

ERIS
EAST RIVER LEGAL SERVICES

Volume 1, Issue 2-Summer 2023

Welcome to the East River Legal Services Newsletter

Hello and welcome to the East River Legal Services Newsletter! We are excited to share updates with you on the work we are doing and the difference we are making in communities in eastern South Dakota.

Please feel free to forward this newsletter on to those who would find it beneficial. Subscribe at the bottom of this newsletter, so you don't miss an update.

Thank you and enjoy!

Thank You Summer Interns

We would like to thank all of our wonderful summer interns! They have helped staff with countless projects this summer and we could not have completed all of the amazing work we were able to without their assistance. We appreciate each and every one of them and their skills and talents!





Upper Left: Stephanie Sadoon (RSLC Summer Law Clerk)-University of South Dakota School of Law

Upper Right: Katherine Steffen (Marketing and Outreach Intern)-University of Sioux Falls

Lower Left: Peter Amponsah (Summer Law Clerk)-University of South Dakota School of Law

Lower Right: Marah Darling (Marketing and Outreach Intern)-Augustana College

Forms Clinics: One Response to the South Dakota Legal Needs Assessment

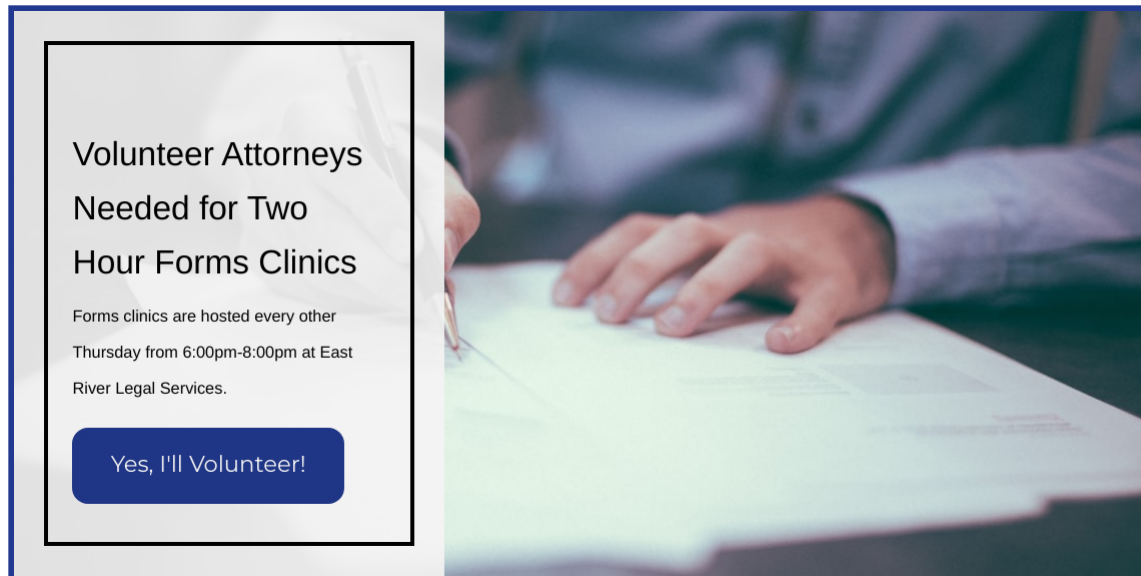
The [South Dakota Legal Needs Assessment Report](#) (2022) identified an enormous number of litigants attempting to access the courts by themselves, since they cannot afford or access an attorney. Courts, human services agencies, and low-income clients expressed frustration with pro se representation. In some counties over 90% of family law pleadings are filed without an attorney. While the South Dakota Unified Judicial System has a variety of [civil court forms](#) designed to assist individuals with simple cases to access the courts, unfortunately the instructions, while thorough, are sometimes confusing and overwhelming to those trying to represent themselves. ERLS has found that *assisted* pro se, providing information and advice, and review of the pro se pleadings, improves a pro se litigant's chance at success, and takes fewer resources than a direct service case.

In May 2023, ERLS began hosting Divorce Forms Clinics for clients who need help with the court process. Our intake staff identifies clients who could represent themselves with some assistance. ERLS recruited private attorneys to volunteer one time for two hours with no ongoing commitment to the pro se client. Our intake staff screens the cases to determine suitability for pro se representation. All potential clinic cases are reviewed by an attorney and ERLS staff is present to assist with any unexpected problems. This model allows attorneys with limited knowledge in a practice area to volunteer. ERLS has a regular volunteer who is a personal injury expert, yet he feels comfortable helping with simple pro se divorces. He commented, "I would never agree to take a contested divorce case, but I can help with simple pro se cases." The

Everyone was extremely helpful. Kaitlin (intake Specialist) was very knowledgeable and informative. I think that the Divorce Clinic would be a great way for attorneys to give back to the community.”

