



Safe & Stable Homes Volunteer Manual

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Welcome: *Letter from Safe & Stable Homes Co-Director Cole Thaler*

What would Atlanta Volunteer Lawyers Foundation be without volunteers?

Since our founding in 1979, volunteers have formed the beating heart of AVL's service to the Atlanta community.

Because of thousands of volunteers like you, countless tenants have gotten necessary repairs made to their homes, gotten their security deposits back, and defeated evictions.

Because of volunteer attorneys, tenants have not had to stand alone in the courtroom. Because of volunteer paralegals and law students, cases have received top-notch research and assistance. Because of community volunteers, neighbors visiting our outreach fairs have met smiling faces and picked up important legal information.



Because of people just like you who find time in their hearts and busy schedules for pro bono, more Atlanta residents have accessed meaningful justice.

In this manual, you will read about the many ways that AVLF needs your help, and the many ways that we support our volunteers. We pride ourselves on the wealth of resources – from sample demand letters to forensic accountants -- we have amassed to share with volunteer attorneys so that your representation can be as effective as possible.

More than 20,000 attorneys practice law in Metro Atlanta, and we would love the opportunity to introduce every one of those attorneys to our clients. But even if you don't have a Bar card, AVLF needs your help. In return, we pledge to provide you with the tools you need, to answer your questions, to strategize and brainstorm with you, and to support your work in every way we can. If you donate your time to our clients, we've got your back.

So read on, and then get connected to AVLF's work! Together, we make our city better.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Cole'.

Cole Thaler

Safe & Stable Homes Project Co-Director

Background Information

Purpose of this Handbook

The purpose of this volunteer handbook is to define your role as a volunteer with AVLF's Safe and Stable Homes Project. It serves as a guide for questions that you may have while volunteering with us and codifies our volunteer policies and expectations. As we seek to serve you better, our processes and procedures will change, which means that this handbook will be updated periodically.

If you are unsure about a policy or have questions, always reach out to the Volunteer Engagement Manager or an AVLF staff member for clarification.

Who We Are

Atlanta Volunteer Lawyers Foundation (AVLF) is a nonprofit that believes no one standing up for their rights should have to do it alone. That's why we stand with, for, and in support of low-income Atlantans as they demand safe and stable housing, insist on fair pay for an honest day's work, and break free from domestic violence.

The largest provider of pro bono legal services in Atlanta, we leverage the collective power and resources of our professional community to advocate for our clients during their time of greatest need. Every year, over 5,000 Atlantans receive free, first-rate legal services from our staff and the 500 professionals and students who volunteer with us.

We serve survivors of intimate partner abuse, children in high-conflict custody disputes, tenants in disputes with their landlords, employees denied their wages, and people who have recently lost a family member. Whatever our clients are up against, we're here for them. At AVLF, 'here' means many things. It means beside them in court; it means at our downtown legal clinics nearly every Saturday of the year; it means in our two offices in the Fulton County Courthouse; in our communities' schools and in our clients' homes.

Over the years, we've evolved into a nimble and mobile organization, with staff in centrally-located offices and deeply embedded in Atlanta's underserved communities. For us, 'here' means meeting our clients where they are, geographically and emotionally, then coming up with a plan to get them where they want and need to be.

Though we're first and foremost a legal organization, we understand that the struggles our clients face don't occur in isolation, and that getting back on track often requires more than legal representation. In response to this, we've pioneered programs and forged partnerships that meaningfully address a diversity of issues related to domestic violence and housing insecurity, including pediatric asthma, homelessness, and trauma. And we're just getting started.

We're successful because of the passion and innovation of our staff, the expertise of our partners, and the generosity of Atlanta's legal community. For over 40 years, our city's top firms and brightest legal talent have volunteered their time and energy to help our clients in their fight for

justice—and have found that they get a great deal back in return. As these lawyers lift the community, their personal and professional lives—and the lives of our clients—are enriched in equal measure.

Together, we're working to create safer and more stable families, homes, and communities and a fairer and more equitable Atlanta, one client at a time.

Equal Opportunity

AVLF is an Equal Opportunity organization. We consider all volunteers without regard to race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, national origin, disability status, socioeconomic background, protected veteran status, and/or any other characteristic protected by law. We are also committed to building a diverse volunteer pool, and we strongly encourage potential volunteers who are people of color, people with disabilities, and LGBTQ+ people.

About Our Work

Our mission is to create safe and stable homes and families by inspiring the fight for equal justice.

Safe and Stable Homes Project (SSH)

Whether it's contesting an illegal eviction or demanding repairs, our Safe & Stable Homes Project is dedicated to helping low-income renters and workers access the justice they deserve.

We have a few smaller programs under this umbrella, but the vast majority of our Safe & Stable Homes clients come to us for help with housing issues like illegal evictions and deplorable conditions. Our client services include legal consultations, referrals to wraparound services, and full representation from a volunteer attorney.

Safe & Stable Homes Programs

Saturday Lawyer Program · Standing with Our Neighbors® Program · Eviction Defense Program
Bankruptcy Program · Dollars for Judgments Program · Housing Court Assistance Center

Safe and Stable Families Project (SSF)

Our Safe & Stable Families Project provides top-notch legal and social services to survivors of intimate partner abuse.

