

Position Description

Position details

Position Title:	Criminal Lawyer/Generalist Lawyer
Purpose	You will work within a cohesive high-performing Health Justice Partnership, using your excellent Criminal/Generalist Law experience, to ensure First Step Legal (FSL) provides exceptional service delivery to vulnerable and marginalised individuals to make a difference, leading to systemic impact and advocacy.
Classification:	Salary Negotiable, subject to skills and experience SCHADS award
Reports to:	Practice Manager
Location:	St Kilda + outreach locations with initial WFH arrangement as per COVID19 requirements
Employment Status:	2-year fixed term contract with all positions subject to continuation of project funding
Hours:	Part-time 0.6-0.8 FTE (22.5-30 hrs per/week) subject to negotiation
Probationary period:	A three month probationary period applies.

The Organisation

First Step Legal (FSL) operates as a Health Justice Partnership (HJP) within First Step, a not for profit mental health and addiction clinic in St Kilda. FSL is a unique Community Legal Centre providing pro bono, legal advice and representation to among the most marginalised in the community. FSL practices predominantly in relation to criminal law and family violence matters. Assistance is also provided with infringement, debt and other matters on an ad hoc basis. FSL currently comprises a small team of 2 part-time lawyers, an administrative case manager and several volunteer paralegals.

FSL's vision is to increase *Access to Justice* for clients struggling with mental health and addiction issues to enable them to access supports to rebuild and improve their lives and by achieving legal and court outcomes supportive of their continued recovery and rehabilitation in the community. FSL also works to champion HJPs and therapeutic, compassionate legal practice via law reform and advocacy opportunities.

FSL aims to embody a methodology of practice which values:

- Delivering excellence in the provision of our legal services to clients within a framework of compassionate legal practice
- Ensuring clients are well-informed about the process and conduct of their legal matters
- Assisting clients who are genuinely engaged or wanting to be engaged in treatment, recovery and therapeutic interventions that will support their ongoing wellbeing
- Giving clients agency in decisions regarding their treatment that best support them and their needs
- Working hard to achieve legal resolutions that will support ongoing recovery and rehabilitation.

Funding Sources

FSL receives funding from a variety of sources including philanthropic, corporate, government and quasi-government sources. This includes Victorian Legal Services Board (VLSB) project funding and recently, 3 year Community Legal Services Program (CSLP) funding, administered through Victoria Legal Aid. FSL is expanding its HJP model by undertaking some new outreach pilots. FSL is moving into a new expanded office space in St. Kilda, adjoining First Step (subject to COVID restrictions).

The Role in Context

The aim of the role is to deliver excellent criminal/generalist law legal services across all programs under an HJP model, both at First Step, as well as at least two new outreach projects (including one at the Alfred Health and another at Star Health). This will enable FSL to directly support clients with a broader range of legal issues to rebuild and restore their lives. The incumbent will therefore work collaboratively with medical staff and social workers as well as with legal volunteers. The role will also help inform our policy and advocacy work. Cases will be handled by phone or in person and in line with COVID-19 restrictions and safety.

Key Responsibilities

Key Responsibility Areas
<p><u>Legal Advice and Casework Services</u></p> <p>Provide high quality legal advice and casework, including by -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Providing legal advice in the variety of settings where FSL operates, with a particular focus on Criminal Law, as part of an integrated HJP model.• Triaging to understand client goals, assess client urgency and eligibility for service provision, and to identify and support additional legal and non-legal issues.• Maintaining personal caseload as negotiated.• Assisting with FSL's paralegal volunteer program, including supporting training, task allocation and supervision.• Ensuring compliance with professional indemnity insurance scheme.
<p><u>Integrated Practice</u></p> <p>Work collaboratively in accordance with FSL values, including by -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Accepting referrals from a variety of HJP settings.• Providing legal information and/or facilitating high quality legal and non-legal referrals for individuals not eligible for FSL services• Collaborating with the FSL Team and partnership professionals to develop case plans for clients and facilitating referrals to other members of the team and any relevant agencies• Contributing to the delivery of integrated, high quality legal and therapeutic outcomes for clients, supportive of their continued recovery and rehabilitation in the community• Contributing to the identification of systemic issues affecting the delivery of services and contribute to informing relevant policy.

Client Information & Reporting

Maintain a comprehensive client record in the client management system, including by -

- Accurately entering all client based and non-client based activity in a timely way
- Seeking client's permission to share information within the HJP as required by the case plan
- Preparing documentation and reports for relevant parties as required.

Organisational Obligations

Meet organisational obligations, as agreed with the Manager, including by –

- Undertaking training/professional development which meet FSL's organisational and professional development requirements
- Participating in FSL activities including staff, team and agency meetings, supervision and debriefing
- Undertaking a range of project or other duties required to support the effective delivery of direct services to clients under the HJP.

Health & Safety

- Actively contribute to health and safety at FSL by being aware of safety policies and procedures and consciously applying these every day to ensure the health and safety of our workplace including additional requirements to maintain a COVID-safe workplace.

Key Selection Criteria

Qualifications, Knowledge and Skills, Personal Attributes:

Mandatory Qualifications

- Eligible to hold an unrestricted Employee Practising Certificate in Victoria
- Demonstrated strong practice experience in Criminal Law.

Highly Desirable

- Experience in Family Violence and any other key areas of our HJP legal practice such as Mental Health, Debt and Tenancy.
- High level communication and negotiation skills with a demonstrated ability to use those skills to share knowledge and build relationships with diverse clients and stakeholders
- Demonstrated commitment to access to justice, social justice and equality
- Experience responding to the legal needs of people with addiction and mental health vulnerabilities and/or demonstrated knowledge of the impact of legal issues on mental health and addiction recovery and rehabilitation
- Ability to work both autonomously and collaboratively as a member of a multidisciplinary team.

Desirable

- Demonstrated ability to stay focussed under pressure and prioritise competing demands
- Computer literacy skills in direct client data entry, word processing and internet use.

Approval and Acknowledgement

Date PD last reviewed: New PD

PD Approved by: FSL Managing Lawyer

Date of approval: September 2020

