Abbey Center Requirements - Question & Answers

Introduction

The Abbey Center provides academic and professional opportunities for New York Law School students who are interested in children’s and family issues. In addition, the Abbey Center hosts conferences, provides information for practitioners and members of the public, and publishes the JustFamilies.org blog. The Abbey Center takes an interdisciplinary approach to family law, with the goal of enhancing the quality of advocacy and services for children and families.

The requirements for the Abbey Center are designed to ensure that students have opportunities to work on behalf of children and families, and to contribute to family law-related policy debate and scholarship. In addition, they provide students with a strong foundation for achieving their professional goals.

Summary of Questions

Q1. What are the requirements for the Abbey Center?
Q2. What does “family law-related” mean?
Q3. How should I keep track of my hours and my progress toward completing the requirements?
Q4. What type of work satisfies the 5-hour per semester minimum time commitment requirement?
Q5. Does attending an event count toward the 5-hour requirement?
Q6. Why a Capstone project, and what are my options for meeting the Capstone requirement?
Q7. Do I need to register for the Capstone course? If so, when?
Q8. May I work together with another Abbey Associate to complete the Capstone project?
Q9. What courses count toward the 12-credit “family law-related” coursework requirement?
Q10. How do I select a topic for a blog post?
Questions & Answers

Q1. What are the requirements for the Abbey Center?

A1. The requirements are as follows:

   a. the Colloquium class, an introductory course that is generally taken in the 2L year;

   b. 12 additional credits of approved family law-related substantive law or skills-based courses (approximately one course each semester);

   c. one family law-related placement each year, which may include an academic year or summer job, externship, clinic, or significant volunteer opportunity;

   d. one graded clinic or independent study project that is approved by the Director or Associate Director as a Capstone project;

   e. at least 5 hours of Abbey Center work each semester; and

   f. attending two Abbey Center academic or professional events each year.

Q2. What does “family law-related” mean?

A2. “Family law-related” refers to practice areas that involve representing or providing services for children and families, including: child welfare, education, matrimonial practice, adoption, juvenile justice, elder law, domestic violence, immigration, and mental health.

Q3. How should I keep track of my hours and my progress toward completing the requirements?

A3: A template is available to track your progress toward completing the requirements. This document should be completed and submitted at the end of each semester.
Q4. What type of work satisfies the 5-hour per semester minimum time commitment requirement?

A4. The following work counts:

- Drafting and completing one or more blog posts that are approved for publication on the Abbey Center’s JustFamilies blog;

- Helping to plan, coordinate, and carry out an Abbey Center event;

- Other projects proposed by the Director or Associate Director; and

- Other projects proposed by students, subject to approval by the Director or Associate Director.

Q5. Does attending an event count toward the 5-hour requirement?

A5. Not by itself. **However**, helping to plan for, coordinate and carry out an event and providing assistance before or after the event does count. In addition, taking notes and preparing a written summary of the event to share with others would count when this work is requested or approved by the Director or Associate Director.

Q6. Why a Capstone project, and what are my options for meeting the Capstone requirement?

A6. The purpose of the Capstone is for students to work with outside mentors and meaningfully contribute to the field of family law. The Capstone project gives students the opportunity to undertake, develop and complete an important project and/or, in the case of clinics, to work with one or more clients. It also offers you an opportunity to develop a relationship with someone in the field who can serve as a guide and perhaps a future mentor.

Subject to approval by the Director or Associate Director, you can complete the Capstone by:

- Completing an approved clinic; or

- Completing a graded independent study project. Generally this project should be done in collaboration with a mentor from a non-profit organization or government agency, and under the supervision of the Director or Associate Director or another NYLS faculty member. The
topic and structure/supervision of the independent project should be approved by the Director or Associate Director before work on the project begins. Independent projects may include:

- Creating an information pamphlet, guide, or other resource for a government or non-profit organization (which could be done in addition to an externship experience with the organization);

- Other projects proposed by the Director or Associate Director; or

- Other projects proposed by students, subject to approval by the Director or Associate Director.

Examples of recent Abbey Associate independent Capstone projects include the following:

- **Residential Treatment Resource Guide.** Created a comprehensive resource guide of residential treatment centers and residential treatment facilities located in Long Island and the tri-state area, prepared for the Legal Aid Society of Suffolk County, Children’s Law Bureau.

