

ERLS
EAST RIVER LEGAL SERVICES

Volume 1, Issue 3-Winter 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!

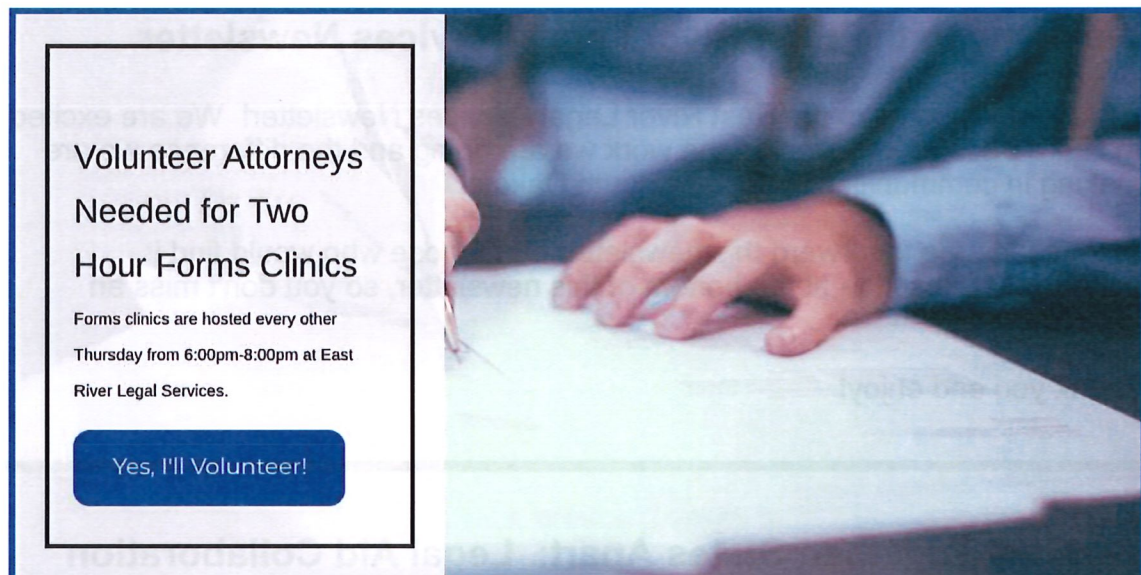
Working Together, States Apart: Legal Aid Collaboration



Pictured above left, is ERLS Staff Attorney, Ann Knudson.

Pictured above right, is Legal Services of

East River Legal Services (ERLS) Staff Attorney, Ann Knudson, recently represented a client in a parental kidnapping case which required collaboration between legal aid organizations in two states. Legal Services of Southern Missouri Staff Attorney, Portasha Stallworth-Moore, requested assistance from ERLS after her client's husband fled with the parties' children and refused to disclose where he and the children were living. He was found by police in Sioux Falls. The out-of-state custody order awarded primary physical custody to the mother. Ms. Knudson successfully secured registration and enforcement of the out-of-state order, and dismissal of a baseless protection order petition the husband had filed. The mother and her children were reunited after seven months of separation.



**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!!

- Olin Clyne
- Pete Heidepriem
- Tim Billion
- Mae Pochop
- Tracye Sherrill

- Pamela Keller
- Beth Baloun
- Lisa Marso
- Joshua Brown

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

Meeting Legal Needs With Limited Resources

East River Legal Services receives over two hundred applications for assistance a month. With just five attorneys (two of them part-time) and thirty-three counties to serve, we have to set priorities for case acceptance and offer a variety of service levels. Although our court system was designed for both parties in a case to have an attorney, that is not the reality for low-income Americans. There is not a right to an attorney in a civil case, which means that for important and personal issues like custody of children, housing, and retention of essential benefits, low-income individuals must rely on resource-strapped legal aid programs or navigate court on their own. The unfortunate reality is that demand for civil legal aid exceeds the capacity of legal aid and pro bono programs. Despite eligibility and need, 92% of low-income Americans do not have access to an attorney to assist them with their civil legal problem.

Everyone who applies for assistance at ERLS is screened for conflicts of interest, financial qualification, and documentation to be in the United States. After an interview, our Intake Specialists and Intake Attorney provide advice to all qualified applicants, because they are our clients, even if they are not assigned an attorney to represent them. Applications concerning domestic violence, loss of housing, and access or loss of income, are all forwarded to our legal department for direct representation. If we cannot provide direct representation, we review the case to see if it is appropriate for pro se representation. East River Legal Services provides UJS forms and advice to pro se clients, but many non-lawyers still have difficulty completing the forms and navigating the court system. In response to the great need, ERLS began holding forms clinics twice a month. Volunteer attorneys meet with pro se litigants to review forms and answer questions about the legal process.

We welcome suggestions and assistance to meet the unmet legal needs of clients that cannot be assigned an attorney due to ERLS' limited resources. If you are interested in volunteering or collaborating, please email us at: info@erlservices.org.

ERLS relies on grants and private donations to continue providing legal advice, assisting pro se litigants, and representing vulnerable clients directly.

Please consider a donation to support our work and allow us to expand.



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

Upcoming **COMMUNITY EVENTS**

December:

- **Thursday, December 14-Wills/POA Clinic**
 - From 1:00pm-5:00pm
 - Huron Area Senior Center (290 7th St. SW Huron, SD)
- **Thursday, December 21-Divorce Clinic**
 - From 6:00pm-8:00pm
 - ERLS Office (335 N. Main Ave., Suite 200 Sioux Falls, SD)

A banner with a blue border. The top half shows a person's hands holding a smartphone displaying a social media post. The bottom half is a white background with the text 'Subscribe for Future Newsletters from East River Legal Services' and a blue 'Subscribe Now' button.

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