Vera Institute Pre-Doctoral Fellowship in Applied Justice Research (AJR)

In 2017, Vera and The Graduate Center launched the Applied Justice Research (AJR) pre-doctoral fellowship. This fellowship is an opportunity to spend time at the Vera Institute and work with Vera research staff on ongoing projects related to the institute’s core areas of focus. There are a number of opportunities to join ongoing projects, listed below. Fellows will work with a Vera research team for one academic year, participate in applied research, and potentially test new ideas and research approaches to Vera’s existing work.

Application Requirements

Students should submit:

- A 2 page proposal narrative that addresses, under specific headings, the “project of interest” and short descriptions describing “potential research questions” that the student is interested in addressing and the “relevant experience”, and “research methods” the student would use to answer those questions.
- Letter of support from faculty advisor
  - Including recognition that the faculty advisor should have quarterly updates with each fellow’s Vera supervisor
- Up-to-date resume or CV
- Signed letter of academic standing (from applicant’s Executive Officer)

Students interested in more than one project should submit one application per project. If you are applying to more than one project, please fill out the last page of this document, indicating the projects to which you are applying in order of preference, and include it with the rest of your application materials. Selected applicants will be asked to interview with Vera staff, depending on their project of interest, and additional materials may be requested.

Fellowship Details and Deadlines

The Fellow will be expected to spend three days per week at Vera’s offices between August 27, 2019 and May 22, 2020. Over this period, they will be embedded within a research team and will contribute to Vera work products. AJR Fellows will be encouraged to identify opportunities to publish and otherwise disseminate products from Vera projects and to explore opportunities to expand Vera’s work in new directions. The Fellow must currently hold a Graduate Center Fellowship (GCF), the student will continue to receive the GCF funding, but will be permitted to substitute the work at Vera for their normal GCF service. Vacation and time off will be discussed with each applicant, but will not follow the academic calendar.

Applications are due in full by February 1, 2019. Interviews will be scheduled throughout February. The selected AJR fellows will be notified by March 20, 2019

Email any questions to Charlotte Miller: cmiller@vera.org
Email final application materials to Jim Parsons: jparsons@vera.org and Charlotte Miller: cmiller@vera.org
1) Restoring Promise  
**Center on Youth Justice**  
Young people ages 18 to 24 make up 10 percent of the U.S. population but comprise 30 percent of arrests and 21 percent of prison admissions. Vera’s Restoring Promise initiative partners with forward thinking corrections agencies in jails and prisons across the country to transform living conditions for incarcerated young adults and working conditions for staff. The initiative aims to end mass incarceration, advance race equity, eliminate violence in corrections, and ensure success for young adults. 

In partnership with the Connecticut Department of Correction, Vera is developing an approach for transforming the care and custody of incarcerated young adults nationally. The new approach draws on lessons from best practices, international examples, and the voices of those directly impacted by the current system. The Connecticut DOC unit for young adults is being developed with guiding principles of (1) safety and equity, (2) purpose, not just programs, (3) connection to identity, culture, and people, and (4) healing and wellness. 

The summer fellow who joins the Restoring Promise team may analyze data from partner facilities, administer surveys to young adults and corrections staff, analyze survey results, and assist with a NIJ funded randomized control trial. The fellow will learn about collaborative research techniques and how to effectively partner with the communities most impacted by our research.

2) AJR Policing Fellow  
**Policing Program**  
Vera’s Policing Program is dedicated to fundamentally shifting the culture of policing from one that incentivizes and defaults to enforcement to one that delivers and rewards public safety through community engagement and satisfaction. Our efforts are concentrated primarily in three areas: shifting the discourse on policing; reengineering police incentives and performance management; and developing innovative strategies to reduce enforcement. Relative to these goals, a summer fellow would have the opportunity to contribute to several projects including, but not limited to Emerging Issues in American Policing Digest, Compstat360, Serving Safely, and Enforcement Trends. These projects will provide opportunities for fellows to practice and develop applied research skills in translating research findings for general audiences; contributing to training and technical assistance; and working with and visualizing big data.

