



10-1975

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Recommended Citation

Wilkes, Gilbert III (1975) "Providing Legal Services for the Elderly," *University of Baltimore Law Forum*: Vol. 6 : No. 1 , Article 12.
Available at: <http://scholarworks.law.ubalt.edu/lf/vol6/iss1/12>

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Providing Legal Services For The Elderly

by Gilbert Wilkes, III

One of the lesser publicized combined community and pedagogical service programs conducted by the University of Baltimore Law School is the Legal Services for the Elderly project located in the Waxter Center for Senior Citizens at 861 Park Avenue, approximately four blocks from the University.

Currently partially funded by a federal grant, the program is administered by Assistant Dean William Weston and is operated under the guidance of Director Anne K. Pecora, 1972 cum laude graduate of U.B. Law School and a member of the Maryland Bar. Ms. Pecora is assisted by approximately six carefully screened student interns from the Law School and a legal secretary, Maralyn Anderson.

The project has a dual thrust: providing legal services to a sorely neglected segment of our citizenry, the aging, providing a broad clinical legal experience to student interns.

In far too many instances our nation's elderly lack adequate legal services. Surveys indicate that the elderly comprise over 20% of the nation's poor and yet they represent only 6% of the client load of the average Community Services — sponsored Legal Aid programs. This is primarily caused by arbitrary disqualifications based on income or home ownership. Yet, perhaps more than any other group, the elderly rely on, and have superimposed on, their lives a vast array of complex federal, state, and private programs and laws designed to assist but overwhelming in their bureaucratic complexity. The Legal Services for the Elderly office operates not only to handle individual client problems but also to show a broad overview of the practical effect of various government programs on the elderly as

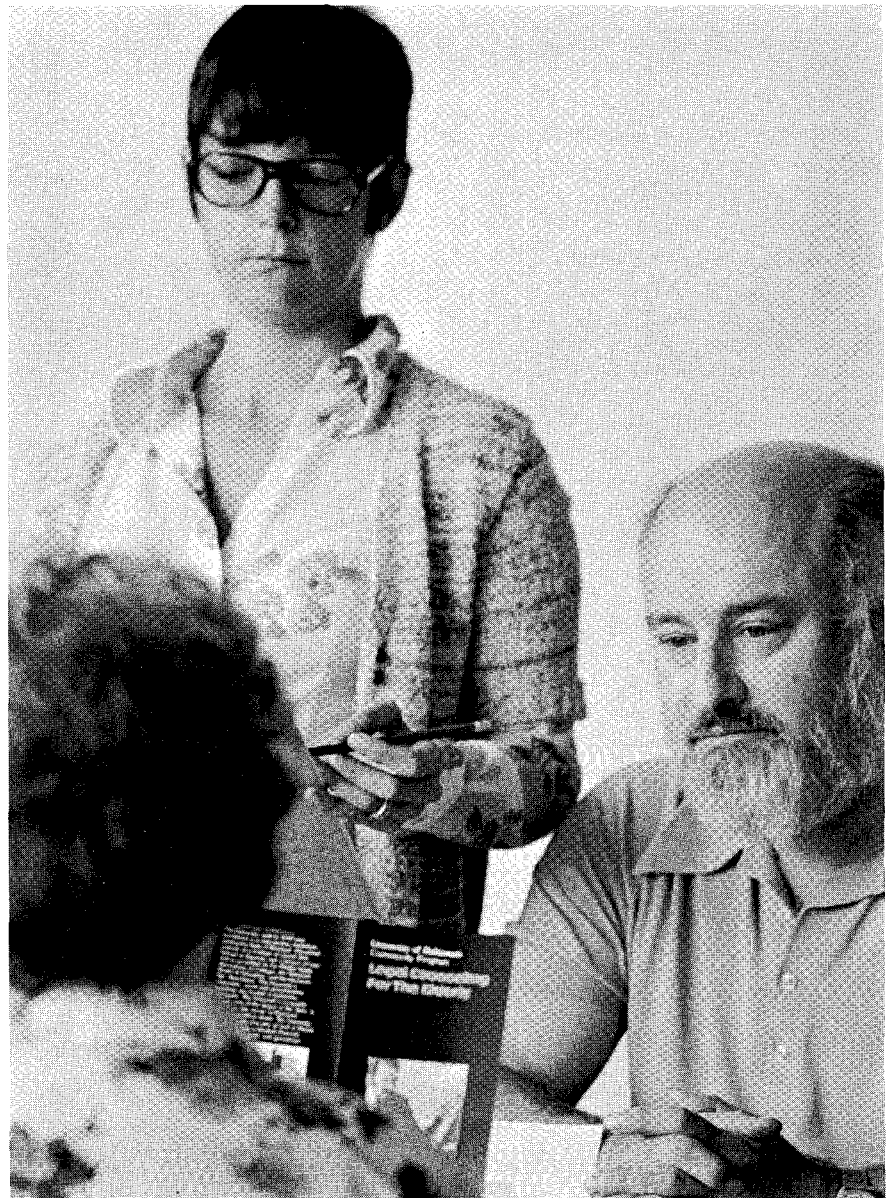
a class.

Under the supervision of Director Pecora, student interns, working for credit, perform much of the work involved. With the exception of criminal work and fee-generating situations, students can expect to be involved in a broad clinical experience including, but not limited to, contracts, torts, landlord and tenant, wills and deeds, litigation, taxes, pleadings and a high degree of immersion in the details of various government programs designed for the elderly. Individual case work involves a large amount of client interviewing and coun-

selling.

Student interns are selected from second and third year law students who are expected to devote at least fifty hours per semester or four hours a week on a regularly scheduled basis. Summer internships are also available. Initial student screening is conducted by Dean Weston with final applicant approval by Anne Pecora.

For the law student a tour of duty with the Legal Services for the Elderly Program will prove to be not only socially rewarding but also professionally enlightening.



DIRECTOR ANNE PECORA AND
STUDENT GILBERT WILKES WITH CLIENT