

Donna Harkness, CELA  
Professor of Clinical Law  
Director, Elder Law Clinic  
(901) 678-5138  
[dharknss@memphis.edu](mailto:dharknss@memphis.edu)

## ELDER LAW CLINIC

**Why Elder Law?** Senior citizens are among the fastest growing demographic groups, comprising more than twelve percent of the population. Because the elderly experience difficulties unique to their age group, their legal needs often demand specialized training.

**What Skills Training is Offered?** Qualified law students will develop **core legal skills** through representation of elderly clients across a broad range of substantive areas. Students conduct client and witness interviews, engage in factual development of cases, legal research and writing, problem solving, written communications, and drafting wills, living wills, powers of attorney, and other legal documents. Students should expect some litigation and courtroom experience, as well as opportunities for advocacy before administrative agencies. Students participate in weekly Acase review meetings@ and are introduced to the tenets of holistic practice, therapeutic jurisprudence, NAELA Aspirational Standards, and other principles of elder law practice. Students will have an opportunity to utilize knowledge of substantive, procedural, and evidentiary law, and to apply the Tennessee Rules of Professional Conduct in a live client setting.

**What Types of Cases May Be Involved?** Consumer protection, senior exploitation issues, predatory lending, contracts, wills, advance directives, grandparent adoption, health care and long term care issues, capacity, Social Security, Supplemental Security Income, insurance landlord/tenant, housing and real property law.

**How Many Credit Hour and Grades?** Clinic students will earn four (4) hours of academic credit for the semester upon satisfactory Clinic performance. Letter grades are based on the student=s mastery of fundamental lawyering skills.

**What Prerequisites?** Clinic prerequisites are Professional Responsibility and Evidence, which should be taken either before the clinic or concurrently with the clinic, although the requirement may be waived in certain circumstances. Request for waiver should be made in the clinic application.

**Time Requirements?** Qualified law students enrolled in the Elder Law Clinic will attend group orientation sessions for the first three weeks of the semester. Thereafter, students will attend weekly class case review sessions and be available an additional seven hours per week at the Clinic Office at set times to be arranged with the Clinical Professor. Students are expected to spend fifteen (15) hours per week total on Clinic activities, consisting of weekly class sessions, regular office hours, and time spent conducting investigation, research, trial preparation, etc. Because a significant number of elderly clients are homebound, it is hoped that COVID conditions will improve so that we will once again be able to resume out of office interviews in the community. If so, students may be expected to conduct up to two Ahome visit@ interviews during the semester, accompanied by the Clinic Director.