

# 1L Sample Cover Letters

Public Interest Law Center  
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December 3, 2018

Margaret Knight  
Supervising Attorney  
Office of the Appellate Defender  
11 Park Place, Suite 1601  
New York, NY 100072

Dear Ms. Knight,

I am a first-year student at New York University School of Law, and I write to express my strong interest in a summer internship with the Office of the Appellate Defender. I came to law school to be an appellate public defender, and I want to work at OAD because of its dedication to representing individuals through a holistic approach to appellate work. I believe that my passion for advocating for indigent defendants, as well as my strong research and writing skills, will allow me to make a real contribution to your office.

My interest in appellate public defense began with my realization of how harmful prosecution can be. Prior to law school, I imprudently accepted a one-year paralegal position with the Appeals Division of the New York County District Attorney's Office. I was skeptical of prosecution, but, having been formatively shaped by my mother's 35-year career in a state attorney's office, I did not yet understand its failings—beyond individual abuses of discretion and adversarialism—as intractable and systemic. As such, I was naively curious about the prospect of reform prosecution, and I envisioned a system where both sides collaborated toward best outcomes. Instead, through the nature of appellate work, I saw the State brutalize indigent people of color at every step. I saw bail habeas petitions that recounted how the system of cash bail denied liberty to presumptively innocent indigent persons, pricing their freedom at farcically high costs. I read countless plea and sentencing minutes wherein such persons, fearful for their immediate safety, overwhelmingly pled guilty in exchange for terrifying collateral consequences. And, of course, I reviewed myriad appellate briefs that rubber-stamped this brutalization with identical dispassionate remove.

One case, early in my tenure, particularly confirmed my impulse to pursue law school so as to become an advocate for indigent defendants. A man had been arrested for “sitting improperly on a subway seat.” He was homeless and had fallen asleep across two seats after midnight on a weeknight. An ADA sent me his brief responding to the appeal with the note, “Another terrible one for ya, but at least it's short.” In it, he defended the conviction as the necessary litigating of a public nuisance – there was no record to suggest that the car was full, but what if, the ADA wrote, someone who had desired a seat was left to stand because the man was sleeping across two? When I later questioned how, if nothing else, the brief could constitute a justifiable use of limited resources, the ADA deflected. Concession wasn't done, nor, in a field where you can avoid putting a face to a name—or even a name to “defendant”—considered.

My time at the District Attorney's Office was a mistake, but it left me deeply passionate about defending the rights of indigent defendants. Indeed, in reading countless OAD briefs over my year at DANY, I was consistently swayed and inspired by the compassion and commonsense humanity of OAD's approach, and I remain dedicated to a career per its example. In law school, I have thus worked to hone the skills I will need to be an effective defendant advocate. Through my volunteer work with the Civil Legal Advice and Resource Office, where I do intake and work with attorneys to provide legal advice to debtor-defendants, I am building my direct service and client interaction skills, learning to put a client's priorities at the forefront. Additionally, as a case manager for the Washington Legal Services Bail Fund, where there is frequently a tension between the letter of the eligibility criteria and the interests of justice in bringing an incarcerated person home, I am learning to apply a holistic approach to technicalities.

Moreover, moral instructiveness aside, my time at the District Attorney's office was an efficient crash course in the criminal justice process from arrest to appeal, as well as in the functional difficulties of navigating court systems. Specifically, I have acquired ample practical skills—for example, communicating with Appellate

Division clerks, reading RAP sheets, and examining the court file—that will allow me to contribute to OAD effectively. My considerable journalistic writing experience also refined my written skills of persuasion and advocacy, particularly because success in digital journalism came from making wide audiences care about my chosen content. My time working as the sole steward of [publication]'s nightly news operation, writing and publishing multiple articles live and without supervision, was also a high-pressure primer in being efficient, diligent, and self-sufficient in the work I prepare. I thus believe that my experience to date has given me the skills necessary to be of service to OAD and your clients.

