

# **The Call to Pro Bono Service**

*By Michael Hayes, YLD Chair of the Philadelphia Bar Association*

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The American Bar Association has issued a call for every attorney in the private practice of law to perform, at a minimum, 50 hours of pro bono legal service annually. Similarly, Rule 6.1 of the Pennsylvania Rules of Professional Conduct provides that we, as lawyers “should render public interest legal service,” in the form of pro bono representations persons who cannot afford legal representation and/or “public service or charitable groups or organizations, by service in activities for improving the law, the legal system or the legal profession,” and by financial support to public interest legal organizations.

Heeding the ABA’s call to action, and in keeping with our ethical responsibilities as lawyers under Rule 6.1, the Young Lawyers Division of the Philadelphia Bar Association has created a “Program for the Annual Voluntary Certification of Pro Bono Legal Services for Young Lawyers.”

Our Philadelphia YLD Voluntary Certification Program has dual, interrelated purposes. First, we hope to encourage more young lawyers to provide pro bono legal services to our community. Second, we wish to publicly recognize the often-unheralded volunteer efforts of our members who work behind the scenes, using their legal acumen to represent those who cannot afford legal services, educate the public about the law and our profession, and provide assistance to charitable organizations.

Commencing in January 2007, the Executive Committee of the Young Lawyers Division of the Philadelphia Bar Association shall make an annual, formal invitation to our members to submit online forms certifying their provision of at least 50 hours of pro bono legal services during the previous calendar year. We will then compile all of the online certifications and provide public recognition, in the Philadelphia Bar Reporter and elsewhere, to each of our members who heeds the call to give back to our community through the provision of pro bono legal services.

For purposes of our Voluntary Certification Program, “pro bono legal services” includes not only the provision of traditional legal services to those who are unable to pay, but also the provision of any other volunteer services to the community requiring the use of one’s legal acumen. This definition is purposely intended to include the provision of volunteer services (as counsel or board member) to charitable organizations, as well as education of the public regarding the law and/or our profession. Not coincidentally, young lawyer volunteer efforts in furtherance of almost all of our Philadelphia YLD public service activities, including the annual John S. Bradway Philadelphia High School Mock Trial Competition, Lawyer in the Classroom sessions, People’s Law School seminars, Legal Line programs and Law Week events fall within the definition of “pro bono legal services” for purposes of our Voluntary Certification Program.

We, as a Division of the Philadelphia Bar Association, believe that the need for pro bono legal services has never been greater, both for our society and our profession. We consider our

Voluntary Certification Program an important step towards meeting those growing needs, and sincerely hope that the leadership of the Young Lawyers Division of the Pennsylvania Bar Association will consider taking our voluntary certification program, or a similar certification program, state-wide.