

LUZERNE COUNTY PRO BONO OPTIONS, January 8, 2010

A. Luzerne County Pro Bono

Generally, North Penn Legal Services (NPLS) has pro bono panels for several case types: property reassessment; support; limited debt related issues. NPLS also have a pro se divorce clinic. Applicants must apply for legal aid and if appropriate, NPLS refers them to one of the above services.

In addition, there are pro bono opportunities within Luzerne County not affiliated with NPLS. These include several church organizations including: St. Theresa's in Shavertown and Back Mountain Harvest Assembly in Carverton.

The Luzerne County Bar Association currently has a special pro bono initiative that Atty. Joe Burke is working on with Atty. Matt Cartwright and Judge Grim, who has been assigned by the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania to handle the 6,500 vacated juvenile cases in the County as part of the Federal Corruption Probe Scandal here. The Supreme Court is permitting some 50 juvenile cases to be retried by the local D.A. The Bar is launching a special pro bono initiative to be sure that each of these juveniles is represented this time by proper legal counsel. But, this program is, of course, exceptional, and not a regular program of the local bar.

B. Other Local Pro Bono Options

1. Middle District Bankruptcy Bar Association (Northern Tier)

The Middle District Bankruptcy Bar Association (MDBBA) has established a pro bono program that provides attorneys to represent indigent parties in civil litigation after the Court has preliminarily evaluated the case and made a determination to seek counsel for the unrepresented indigent party. The MDBBA's pro bono chair is responsible for acting upon the Court's requests for volunteer attorneys.

Assignments generally are not made to a given attorney more frequently than twice a year, assuming that the volume of cases and the number of panel attorneys permit this approach. Upon occasion, the Court may also refer requests for pro bono counsel to Betty Abraham, Pro Bono Coordinator for North Penn Legal Services, Inc., for a possible referral to the MDBBA's pro bono panel.

Or, in the alternative, to Mollie Oleyar, Administrator of the MDBBA, for referral to a member of the MDBBA panel for a low-cost private attorney.

For more information, please contact:

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2. Middle District Federal Bar Association

The Middle District Chapter of the Federal Bar Association has established a pro bono program that provides attorneys to represent indigent parties in civil litigation after the Court has preliminarily evaluated the case and made a determination to seek counsel for the unrepresented indigent party. The Chapter's pro bono chair is responsible for acting upon the Court's requests for volunteer attorneys.

Assignments generally are not made to a given attorney more frequently than once every five years, assuming that the volume of cases and the number of panel attorneys permit this approach. Another important feature of the program is the availability of a panel of mentors to assist volunteer attorneys in the mentors' specialized areas of practice.

For more information, please contact:

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