



REFUGEE HEALTH & ASYLUM COLLABORATIVE

HEAL Forensic Evaluation Clinic: Memo for Immigration Attorneys

Introduction to HEAL: The HEAL Refugee Health and Asylum Collaborative is a partnership among Johns Hopkins University, Esperanza Center, Asylee Women Enterprise, and Loyola University Maryland to increase access to forensic physical and psychological evaluations, mental health care, and other direct services to survivors of torture and trauma seeking humanitarian protection in the United States.

HEAL Forensic Evaluation Clinic: The Forensic Evaluation Clinic offers comprehensive, pro-bono physical and psychological evaluations for clients with affirmative and defensive asylum cases, U and T visa cases, VAWA cases, and other legal proceedings related to immigration. The purpose of these physical and psychological evaluations is to document objective findings on examination and assess the degree to which they are consistent with a client's reported history of trauma.

Logistics: Located at Esperanza Center (430 S Broadway, Baltimore, MD), the Forensic Evaluation Clinic has clinic days typically on the 2nd and 4th Tuesday afternoons of every month from 4PM-7:30PM and ad hoc Friday clinics 1-4PM. An evaluation typically takes 3-4 hours and may require an additional follow-up evaluation.

Expectations:

- The attorney will be the point-of-contact for all client communications; Generally, HEAL will not directly coordinate with your client.
- Prompt email communication by both parties is necessary for efficient scheduling.
- Evaluators are available to testify in court on a case-by-case basis.
- Please share with us the legal outcomes of cases – this is essential for our monitoring and evaluation, and news of successful outcomes is the most rewarding part for our work.

Referral:

- Prior to initial referral, draft the client's personal statement or declaration.
- Fill out the [referral form](#) in its entirety – all of the details are necessary to plan evaluations.
- In the referral form, clearly detail any and all physical and psychological consequences of persecution. This information is critical for determining the type of evaluation (physical, gynecologic, psychological, neuropsychological, combined, etc.).
- Referrals should be submitted at least 2-4 weeks before the requested evaluation date. In certain cases, we are able to accommodate urgent cases.
- A Review Committee will assess the referral prior to committing to the evaluation. We will reach out for clarifying questions to better understand a particular case.

Scheduling

- Evaluations are triaged according to the urgency of legal proceedings (e.g., impending court date)
- A draft of the client's personal statement or declaration should be submitted at least 1 week before the evaluation date to allow the evaluation team to review the case. **If your client is scheduled but you are not able to provide HEAL with a draft declaration at least 1 week beforehand, we may need to postpone their evaluation.**
- Please note any special accommodation for the client.
- A reminder email will be sent to legal counsel and evaluation team 1 week prior to the evaluation date. The email contains crucial clinic information **that needs to be shared with the client.**
- In case of no-shows, HEAL Forensic Evaluation Clinic may not be at capacity to accommodate rescheduled appointments. Please confirm client availability.

Evaluation

- An evaluator team typically consists of the primary evaluator leading the evaluation, one or two assistants to take notes, and an interpreter (if requested).
- Prior to the forensic evaluation, legal counsel should explain to the client the purpose and content of the forensic evaluation. While our evaluators strive for trauma-informed care, forensic evaluations can be mentally and emotionally taxing for clients, especially if they are unprepared for the sensitive nature of the interview.
- In general, HEAL Forensic Clinic provides interpretation services for the evaluation. Please specify if your client speaks a particular dialect of a given language.

Affidavit

- We generally require at least 4-6 weeks of time following an evaluation to draft the affidavit.
- The lead evaluator will follow up with you directly regarding the details of the evaluation to coordinate revisions and discuss any areas requiring further clarification or coordination.

Checklist for legal counsel

- Draft client personal statement or declaration.
- Submit [referral form](#).
- Schedule evaluation date with client and submit personal statement or draft declaration 1-2 weeks prior.
- Communicate to client the purpose and content of forensic evaluations.
- Receive logistics summary email 1 week prior to evaluation.
- Remind client of evaluation date and location. HEAL cannot always re-schedule following a no-show.
- Post-evaluation: Coordinate with primary evaluator directly to review the draft evaluation affidavit and discuss any areas in need of clarification/revision.
- Inform HEAL of legal outcomes.