



Host Site: Legal Aid of North Carolina

Topic of Project: General Legal Practice and Legal Innovation

Location: Sylva, NC or Wilson, NC

Description of Fellow Project:

Legal Aid of North Carolina is the statewide legal services provider for low-income people in all 100 counties in North Carolina. 48 counties in North Carolina qualify as legal deserts, meaning there is less than one lawyer for every 1,000 residents. Law students will have an opportunity to engage with the newly established (launching spring 2023) Legal Aid of North Carolina Innovation Lab, which is focused on using technology to expand access to justice in North Carolina. The lab is a collaborative project with Duke Law School, North Carolina Central Law School, North Carolina tech companies and other tech partners to identify and build technology solutions that will create greater access to legal representation and legal information. The Fellows participating in the Rural Access Expansion Project will be introduced to the tech lab and given opportunities to interact with the Innovation Lab and its partners as it begins to vision for a future with greater rural access using technology tools. This will have the twin goals of allowing the Innovation Lab to benefit from fresh perspectives and ideas while also allowing the fellows to appreciate how technology can be used to bridge the access to justice gap.

Fellows located in the Smoky Mountain office will also be exposed to practice in the Cherokee Tribal Court, where attorneys from the Legal Aid of North Carolina Smoky Mountain office have provided legal representation to clients for over 40 years.

Fellows will be provided close supervision and guidance but given opportunities to provide direct representation to clients. The goal would be for each fellow to represent at least one client in a court hearing, although the sites anticipate multiple opportunities to do so for students who are willing.