Most of our Safe & Stable Families clients come to us through the Safe Families Office: Georgia's only lawyer-staffed, Courthousebased walk-in clinic for survivors of intimate partner abuse. We co-run the clinic, which is located in the Fulton County Courthouse, with Partnership Against Domestic Violence. At the SFO, we help survivors obtain Temporary Protective Orders and

provide them with legal advocacy, safety planning, counseling, shelter access, resource referrals, and more.

But the journey doesn't end with a protective order. Our Safe & Stable Families Project supports survivors along the road to safety and independence, providing social work services, family law representation, and more.

Safe & Stable Families Programs

Safe Families Office · Family Law Program · Social Work Program · Guardian ad Litem Program ·
Standing with Survivors Program

Why Volunteer with AVLF?

People join us in the fight for justice for many reasons. Some of the most common reasons that we hear from our volunteers are that they want to help their community, gain more legal experience, and make an impact.

At AVLF, we pride ourselves in providing a volunteer experience that fulfills all three of these goals and more. You will interact with a caring and motivated staff who is committed to providing you with a quality volunteer experience. You will receive training, guidance, and support to ensure that you have the tools you need to successfully fulfill your volunteer duties.

Our organization fosters an environment of open and honest communication. We are here to listen to your concerns and encourage suggestions for improvement.

“AVLF let me gain a lot of legal experience, develop interviewing skills and meet professionals from different practices. I am just SO GRATEFUL to Y'all!!!”

Volunteer Attorney

You will want to continue to volunteer with us because we are an organization that values our volunteers, and we are not shy about showering them with appreciation.

You will also be assured in knowing that you are a part of a 40-year-old organization that has a stable foundation in the community and has recorded success in providing great outcomes for our clients. We cannot do what we do without our volunteers.

Our success is because of you!

“My desire to continue volunteering with an organization stems from the organization’s purpose, how it executes its volunteer activities, and an organization’s intentionality. I believe an organization should ‘practice what it preaches,’ and I feel AVLF does that.”

Law student volunteer



Who are our Volunteers?

Our volunteers are community members, students, and professionals in and out of the legal field. They are people with a passion for justice who are dedicated to making their community a better place for everyone. They show respect to others, are willing to help wherever they are needed, and are committed to fulfilling their volunteer role. If this sounds like you, then we are excited that you are joining us in the fight for equal justice!



My desire to serve my community and help those who deserve legal representation but cannot afford it, motivates me to volunteer.

Volunteer law student

Programs in Need of Volunteers

Saturday Lawyer Program

AVLF's first and oldest program, the Saturday Lawyer Program (SLP) has been assisting low-income Atlantans for more than 40 years. Nearly every Saturday morning, from 9:00 a.m. until around 12:30 p.m., volunteer attorneys, legal assistants, and law students gather at AVLF's Peachtree Center office to conduct in-depth interviews with potential clients who are having disputes with their landlords or employers. Each potential client is low-income and lives in either Fulton or Clayton County. At each Saturday Lawyer Day clinic, volunteers are provided with breakfast and coffee, and focus on learning each client's full story and assessing the strength of her claims. Volunteer attorneys are encouraged, although not required, to provide post-Saturday representation to the client they meet with. AVLF provides extensive support to the volunteer attorney during the representation.

Eviction Defense Program

Georgia evictions move quickly. When a tenant calls our office and reports that she has been served with a dispossessory, we don't require her to schedule a Saturday Lawyer Program appointment (which might take several weeks to get). Instead, after we screen the case for merit, we immediately start recruiting a volunteer attorney to represent that client. All attorneys who take on an Eviction Defense case must attend our Eviction Defense training OR have prior experience with Georgia evictions. The Eviction Defense Program is limited to Fulton County dispossessories.

Standing with Our Neighbors

AVLF's Standing with Our Neighbors (SWON) initiative places AVLF staff members in Atlanta public schools to support the low-income tenants whose children attend those schools. SWON attorney volunteers generally work at one of our 10 partner firms: Alston & Bird, Arnall Golden Gregory, Dentons, Jones Day, Kilpatrick Townsend & Stockton, King & Spalding, Nelson Mullins, Eversheds Sutherland, Taylor English Duma and Troutman Sanders. If you are an employee at one of these firms and would like to get involved, please contact AVLF or the pro bono coordinator at your firm. The SWON initiative also sometimes needs volunteers to help staff outreach events.

Housing Court Assistance Center

AVLF's Housing Court Assistance Center (HCAC) is a walk-in advice clinic for Atlanta tenants whose landlords are taking them to court. Located in the Fulton County Courthouse, tenants can get immediate advice about the eviction process (which in Georgia is known as a dispossessory). With the help of an AVLF staff attorney, volunteer attorneys and law students meet with tenants to explain their rights under Georgia law. From limited advice on completing an Answer to pre- and post-litigation advice, HCAC provides tenants with the knowledge and resources they need to advocate for themselves throughout the eviction process.

Volunteer Positions

All volunteers are encouraged to read the [Tips on Cultural Competence](#) on **page ___**.

