



Volunteer Attorney: Michelle Velasquez

What is your current position?

I am the Managing Attorney of Civitas Law Group, a non-profit legal service organization.

What do you enjoy about your practice?

I co-founded Civitas Law Group in 2016, and currently practice family, criminal defense, and immigration law. As an advocate, connecting my clients with needed resources that can impact the outcome of their case is important. What I enjoy most from my practice is the flexibility it affords me to do that – to collaborate with other community organizations and assist clients in other aspects of their lives.

Where did you go to undergrad? What did you study?

I majored in Social Work at UW-Madison.

Where did you go to law school?

I went to Marquette University Law School.

What activities were you involved in in law school?

While in law school I was a member of the Hispanic Law Student Association, Jessup Moot Court, and Pro Bono Honor Society. I traveled to Santiago, Chile as a PILS fellow, and participated in a Pro Bono service trip to New Orleans. I also volunteered at the MVLC.

What was your favorite class in law school? Which class did you learn the most in?

It is impossible for me to choose just one, so I will pick two courses: American Legal History and Constitution and Criminal Investigations.

How did you start volunteering at MVLC?

Civitas Law Group and the MVLC have common missions - to promote access to justice. I decided to start volunteering because I knew that my experience in family law, as well as my language skills, would help clients at the clinic begin to evaluate their legal issue(s) and what options they may or may not have. I enjoy working with students and talking through the legal issue presented. I hope that no matter what career path the student volunteer takes, they commit to pro bono work when they are practicing.

What advice would you give current law students?

The best advice I have to students is to participate in pro bono work, and to take advantage of every opportunity to engage directly with clients. Developing rapport, showing compassion, and effectively communicating is a skill set whose importance cannot be overstated. The MVLC and other legal clinics are a great way to develop these skills, and to observe attorneys put them into practice. The clinic also helps you become familiar with local practices, state forms, and procedure.

What do you do like to do in your spare time?

Pre-pandemic I enjoyed traveling, whether near or far, as much as possible. Currently I am spending my spare time learning to bake, attending Zoom parties, and getting my yard summer-ready.