



THE NEW YORK BAR FOUNDATION

2026 TRUSTS AND ESTATES LAW SECTION FELLOWSHIP

The New York Bar Foundation is pleased to announce the ***2026 Trusts and Estates Law Section Fellowship*** which has been established by the Foundation through a gift from the Trusts and Estates Law Section of the New York State Bar Association. The Fellowship will be awarded to four first-year (1L) or second-year (2L) law students who are currently enrolled in law schools in the State of New York to work in trusts and estates law positions in the public sector in the State of New York during the summer of 2026.

Fellowship Program Goals

The Fellowship Program will provide students with an opportunity to experience trusts and estates law practice. The ultimate goal of the Fellowship is to create a network and forge relationships among trusts and estates law attorneys throughout the State of New York. Through the Fellowship, the student will be provided a meaningful and appropriately supervised work experience in the **Chambers of the Honorable Deborah Kearns of Albany County Surrogate's Court** OR in the **Chambers of the Honorable Rita Mella of New York County Surrogate's Court** OR in the **Chambers of the Honorable Rosemarie Montalbano of Kings County Surrogate's Court** OR in the **Chambers of the Honorable Mary Keib Smith of Onondaga County Surrogate's Court**.

The Fellowship

1. The Fellowship will be awarded as follows:
 - a. \$7,500 to at least one student to spend the summer of 2026 (10 weeks) working on trusts and estates law matters in the Chambers of the Honorable Deborah Kearns of Albany County Surrogate's Court
 - b. \$7,500 to at least one student to spend the summer of 2026 (10 weeks) working on trusts and estates law matters in the Chambers of the Honorable Rita Mella of New York County Surrogate's Court
 - c. \$7,500 to at least one student to spend the summer of 2026 (10 weeks) working on trusts and estates law matters in the Chambers of the Honorable Rosemarie Montalbano of Kings County Surrogate's Court
 - d. \$7,500 to at least one student to spend the summer of 2026 (10 weeks) working on trusts and estates law matters in the Chambers of the Honorable Mary Keib Smith of Onondaga County Surrogate's Court

2. The Fellow will be a guest member of the NYSBA Trusts and Estates Law Section for one year starting with the award of the Fellowship.
3. The Fellow will be invited to attend Executive Committee meetings of the NYSBA Trusts and Estates Law Section during the fall 2026 meeting. The Fellow's travel costs to the meeting will be reimbursed by the Section.
4. The Fellowship recipient will be announced in March, 2026.

Eligibility

The Fellowship is open to all first-year (1L) and second-year (2L) students as of the fall 2025 semester who are enrolled in a law school in the State of New York, who intend to practice law in New York State upon graduation, and who are capable of fulfilling the requested work hours and responsibilities. Fellowship finalists may be interviewed in person.

Fellowship Length

The Fellowship will take place during the summer of 2026 for a period of ten weeks from **June 2026 to August 2026**. The work requirement per week is 35 hours at the minimum but should not exceed 40 hours.

Location of Fellowship

The 2026 Fellowships are located in the following courts: the Chambers of the Honorable Deborah Kearns of Albany County Surrogate's Court OR in the Chambers of the Honorable Rita Mella of New York County Surrogate's Court OR in the Chambers of the Honorable Rosemarie Montalbano of Kings County Surrogate's Court OR in the Chambers of the Honorable Mary Keib Smith of Onondaga County Surrogate's Court.

Fellowship Requirement

At the conclusion of the Fellowship, the recipient will be required to produce a summary evaluation report that may be produced as an article in the Trusts and Estates Law Section Newsletter and/or the Foundation's Newsletter.

Payment of Fellowship

The student will receive \$3,750 during the month of June from The Foundation with the remaining \$3,750 paid to the student during the month of August.

Housing and Other Expense

Housing, transportation, and all other expenses to participate in the Fellowship will be provided by the student.