In the following sections, we break down the available volunteer positions. Read through them and identify which positions fit your skills and interests.

You don't have to pick only one volunteer position! You can choose to volunteer for multiple programs, or you can have multiple volunteer roles in one program.

If you start in one role and want to switch, that's completely fine, too. We'll work with you to find the perfect volunteer position for you.

Legal Sponsor – A legal sponsor can be any law firm, Bar section, or legal organization.

Legal sponsors choose a Saturday Lawyer date or dates that they want to sponsor every calendar year. We count on our sponsors to provide three to five Georgia-licensed attorneys on each of their sponsored Saturdays. Summer associates, legal assistants, and other staff are also welcomed to attend. AVLF will provide marketing material and training documents prior to your sponsorship date. We can also attend an organizational event or make a presentation at your office to assist with volunteer recruitment.

Law firms, Bar sections, and legal organizations can also sponsor our Eviction Defense program. AVLF staff will train all interested attorneys on the relevant laws and procedures. Then, as available eviction defense cases come in, we will contact your point person to see if any of the trained attorneys are available to represent the tenant facing eviction.

At this time, SWON is not seeking new legal sponsors. However, if you are an employee at one of the following law firms, please contact AVLF or the pro bono coordinator at your firm to get involved:

- Arnall Golden Gregory
- Alston & Bird
- Eversheds
- Jones Day
- Kilpatrick Townsend
- King & Spalding
- Nelson Mullins
- Troutman Pepper
- Taylor English

Community Sponsors – Any nonlegal company or organization can be a community sponsor. We rely on our community sponsors to provide 5-15 volunteers for a Saturday Lawyer clinic or a Standing with Our Neighbors (SWON) community outreach event. Community Sponsor volunteers will assist with clients: passing out information and food, greeting clients, and organizing clients' documents. You will also assist attorneys with client interviews - note taking and case assessments. [See page 29 for more information.](#)

Housing Programs Coordinator – The Housing Programs Coordinator is the person who schedules the sponsorship date on behalf of their firm or organization and collaborates with AVLF to recruit volunteers. We ask Housing Program Coordinators to provide us with the list of

volunteers (names and email addresses) at least a week before their scheduled date. Coordinators also help with case placement and streamlining the conflict check process.

Attorney Volunteer – We welcome all attorneys regardless of experience. Our volunteer attorneys are Georgia-barred attorneys, barred in another state, just passed the Bar exam, inactive with the Bar, or not practicing law. You do not need to have prior experience with landlord-tenant law or wage disputes. However, your status with the Bar will determine if you are able to take a pro bono case.

Anyone who has an active Georgia Bar license can take a case for full representation. If you want to work on a case but you are **barred in another state** or currently inactive with the Georgia Bar, you will need a Georgia-barred attorney to supervise you. If you do not know a Georgia-barred attorney that is willing to assist, we may be able to pair you with one. Inactive attorneys can take cases for full representation once their membership is reactivated.

Primary malpractice insurance is provided by AVLF for volunteers who assist with the Saturday Lawyer Program or who are working on a case referred by AVLF. Please notify us immediately if you believe there is a threat of a claim.

- Attorneys' Role with the Saturday Lawyer Program (SLP): Volunteer attorneys interview one or two potential clients to assess the strength of their claims. If the case has merit, volunteers are encouraged (although not required) to accept the case for representation. Attorneys who are not barred in Georgia are often paired with a Georgia-barred attorney for the intake.

If you are not available to volunteer on Saturday mornings, you can also assist the Saturday Lawyer Program by reviewing summaries of available landlord-tenant and unpaid wage cases and accepting representation as your schedule allows. We will provide extensive assistance to all our volunteers, whether you can attend on a Saturday or not.

- Attorneys' Role with the Eviction Defense Program (ED): All attorneys who take on an Eviction Defense case must attend our Eviction Defense training OR have prior experience with evictions. Through the Eviction Defense program, attorneys assist clients with their dispossessory hearings. When AVLF has a client with an active eviction, we will reach out to you to see if you are available. After conflicts clear, you will receive the client's documents. Once the hearing is over, your service should be complete. Only Georgia-barred attorneys can accept a case through the Eviction Defense Program.
- Attorneys' Role with Standing with Our Neighbors (SWON): SWON attorney volunteers generally work at one of our 10 partner firms: Alston & Bird, Arnall Golden Gregory, Jones Day, Kilpatrick Townsend & Stockton, King & Spalding, Nelson Mullins, Eversheds Sutherland, Taylor English Duma, Dentons, and Troutman Sanders. As an attorney volunteer, you will work on a housing case from one of the three SWON neighborhoods: Carver Cluster, NPU-V, and the Westside. If you are an employee at one of these firms and would like to get involved, please contact AVLF or the pro bono coordinator at your firm.

At-Home Intake Volunteers – Any attorney volunteer, law school graduates, paralegals, and law students can be at home intake volunteers. You will conduct home visits with clients who are

unable to make it to the Saturday clinic due to limited mobility, work schedule, or other issues. We will provide you with all the materials you will need to conduct the interview. You will contact the client and schedule the interview at the client's home or in a mutually-convenient location. After the interview, you will provide us with your intake notes, photos, or any other documents that you collected during the interview.