I am drawn to OAD because of its commitment to keeping holistic client service at the forefront of appellate work. It would be an honor to bring my skills and passion to your office, and I would welcome the opportunity to discuss further the position and my qualifications. Thank you for your consideration, and I hope to hear from you soon.

Sincerely,

1L Student

December 13, 2018

Sharee Garnett, Director of Human Resources  
Orleans Public Defenders  
2601 Tulane Avenue, Suite 700  
New Orleans, LA 70119

Dear Ms. Garnett,

I am a first-year student at New York University School of Law and write to convey my strong interest in a summer law clerkship with the Orleans Public Defenders. My passion for social justice and conviction to advocate for indigent clients underlie my goal of practicing as a public defender. I believe my professional experience and personal commitment to OPD's mission would make me a valuable contributor in your office, and I appreciate your time and consideration.

Prior to law school, I worked at the Public Defender Service for the District of Columbia as an investigative intern for six months. At PDS, I gained first-hand experience in indigent defense as I investigated a general felony caseload spanning clients who faced charges of gun or drug possession to assault or murder. I was drawn to work as an investigator because I wanted to interact with clients and help advocate for the marginalized and most vulnerable among us; I also intuited that the pace and dynamic of trial advocacy suited my personality and background. But I left PDS with the unrelenting conviction that criminal defense for indigent clients is the most urgent and necessary work I can do. Our clients were complex and multifaceted, compassionate and loyal, despite the pervasive racism and classism that funneled them into the legal system. I was humbled by the role we served in defending their liberty.

My experience at PDS complements my ongoing work as a teacher and member of [organization]. Teaching in prisons and jails allows me to spend time in a non-legal context with those bearing the greatest impact of the criminal legal system. The work enriches my perspective of how the system operates and whom it fails, and it intensifies my drive to pursue public defense.

I came to law school – and NYU Law specifically – to cultivate tools that will allow me to zealously advocate for marginalized clients. I have sought avenues to further engage my interests in criminal justice by joining the Prison Education Reform Project and the program committee for [organization]. I also serve as a student advocate for a gender non-conforming client who is navigating the process of changing personal documents. Next semester, I will compete in [moot court competition], which provides the opportunity to hone legal research, writing, and oral advocacy skills. These experiences strengthen my strong analytic and academic foundation and prepare me to succeed in a fast-paced and demanding environment.

I am drawn to OPD because I want to learn from exceptional advocates who navigate one of the most unjust legal systems in the country. My writing, research, and communication skills, coupled with my strong work ethic, will allow me to contribute to OPD's work. I have enclosed my resume and would appreciate the opportunity to speak in detail about my background and interest in OPD. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,  
1L Student

Address  
Phone  
Email

January 11, 2014

International Labor Rights Forum  
1634 I St NW, Suite 1001  
Washington, DC 20006

Dear Sir or Madam:

I am a first-year JD candidate and Root-Tilden-Kern Public Interest Scholar at New York University School of Law. I have been offered funding for a summer internship so long as I secure a position by April 1. I am interested in the International Labor Rights Forum (ILRF) because of my desire to use my legal education to protect the rights of South Asian workers in an increasingly globalized economy. I am most interested in ILRF's work in Bangladesh factory safety, as well as women's rights. I am available for a full-time internship from May 20 to August 14.

Prior to starting my JD, I was working in Kathmandu on issues around gender, politics, and labor migration. As program coordinator of the Combating Trafficking Against Persons project at the Forum for Women, Law and Development (FWLD), I gained experience in advocating with policy-makers for policy and legal reform to protect the rights of migrant women workers. However, what I often found missing from such projects was a vision to strengthen the power of workers themselves to be advocates for their own rights and freedoms. The approach that ILRF takes in combining these two components – policy advocacy and strengthening workers' rights – is what draws me to the organization.