3) Solitary Confinement  
**Center on Sentencing and Corrections**  
Incarcerated people placed in segregation (or ‘solitary confinement’) are held in isolating conditions, often restricted to a small cell for 22 or more hours per day and denied access to programs and activities. Citing the potential psychological and physiological impacts of this practice, a diverse range of advocates, policymakers, and corrections practitioners have called for prisons and jails to reform their use of segregation. However, there are still significant gaps in our knowledge relating to how segregation is used across the country. 

With funding from the National Institute of Justice, Vera has embarked upon a comprehensive research endeavor designed to (1) document policies governing segregation across the U.S.; (2) analyze administrative data from multiple state departments of corrections to identify who is placed in segregation (and why); and (3) evaluate the impact of working in these conditions on corrections officers’ wellbeing. 

Vera seeks a research fellow who will use data collected from this project to write a manuscript testing an empirical question about segregation. In addition to the administrative data described above, the fellow will have access to data from two national surveys about the use of restrictive housing in prisons and jails. These data can be merged with other state-level political and social data to test a variety of questions about the political, social, and economic correlates of segregation use.
Students from all academic disciplines with demonstrated experience studying the conditions of confinement are encouraged to apply. For more information on Vera’s solitary confinement research, see https://www.vera.org/blog/revealing-the-prisons-within-prisons.

4) In our Backyards

Center on Sentencing and Corrections

A little known fact imperils our nation’s collective efforts to end mass incarceration: Major cities such as New York, Chicago, and Los Angeles are no longer bearing the heaviest burden. Instead, thousands of smaller cities and towns are now grappling with the nation’s highest incarceration rates. Vera’s In Our Backyards initiative employs both quantitative and qualitative analysis to uncover what’s causing this trend so that we can drive reform in places that have long been under-studied.

Vera is seeking a research fellow that will support the work of the In Our Backyards research team and also develop a qualitative or quantitative study to contribute to the emerging body of literature on incarceration in small and rural places.

Students from all academic disciplines with demonstrated experience studying incarceration—particularly in small and rural places—are encouraged to apply. For more information on the county-level historical jail and prison data that the fellow can leverage, see https://github.com/vera-institute/In-Our-Backyards-Symposium. For more information on In Our Backyards, see https://www.vera.org/projects/in-our-backyards.

5) Safe Cities Network

Center on Immigration and Justice

In 2017, the Vera Institute of Justice launched the SAFE (Safety and Fairness for Everyone) Cities Network, a group of geographically and politically diverse local jurisdictions from around the country that are committed to keeping communities safe and strong by protecting due process and providing legal representation to immigrants facing deportation. Studies show that immigrants who are represented are up to ten times more likely to establish a right to remain in the United States than those who are unrepresented. But, almost no non-citizens are legally entitled to government-funded representation, and most go unrepresented, meaning they are less able to access the protections to which they may be entitled under the law and instead face permanent separation from their loved ones, their livelihoods, and their communities if deported. SAFE Cities marks an important turning point as local governments around the country have committed resources to ensuring their immigrant residents are able to make their cases on a level playing field, with the assistance of counsel.

As part of this new national initiative, the research team in the Center on Immigration and Justice will be conducting a multi-year study of the varied impacts of legal representation for individuals, families, and communities across the United States. This includes ethnographic work with individuals and their families to understand the range of ways legal representation may contribute to family unity, thus offsetting the negative effects of detention and deportation; analysis of how legal representation for immigrants may contribute to a climate of public and personal safety; and measurement of the economic impacts of legal representation for individuals, households, and the broader state and local economy. This research builds on Vera’s previous evaluations of other legal access programs, contributes to the Center on Immigration and Justice’s ongoing work to develop a blueprint for universal representation for immigrants facing deportation, and will inform broader efforts to expand access to due process for all immigrants.

The Center on Immigration and Justice seeks a research fellow to help study the impact of legal representation, especially in contributing to family unity, public and personal safety, or on state and local economies. This is an opportunity to develop and conduct an original, applied research project as part of an interdisciplinary research team and to contribute to broader efforts to understand how increased access to due process might change the landscape of immigration enforcement and rights in the United States.
Applicant Name:

I am submitting more than one application for the Applied Justice Research Fellowship. I acknowledge that I can only be accepted to work on one project. The projects I’d like to work on are listed below in order of preference.

______________________     ________________
Signature       Date

Please list the projects to which you are applying in order of preference (1 being the project you are most interested in working on).

1.

2.

3.