Fellowship Application Requirements

The applicant **must** submit the following as a single PDF file:

1. A completed application (application form below)
2. Cover letter of interest
3. Unofficial undergraduate and law school transcripts
4. Resume
5. Two letters of recommendation
6. One writing sample on any topic related to the law. The writing sample must be at least five pages but shall not exceed 10 typed pages double-spaced.

Deadline

The completed application must be submitted by email on or before **Monday, February 16, 2026.**

Format

Emailed files will be accepted in single PDF format only.

Judging

Criteria for judging applications will be:

1. Content and quality of application materials
2. Demonstrated interest in trusts and estates law
3. Work experience
4. Academic record
5. Leadership experience
6. Extracurricular activities and community service
7. Quality of written expression
8. Maturity, integrity and professionalism
9. Any other relevant factors

Submission

The completed application must be submitted by email on or before **Monday, February 16, 2026.**

Email submissions should be sent to [**Ldorr@tnybf.org**](mailto:Ldorr@tnybf.org)

Please include 'Trusts & Estates Fellowship' on the subject line.

About the **TRUSTS AND ESTATES LAW SECTION**
of the NEW YORK STATE BAR ASSOCIATION

The Trusts and Estates Law Section is actively involved in all aspects of estate practice by analyzing topical issues, drafting new legislation and providing relevant continuing legal education to practitioners. The Section has been in the forefront of proposing significant legislation which has enhanced the practice of trusts and estates law, such as the creation of unified forms throughout the Surrogate's Court system referred to as "HOT DOCs" and ratification of the attorney-client privilege between counsel and a fiduciary. It is enormously rewarding to play a role in the development of the law which governs the trusts and estates law practice.

For more information about the Trusts and Estates Law Section of the New York State Bar Association, go to

<https://nysba.org/committees/trusts-estates-law-section/>

About **THE NEW YORK BAR FOUNDATION**

Founded in 1950, The New York Bar Foundation is dedicated to aiding educational, direct legal services, and charitable projects aimed at meeting the law-related needs of the public and the profession. The Foundation solicits charitable contributions and provides funding for the following purposes:

- Increasing public understanding of the law
- Improving the justice system and the law
- Facilitating the delivery of legal services
- Enhancing professional competence and ethics

For more information about The New York Bar Foundation, go to

www.tnybf.org



2026 Trusts and Estates Law Section Fellowship

*Provided by The New York Bar Foundation through a gift from the
Trusts and Estates Law Section of the New York State Bar Association*

APPLICATION FORM

Name: _____

Permanent Address: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

School Address: (if different) _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Law School attending: _____

___ Day student ___ Evening student

Year of Law School Study as of December 1, 2025: _____

Intent to practice in New York in trusts and estates: _____

Please indicate the location where you will be available to pursue the Fellowship:

___ Chambers of The Honorable Deborah Kearns **OR** ___ Chambers of The Honorable Rita Mella **OR**

___ Chambers of The Honorable Rosemarie Montalbano **OR** ___ Chambers of The Honorable Mary Keib Smith

Prior Education

College Name	Address	Major	Dates Attended	Degree
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

Include the following materials with this application as a single PDF file:

1. A cover letter which indicates your interest in the practice of trusts and estates law and the receipt of this Fellowship.
2. An undergraduate and law school transcript. (Transcripts need not be official; finalists may be asked to provide official transcripts.)
3. A resume describing your prior employment and other relevant activities and qualifications.
4. Two letters of recommendation. (These may be the same as used for law school applications.)
5. One writing sample on any topic related to the law. (Must be at least five but shall not exceed 10 double-spaced typewritten pages.)

Application Deadline:

Completed application must be submitted by email on or before **Monday, February 16, 2026.**
Only single PDF files will be accepted.

Email submissions should be sent to Ldorr@tnybf.org

Please include ‘Trusts & Estates Fellowship’ on the subject line.

Certification

I hereby certify that all of the statements contained, and information provided in this application, and in the attachments hereto, are truthful, to the best of my knowledge, and that I meet the eligibility requirements for the 2026 Trusts and Estates Law Section Fellowship.

Applicant's Signature

Date

Where did you hear of TNYBF Fellowship Opportunity? _____