Legal Assistants – Legal assistants are paralegals, students, administrative professionals, and any person with a desire to help. During the Saturday Lawyer clinic, we need administrative assistance. This includes organizing and scanning client documents, staffing the locked door to welcome and greet clients/volunteers, and taking notes while sitting in on client intake interviews. All legal assistants are asked to sign the [Legal Assistant Consent Form](#) on their first volunteer date. Legal experience is not required.

Law Students - AVLF's Saturday Lawyer Program accepts up to five law student volunteers each Saturday. Law students sit in on the client interviews, assisting with note-taking and case analysis. Law student volunteers also assist with administrative tasks such as greeting clients at the locked front door of our building and organizing client files.

Community Outreach Volunteers- Anyone with a desire to serve can be a community outreach volunteer. No legal experience is required. SWON hosts several community events throughout the year such as festivals, workshops, and community gatherings. On the day of the event, Community Outreach volunteers assist with childcare, handing out information, passing out food, and general event logistics. We will notify you of the date and time of each event prior to volunteering. You can sign up to work a shift or choose to work the whole event.

Accountants – An accounting professional can attend a Saturday Lawyer clinic to help screen cases alongside a volunteer attorney and offer any specialized feedback you feel comfortable in giving. You can attend individually or sign up an entire group for a Community Sponsorship Day. Volunteer accountants are not only limited to the Saturday clinic. Accountants can sign up for our Accountant Pitch List for SLP, ED, and SWON cases. You can assist by calculating damages such as property loss due to conditions issues. See the [Volunteer Accountant Guide](#) for more information.

Financial Planners – Any certified financial planner can participate in our Financial Planning Program, which runs in conjunction with the Saturday Lawyer Program. Two Saturdays out of the month, volunteer financial planners meet with our clients for a one-hour consultation. During the consultation, volunteer planners assess clients' financial needs and develop strategies to help them achieve financial wellness and autonomy. We will provide information about the clients' financial goals before the consultation. If a client requests continuous financial planning assistance after their appointment, we will reach out to our volunteers to see who is available to assist. Volunteers can determine the length of their representation and how often they are willing to meet with a client.

Interpreters - Anyone who is proficient (speaking, reading, and/or writing) in a language including sign language can volunteer as an interpreter. Once AVLF identifies a client that needs interpretation assistance, we rely on our volunteer interpreters to:

- Conduct the initial intake interview
- Assist in scheduling the client for a Saturday clinic if necessary

- Sit in with a volunteer attorney at the scheduled clinic
- Assist the attorney after they accept the case
- Interpret legal documents

Interpreters are not required to assist with every task listed above. You can pick and choose the type of services you want to provide. Please see the [Volunteer Translator Guide](#) for more information.

Mediators – Any registered mediator current with the GODR can volunteer. Many of our cases involve a required attempt at mediation. Typically, the services of volunteer mediators are needed where the case is pre-litigation; where the required mediation has been attempted but was unsuccessful and the parties agree that they would like to try again; and in cases where there is not a required mediation.

When a volunteer attorney reaches out to us for mediation assistance, we will reach out to you for availability. If you indicate that you are available and willing to help, we will help connect you to the volunteer attorney and provide you with whatever support you need. This may include primers or case law outlines on the pertinent laws and conflict check information (if needed).

You can also sign up to attend and observe a Saturday Lawyer Day. On Saturday, you can assist with interviews and clerical work. It is also a great opportunity to let attorneys know about your volunteer services and your professional paid work.

Attorney Legal Assistant Partnership (ALAP) Volunteers - An attorney who accepts a case through SLP and ED can request a legal assistant to help with their AVLF case(s). The legal assistant aids in reviewing client files, researching laws, drafting documents, contacting clients, filing court documents, and performing other support tasks under the supervision of the volunteer attorney.

Any legal assistant (under the SLP definition) and law student who attends 3 Saturday Lawyer clinics can participate in ALAP. You will be provided with housing law information that will prepare you for assisting on a case. We also encourage all legal assistants to attend our bi-monthly housing law training. Legal Assistants will fill out the ALAP Consent Form prior to accepting a case with an attorney. Any ALAP legal assistant who wants to volunteer for Eviction Defense will need to attend 3 Saturday Lawyer clinics AND an AVLF Eviction Defense training.

We will provide attorneys with a guide for working with legal assistants and a legal assistance consent form. Both documents will help you outline your partnership with your legal assistant while working on pro bono case together.

Interns/Externs/Weekday Volunteers – Externships are available year-round for law students. Summer internships are available for undergraduates, law school students, and graduate students. Externs and law student interns assist with legal research, case review, drafting case assessments, creating documents that explain landlord-tenant law, conducting client intake, and other clerical tasks.

Undergraduate interns assist with researching resources for clients and volunteers, maintaining multiple online databases, attending community outreach events, and assisting with various administrative tasks.

If you are interested in being an intern or extern, please submit a resume, cover letter, writing sample, and information about your availability to Matilde Davis at mdavis@avlf.org.

Anyone can be a weekday volunteer. These volunteers assist us during our normal business hours (M-F; 9am-5pm) with administrative tasks. All weekday volunteers, interns, and externs are required to sign the Internship/Externship Consent Form.

