

PRO BONO OPTIONS, Dec. 9, 2009

A. Dauphin County Bar Association Pro Bono Programs

1. MidPenn Legal Services Referral Cases

The Referral Program is coordinated by the Bar Association Public Services Coordinator with the client scheduling handled by the MidPenn Legal Services intake staff. The Public Services Coordinator will email a message to each participating attorney to schedule the attorney to meet with two pro bono clients.

Once an attorney accepts the appointment time and date, MidPenn calls the attorney to determine what types of cases the attorney prefers. MidPenn makes every effort to match the pro bono attorney's interests and skills with the client's needs.

Roughly 50% of MidPenn's cases involve Family Law. Other areas of need are: Landlord/tenant, Bankruptcy, Consumer Law, Debt Collection, and Unemployment Compensation. The Program does not accept criminal or fee-generating matters. MidPenn Legal Services (MidPenn) staff screens each case to ensure that

- The client is income eligible,
- The case has at least "threshold" legal merit, and
- The case is appropriate to refer to a *pro bono* attorney.

Once the *pro bono* attorney has interviewed the client and reviewed the case, the attorney is free to make his or her own merit determination regarding the client's claim and, if ethically appropriate, decline further representation.

2. Special Projects

a. Pro Se Custody Clinics

In Dauphin County and throughout the country, the area of greatest pro bono need is in custody matters. To address that need locally, MidPenn Legal Services offers Pro Se Custody Clinics. The Clinics are held from 9 to 11 AM at the Bar Association building (which also houses the MidPenn Legal Services office). At each monthly Clinic, three to five pro bono attorneys assist ten to twenty low-income people. After a brief video presentation, the parents complete the forms to begin the custody process. The attorneys circulate throughout the room to answer questions and review completed forms. The Clinics require no advance preparation or ongoing responsibility - and pro bono attorney slots fill quickly!

b. Custody Mentorship Program

Despite the Clinics' success, MidPenn is still faced with custody clients in need of representation. The Custody Mentorship Program attempts to meet some of that need. Family law attorneys (Mentors) work with pro bono attorneys who have little or no family law experience. The Mentor and pro bono attorney take the first custody matter together. If the matter does not settle at conference (which only occurs in only about 20% of the cases), the Mentor agrees to represent the client at the hearing. The pro bono attorney takes the second custody matter independently - with the Mentor available for support.

c. Homeless Outreach Project

Through our Homeless Outreach Project, teams of three to five attorneys travel to three area soup kitchens to staff monthly "Legal Information" tables for two hour shifts. The participating attorneys

- Provide legal information from www.PaLawHelp.org, and

- Refer folks with legal issues (that can't be clarified with information and/or a phone call at the shelter) to MidPenn Legal Services.

A Pennsylvania Bar Insurance Fund Grant allowed us to purchase a laptop and wireless service for the participating attorneys to use to access legal information from www.PaLawHelp.org.

d Pro Bono Guardian Monitors

In 2007, we created the Pro Bono Guardian Monitors Project in response to Judge Hoover's request for assistance. Pro Bono Monitors became the court's "eyes and ears" to assure that incapacitated persons are not being personally or financially mistreated. Once a year, the assigned Monitor visits the guardian and ward, reviews records, and reports to the court on the forms provided. Barbara Lundgren, the Deputy Court Administrator for Orphans Court, manages the program and provide the Monitors with interview checklists and step-by-step instructions.

B. Other Local Pro Bono Programs

1. YWCA Domestic Violence Legal Center

The YWCA Domestic Violence Legal Center provides free civil legal assistance to victims of domestic violence who are unable to afford an attorney. Services include legal advocacy and attorney representation at hearings; ongoing legal assistance through continuances, settlement negotiations and contested hearings; drafting court documents and subpoenaing witnesses, photographs and medical records, when appropriate; legal options counseling; legal advocacy and accompaniments to domestic violence-related criminal and civil court proceedings; and community outreach and educational programs.

Usually pro bono attorneys with staff support assist with Protection From Abuse cases. The cases are closed after the PFA hearing and do not involve ongoing representation.

For more information, please contact:

Nichole M. Walters, Esquire or Codi Tucker, Esquire

YWCA Legal Center

114 Walnut Street

Harrisburg, PA 17101

(717) 724-0516 nwalters@ywcahbq.org

2. American Civil Liberties Union of Pennsylvania

The ACLU is an advocate of freedom, liberty, and equality. The ACLU engages in litigation, lobbying, and public education on an array of issues affecting civil liberties. The ACLU of Pennsylvania is always looking for volunteers to help respond to complaints, to do routine office tasks, to take legal cases, to write for its newsletters, and to do graphic design, among other things.

To volunteer, visit the Website link <http://www.aclupa.org/supportus/volunteer/> and fill out the [Volunteer Inquiry Form](#) to let the ACLU know how you would like to help!

