INFORMATION AND CRITERIA
The Legal Aid Society of Vanderbilt University Law School aims to address the needs of the economically disadvantaged and other populations traditionally under-served by the American legal system. Its Public Interest Stipend Fund program exists to enable students to hold public-interest legal positions during their 1L or 2L summers that support this goal. To be stipend-eligible, a summer position must meet several threshold requirements:

I. The position must be devoted to serving one or more underserved populations. In the past, students have received stipends for working with such groups as low-income citizens, LGBTQ populations, and primarily Spanish-speaking migrant workers. Most government positions do not qualify.
   A. If the sponsoring organization does work that does not qualify under this criterion (e.g., a law firm that pays its bills with regular divorce cases so that it can afford to undertake custody issues for low-income clients) you must ensure that your summer will be spent working with an underserved population 100% of the time. You must present a letter/email to this effect from someone in authority at the sponsoring organization with this application.

II. The position must be comprised of legal work done under the direct supervision of at least one lawyer.

III. The position must be unpaid or the funding awarded must be less than the standard Public Interest Stipend for your classification. If you are receiving funding from your employer or a stipend from another source (e.g. a scholarship or charity), you disclose this in your application. It is possible to receive a partial Public Interest Stipend up to the amount of $5,000.

Read the following guidelines thoroughly before filling out the PISF application. Should you have any concerns about whether your organization qualifies, or any other questions about the PISF, please contact Monica Doss (monica.doss@vanderbilt.edu) before turning in your application. To facilitate the evaluation of whether your organization qualifies, you will need to provide information regarding the factors listed below.

I. An employer will be considered eligible if:
   A. It is a non-profit organization qualifying for tax exemption status under IRS Code §§ 501(c)(3), (c)(4) or (c)(5) or a government office (if working in a prosecutorial governmental office the project will be closely scrutinized with respect to I.B.) or a for-profit firm that qualifies under subsection (1) above;
   B. It serves clients or interests that are traditionally underserved by the legal system;
   C. It will not be providing funding for your summer position (OR you will be receiving less funding than the maximum PISF award from the employer and any other sources); AND
   D. It will provide you with legal work that will be supervised by an attorney.

II. If the employer is deemed eligible, the PISF Committee will consider the following criteria in determining stipend recipients:
   A. A student’s experience in public interest work and public service generally;
   B. A student’s enthusiasm for public interest work;
   C. A student’s career goals and commitment to applying his or her legal education to a career in public interest,
   D. The quality of the student’s application materials;
   E. The sponsoring organization’s history with former stipend recipients, if any, and its general reputation; and
   F. Variation among the place and types of employment represented by potential recipients.

III. The following will be categorically excluded from consideration:
   A. The employer’s political, social, or religious affiliations, if any;
   B. Personal opinions that the selection committee may have regarding the potential employer that are unrelated to a specific committee member’s own past experience with the employer; and
   C. The general financial need of the student.

IV. Required documentation to be included with this application:
   A. Potential dates you plan to work and whether you are applying for a full or half stipend; a letter from the employer stating the nature of the organization’s work and confirming that you have an offer for summer employment. A statement from the employer confirming that the position will be unpaid, or stating the amount to be awarded (if this amount is less than the standard PISF stipend you may apply for the difference). If you have received money from an outside source, you must also specify that amount.
   i. If your sponsoring organization serves both regular and underserved populations as described at the outset of this application, your employer letter will need to contain a guarantee that your position will be 100% dedicated to the latter.
   ii. If you are awarded a stipend and you plan to work for a tax-exempt organization, you will be required to provide
V. The discretion inherent in the application of these guidelines to specific student applications lies with the PISF Committee of the Vanderbilt Legal Aid Society. This committee is comprised of the Executive Directors (students), the Public Interest Stipend Fund Director (student), the Associate Dean for Clinical Education, and the Assistant Dean for Public Interest. The Faculty Advisors will redact the applications so that they are anonymous before the PISF student members consider them. Thus, the student members of the PISF Committee will be considering applications independent of any direct knowledge of the identities of the applicants. The PISF Committee reserves the right to award any amount to any applicant up to $5000. Applications not chosen to receive a PISF stipend, or those awarded less than the full amount for which the applicant would be eligible as a VULS stipend applicant, will be forwarded for consideration by the VULS stipend committee.