With the success of the Divorce Forms Clinic, ERLS seeks to expand the clinic model using private attorneys and volunteers from the University of South Dakota School of Law. At the recent Name Change Clinic, eight individuals received in-person assistance with the pleadings and process to obtain a name change. ERLS is currently developing forms clinics for uncontested guardianships, consumer counseling for seniors, and simple bankruptcies.

The Rule of Law presupposes that both sides are represented by an attorney, but low-income Americans often do not get the help they need to access the courts. The forms clinics help pro se litigants access the courts and improves their chances of success.



**Volunteer Attorneys
Needed for Two
Hour Forms Clinics**

Forms clinics are hosted every other
Thursday from 6:00pm-8:00pm at East
River Legal Services.

[Yes, I'll Volunteer!](#)

THANK YOU

A **HUGE** thank you to the Attorneys who have already volunteered for one of our Forms Clinics! We appreciate you!!

- Reagan Chavez
- Olin Clyne
- Morgan Erickson

- Tracye Sherrin
- Elizabeth Stanley
- Marilyn Trefz

To volunteer at future clinics, please click [HERE](#) to email Nichole Townsend, PAI Coordinator.



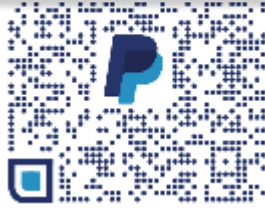
Allison Ramsdell, U.S. Attorney for the District of South Dakota, and Kevin Koliner, U.S. Attorney's Office Appellate Chief and Criminal Rights Prosecutor, and Nichole Townsend, ERLS Private Attorney Involvement Coordinator address attendees at the ERLS Name Change Clinic on August 3, 2023.



It's official! East River Legal Services is a United Way Agency!

A **HUGE** thank you to the Yankton Area United Way for awarding us a Venture Grant! With the money we obtained from this grant, ERLS was able to purchase tablets, keyboard cases, screen protectors and locked storage to store the tablets. We were also able to purchase a portable, wireless printer and ink. With the addition of this new technology, clients will be able to complete the online application at outreach events, booths, and even in our lobby. This will speed up the intake process for potential clients and allow for a more timely response from ERLS.

Thank you United Way of Greater Yankton!



or donate online at: <https://erlservices.org/donate/>

Help us close the justice gap!

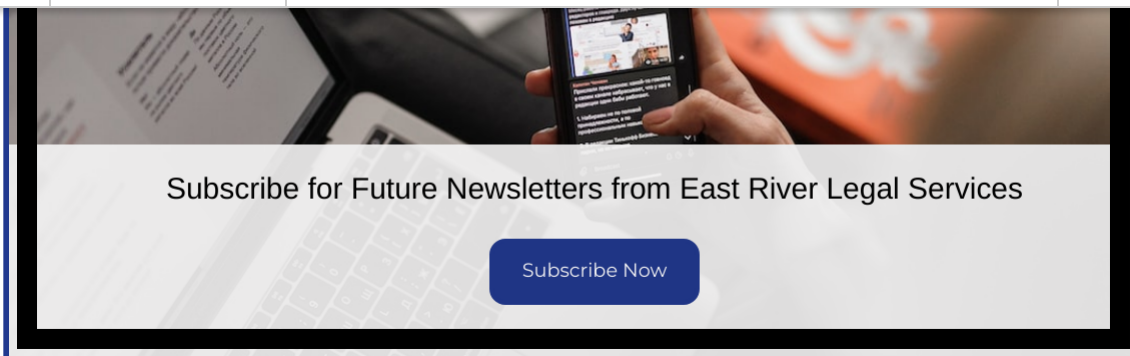
Upcoming COMMUNITY EVENTS

August:

- **Thursday, August 17-Pro Se Forms Clinic**
 - From 6:00pm-8:00pm
 - ERLS Office (335 N. Main Ave., Suite 200 Sioux Falls, SD)
- **Friday, August 22-VA Stand Down**
 - From 9:00am-12:00pm
 - SD Military Heritage Alliance (1600 Russell St. Sioux Falls, SD)

September:

- **Thursday, September 7-Pro Se Forms Clinic**
 - From 6:00pm-8:00pm
 - ERLS Office (335 N. Main Ave., Suite 200 Sioux Falls, SD)
 - **Saturday, September 16-Health Connect Fair**
 - From 11:00am-3:00pm
 - Sioux Falls Arena (1201 NW Ave. Sioux Falls, SD)
 - **Thursday, September 21-Pro Se Forms Clinic**
 - From 6:00pm-8:00pm
 - ERLS Office (335 N. Main Ave., Suite 200 Sioux Falls, SD)
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