

Los Angeles Superior Court – Public Information Office

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**NEWS**



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**JUSTICECORPS APPLICATIONS FOR THE 2019 PROGRAM YEAR  
ARE NOW BEING ACCEPTED:  
AN ALUMNI OF THE PROGRAM SHARES HER EXPERIENCE\***



*Vanesa Martin, Los Angeles County JusticeCorps*

***Vanesa Martin is a student at the University of California, Los Angeles and an alumni member of JusticeCorps, a program which has helped more than 1 million Californians find access to justice. She shares her experience working at the Santa Monica courthouse:***

*As the child of Mexican immigrants, I thought that assisting members of the Latino community who came into a Los Angeles County Superior court self-help center would feel entirely familiar.*

*I had always helped my Spanish-speaking parents, neighbors, and family friends translate documents and interpret conversations, and I felt that joining [JusticeCorps](#)—an AmeriCorps program that offers college students the opportunity to learn and serve in the courts—would be a more structured extension of these experiences. I underestimated the diversity of experiences even within the community I believed I knew so well.*

*I was taken aback when I learned about the prevalence of domestic violence through the litigants my coworkers and I worked with. At the self-help center, I assisted with requests for restraining orders, people reluctantly requesting to evict family members, and litigants asking questions about both dissolutions of marriage and unlawful detainers.*

More-more-more

*I also became increasingly aware of, and infuriated, by how frequently people who do not speak English or are undocumented are taken advantage of. All too often, these tenants would be told by their landlords or managers that they didn't have to respond to the 3-day notice or the summons and complaint packet they were served with, and the tenant, not knowing any better and being uninformed of their rights in a language they understood, trusted this advice. They then turned to the court for help.*

*Residents also came to the self-help center with habitability problems with their rental units. Again, these issues seemed to be more easily disregarded by property owners when those making the complaint or request were undocumented, most likely because many undocumented immigrants live in fear of government agencies and would not call out their landlords for failing to make repairs. With no fear of consequence, there seemed to be little incentive for property owners to make things right.*

*Today, I still feel a part of the same community, but my experience with JusticeCorps has made me more humble and less quick to make assumptions. I am also even more grateful for the privilege of education that my parents have given me through their sacrifice and hard work. In addition to my goal of continuing my education, my ambitions now include staying aware of the issues affecting minority communities and bridging the gaps between resources and low-income people. JusticeCorps has opened up my eyes to the flaws in our social systems and has motivated me to think more innovatively and work harder for the communities that fall through the cracks.*

The **JusticeCorps program** assists California courts in meeting the needs of self-represented litigants (people who come to court without lawyers) by recruiting and training over 250 college students and recent graduates annually to help litigants in California's court-based [self-help centers](#). JusticeCorps members make a commitment to national service by:

- Assisting court staff with legal workshops;
- Helping self-represented litigants complete legal forms;
- Providing information and referrals; and
- Offering language assistance to customers when necessary.

JusticeCorps members work under the supervision of court attorneys. Since the program began in 2004, 1,700 members have successfully completed the program and have had the following impact:

- Provided 490,000 instances of assistance in up to 24 different languages;
- Filed 330,000 legal documents; and
- Completed more than 500,000 hours of national service.

For more information about JusticeCorps, including application deadlines, or to apply for the program, please visit: <https://www.courts.ca.gov/justicecorps-la.htm> or email Jennifer Kalish at [jkalish@lacourt.org](mailto:jkalish@lacourt.org).

*\*Story provided by the Judicial Council of California.*

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