Fundraising Events Volunteers – AVLF holds fundraisers year-round and occasionally needs additional assistance at these events. Fundraiser volunteers help with collecting donations, checking in attendees, and other event logistics. We expect all fundraiser volunteers to provide excellent customer service and abide by confidentiality rules while handling sensitive payment and contact information.

Observers - We reserve observation spaces for law student graduates, professionals, and any person who is considering sponsoring a Saturday Lawyer clinic or a community outreach event. Reach out to Matilde Davis at mdavis@avlf.org to observe a Saturday Lawyer clinic.

Did We Miss Anyone? If you have a skill to offer that you think might benefit AVLF's clients or attorney volunteers, please contact us so that we can discuss how you can volunteer!

Sign Up to Volunteer

We don't take walk-in volunteers, but you can sign up for available Saturday Lawyer dates here: <https://avlf.org/slp-signup/>.

You can also sign up for volunteer dates and learn about additional volunteer opportunities by contacting Matilde Davis at mdavis@avlf.org.

If you are a new volunteer, please fill out the volunteer intake form here: <http://avlf.org/volunteer/volunteer-intake-form/>.

Volunteer Orientation/Training

Orientation for the Saturday Lawyer Program occurs at the beginning of every Saturday Lawyer clinic. We will provide important information about AVLF's expectations, resources available to you, and suggestions for how to be most effective with your interviews. For those of you who have

been involved with the Saturday Lawyer Program in the past, this will be both a refresher course and an opportunity to learn and ask questions about how the program has changed.

AVLF hosts various **trainings** throughout the year. All volunteers or potential volunteers are welcome to attend the below trainings.

- Tenants' Rights Trainings – AVLF staff attorneys conduct bi-monthly trainings focused on housing law and tenants' rights. Volunteers will be able to ask questions and discuss issues with their current AVLF case.
- Eviction Defense Trainings – Erica Taylor, the staff attorney who directs the Eviction Defense Program, leads this CLE training which focuses on the Georgia eviction process and housing law. We hold these trainings at least once a quarter. However, Eviction Defense sponsors or potential sponsors can request a separate training at their firm at any time.
- Saturday Lawyer Lunch and Learns – This is a one-hour presentation with CLE credit led by the Saturday Lawyer Director. Attendees will learn about affordable housing in Atlanta and the various housing issues that our clients experience. The presentation also provides a great introduction to the Saturday Lawyer Program by breaking down what volunteering on Saturday entails. Any sponsor or potential sponsor can request a lunch and learn presentation. We provide the materials and cover the cost for CLE credit. You provide the meal and the attendees.
- Skills-based Trainings – Based on feedback from our volunteers, we have implemented skills-based trainings. These trainings will help to better prepare our volunteers to deal with the various aspects of pro bono representation. The topics include how to write landlord-tenant demand letters, best practices for establishing attorney-client relations, and negotiating settlement agreements.

Information about upcoming trainings are on AVLF's website: <https://avlf.org/events/>. Please contact AVLF if you have suggestions on topics for future trainings.

Volunteer Policies & Procedures

Standard of Conduct

AVLF strives to provide a volunteer environment that is safe, productive, and enjoyable. In order to sustain this type of environment, our staff is held to a standard of conduct that prioritizes integrity, professionalism, and excellent customer service. We hold our volunteers to that same standard.

We reserve the right to dismiss a volunteer, decline the services of potential volunteers, or suspend volunteers who do not adhere to our standards of conduct or violate any of AVLF's policies. Below is a list of violations that could lead to dismissal.

- Disrespecting anyone associated with AVLF (i.e. clients, volunteers, staff)
- Giving false or misleading information
- Behaving in a violent or hostile manner
- Conducting illegal activities while volunteering
- Harassment
- Cancelling or not showing up to multiple volunteer commitments
- Being unresponsive to AVLF staff after multiple communication attempts
- Disclosing confidential information
- Using foul, abusive, or discriminatory language towards anyone associated with AVLF
- Consistently ignoring directives from AVLF staff
- Unwillingness to complete your volunteer tasks
- Stealing office property
- Continuous unsatisfactory performance
- Representing AVLF without prior authorization
- Accepting gratuity in exchange for volunteer services

This list is not all-inclusive and only serves as an example of the types of violations that could lead to dismissals. We will consider requests from dismissed/inactive volunteers who are interested in returning to their volunteer duties or finding other ways to be involved with our organization.

Conflicts of Interest

In order to protect the integrity of our programs we occasionally must turn away potential volunteers or discharge current volunteers due to conflicts of interest. Not every conflict of interest will result in an immediate dismissal. We will deal with each conflict on a case by case basis. We ask that you notify us immediately if you are aware of a conflict.

Reasons for conflicts of interest:

- Clients as volunteers – if you currently have an open case with AVLF as a client, you cannot be a volunteer until that case is closed. If you are a volunteer who then becomes a client, you will need to suspend all your volunteer activities until your case as a client is closed

with AVLF.