At NYU I have been involved with the Coalition for Fair Labor, where we are advocating for high labor standards at NYU projects, including the NYU campus in Abu Dhabi. This experience has taught me the importance of well-researched and targeted advocacy to protect the right to freedom of association of workers. I have strong qualitative research skills, developed through my work at FWLD where I interviewed former Constituent Assembly members on the inclusiveness of the draft constitution. I also have strong writing skills developed in my lawyering program at NYU, as well as through my work with FWLD. Furthermore, I have strong outreach and advocacy skills developed while organizing around social issues through Chaukath. I believe that my passions align with the work of the ILRF, and that I also possess the experience and skills required to make me an asset in your organization.

I have enclosed my resume and a writing sample. If I can provide any additional information, please contact me at EMAIL at any time, or at PHONE after January 19<sup>th</sup>. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

1L Student Name

Address  
Phone  
Email

January 11, 2016

EarthRights International  
Amazon Office  
Casilla Postal 45  
Barranco 4, Lima, Peru

Dear Hiring Committee:

I am a first year student at New York University School of Law and am extremely interested in a 2016 summer internship position with EarthRights International (ERI) in Lima, Peru. Given my substantial international experience, my passion for the environment, and my strong research and writing skills, I believe I am well suited to the varied demands of the ERI legal internship.

I grew up in rural Costa Rica in a town where foreign biologists, tourists, and local farmers collided. Consequently, the intersection between environmental, economic, and social issues was always at the forefront of my thinking, and much of my subsequent work has attempted to bridge the gap between these issues. For two summers in high school I volunteered in a small fishing town in Costa Rica at an environmental camp, which aimed to provide an immersive experience for local children in the area's natural environment. While a student at Goucher College, I co-founded a community garden with the Latino Center that operated on campus. The project required me to employ a broad range of skills, from rallying support among the Latino community, to petitioning the college's administration for use of campus land, to securing a funding grant, and eventually teaching a gardening class to Latino children. Finally, working as a teacher at Can Tho University in Vietnam gave me additional valuable experience in a more formal cross-cultural workplace.

While in college, I studied International Relations, a major with a strong research and writing focus. Goucher College is a small institution, which allowed me to work closely with my professors as I honed my research and writing skills. Studying International Relations, I became fascinated with Costa Rica's role in the international community, and I delved deeply into theories explaining how a country with no military used its human rights record to build a strong international presence. My fascination with this subject culminated in a semester-long independent research project, which was supervised by my advisor. My time at NYU School of Law has allowed me to translate my research and writing skills into a legal setting. Those legal skills, in conjunction with my international experience and my passion for environmental issues makes me well-qualified to perform effectively as an intern for ERI in Peru.

I would appreciate the opportunity to meet with you to discuss my qualifications in greater detail. I am available by phone or email at any time. Thank you very much for your consideration and I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

1L Student Name

Address  
Phone  
Email

February 25, 2016

Robbi Marmur and Erzsi Karkus  
Institute of International Education  
809 United Nations Plaza  
New York, NY 10017

Dear Robbi Marmur and Erzsi Karkus:

I am a first-year student at New York University School of Law and am writing to express my interest in a summer legal internship with the Institute of International Education. Particularly, I am interested in your work partnering with foreign governments and other entities to establish and administer education programs. I fundamentally believe that education is the bedrock for many societal reforms and that my interests and experiences will be valuable additions to IIE's important work this summer.

Through my academic studies and volunteer work, I have developed a strong interest in public policy formation and the role of education in societal development. As a double major in history and politics at the University of Virginia, I studied a broad array of public policy issues including classes in economics, global development, political theory, governmental transitions, and commercial law. Additionally, I have spent time living and volunteering in transitional regions of the world including Morocco, Nicaragua, and Colombia. From these experiences, I have observed first-hand the inherent difficulties of effecting change within education systems and the importance of sustained partnerships in advancing access to educational opportunities.

Apart from my background and experiences, I am confident I have the necessary skills to actively contribute to IIE's work. I have gained valuable legal research and writing skills through assignments in the Lawyering Program at NYU and strong analytical skills while writing my honors undergraduate thesis. Further, from my experience as a former teacher and administrator in a low-income community, I possess strong organizational skills, an ability to effectively adapt to variable workloads, and an appropriate sensitivity to working with different cultures and viewpoints. A summer internship with IIE would be a tremendous opportunity for me to apply my knowledge and skills to advance work I care deeply about.

