



PRISONERS' LEGAL SERVICES, LEGAL INTERN/PARALEGAL

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B.S., CRIMINAL JUSTICE AND SOCIOLOGY, M.S., CRIMINOLOGY AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE



About PLS

PLS is a not-for-profit legal services corporation, that provides civil legal assistance to people incarcerated in Massachusetts state prisons and in the county jails and houses of correction. PLS engages in administrative advocacy, litigation, and public education on behalf of incarcerated people and their families. PLS also tracks Massachusetts policies affecting incarcerated people.

PLS' priority areas: Medical and Mental Health Care; Conditions of Confinement; Solitary Confinement; Staff Assaults; Racial Equity in Corrections

Daily Tasks

Tasks differed daily, but could be any of the following:

- Drafting advocacy letters
- Drafting deposition outlines
- Client phone or zoom calls
- Writing letters to clients
- Legal document discovery
- Team meetings
- Summarizing policies or regulations
- Medical record reviews

Special Project

- Extended co-op to work on a brutality case
- The case challenged a planned use of force that resulted in physical and emotional injuries to our client
- Worked on: document discovery, trial preparations, deposition outlining and preparations
- Sat in on two of the depositions
- Got to see the impact of work through depositions

Course Integration

- Courses that helped during co-op:
 - Criminal Due Process
 - Sociology of Poverty
 - Non-Fiction and Social Justice
- Gave knowledge about criminal justice institutions and processes
- Taught the impact of poverty and how that relates to larger issues of injustice and fairness as they relate to incarceration
- Taught the importance of strong writing and how administrative and legal advocacy can be used within the criminal justice system



Zaneta (my co-co-op) and me in the office!

Previous Co-op Connection

- Great opportunity to build of the foundational skillset from first co-op, which was at a large law firm in Boston
- Had some similar tasks to those at first co-op; however, PLS allowed more in-depth work on tasks that had started learning about at first co-op
- Was able to contrast experience between working at a large law firm and at a smaller non-profit legal services organization
- Since last co-op was half remote, similar experience to working remotely

Teams

- Advocacy
- Medical Parole
- COVID-19
- Brutality Case
- Restrictive Housing Oversight Committee
- Restraints at a Mental Hospital

Skills

- Communication skills
- Computer Proficiency
- Organization
- Time Management
- Self Advocacy
- Problem Solving
- Being Trauma-Informed
- Confidence

BCIC Co-op

- Met with cohort of Northeastern students from four other Boston Community Impact Co-ops (BCICs)
- Engaged in monthly reflections and debriefs about our co-ops

Remote Work

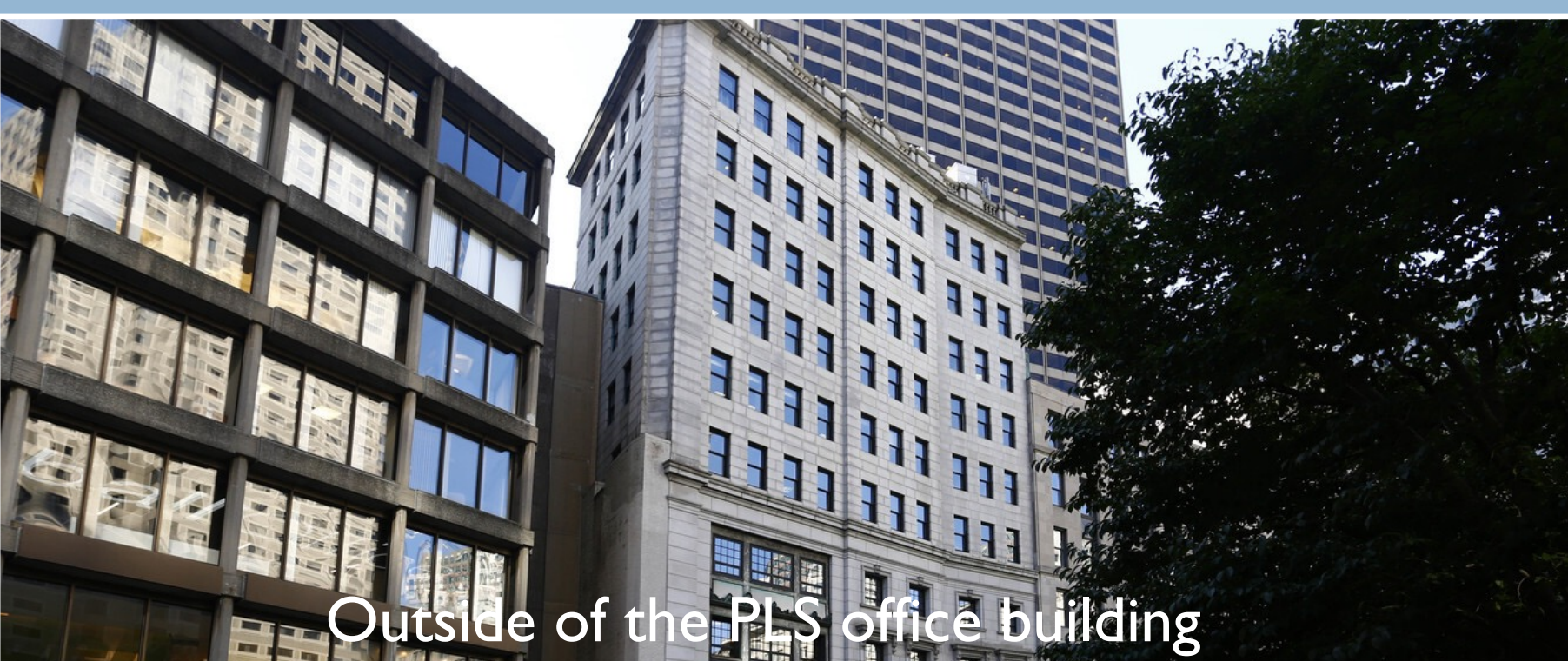
- Was lucky to work with PLS despite the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic
- Majority of work was remote
- Had a few impactful in-person prison and office visits
- Maintained consistent and busy workload
- Maintained relationships with colleagues through Google Hangout meetings which was great because the PLS staff are all such strong advocates and great coworkers

Senior Capstone

- Inspired to work with incarcerated and formerly incarcerated individuals
- Planning on writing capstone about the topic of religiosity and desistance from crime amongst juvenile lifers and other people who were incarcerated while they were children
- Working at PLS showed the impact of recidivism on individuals so capstone will focus on ways to prevent recidivism

Future Directions

- This co-op affirmed interested in pursuing a career in the legal field, specifically as a public interest attorney
 - In addition to public interest law, also interested in working in community organizing
 - Would like to continue to work with changing the prison system
- Started studying for the LSAT during this co-op and took the LSAT in August
 - Taking the LSAT was a huge step and this co-op clarified that I would like to be an attorney
- Appreciated working in a client-focused setting, and preferred the work that was directly with clients
- Learned that prefer working in a smaller office environment
- Looking forward to continuing to work in the public interest and legal fields



Outside of the PLS office building



Souza Baranowski Correctional Center prior to visiting clients