- Adverse Parties – An adverse party is the opposing party in a case. If you are an adverse party in an AVLF case, you cannot volunteer with our organization.
- Employees of Adverse Parties – Adverse parties for housing cases are primarily property management companies, housing authorities, real estate companies, and other housing related entities. Please notify us if you work for one of these companies. We may ask you to limit your role or decline your request to volunteer with the Safe & Stable Housing Project.

Confidentiality

While volunteering with us, you may have access to confidential client information. All volunteers are bound by the same rules of confidentiality that bind lawyers. You may also have access to private volunteer information, staff information, and insight to AVLF's private processes and procedures. All information you obtain while volunteering with AVLF is confidential. Confidential information is any and all information disclosed to or known by you because of your relationship with AVLF that is not generally known to people outside the organization about its operations. If you are unsure whether something is confidential, always ask an AVLF staff member. If you violate AVLF's confidentiality policy, you will no longer be permitted to volunteer.

Volunteer Notice/Attendance

Dependable and punctual volunteers are vital to the success of AVLF's programs. When you sign up for a commitment, make sure that you understand the time that you are expected to arrive and when your volunteer shift will end. While we understand and can handle cancellations, we ask that you give us as much notice as possible and try your best to avoid them.

If you are unable to attend an event, complete your volunteer commitment, or if you know that you are going to be late, we ask that you notify your AVLF staff contact immediately or **at least 24 hours before your scheduled volunteer date**. You will receive the contact information for the AVLF staff member(s) in charge of that event/program prior to your volunteer date. If you are unable to reach them, contact the Volunteer Engagement Manager.

If you are repeatedly tardy or absent for an event or volunteer assignment, we will take **disciplinary action**. This could include declining to schedule you for future volunteer dates, cancelling your current volunteer commitments, or deactivating your account with AVLF.

Age Restrictions

AVLF accepts volunteers 14 and older. Volunteers ages 14-17 will need prior parental consent before volunteering.

We completely support and encourage volunteers who want to bring their child(ren) of any age to volunteer with them. All volunteers will need to supervise their children.

Dress Code

We ask that all Saturday Lawyer volunteers dress at least business casual, out of respect for the potential clients who may have valid expectations about lawyers' attire.

Community Outreach volunteers are occasionally asked to do more physical tasks such as lifting boxes of food. Therefore, we encourage you to dress comfortably.

The following dress code applies to weekday volunteers:

- Weekday volunteers are invited to dress in casual attire unless the day's tasks require otherwise.
- Weekday volunteers must always present a clean, professional appearance. Everyone is expected to be well-groomed and to wear clean clothing, free of large holes or tears. Short pants, pajamas, flip flops are not considered professional. Clothing with offensive or inappropriate designs or stamps are likewise not allowed.
- On Monday through Thursday, t-shirts may be worn if they show an AVLF logo. On Friday, other t-shirts, in good taste, are permitted.
- Clothing and grooming styles dictated by religion or ethnicity are exempt.

Reporting Safety Issues and Dangerous Situations

Our staff is dedicated to maintaining a safe volunteer environment. We want you to feel comfortable with immediately reporting any violations of policies, potential hazards, or concerns to the AVLF staff member in charge or the Volunteer Engagement Manager. Trust that your grievances will be taken seriously, kept confidential when necessary, and action will be taken in a reasonable amount of time.

Risks or potential safety issues can include:

- Injury (to you or someone else)
- Spills or broken glass
- Someone brandishing a weapon
- Solicitations
- Extreme illnesses
- Violent, aggressive, or irrational behavior
- Drug or alcohol use
- Harassment
- Illegal activity
- Threats or intimidation tactics
- Lewd material or behavior

We can't anticipate every unsafe situation, so we appreciate your understanding when issues come up that are beyond our control. We also rely on our volunteers to be our partners in providing a safe environment for all volunteers and clients. We don't expect you to intervene in dangerous situations or confront a hostile person. However, we suggest that you take general

precautions to protect yourself, be on alert, use your best judgment, and always keep your supervisor's phone number with you.

Difficulty with Your Volunteer Role

If you experience any difficulty while volunteering, we ask that you reach out to the Volunteer Engagement Manager and/or your AVLF contact immediately. We are here to work with you through any issues, and we don't want you to feel that you are alone in this process even after you accept a case.

If you're considering returning a case before it is complete, we ask that you contact AVLF first before doing so. Give us the opportunity to discuss your concerns and to work with you to create solutions. If we agree that this role or case is not right for you, we ask that you still work with us to find you another case or a better volunteer situation.

Organization Resources

AVLF's office is open to any volunteer who needs a meeting room or wants to use office equipment for the purposes of their volunteer work with AVLF. We only ask that you contact us in advance to reserve office space or to use office equipment.

We also have a library of resources (e.g. sample demand letters) that is available at your request.

Our partnerships with mold inspectors, process servers, forensic accountants, and other professionals are a resource for you while working on an AVLF case. Contact us if you need additional assistance while volunteering.

Volunteer Subscriptions

We send out occasional emails to our volunteers, including our quarterly Volunteer Dispatch and quarterly newsletter. Our emails provide updates about our work, events, and volunteer opportunities. You can unsubscribe at any time.

When you provide AVLF with your contact information, your information is stored in our secured database. AVLF will not share your information with anyone outside of our organization. You can view our full privacy statement [here](#).