Please find my resume, transcripts, and writing sample enclosed. Thank you for your consideration, and I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,

1L Student Name

Enclosures

Address  
Email

Date

Jane Rodriguez, Esq.  
Legal Services for Children  
1254 Market Street, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor  
San Francisco, CA 94102

Dear Ms. Rodriguez:

I am a first-year student at New York University School of Law and am writing to express my interest in a summer internship at Legal Services for Children. I am committed to advocating on behalf of children, whose interests are all too often overlooked.

I believe my experience in law school and prior would be valuable to Legal Services for Children. For example, I have gained strong legal research and writing skills through assignments in the Lawyering Program at NYU, and also in my work as a Legal Assistant at the Office of the Appellate Defender.

In addition, I have experience working with a variety of clients. After college, I spent a year as a Court Appointed Special Advocate with the N.Y. CASA Unit, where I monitored the relationship between sisters and their foster mother. My skills in working with clients, coupled with my ability to think and write analytically and work effectively in a team environment, would enable me to make substantial contributions as an intern at Legal Services for Children.

I have enclosed my resume for your review and would welcome the opportunity to discuss internship opportunities with you. I will be in California over winter break from December 24-January 11 and if possible, I would appreciate an opportunity to meet with you during that time. Should you wish, I would be happy to send a writing sample and list of references.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

1L Student Name



January 12, 2016

Lauren Shapiro, Attorney-in-Charge  
Brooklyn Defender Services, Family Defense Practice  
177 Livingston Street, 7th Floor  
Brooklyn, NY 11201

Dear Ms. Shapiro:

I am a first-year student at New York University School of Law and wish to express my strong interest in a summer internship with Brooklyn Defender Services' Family Defense Practice. Having watched my younger sister struggle through the court system, I came to law school to advocate on behalf of vulnerable people and families. The opportunity to learn from Brooklyn Defender Services' attorneys would be of unparalleled value, given the organization's diversity of cases, and its relentless commitment to its cause. At the same time, I believe that my professional experience and personal commitment to social justice would enable me to make a meaningful contribution to your important work.

As a queer girl of color in a conservative, white town, my younger sister has long attracted the attention of law enforcement. She was thirteen years old the first time the police followed her home. Those early interactions codified her difference and imposed a myth of deficiency in her mind and the minds of those around her. Future opportunities were limited as she was excluded from extracurricular activities, scholarships, and summer jobs, while her history was used to justify increasingly extensive stops, searches, and accusations. Though her experience was driven by criminal charges, it showed me how frightening, alienating, and straining court proceedings can be, especially for children and families. Fundamentally, my family needed more than a lawyer—we needed an advocate.

As a volunteer for the Parole Preparation Project (PPP) and the Prisoners' Rights and Education Project (PREP), I am working to gain the skills necessary to be a powerful advocate, and I believe that my work with both organizations will provide solid training for a career in civil or criminal representation. Through PPP, I am helping a man prepare for the first parole hearing of an indeterminate life sentence for a violent crime. We only recently began our work together, but already I am learning to work with my client's family, and to earn his and their trust. I am also working to build a relationship that, while professional at its core, revolves around deeply personal issues. This semester, I will be teaching a legal research class at a women's prison through PREP and hope to gain further skills, including how to communicate legal concepts to non-legal audiences. Though my work in both cases is with individuals convicted of criminal charges, I believe the skills I will gain in client interaction are equally vital in a civil context as well.

