

# Legal Team Action Roles

## Office Roles

### **Information Coordinator:**

The job of the IC is one of the most challenging. It involves:

- Having a good overall sense of what's happening both in the streets and in the office
- Knowing how the office systems are set up, how they are working or not working, and changing them in order to make them more effective
- Determining what info has been sufficiently corroborated and should be put on the Street Updates wall chart
- Coordinating volunteers, and
- Handling difficult situations, possibly including but not limited to: irate callers, person shortages, reticent lawyers, needy arrestees, and confused, sleep-deprived, or slacking volunteers.

Also, in large, complex actions:

- Communicating between the Legal Observer Dispatch center and the legal team office
- Calling and dispatching Lawyers with a legal team member (Away Teams)
- Taking calls from the Legal Team (if there is a designated line for them to call),
- Deciding what information needs to be conveyed to lawyers, and
- Prioritizing lawyer visits (to where, to whom).

One of the hardest things to do efficiently is to get important information from the phones to the update charts. Whatever the IC decides, the most important thing is that she communicates with the volunteers about what they should be doing to help you facilitate the flow of information. In large actions, it is helpful to have at least two ICs, with at least one in the office at all times.

Other information systems you may want to think about:

- How and where to compile arrestee questions, requests and messages 1) for lawyers and 2) for others
- How to make sure important information get communicated between lawyers and the legal team
- Where to keep Police Misconduct Reports and other sensitive information
- How to make sure the AG legal support person information is being updated

### **Media Flak**

In a mass action scenario, the legal office will receive a lot of media calls. Because whatever we say to the media can be used against us and against those arrested, the legal team must be very careful when talking with the media. Volunteers should refer all media calls to the flak or an available legal team member.

All members of the legal team should:

- Consense on talking points that everyone will use when necessary
- Go to a media training,
- Feel comfortable with referring calls to the media team for the action or asking journalists to call back at a later time (especially when the office is busy).

The talking points regarding Legal Solidarity should be shared with the media team in order to ensure the safety of arrestees and members of the legal team

### **Office Elf**

It is important to keep people alive and healthy. This often gets overlooked. The Office Elf makes sure:

- People are eating and sleeping
- There is food in the office and meals prepared
- The office is a relatively sane, calm and orderly space.
- The office rules are followed.

## “Away Team” Roles

### **On the Streets**

It's important to have legal team members or representatives on the streets in order to:

- Build trust and confidence in legal team
- Troubleshoot — go to places where civil disobedience and/or mass arrest is occurring in order to act as a police liaison (*only* if there isn't one already), take notes, and be reliable witnesses
- Pass out stickers and other legal info
- Give updates to demonstrators on plans of police, numbers of arrests, and activity in courts
- *Call legal office with updates from streets!*

\*Note: It's nice to have lawyers on the street with legal team members, but it is not crucial and should be the lowest priority in assigning lawyers to tasks. Also, lawyers sometimes get worried about becoming witnesses to cases they may work on later.

### **Jail Visits**

Depending on the city and the circumstances you are in, activist legal team members may or may not be able to do jail visits with lawyers. If they can, they will be able to:

- Get pertinent but legally sensitive info from arrestees
- Give arrestees emotional and moral support
- Build trust and confidence in legal team and in each other
- Share information from other arrestees
- Share information about action on streets, about activity in courts
- *Call legal office with updates from jails!*

If arrestees are using Jail Solidarity, legal pairs can:

- Arrange group meetings
- Arrange group negotiations
- Facilitate communication amongst all arrestees about strategies, tactics, demands, and negotiating positions
- *Call legal office with updates from jails!*

If activists cannot go into jails with lawyers, there are other options. The legal team might choose to send a member down to the jail to meet with the lawyer before and after the visit. They might also choose to get people in to do jail visits one-on-one. The purpose of these would not be to discuss their case or specific situation, but to give moral and emotional support to the arrestee.

### **Outside the Jail — Jail Outtake**

- Give emotional and moral support to activists being released from jail
- Build trust and confidence in legal team and in each other
- Have everyone released fill out detainee forms
- Have everyone fill out police misconduct reports
- Photograph/videotape and document injuries
- Take statements on tape recorder
- Give people being released information about free clinics, continuing contact info for the legal team, and other info they might need
- *Call legal office with updates!*, and
- Help people find rides home, help organize a jail vigil, etc.

## **Courthouse/Arraignments**

- Get as much information about defendants as possible including:
  - ◆ name
  - ◆ case number
  - ◆ charge
  - ◆ plea/demur
  - ◆ arraignment, pretrial or other hearing date
  - ◆ conditions of release
  - ◆ bail
  - ◆ judge
  - ◆ prosecuting/city attorney
  - ◆ courtroom number
- Give emotional and moral support to defendants and their friends
- Help build trust and confidence in the legal team
- Network with lawyers, and
- *Call legal office with updates from courts!*

## **Negotiation**

If practicing Jail or Court Solidarity, a legal team member might be needed to help with negotiations. As a member of the negotiation team, they would:

- Help convey to the prosecutor the positions of the activists
- Make sure lawyers are accurately representing the positions of the activists
- Help convey the strength of solidarity and the trust and confidence the arrestees have in each other
- *Call legal office with updates!*

## **About Information Sharing**

Information sharing is one of the most difficult things to do effectively in an action legal team. Information sharing is challenging within the office and also between the legal away teams and the legal office. Having office systems set up in advance and well-trained volunteers will greatly help internal information sharing. Daily meetings, good cell phones, and designated check-in times are ways that might facilitate information flow between away and office teams.