For more information, please contact:

Valerie A. Burch, Esquire

105 N. Front Street, Suite 225

Harrisburg, PA 17101

717-236-6827 vburch@aclupa.org

3. Middle District Chapter Of The Federal Bar Association Pro Bono Program

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:

Stephen M. Greecher, Jr., Esquire
FBA Pro Bono Program Chair
Tucker, Arensberg, & Swartz
111 North Front Street
Harrisburg, PA 17108-0889
717-234-4121 (Direct dial) sgreecher@tuckerlaw.com

4. **SeniorLAW Center's Pennsylvania SeniorLAW HelpLine** -- Not currently taking new volunteers.

SeniorLAW Center's Pennsylvania SeniorLAW HelpLine (1-877-727-7529) is an exciting free legal service for older Pennsylvanians, providing free, confidential legal advice, information and referrals to senior citizens age 60 and older statewide. The HelpLine also offers a unique pro bono opportunity for Pennsylvania attorneys.

HelpLine volunteer attorneys engage in limited representation only, counseling senior citizens on the phone on a wide range of civil legal issues. No litigation or on-going representation is involved. Volunteers generally indicate their scheduling preferences as well as what areas of law they are comfortable discussing with seniors. Because the helpline serves seniors statewide, it welcomes volunteer attorneys across the state.

For more information, please contact

Sue Wasserkrug, Esquire
100 S. Broad Street, Suite 1810
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19110
215-988-1244 or 215-701-3216 swasserkrug@seniorlawcenter.org.

5. **Federal Court Pro Bono Mediation**

Federal Court Pro Bono Mediators meet with the lawyers and litigants in a confidential process to promote better communication, identify the party's respective interests and help develop options for settlement. Mediators may meet one or more times with the participants. At the conclusion of the mediation, the mediator submits a report to the Court indicating whether the mediation resulted in a settlement, but does not disclose any other details of the process.

To participate, an attorney/mediator must be a member of the Middle District Bar, have been admitted to practice law for at least ten years, and either (1) complete a two day training course on mediation techniques offered by the Court or (2) obtain a waiver of the training requirement from the Chief Judge.

For more information, please contact

Joe Barrett
ADR Coordinator
USDC, Pennsylvania Middle
(570) 207-5662 Joe_Barrett@pamd.uscourts.gov

6. **Legal Assistance to Military Personnel**

Pennsylvania offers several options for Legal Assistance for Military Personnel and their families. Volunteers assist in providing free legal services to members of our armed forces and their families.

General Information on Legal Assistance for the Military from the American Bar Association, including information on several CLE programs offered to volunteers by the ABA, may be found at:
<http://www.abanet.org/legalservices/lamp/home.html>

The Pennsylvania Bar Association has a statewide referral service in place. Assistance is provided to reservists and families in SSCRA, USERRA, and SGLI. Cases in the system are reviewed by JAGC lawyer. Free CLE training materials are available to volunteers. Check <http://www.pabar.org/Public/committees/MILITARY/Legal/>

For more information, please contact

David Trevaskis
100 South Street
Harrisburg, PA 17108-0186
800/932-0311 ext. 2236 David.Trevaskis@pabar.org

7. Wills for Heroes

A program cosponsored by the Pennsylvania Bar Association Young Lawyers Division, “Wills for Heroes” provides free basic estate planning documents to first responders in Pennsylvania.

“Wills for Heroes” provides police, fire and emergency medical personnel — those on the frontlines for our personal safety — the tools they need to prepare adequately for the future. Programs are staffed by lawyer volunteers and are conveniently offered to first responders at meeting halls and police and fire stations.

[Information for Lawyer Volunteers](#)
[Online Registration Form for Lawyer Volunteers](#)
[Wills for Heroes Foundation Web Site](#)

For more information, please contact

Pennsylvania Bar Association
Young Lawyers Division
800-932-0311 www.pabar.org/public/yld

8. Miller Center for Public Interest Advocacy

The Miller Center for Public Interest Advocacy at Penn State University Dickinson School of Law serves to foster students' understanding of and commitment to their obligation to serve the underrepresented. The Miller Center pairs law students who have expressed a desire to provide pro bono research with lawyers providing pro bono representation, Legal Service attorneys, public defenders, private attorneys appointed by the court to represent indigent defendants, public interest organizations, and pro bono programs that have requested assistance on a case or a particular issue. The Miller Center is looking for pro bono attorneys interested in working with law students on a projects.

View the latest issue of [The Public Interest Advocacy Newsletter](#)
For more information, please contact

Kate Cramer Lawrence
Director of Public Interest Programming
Dickinson School of Law
150 S. College Street
Carlisle PA 17013
(717) 240-5210
kmc32@dsl.psu.edu

C. Other Pro Bono Options Can be Found at ProBono.net <http://www.probono.net/oppsguide/>

D. Other Opportunities the Attorney Is Aware of

Sandy Ballard, Esquire
Public Services Coordinator
Dauphin County Bar Association
213 North Front Street
Harrisburg, PA 17101
(717) 232-7536

Please note: We do NOT have voice mail before 9 AM or after 5 PM.

Fax: 234-4582

sandy@dcba-pa.org

Visit our Website: www.dcba-pa.org