In addition to the skills that I am currently developing, I also have more than seven years of transferrable experience that I am eager to apply. As a Field Organizer on President Obama's 2008 campaign, I worked with people from diverse backgrounds in service of a cause, organizing districts ranging from affluent suburbs to poor urban communities, and working with community members to forge coalitions with labor, local officials, and religious groups. I built on that experience later as Co-Chair of the Community Action and Social Equity Committee of the Manhattan Young Democrats, organizing service events and fundraisers on behalf of needy New Yorkers. The campaign also made me an effective and persuasive communicator. Leading the effort to connect with individual voters in my districts, I learned to present strong and consistent arguments, and to respectfully but effectively persuade strangers on deeply divisive issues. I further sharpened my narrative abilities in my most recent position at the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR), where I strengthened my analytical writing and learned to craft cohesive and persuasive narratives from raw data. I also honed the research skills that I first developed in college, where my thesis on transitional justice in Rwanda was the result of independent research and analysis of victim testimony. Through all of my experiences, I have learned to work independently and as a member of a team; to manage multiple projects, priorities, and deadlines; and to deliver comprehensive and consistent work.

I came to law school to work on behalf of vulnerable people; to intern with Brooklyn Defender Services in the Family Defense Practice would be a chance to do so with an organization I greatly admire. I have enclosed my resume for your consideration, and I would be grateful for the opportunity to speak in greater detail about my background and interest in the position. I hope to hear from you soon.

Sincerely,  
1L Student Name

1L Student Name  
Address  
Phone  
Email

January 13, 2016

Louis Jones  
Staff Attorney  
Los Angeles Public Defenders  
233 A Street, Suite 800  
Los Angeles, CA 92101

Dear Mr. Jones:

I am a first year student at New York University School of Law and am very interested in a summer internship with the Los Angeles Public Defender. Although I am applying to you through the NYU Career Fair, I am writing separately in order to emphasize my strong interest in your office. Given my passion for criminal justice and the rights of indigent defendants, I would like to explore a career as a public defender, and your office is known for the excellent quality of its representation.

I believe that I have the skills and knowledge to be a successful intern at your office. Through my work experience, my first year of law school, and my strong undergraduate education at Brown University, I have developed considerable skills in critical thinking, research, and writing. Moreover, through my work as a Student Advocate at The Unemployment Action Center, I have gained experience representing clients in administrative hearings.

My previous employment at MK Communications, where I worked with government officials, non-profit leaders in community development, and members of the media, gave me the skills to build relationships with a wide range of people. Furthermore, as Chairperson of the All-University Conference on Entrepreneurship, I developed a strong ability to multitask as I worked to coordinate events and people. Finally, I am fluent in Spanish and believe that my language skills, coupled with my commitment to public service and training in legal research and writing, will enable me to contribute effectively to your office.

I have enclosed my resume, writing sample, and the names of three references for your review. Should you wish to schedule an interview, or if I can provide you with any other information, please contact me at PHONE or EMAIL. Thank you very much for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

1L Student Name

1L Student Name  
Address  
Phone  
Email

Sandra Jefferson Grannum, Esq.  
Bureau Chief, Legal Recruitment  
Office of the New York State Attorney General

Dear Ms. Granum:

I am a first-year student at New York University School of Law, and I write to apply for a position in the Summer Law Internship Program for the New York State Attorney General's Office. I decided to attend NYU Law to shape governance and regulation through legal advocacy, and it is for similar reasons that I wish to participate in your summer program. Your office first captured my attention when Attorney General Schneiderman announced steps towards state government reform this past summer. I would be excited to join the Internet Division in Manhattan.

The analytical and communication skills that I developed while building one of the Affordable Care Act's (ACA) 17 state-based health insurance marketplaces for two years after graduating Cornell University, along with my first-year legal training, have prepared me to work in your office. At Exeter Group, I first led the quality assurance of our conversion of ACA rules into software. I then joined our on-site implementation team to help manage our clients and implement policy and system solutions for Hawaii's marketplace. We launched an organization that brought new health insurance to the state's citizens, working with private, state, and federal stakeholders on a politically charged project. I learned how to persuade these stakeholders to reach consensus on key decisions, which required analytical rigor interpreting ACA rules and clear communication of complex system and process specifications. I believe that these skills would help me to succeed in your office.

After moving to NYC to work at a consulting startup, I found that I wanted to effect change through legal advocacy. Interning at Kobre & Kim, where I researched and helped draft motions in complex civil litigation proceedings, and studying procedure this semester have affirmed my conviction to litigate at the intersection of the public and private sectors. I am particularly interested in how constitutional law shapes these relationships.

