

TO: ALBANY LAW CLINIC & JUSTICE CENTER  
**FIELD PLACEMENT CLINIC**

PLACEMENT NAME: NYS Committee on Open Government

PLACEMENT ADDRESS: 99 Washington Ave, Suite 650, Albany NY 12231

1) A brief statement about your office generally (e.g., mission, jurisdiction, size, nature of practice, etc.)

The Committee on Open Government is responsible for overseeing the implementation of the Freedom of Information Law, which governs rights of access to government records, the Open Meetings Law, which concerns the conduct of meetings of public bodies and the right to attend those meetings, and the Personal Privacy Protection Law, which pertains to records containing personal information that are maintained by state agencies. Annually the Committee is required to report on its activities and findings to the Governor and the Legislature and make recommendations for changes to the law.

The Committee is composed of eleven members, as follows: five from government including the Lieutenant Governor, the Secretary of State, the Commissioner of General Services, the Director of the Budget, and one elected local government official appointed by the Governor; and six from the public, including at least two of whom must be or have been representatives of the news media.

The staff of the Committee (two attorneys and one secretary) has the responsibility for providing legal advice and training to public officials and employees, the news media, advocacy groups and the public. Advice is rendered verbally and in writing; thousands of advisory opinions are available online.

Although the Committee is housed in the Department of State, it is essentially an independent body responsible for rendering non-partisan legal advice regarding access to records and meetings. The Executive Director is appointed by the Governor, and has been with the Committee since its inception in 1974, essentially reappointed by five successive governors. Staff takes great care to provide articulate and intelligent legal analyses based on the law.

2) A description of the experiences law students are likely to have at your office, including the type of tasks a student may perform.

Students are expected to draft advisory opinions based on legal research and previous advisory opinions; to assist in the preparation for Committee meetings and its annual report, including the drafting of legislative recommendations; to attend Committee meetings; and to accompany the executive director and assistant director to seminars, conferences and meetings with representatives from local governments, foreign governments, legislative personnel, advocacy groups, the media and the public.

3) Any special requirements you have for student selection (e.g., writing sample, class standing, experience, third year students only, background check, etc.)

An up to date resume and a writing sample are required.

4) Website for further information: <http://www.dos.state.ny.us/coog/index.html>

5) Anything else that you think would be helpful or informative.

Located in a large downtown building, the office is small and fast-paced (two attorneys, one support person). We issue approximately 50 written opinions per month and answer anywhere from 400 to 600 requests for legal advice over the telephone. During peak periods of demand, we are scheduled to give educational presentations up to five times a week, to groups that vary in size from 5 to 250 people.