Request for Volunteer Hours/References

- Volunteer Hours - AVLF tracks volunteer hours for the Saturday Lawyer clinic, community outreach events, and fundraisers. For each Saturday clinic you attend, you will log 4 volunteer hours (unless you leave early or arrive late). Volunteer hours for community outreach events and fundraisers are based on the length of the event, which is typically 3 hours. If you are working on an AVLF case, you should record your hours and report them to AVLF once your work on that case is complete. At your request, we will provide a

confirmation letter for your volunteer hours based on the hours that we have in our system.

- References - Notify the Volunteer Engagement Manager before putting AVLF down as a reference. AVLF will provide a standard letter of volunteer acknowledgement for any volunteer who requests a reference. Please let us know if a comprehensive reference is needed. AVLF may be willing to write a letter or speak to interviewers on your behalf. Keep in mind that it is easier for us to provide a quality reference if you are a consistent or longtime volunteer. AVLF reserves the right to deny any reference request.

Volunteer Recognition

All year long, we recognize volunteers through our Volunteer of the Month section in our newsletter and through our various volunteer appreciation events: National Volunteer Week in April, Georgia Paralegal Week in June, Celebration of Service Awards in October, and the Holiday Appreciation Luncheon in December.

Check out the events page on our website and follow us on Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter **@supportAVLF** to see how we are constantly expressing our love for our volunteers. We also do not underestimate the value of just saying thank you. Thank you for supporting AVLF!

Ending Service

Ideally, we would like all volunteers to be lifelong volunteers, but we understand that circumstances might change. If you want to end your volunteer service with us for any reason, reach out to the Volunteer Engagement Manager or your AVLF contact person as soon as possible.

We are always interested in hearing suggestions in order to improve our volunteer services. Your feedback will help us to create a better experience for current and future volunteers.

Appendix A: Important Contacts

Matilde Davis

Volunteer Engagement Manager
678-681-6005
Mdavis@avlf.org

Erica Taylor

Saturday Lawyer Director
404-333-6229
Etaylor@avlf.org

Cole Thaler

Safe and Stable Homes Project Co-Director
678-681-6007
Cthaler@avlf.org

Ayanna Jones-Lightsy

Safe and Stable Homes Project Co-Director
678-245-0851
ajones-lightsy@avlf.org

Building Security for Peachtree Center: 404-654-1285

Appendix B: Legal Assistants Consent Form

Thank you for generously volunteering your time with the Atlanta Volunteer Lawyers Foundation! Legal assistants, who assist lawyers in the delivery of legal services, are a key part of AVLF programs.

The American Bar Association encourages pro bono programs that provide services to low-income people to utilize the skills and contributions of legal assistants. However, even though you are a volunteer and not an employee of AVLF, volunteer legal assistants are nevertheless subject to the same laws, rules, and ethical considerations that apply to people employed as legal assistants or paralegals. Therefore, AVLF asks that you read, understand, and agree to the statements below.

By signing below, you acknowledge and agree that:

- Georgia prohibits the unauthorized practice of law. O.C.G.A. § 15-19-50 et seq. You will not engage in any conduct or make any statements that could constitute the unauthorized practice of law.
- You will not provide any legal advice to clients, even if you think you know the answer to their question. If you are not sure what would constitute giving legal advice, ask the client to raise their issue or question with a lawyer.
- You will not disclose information shared by any client; you are bound by the same rules of confidentiality that bind lawyers.
- You will disclose your status as legal assistant or paralegal during interactions with clients, and will inform them that you are not a lawyer and cannot give legal advice.
- You understand that lawyer supervision is required for all legal services performed for the client. The lawyer who supervises AVLF's Saturday Lawyer Program is Erica Taylor.

Furthermore, AVLF relies on you to help our programs run smoothly. Therefore, by signing below, you further acknowledge and agree that:

- Punctuality and professionalism are very important for AVLF clinics and events. Before committing to a volunteer date, make sure that you understand the time that you are expected to arrive. If you will be late, or need to cancel because of an emergency, notify the supervising attorney as soon as possible.
- If you are repeatedly tardy or absent without explanation for a clinic or event, or violate another AVLF policy, AVLF may decline to schedule you for future volunteer dates.

This ____ day of _____, 20__.

Signature: _____

Printed Name: _____

Acknowledgement (Signature Required)

I acknowledge that I have received and read the AVL F Safe and Stable Homes' Volunteer Manual. I consent to abide by the policies set forth in this manual.

Name (print)

Name (signature)

Date

Appendix C: Guidance for Accountant Volunteers

Volunteer Opportunities for Accountants

Saturday Lawyer Program: SLP offers low-income clients a chance to be heard on their issue, to receive advice, and to potentially receive representation. Our volunteers help us screen these clients to figure out if they have a case that an attorney can help with and how they can help. Then, we place meritorious cases with volunteer attorneys and provide support to the litigation.

Eviction Defense Program: Clients with active evictions in Fulton County call us to be screened. We then provide them with advice about the process and search for an attorney to go to the hearing with them. Those placed cases have the option to receive various forms of litigation support from us. Unplaced clients are walked through the hearing process

How Can You Get Involved?