I have enclosed my resume, a writing sample, and a list of three references. When my law school transcript is available, I will send it to you. I hope to have the opportunity to speak with you and can be reached by phone at PHONE or by email at EMAIL. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

1L Student Name

Address  
Phone  
Email

January 7, 2016

Housing Works, Inc.  
57 Willoughby Street  
Brooklyn, NY 11201

To Whom It May Concern,

I am a first year student at New York University School of Law and am extremely interested in a summer 2016 legal internship with Housing Works. Given my proven commitment to public interest legal work and extensive research and writing experience, I believe I am well positioned to make a meaningful contribution to Housing Works' impact litigation efforts this summer.

My legal services experience and background in social justice advocacy make me a good fit for Housing Works. I first began participating in LGBTQ, economic, and racial justice activism in college, through various campus reform initiatives and leadership of Common Ground, a program that enables diverse groups of students to learn from one another's experiences through intensive, structured dialogue. I had my first taste of direct civil legal services work in the summer of 2012, when I worked as a paralegal in a small nonprofit in Cape Town, an experience I found deeply rewarding. More recently, I volunteered weekly at the Ali Forney Center in Harlem prior to law school—a powerful experience that gave me insight into the unique legal challenges facing New York's low-income queer and gender non-conforming youth of color. My volunteer work affirmed my interest in pursuing a legal career that would enable me to advance their interests—and the interests of all marginalized New Yorkers—through the litigation process.

My research and writing experience will also allow me to make a valuable contribution to Housing Works' mission. I have several years of journalism experience with my undergraduate school newspaper and graduated with honors from Duke's Sanford School of Public Policy in recognition of my thesis, which examined the minimum wage's effects in American cities. My writing skills were further strengthened during an internship in the Florida Office of Policy and Budget in 2013, where I wrote comprehensive policy memos on various state economic development incentive programs and completed an extensive literature review on the subject as part of a concurrent independent study.

Enclosed please find my resume. I would appreciate the opportunity to meet with you at the PILC Fair to discuss my qualifications in greater detail. Thank you for your consideration, and I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

1L Student Name

Address  
Phone  
Email

January 5, 2016

New York City Law Department  
100 Church Street  
New York, NY 10007

To Whom It May Concern:

I am a first year student at New York University School of Law and am extremely interested in a Summer Honors Program position with the New York City Law Department's Legal Counsel Division. Given my extensive research and writing experience and proven commitment to public service legal work, I believe I am well positioned to make a meaningful contribution to the Division this summer.

My academic and government research and writing experiences make me a good fit for the Law Department. I have several years of journalism experience with my undergraduate school newspaper and graduated with honors from Duke's Sanford School of Public Policy in recognition of my thesis, which examined the minimum wage's effect on income inequality in American cities. My writing skills were further strengthened during an internship in the Florida Office of Policy and Budget in 2013, where I wrote comprehensive policy memos on various state-level economic development incentive programs and completed an extensive literature review on the subject as part of a concurrent independent study.

My legal services experience and background in progressive advocacy will allow me to make a valuable contribution to the Division's mission. I first began participating in economic, LGBT, and racial justice advocacy in college, through various campus reform initiatives and leadership of Common Ground, a program that enables diverse groups of students to learn from one another's experiences through intensive, structured dialogue. More recently, I interned with Legal Aid's Brooklyn Criminal Defense Practice, which enhances my understanding of New York City's justice system. In addition, prior to law school, I volunteered weekly at the Ali Forney Center in Harlem—a powerful experience that gave me insight into the unique legal challenges facing New York's low-income LGBT youth of color. My volunteer work affirmed my interest in pursuing a legal career that would enable me to advance their interests—and the interests of all marginalized New Yorkers—through government and the legal system.

Enclosed please find my resume. I would appreciate the opportunity to meet with you at the PILC Fair to discuss my qualifications in greater detail. Thank you for your consideration, and I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

1L Student Name