

Resolution of Allegheny County Bar Association
Board of Governors

Pro Bono Service Policy

Whereas, Rule 6.1 of the Pennsylvania Rules of Professional Conduct states that every lawyer has a professional responsibility to render public interest legal services;

Whereas, the importance of Pro Bono service has been given charter recognition in the By-Laws of this Association through the creation of the Public Service Committee, whose charge is to assist the members of the Association in fulfilling their ethical responsibilities to provide pro bono services to persons who are indigent;

Whereas, in 1990 this Association passed a Resolution (“ACBA Pro Bono Resolution”) encouraging all lawyers to render at least 50 hours of public interest legal service each year;

Whereas, many lawyers in Allegheny County have not met this professional goal;

Whereas, the unmet need for legal representation for the poor and near-poor remains severe and is growing;

Whereas, this Association recognizes that despite the cooperation and support of law firms, including corporate and governmental legal departments, substantial occupational and practical barriers to lawyers’ efforts to honor their ethical obligation to render public interest legal service remain and must be overcome;

Whereas, this Association recognizes and encourages public service activities including those that do not entail the performance of legal work (e.g., community volunteerism, most bar association activities and most service on the boards of non-profits), but further recognizes that these efforts are often distinct from pro bono legal efforts designed to deliver direct legal services to the poor and disadvantaged;

Whereas, this Association believes each firm and legal department should more actively encourage and facilitate their lawyers' contributions in some meaningful measure to the delivery of direct pro bono legal services to the poor and disadvantaged;

Whereas, this Association believes that the adoption of pro bono policies by law firms and legal departments, and the incorporation of certain provisions therein, will substantially enhance the rate of participation of their lawyers in pro bono legal representation activity.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Board of Governors of the Allegheny County Bar Association as follows:

1. The Association hereby renews its commitment to ensure the delivery of direct pro bono legal service to all persons in need but unable to pay for legal services.
2. The Association therefore renews its call to all Association lawyers, firms, and legal departments to meet the goals established in the ACBA Pro Bono Resolution and urges all association lawyers, law firms, and legal departments to encourage all of their lawyers, partners, as well as associates, to help provide direct pro bono legal service to the poor and disadvantaged.
3. The Association hereby adopts and urges each of its members and law firms to adopt the goal of having each lawyer contribute annually fifty hours of legal service to the poor and disadvantaged, or to organizations having as their primary purpose service or assistance to the poor and disadvantaged, whether by direct legal service, through cash or in-kind donations, or by a combination of these methods.
4. The Association calls upon each law firm and legal department in this County to develop and adopt a written pro bono policy and to include, in addition to their other commitments and statements, the following statements within their pro bono policies:
 - that senior lawyers are encouraged to set an example by becoming involved in pro bono representations;
 - that the firm or legal department will perform an aggregate amount of pro bono legal work that equals or exceeds an average of 50 hours per lawyer each year;

- that time spent on pro bono matters will be treated the same as time spent on legal work for fee-paying clients with respect to all matters, including but not limited to compensation, billable hour requirements, targets or guidelines (if any), and bonus eligibility;
 - that an individual lawyer's commitment to pro bono legal work will be considered favorably in his or her performance reviews and in personnel decisions;
 - that all newly hired lawyers are strongly encouraged to participate in at least one pro bono matter during their first year of employment ;
and
 - that the firm or legal department will publicize pro bono matters in any newsletters, written and electronic publications, or other internal and external communications.
5. The Executive Director and staff of the Association are authorized to take such reasonable steps as the Executive Director may determine to publish and distribute the ACBA Pro Bono Resolution and this Resolution and to encourage their adoption.