

Pro Se Assistance and Mediation Clinic Opens in Selinsgrove

The Neysa C. Adams Pro Se Assistance and Mediation Clinic opened on Oct. 20, 2008, under the auspices of the Arlin M. Adams Center for Law and Society at Susquehanna University.

Adams Center Director Allan Sobel explained the reason for the clinic: "Today, a large percentage of litigants are unrepresented. Many simply cannot afford a lawyer. The number of people who fall into that category has increased dramatically in the past year along with the rate of unemployment. Legal services offices have seen their funding support cut and cannot begin to serve all of those in need of assistance in civil matters. A bad economy produces less of everything except judicial proceedings."

The Adams Center opened the Neysa C. Adams Pro Se Assistance and Mediation Clinic to serve Northumberland, Snyder and Union Counties. The opening of the clinic was made possible by a grant from Good Samaritan, Inc. The clinic is currently operating at the CareerLink location on Bridge Street in Selinsgrove. Over time, the Adams Center intends to open satellite locations during each month in various municipalities within the three counties.

"In these tough economic times many have become unable to meet their existing obligations. Defaults have led to personal bankruptcies, home foreclosures, eviction proceedings, and debt collection actions," Sobel explained. "The heightened stress attributable to job losses and financial pressures, have contributed to an increase in domestic relations and criminal proceedings. "

Sobel was appointed the first full-time director of the Arlin M. Adams Center for Law and Society on Sept. 18, 2006. He served as President of the [American Judicature Society](#) before his appointment as The Adams Center Director. As president, Sobel was responsible for all AJS operations at its offices in Illinois, Iowa and North Carolina, served as its spokesperson, and regularly contributed to its scholarly journal, Judicature. AJS, established in 1913, is a non-profit, non-partisan organization devoted to promoting the effective administration of justice.

Prior to his tenure at AJS, Sobel served for three years as executive director and general counsel of the Michigan Judicial Tenure Commission, a constitutionally-created and independent judicial conduct organization responsible for enforcement of the Code of Judicial Conduct in Michigan. From 1977 to 1997, he practiced law with offices in Portland, Oregon and Detroit, Michigan, primarily representing defendants in criminal proceedings and parties in professional malpractice actions.

Sobel has held faculty positions at Drake University School of Law and at Lewis and Clark College Northwestern School of Law. He holds a J.D. from Lewis and Clark College Northwestern School of Law, and a Bachelor of Science degree in Special Education from Eastern Michigan University.

Sobel currently serves as a member of the Pennsylvania Joint State Government Commission Committee on Wrongful Convictions and the Snyder County Criminal Justice Advisory Board. He produces and hosts a weekly justice system radio program, [Justice for All?](#) and frequently authors justice system related articles for publication in national, state and local papers.

The clinic is an idea that Sobel hopes to spread beyond its initial office. He added, "The clinic brings some relief to the people in our area. When I joined Susquehanna University in 2006, I hoped to be able to provide just such a community resource. Little did I know then, how much it would be needed."

The clinic will not provide direct legal advice or representation. It will, however,

- make available brochures and other written information regarding area service providers;
- coordinate a pro bono services project and a separate project that would refer clients to attorneys willing to engage in a brief consultation at a reduced rate, with the understanding that neither the attorney nor the client would be obligated to extend the relationship beyond the initial meeting;
- maintain, distribute and help pro se litigants complete needed forms, and provide related filing and procedural instructions. The forms and instructions will be available both at the clinic offices during clinic hours and on-line;
- collaborate with North Penn Legal Services to provide education to the public regarding common subjects of litigation; and
- recruit volunteers to be trained and then serve as mediators in a voluntary, cost-free mediation program.

Location

713 Bridge Street, Selinsgrove, Pa. (CareerLink Building)

Clinic Hours

M, W, F 9 a.m.-1 p.m.

T, Th 1-5 p.m.

First Sat. of each month

10 a.m.-2 p.m.

Contact Information

Phone

570-374-5414 (during clinic hours) 570-372-2784 (non-clinic hours)

Mail

604 University Ave, Selinsgrove, PA 17870