

CRIMINAL DEFENSE CLINIC

Spring 2026

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Students enrolled in the semester-long Criminal Defense Clinic represent low-income people charged with a variety of municipal ordinance violations and misdemeanor crimes including assault, resisting arrest, disorderly conduct, theft, and others, in Denver and/or surrounding cities. Students learn and apply lawyering skills such as interviewing, building client relationships, client counseling, investigation, legal research and writing, oral advocacy, negotiation, and trial skills and preparation. Students appear regularly in court for hearings such as arraignments, pretrial conferences, motions hearings, and trials. Through classes and representation of clients, students will learn about systemic injustice in the criminal legal system and about the connections between the criminal legal system and trauma, mental health, and a variety of governmental systems and societal factors. Students will also explore issues of forensic science and learn to incorporate them into their work defending clients.

Are there any prerequisites?

Although they are not required, it is highly recommended to take Criminal Law, Criminal Procedure, Evidence, and Trial Practice before or concurrently with the clinic. A demonstrated commitment to public interest law is preferred. To participate in a Student Law Office Clinic, students must have completed 30 credit hours by the start of the clinic and have a GPA of 2.3 or higher.

Are classes required?

Yes, class attendance is mandatory. **Classes are expected to meet in the afternoon, likely on Tuesdays and Thursdays, time TBD.** Students are also required to attend a mandatory orientation beginning the first week of classes. The orientation will include simulations and classes scheduled around clinic participants' availability. Expect to meet as a class at least once daily for the first two weeks, with significant out-of-class work during this period. The orientation will cover the substantive, procedural, and ethical aspects of criminal defense and familiarize students with the Student Law Office and Criminal Defense Clinic procedures.

How many credits will I receive?

Students enroll for the full semester, earning 9 credits in total. Throughout the semester, students must participate in the classroom component and conduct client work. Four of the credits will be earned through in-class activities, while the other three will come from out-of-class client work.

What kind of time commitment is involved?

The Criminal Defense Clinic requires a substantial time commitment. The clinic is very intensive, and you should expect to spend at least 25 hours per week working on client-related matters. This time commitment will vary somewhat with the ebb and flow of litigation, and you may be required to devote considerable additional time. In addition to the time spent serving your clients, you will spend at least four hours each week in class and at least five hours each week performing class related work, preparation, supervision meetings with faculty, and other clinic assignments. For this reason and to avoid potential conflicts of interest, CDC students may not take on an internship, externship, any other experiential advantage courses, or work while they are enrolled in the CDC, unless given explicit advance authorization to do so.

What are the benefits of taking this clinic?

The Criminal Defense Clinic offers you the opportunity to integrate professional ethics and values, legal theory, and practice by representing low-income children and adults charged with crimes. You will learn the lawyering skills necessary to defend a criminal case, including building relationships with clients, investigation, discovery review, development of a case theme and theory, researching and drafting motions, and litigation and trial skills. The laboratories for learning will be the classroom, supervision sessions with faculty, and Colorado's courtrooms and jails. You will learn how to work with clients who face a variety of legal, social, and economic problems and you will learn the resources that are (or are not) available to them. Depending on the issues involved in clients' individual cases, students may litigate constitutional issues and issues relating to forensic science.

Where can I get more information about the Criminal Defense Clinic?

- On our Clinical Programs website at law.du.edu/student-law-office
- On our social media:
 - Follow us on **Instagram** at [@denver_law_clinical_programs](https://www.instagram.com/denver_law_clinical_programs)
 - Follow us on **LinkedIn** at [student-law-office-at-du](https://www.linkedin.com/company/student-law-office-at-du)
- At the Student Law Office located in suite 335 of the Ricketson Law Building.

How do I apply?

- Applications open on the Clinical Programs website at law.du.edu/student-law-office on **Monday October 13th, 2025 at 9:00am and close on Sunday October 19th at 11:59pm.**
Late Applications will not be accepted.
- To apply, students must complete the online application found on our [website](#) and include their updated law school resume.