- **New York Family Court: A History, Celebrating 50 Years of the New York City Family Court.** Contributed to a pamphlet about the history of the Family Court system that was distributed at City and State events celebrating the Family Court’s 50th Anniversary.

- **NYLS Courtroom Advocates Project Program: Complete How-To & Proposed Update.** Revised manuals, compendia and resource guides for the city-wide CAP program at Sanctuary for Families.

- **Overview of the Private Adoption Process in New York, a Private Adoption Guide.** Created a guide designed to assist adopting parents in learning the adoption process and making critical decisions about their adoption plans.

- Evaluation of a questionnaire used to screen potential parties to Family Court mediations for whether domestic violence was present between the parties.
Q7. Do I need to register for the Capstone course? If so, when?

A7: You only need to register for the Capstone course if you are completing an independent project for Capstone credit (as opposed to a clinic). The Capstone course is a graded, 2-credit course. For day students, this course should generally be taken in the 3L year. For evening students, this course should generally be taken in the 3L or 4L year.

Q8. May I work together with another Abbey Associate to complete the Capstone project?

A8 Yes, you may complete a joint project subject to approval of the Director or Associate Director. If you choose to do this, your grade will be a “joint” one unless you are able to divide the work in such a way that separate grading is possible.

Q9. What courses count toward the 12-credit “family law-related” coursework requirement?

A9: As noted above, “family law-related” refers to practice areas that involve representing or providing services for children and families, including: child welfare, education, matrimonial practice, adoption, juvenile justice, elder law, domestic violence, immigration, and mental health. Pre-approved courses are listed below. Additional courses may meet this requirement, subject to approval of the Director or Associate Director.

Here are the pre-approved courses for the 2013-14 school year:

- Advocacy Skills in Cases Involving Persons with Mental Disabilities
- Alternative Dispute Resolution
- Americans with Disabilities Act: Law, Policy and Practice
- Anatomy of NYS Divorce Action
- Child Welfare Clinic: Fieldwork
- Child Welfare Clinic: Seminar
- Children and the Law
- Civil Rights Clinic Seminar and Workshop
- Civil Rights Law
- Community-Based Initiatives
- Custody Evaluations, Juvenile and Family Law and Mental Disability
- Domestic Violence and the Law
- Domestic Violence Litigation Clinic
- Drafting: Legislation
• Drafting: Litigation
• Education Law and Policy
• Elder Law and Aging in America
• Elder Law Clinic Seminar and Workshop
• Estate Administration
• Estate Planning
• Family Court
• Family Formation: Adoption and Assisted Reproduction
• Family Law
• Gender in American Legal History
• Guardianship Project Clinic I & II
• Immigration Law
• Immigration Law and Litigation Clinic I & II
• Immigration Practice Seminar
• Immigration Practice Workshop
• Immigration and Refugee Rights Clinic
• Juvenile Delinquency
• Law, Public Policy and Social Change
• Legislative Advocacy Clinic Fieldwork
• Legislative Advocacy Clinic Seminar
• Mental Disability Law, Survey
• Negotiation, Counseling and Interviewing
• Negotiation: Theory and Practice
• Race, Gender, Class and Mental Disability Law
• Racial Discrimination and American Law
• Refugee and Asylum Law
• Remedies
• Reproductive Rights Law
• The Role of the Government Attorney
• Sex Crimes and Child Abuse
• Sex Offenders
• Sexuality and the Law
• Special Education Law
• State and Local Government
• Statistical Literacy for Lawyers
• Suspension Representation Clinic Fieldwork
• Suspension Representation Clinic Seminar
• Trauma and Mental Disability Law
• Wills Clinic
• Wills, Trusts and Future Interests
Q10. How do I select a topic for a blog post?

A10. Suggested topics will be provided. Students may also independently select topics subject to approval. In general:

- Blog posts should concern current family law-related legal issues that impact children and families in New York.

- Blog posts may discuss:
  1. A new court decision;
  2. A new law;
  3. A policy initiative in New York City or New York State;
  4. A public event at NYLS; or
  5. Beginning spring semester 2014, students may also complete a profile of a government or non-profit organization, or an official from a government or non-profit organization.