

## Unemployment Appeal Brief Advice Clinic 2014 Report

In April 2013, the Minnesota State Law Library and the Labor and Employment Section of the MSBA started a free clinic for people contemplating an appeal to the Minnesota Court of Appeals from a denial of unemployment benefits. The clinic is staffed by volunteer attorneys, law library staff, and law students.

The clinic operates twice per month; once via phone and once at the State Law Library. For people using the phone clinic, their experience involves speaking with a volunteer attorney for approximately 30 minutes. Prior to calling the customer, the attorney reviews both the customer's initial decision from the unemployment law judge and the decision in response to the request for reconsideration. Attorneys provide information about whether the person has a meritorious appeal. The intention is to provide guidance to litigants on whether they have potentially meritorious claims for appeal. If the attorney thinks the person has a possible claim to pursue, he or she can provide guidance on the relevant legal issues, including how to focus on them in the appeal. If the attorney determines that the person has a strong case, he or she can provide full representation on a pro bono basis, or can refer the customer to the Appellate Practice Section's Pro Bono Panel.

The in-person clinic, at the State Law Library, has an additional component. After the customer meets with the attorney, he or she can spend 15 minutes with a law student or member of the law library staff, who can assist the customer with the unemployment appeals forms packet. Law students and library staff members do not provide legal advice, but offer guidance on the process of filing the appeal. They also show clinic customers samples of informal appellate briefs and the State Law Library's unemployment case law database.

In 2014, the clinic assisted 47 people. 14 were assisted at the in-person clinic and 33 were helped via a telephone consultation. 30 of those who attended the clinic (64%) ended up not filing an appeal after speaking to the attorney. While the majority of the clinic customers lived in the seven county metropolitan area, the clinic also assisted residents of Kandiyohi, Nobles, Polk and Stearns Counties.

The attorneys who volunteered their time to staff the clinic in 2014 were:

Craig Brandt  
Paul Banker  
Howard Bolter  
Amy Boyle  
Sarah Crippen  
Marlene Garvis  
Nathan Griffin  
Kelly Jeanetta  
Jonathan Reppe  
Brian Rochel

The law students who staffed the clinic were: Owais Ahmed (William Mitchell) and Alex Vian (Hamline). Clara Lowther, reference librarian at the State Law Library, also provided valuable assistance.