

*“Equal justice under law is not just the caption on the façade of the Supreme Court building. It is perhaps the most inspiring ideal of our society....It is fundamental that justice should be the same, in substance and availability, without regard to economic status.”*

*Former United States Supreme Court  
Justice Lewis Powell, Jr.*

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## **LACKAWANNA PRO BONO, INC. FACT SHEET**

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### **What is Lackawanna Pro Bono’s mission?**

Lackawanna Pro Bono provides free legal services to the poor by arranging for local attorneys to volunteer their professional services to financially eligible individuals and families who have serious civil legal matters.

### **Why is pro bono representation needed?**

The American Bar Association has estimated that 80% of America's poor are unable to obtain representation when they have serious civil legal problems. Although government funded legal aid programs work hard to serve the indigent, insufficient funding means that these programs have far too few attorneys to meet the huge need, while conflicts of interest and regulatory restrictions force them to deny services to many people who are experiencing legal crises. This is true here in Lackawanna County as it is elsewhere in the country.

### **What is Lackawanna Pro Bono, Inc.'s purpose and history?**

A 501(c)(3) corporation, Lackawanna Pro Bono was founded in 1997 by Attorneys Carlene R. Gallo, Robert T. Gownley, Jr., and Jill H. Miller, with the support of the Lackawanna Bar Association, in order to increase the amount and scope of pro bono representation in Lackawanna County.

The organization operates from a small office in downtown Scranton, with a staff consisting of two full time employees who administer the program and coordinate the volunteers. Its annual budget is approximately \$100,000 and it is governed by a 13 member board of directors.

### **Who does the organization serve?**

Lackawanna Pro Bono’s clients are men and women of all ages and diverse ethnic groups and include the working poor, the physically and mentally challenged, recipients of unemployment compensation and public assistance, and the homeless. In order to qualify for services, a person’s household income may not exceed 125 per cent of the federal poverty guidelines and the

household's assets must not exceed certain limits. Services are primarily for Lackawanna County residents. The legal problems they face include the following:

- ◆ Landlord-tenant
- ◆ Debtor-creditor problems
- ◆ Mortgage foreclosures
- ◆ Unemployment compensation
- ◆ Termination of social security or SSI benefits
- ◆ Uninsured tort defense
- ◆ Family law (for example, custody/visitation, protection from abuse and child support)
- ◆ Other serious civil matters

One of the people Lackawanna Pro Bono served this year was a man whose unemployment compensation benefits had been denied because his former employer claimed that he quit his job without good reason to do so. After his benefits were terminated, the client was left with an income of less than \$300 per month while he searched for another job. Lackawanna Pro Bono matched him to a pro bono attorney who, at a hearing, successfully argued that the client was legally entitled to receive unemployment benefits. As a result, the client's benefits were restored, providing him with income to cover some of his basic needs while he continued to look for work.

#### **How many people has Lackawanna Pro Bono, Inc. served?**

Since the program began operating in the fall of 1997, Lackawanna Pro Bono, Inc. has obtained pro bono attorneys for its clients in more than 1,900 cases, helping approximately 4,500 people.

#### **How many Lackawanna County attorneys participate in pro bono services?**

- ◆ During the time Lackawanna Pro Bono has been operating, more than 300 local attorneys have represented one or more pro bono clients in cases that Lackawanna Pro Bono, Inc. referred to them.
- ◆ Other local attorneys have supported Lackawanna Pro Bono, Inc. through contributions to the organization's operating budget.
- ◆ Local attorneys also perform pro bono work through projects sponsored by the Middle District Bankruptcy Bar Association and the local Federal Bar Association and informally, without referrals from an organized pro bono program.

#### **What are some of Lackawanna Pro Bono, Inc.'s other accomplishments?**

- ◆ In May 1998, the Pennsylvania Bar Foundation selected Lackawanna Pro Bono, Inc. as the recipient of its Louis J. Goffman Award for outstanding pro bono service to the community.
- ◆ In April 2000, Lackawanna Pro Bono, Inc.'s pro bono attorneys were selected as the recipient of the J.C. Penney Company Golden Rule Award, in the group category, for outstanding volunteer service in the community.

- ◆ In October 2000, the United Nations Association – USA of Northeastern Pennsylvania honored Lackawanna Pro Bono, Inc. with a Certificate of Achievement.
- ◆ On September 12, 2003, the Greater Scranton Interdependence Day Committee presented Lackawanna Pro Bono, Inc. with the Liberty Award for outstanding citizen action and service.
- ◆ In the spring of 2004, the Pennsylvania Bar Foundation awarded its Louis J. Goffman Award to Attorney Carlene R. Gallo for her work as President of Lackawanna Pro Bono, Inc.
- ◆ In 2005, Lackawanna Pro Bono, Inc. was recognized by the Northeastern Pennsylvania Nonprofit & Community Assistance Center (NCAC) as a second place winner in the 2005 Community Awards, Health & Human Services category.

### **How is Lackawanna Pro Bono funded?**

Lackawanna Pro Bono has received generous grants annually from the Lackawanna Bar Association, the PA IOLTA Board, and North Penn Legal Services. In addition, the organization has been the recipient of grants from various foundations and contributions from individuals, law firms, and local financial institutions. For the past three years, funds have also been raised through an annual golf tournament.

For more information, contact Lackawanna Pro Bono, Inc. at (570) 961-2714  
or 5<sup>th</sup> Floor Bank Towers, 321 Spruce St., Scranton, PA 18503.

*The official registration and financial information of Lackawanna Pro Bono, Inc. may be obtained from the Pennsylvania Department of State by calling toll-free, within Pennsylvania, 1-800-732-0999.  
Registration does not imply endorsement.*