- 1) **Screening:** On Saturdays, you can volunteer to help screen cases alongside a volunteer attorney and offer any specialized feedback you feel comfortable giving.

How it works: Email Volunteer Engagement Manager Matilde Davis at mdavis@avlf.org to sign up for a Saturday. You can also sign up an entire group from your office for a Community Sponsorship Day.

- 2) **Calculation/Analysis:** For our various programs, help is often needed to calculate damages in cases.

Examples:

- Personal property loss due to Conditions/Repairs Issues
- Personal property loss due to Illegal Evictions
- Loss of value to rental property due to conditions issues
- Wrongful Charges
- Withholding of Wages

Our volunteer accountants help come up with a strategy for calculating the damages. They may also issue reports for use in negotiation (as needed) or testify at court if the case involves litigation.

How it works: We email a designated person at your company (or you, if you are an individual volunteer):

- Client name
- Adverse party
- Summary of assistance needed
- The attorney assigned to the case
- Any relevant deadlines

Once you express interest, we allow you to do whatever kind of conflict checks you need. Then we connect you with the volunteer attorney and allow you to negotiate what kind of assistance you'll be able to provide.

We're here to support you with whatever you need. We can provide you with a law primer and/or a case law outline to help you understand the law and a sample retainer for you to sign with the client.

Email Matilde Davis at mdavis@avlf.org to be placed on the accountant pitch list for Saturday Lawyer and Eviction Defense cases!

Appendix D: Guidance for Translator Volunteers

How Can You Get Involved?

Screening Calls: When a client calls for help, we typically have to call the client back to have a discussion about what happened so that we can figure out if we might be able to help. Our volunteer translators assist us with this intake call. They are provided with a script of questions. All the volunteer has to do is go through the questions, take notes, and then email your notes back to our client coordinator at our office for input. **Because we want to make sure that all clients are being reached in an expedient manner, we request that you attempt to contact the client within 24 hours and let us know if you weren't able to reach them within 48 hours.**

Scheduling Clients: Once we have reviewed the client's notes from their screening call, we evaluate if the client should be scheduled for a more in-depth interview. If we do want to schedule the client, we must call them back to schedule them. Our volunteer translators also can assist us with this step as well. The client coordinator will provide you with a list of available dates and times. The translator can then contact the client, learn their availability and then update the client coordinator. **Again, because we want to make sure that all clients are being reached in an expedient manner, we request that you attempt to contact the client within 24 hours and let us know if you weren't able to reach them within 48 hours.**

Screening Interview: On Saturday, our clients come into our main office to be interviewed. Our volunteer translators assist us with these interviews. Volunteers can agree to be on our on-call list and we can contact them when a client is scheduled that is in need of assistance with translation. Or, a volunteer can sign up to come on any given Saturday. If no client shows on that Saturday that is in need of translation assistance, the volunteer can assist with other interviews or clerical tasks.

Translation assistance for Vol. Attorneys: Once a case is assigned to an attorney, you can agree to be paired with that attorney to assist with translation. The attorney may ask you to call in or be present at meetings to help with translation. The volunteer translator may also attend court to provide translation at a hearing (if needed and if the translator is available)

How to Get Started:

Contact Volunteer Engagement Manager Matilde Davis at mdavis@avlf.org to sign up to be on a volunteer list and let her know what kind of work you are interested and available for.

Appendix E: Saturday Lawyer Program Community Sponsorships

What is community sponsorship?

Community Sponsorship is a volunteer opportunity for corporations and organizations to sponsor a day of service through Atlanta Volunteer Lawyers Foundation's Saturday Lawyer Program.

AVLF's Saturday Lawyer Program, an Atlanta institution over 40 years old, is a clinic that takes place at our downtown office on most Saturday mornings. This program assists low-income Atlanta residents with landlord-tenant disputes and unpaid wage claims. After a short training at 9:00 a.m., volunteer attorneys interview one or two potential clients. The clinic ends around 12:30pm.

How does community sponsorship work?

On the third Saturday of every month, AVLF will have two legal sponsors and one community sponsor for a Saturday clinic. The legal sponsors provide volunteer attorneys who will lead the client interviews.

On their scheduled date, the community sponsor provides 5-15 volunteers from their company or organization and also sponsor breakfast for AVLF clients.

Community Sponsor volunteers will assist with organizing and scanning client documents, greeting clients, and assisting the attorney with client interviews. Community Sponsors can choose to sponsor one or multiple Saturdays per year.

Who can participate?

Any corporation or organization that is looking for volunteer opportunities. No legal experience is required!

Atlanta Volunteer Lawyers Foundation will assist with recruitment by providing you with marketing materials and making a presentation in your office, at a meeting, or during an event.

Benefits of Community Sponsorship

- Building a culture of service within your organization
- Providing vital services to Atlanta residents who are in need
- Gaining skills in client communications and client interviewing
- Training on landlord-tenant law in Georgia
- Networking with legal professionals
- Access to AVLF staff and resources

If your company or organization is interested in being a Community Sponsor, please contact Matilde Davis, AVLF's Volunteer Engagement Manager, at mdavis@avlf.org or 678-681-6005.