The Black Legal Action Centre is seeking a Staff Lawyer.

The Black Legal Action Centre (BLAC) is a not-for-profit corporation incorporated under the laws of Ontario to combat individual and systemic anti-Black racism by providing legal services to members of Ontario’s Black communities, including engaging in advocacy, community development, law reform, test case litigation, and public legal education. BLAC is an independent community legal clinic funded by Legal Aid Ontario (LAO) and governed by a volunteer Board of Directors.

JOB TITLE: Staff Lawyer
REPORTS TO: Executive Director

This is a full time 12-month contract position covering a staff member’s leave.

PURPOSE OF POSITION

The Staff Lawyer will be responsible for the delivery of the clinic’s legal services, including the provision of summary legal advice, brief services and referrals, and the development of litigation for the purpose of law reform. The Staff Lawyer will also be involved in law reform work, other than litigation for law reform, including public legal education and community development. The proportion of time spent in these activities may vary from time to time and is periodically reviewed.

MINIMUM HIRING REQUIREMENTS

LL.B./JD, called to the Bar in Ontario with at least five (5) years experience in practice. Demonstrated commitment to community and/or legal work related to poverty law, anti-Black racism, human rights and/or anti-discrimination. Computer literacy is essential. The ability to communicate well, both orally and in writing is essential. Relevant experience in law specifically related to clinic services is desirable. Ability to speak French is desirable.

MAJOR DUTIES & RESPONSIBILITIES

Summary Legal Advice, Brief Services and Referrals

- Provide client services in all areas of law practiced by the clinic and keep abreast of changes in the law that impact on summary advice areas, but primarily in poverty law matters (e.g., income maintenance, housing, human rights, employment, immigration and other administrative matters)

- Gather information and conduct interviews by telephone and in-person, in a polite and professional manner
Identify issues to be resolved and make preliminary calls or conduct relevant research as necessary
Provide legal information and advice in a clear and concise manner ensuring the client understands the advice and direction given
Refer clients to appropriate legal, community, social or government agencies where necessary
Assess when a matter requires legal services beyond summary advice
Draft materials as required, including correspondence, forms, affidavits, etc.
Maintain appropriate records of services provided using the clinic data base, indicating summary advice or brief services
Supervise support staff in providing summary advice and referral

Casework
- Provide legal services to individual and group clients in accordance with service guidelines and eligibility policies adopted by BLAC
- Identify legal issues, assess merit and develop an appropriate case strategy in consultation with the Executive Director
- Interview clients and investigate issues to ensure accurate and thorough knowledge of all relevant facts
- Take primary responsibility for litigation files before both courts and tribunals; participate in appellate advocacy in collaboration with the Executive Director
- Develop litigation strategies to assist clients and to promote law reform goals adopted by BLAC
- Document all work in electronic data base and maintain files as dictated by clinic policy
- Comply with Law Society of Ontario (LSO) and office policies with respect to trust accounts, ticklers, personal bring forward systems, global diary and docket

Public Legal Education
- Participate in public legal education activities within the clinic’s areas of expertise
- Research, prepare and produce oral and written public legal education sessions and in-house training sessions on legal issues, and to participate in events as public speaker/conference presenter

Outreach/Community Development
- Participate, as assigned, in community development activities and law reform activities designed to further the legal interests and improve the lives of Black Ontarians
- Participate, as assigned, in committees and organizations representing client concerns, as well inter-clinic working groups
- Provide specialty legal services to other clinics

Law Reform/Research
- Conduct research for law reform litigation and participate in other law reform activities including participation on public/government/consultation committees
- Prepare or assist with preparation of briefs and responses to new legislation and policy
- Prepare proactive materials and presentations on law reform issues, as assigned
- Participate in law reform activities, other than litigation and research for law, as assigned
Administration

- Assist in preparation of legal services reports for the clinic’s Board of Directors
- Assist in preparation and review of quarterly and annual statistical reports for LAO
- Assist in preparation of annual funding application to LAO
- Attend meetings with staff as required
- Identify training needs and arrange for training as required

- Other duties, as determined by the Executive Director.

WORKING CONDITIONS

- The successful applicant must be able to travel (by airplane, train, or car) throughout Ontario
- Evening and weekend work as required including overnight travel as needed to advance organizational objectives
- Occasionally subject to emotional situations and verbally hostile clients
- High volume of contacts and requirement to multi-task
- Use of electronic equipment and information technology
- Possibility of remote work

ESSENTIAL SKILLS

- Possess strong legal skills including research and analysis, negotiation and advocacy
- Ability to communicate effectively, both orally and in writing
- Ability to work effectively in an organization under the direction of a volunteer Board of Directors
- Ability to negotiate and manage third party relationships, including with partner organizations, as assigned
- Ability to organize, plan, and implement activities appropriate to advance organizational objectives
- Commitment to social justice, particularly combatting anti-Black racism, and delivering high quality legal services to low income individuals and groups
- Excellent computer skills
- High ethical standards
- Excellent time management skills and ability to multi-task and prioritize work
- Strong interpersonal skills focused on building and maintaining positive relationships with all levels of staff, clients, volunteers and external stakeholders
- Attention to detail and problem-solving skills
- Demonstrated ability to advocate for clients with the public at large and similar organizations
- Ability to utilize analytical, interpretive, evaluative and constructive thinking
- Proficiency in MS Office (MS Word and MS Outlook, in particular); familiarity with email scheduling tools
Salary will be based on relevant experience and be within the range of average salaries of Staff Lawyers of other LAO-funded clinics.

Please apply via e-mail with a cover letter and resume by July 8, 2020 to info@blacklegalactioncentre.ca. Please use the subject title “Staff Lawyer Application” in your email.

Please include three (3) recent professional references and two (2) writing samples.

If you require any accommodation during the interview process please contact BLAC at info@blacklegalactioncentre.ca to make appropriate arrangements.

We welcome applications from people who are reflective of the diverse communities we serve.

While we thank all applicants for their interest, only those selected for an interview will be contacted.