VI. Applicants should be aware of the following:
   A. Both full stipends and half stipends may be awarded. Full stipends are for $5,000 and presume that the applicant will be working for 10-12 weeks. Half stipends are for $2,500 and presume that the applicant will be working for five weeks. Any divergence from these time periods should be noted and explained in your application.
   B. Students working ten to twelve weeks who are receiving outside funding or funding from their qualified employers totaling less than $5000 may apply for the difference. For example, a student who has been awarded $2000 by an outside source for his otherwise qualified summer work may apply for $3000 from the PISF. Students working 5 weeks may apply for the difference between these outside/employer funds and $2500.

Source: Some portions of the above guidelines were adapted from the NAPIL publication, *Students Funding Students*. 

STIPEND APPLICATION
All applications must be typed.
Please email the completed application to Felicia Vaden (felicia.vaden@vanderbilt.edu) by 5 PM on Friday, March 31.

NAME:  

1L/2L:  

ADDRESS:  

EMAIL:  

PHONE:  

APPLYING FOR [CHECK 1]:

HALF STIPEND (5 WEEKS) _____  WHOLE STIPEND (10 WEEKS) _____

I. Attach a current resume. Do NOT include your GPA.

II. Please specify the employer(s) with whom you have obtained a position and the title of that position, if any, and where the position is located.

A.  EMPLOYER:  ____________________________________________
LOCATION:  ____________________________________________
PHONE:  ____________________________________________

B.  EMPLOYER:  ____________________________________________
LOCATION:  ____________________________________________
PHONE:  ____________________________________________

C.  EMPLOYER:  ____________________________________________
LOCATION:  ____________________________________________
PHONE:  ____________________________________________

III. Complete the following brief essays. One to two well-written paragraphs will suffice for each answer. The answer to any one question should not exceed two typewritten pages.
1. Describe the public-interest opportunity for which you are applying. What do you hope to learn from it? How will you be contributing to public interest work? Please include (1) the purpose and scope of the agency, firm, or organization with which you will be working or wish to work (be sure to include if it is non-profit or a governmental agency); and (2) the details of the work you will be doing, including your anticipated time commitment (part-time, full-time, number of weeks, hours/week). Please refer to the Information and Criteria section at the beginning of this application form when crafting your answer.

2. Provide documentation for at least five hours of pro bono service (or Legal Aid canvassing) that you have competed through one or more Vanderbilt Law School programs in the past academic year. Be sure to include the name and contact information for the person who supervised your service. Discuss how your involvement in these programs (along with any other pro bono and/or community service you have completed) demonstrates your personal interest in and commitment to serving the public with your legal skills.

3. Discuss your career goals and your commitment to applying your legal education to a career in public interest. How will this summer experience help you reach these goals?
How does a legal education put you in a unique situation to contribute and help others?

4. Optional: If there is any other matter, concern, or additional information which you feel would be helpful to the PISF Committee in reviewing your application, please present it.
IV. Will you be receiving funding from any other sources, i.e., other stipends, scholarships, or salary? If so, how much?
   How much $_____
   If so, include some form of documentation regarding the amount and source.

V. Review the following pledge and sign below:
   By signing below, I agree that the Vanderbilt Legal Aid Society’s Public Interest Stipend Committee has my permission to review my application for the Public Interest Stipend. The information contained in this application packet will be kept confidential and will be used only for the purposes of selecting stipend recipients. I understand that if my plans change I must contact Monica Doss, Director of the Public Interest Stipend Fund, immediately. Further, I understand that if I do not work for the organization for which a stipend is awarded, or, if I do not fully disclose information regarding other outside sources of funding, the stipend may be revoked. Finally, I have read the Information and Criteria at the beginning of this application form, and I understand the terms and conditions that apply to my application.

   Signature
   ________________________________

   Date
   ________________________________

Number of pages in application (including this page): __________