

WYOMING-SULLIVAN COUNTY PRO BONO OPTIONS, January 2010

A. Wyoming-Sullivan County Pro Bono Program

The Wyoming/Sullivan County Bar Association created a pro bono program in 2002. The program was created by sending out questionnaires to the bar members and asking them if they would be interested in participating in the program and then asking them to indicate the areas of law in which they would like to accept cases. The bar membership returned these questionnaires and any bar members that did not return the questionnaires were individually contacted by phone by the Pro Bono Committee Chairperson.

At this time, all of the attorneys in the Wyoming/Sullivan County Bar Association have agreed to participate in the pro bono program and have indicated the areas of law in which he or she would take cases. All new members are expected to participate in the pro bono program. No new member has yet refused to participate in the pro bono program.

The pro bono committee evaluates and identifies the current civil legal needs of the county through its partnership with the county office of North Penn Legal Services. The managing attorney for the Tunkhannock office of North Penn Legal Services is a member of the pro bono committee and provides the committee with statistics relative to the number and type of cases in Wyoming and Sullivan County needing pro bono referrals.

North Penn Legal Services conducts an initial screening for income eligibility and determination of a conflict of interest with Legal Services. If a case qualifies as income-eligible and Legal Services has a conflict of interest with the case, it is referred by Legal Services. If a litigant requests pro bono services from an individual member of the bar, the person is referred to Legal Services in order to go through the proper screening and referral processes in order to track the cases and maximize resources. The court and the prothonotary are made aware of the process and inform litigants of this as well.

For more information, please contact:

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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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FBA Pro Bono Program Chair

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