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Pro Bono Opportunity: Help Low-Income Women in Pennsylvania with Economic Security
Qualified Domestic Relations Order (QDRO) Pro Bono Program

The Mid-America Pension Rights Project (MA-PRP) is a program of Pro Seniors, Inc., a private, non-profit organization based in Cincinnati, Ohio, in conjunction with Elder Law of Michigan. The MA-PRP is funded in part by the U.S. Agency on Aging. The Project helps individuals with pension questions. We provide basic advice about pension law and rights, help find lost pensions, and help with survivor, and divorced spouse issues. We assist individuals free of charge. The project is staffed by licensed attorneys and the Ohio office helps residents of any age in Ohio, Tennessee Pennsylvania, and Kentucky, as well as any one who worked in these states or worked for a company with headquarters in these states. The Michigan office assists individuals in Michigan and Indiana. SeniorLAW Center, based in Philadelphia, is the Pennsylvania partner on this project, and connects callers to the Pennsylvania SeniorLAW HelpLine to the Pension Rights Project and services.

Many of our client are ex-spouses who need help in obtaining pension benefits. Whenever a divorce occurs and either or both spouses are entitled to pension benefits for employment during the marriage, the pension is an asset of the marriage that should be divided in the divorce. The decree specifies the name of the pension plan and states exactly how much the spouse is entitled to receive. Based on the decree, a QDRO needs to be sent to the pension plan for approval. Frequently, one or more steps of this process has not taken place, and ex-spouses are unable to access pension benefits they are entitled to receive, without legal assistance.

We are currently in need of pro bono legal services to provide assistance with drafting and filing of QDROs in various communities in Pennsylvania. These services will meet the critical and specialized needs of low-income clients, primarily women, who are divorced. Access to retirement benefits greatly improves the economic security of low-income women. We envision the pro bono service to include drafting QDROs, obtaining Pension Fund pre-qualification, obtaining signatures of the parties, approval and filing with the domestic relations court, submitting to the Pension Fund, and obtaining notice of qualification.

Family law practitioners with experience are sought to support this pro bono effort which will have enormous impact on the lives of low-income women. For more information, please contact David Trevaskis at the Pennsylvania Bar Association david.trevaskis@pabar.org, Bonnie Dahl at SeniorLAW Center, Philadelphia, PA bdahl@seniorlawcenter.org, or Jean Spring at Pro Seniors, Inc. jspring@proseniors.org.

*Helping with Pension and Retirement Benefit Problems in
Kentucky, Michigan, Ohio, Pennsylvania and Tennessee*

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