

PRO BONO IN A NUTSHELL - HOW YOU CAN GET INVOLVED

Pro bono is a specialized form of public service that involves a licensed attorney using his or her unique legal skills to benefit indigent persons or groups serving low-income individuals who cannot afford legal services. As opposed to general community service, examples of pro bono service include:

Pro Bono: Counseling an indigent consumer about the terms of a rent-to-own furniture contract

Public Service: Coordinating a community drive to collect used furniture for the poor

Pro Bono: Mentoring a new lawyer as he or she handles his or her first pro bono referral

Public Service: Mentoring an underprivileged teenager

Pro Bono: Membership on the board of directors of a poverty law program

Public Service: Membership on the board of directors of a nonprofit opera company

Where can I volunteer to help low-income Texans?

In major metropolitan areas, start by contacting:

- **Volunteer Legal Services of Central Texas (Austin):** VLS attorneys help low-income clients with issues such as wrongful evictions or foreclosures, disability benefits, wills, family law and guardianships. For more information, visit www.vlsoct.org/volunteer.
- **Dallas Volunteer Attorney Program (Dallas):** DVAP volunteer attorneys assist low-income clients with benefits, consumer, employment, family, housing, landlord-tenant, probate, real property, tax and wills matters by providing advice, brief legal services and/or full representation. To learn more, visit www.dallasbar.org/dvap.
- **Houston Bar Association's Houston Volunteer Lawyers Program (Houston):** HVLP offers volunteer attorneys a wide range of pro bono opportunities in both family and non-family law, such as divorce, collection and repossession, DTPA (small claims only), bankruptcy, IRS matters, estate and incapacity planning, property law and non-profit assistance. For more information, visit www.hvlp.org/volunteers.
- **San Antonio Community Justice Program (San Antonio):** The CJP accepts uncontested matters such as divorce, child custody modifications, guardianship proceedings, bankruptcy, simple landlord/tenant disputes, probate matters and wills. To learn more, visit www.sabar.org/cjp.
- **Texas C-BAR (statewide):** Texas C-BAR provides free legal assistance to Texas nonprofits working to improve the quality of life in low-income neighborhoods. Experienced transactional attorneys can help these nonprofit organizations with their real estate, tax, corporate, and employment law needs. To learn more, visit www.texasbar.org/attorneys.

For more opportunities statewide:

- Contact the State Bar's Legal Access Division at (512) 427-1855 or probono@texasbar.com to be directed to opportunities in your area.
- Contact your local legal aid office.

See the reverse side to learn about the benefits of volunteering with an approved legal services organization.

STATE BAR SUPPORT PROVIDED TO PRO BONO ATTORNEYS

- **State Bar Malpractice Insurance Network** pays premiums for professional liability insurance for more than 55 legal aid and pro bono service programs throughout Texas. The insurance covers staff attorneys and pro bono volunteers for cases taken through approved legal aid and pro bono service programs. The State Bar Legal Access Division administers the network.
- **Tuition Waivers** to TexasBarCLE courses are available for pro bono attorneys who are nominated by approved legal aid or pro bono service programs for their service.
- **Free Membership in the Pro Bono College** of the State Bar for attorneys who contribute a minimum of 75 hours (or paralegals who contribute a minimum of 50 hours) of eligible pro bono legal services in a year. Benefits include a one-year free subscription to the TexasBarCLE Online Library (a \$295 value); a certificate signed by the State Bar President and the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Texas; a subscription to the *LegalFront* e-newsletter published by the State Bar Legal Access Division; recognition at the State Bar Annual Meeting and reduced tuition at the 3-day Annual Poverty Law Conference sponsored by the State Bar Legal Services Support Division.
- **State Bar Pro Bono Mentor Program** provides up to 5 hours of MCLE credit (including 1 hour of ethics) to attorneys participating as a “mentor” or “mentee” when handling a pro bono case for an approved legal aid or pro bono service program.
- **Access to the Language Access Fund** for free telephonic, on-site, or video remote interpretation as well as document translation in pro bono cases taken through approved legal aid and pro bono service programs.

For more information about any of the aforementioned programs, please visit

www.texasbar.com/probono, call 512-427-1855 or

email probono@texasbar.com.