Options for Legal Aid During COVID-19

During the new reality that is coronavirus, many people feel as though there are limited legal aid options available. Unfortunately, the present situation is possibly when people need legal help the most. From questions about business interruption insurance to worries about credit card debts, many non-health-related problems have arisen due to this pandemic. Even though there have been news briefings about stimulus checks, these briefings have often only left people with more questions about what kind of aid they will be receiving. How do people know if they qualify? When will they get the money? How much will they be getting? Social distancing has already been economically taxing on many families who are not able to work from home, and adding legal fees to answer these questions is an entirely new burden. Although many feel as though there is no end in sight to the new legal issues that seemingly arise daily, there is pro bono legal aid available throughout Pennsylvania. Please visit PALawHelp.org if you are a client looking for support from dedicated attorneys across the Commonwealth. This website and the services offered are available all year, but the Pennsylvania Bar Association is taking extra steps now to recruit attorneys so that even more aid can be offered during this uncertain time.

Attorneys, this is the perfect time to volunteer. If you are willing to help, please visit PAProbono.net and sign up to provide legal advice. The Pennsylvania Bar Association also has a myriad of resources and options for volunteer programs on its COVID-19 page, which can be found at https://www.pabar.org/site/For-Lawyers/Pro-Bono-Services/Covid-19-Volunteers. Not only does the PBA have a hotline that answers thousands of calls each year from Pennsylvanians with legal questions, but it also has the Lawyers Saluting Veterans program, which provides legal aid to veterans free of charge. Additionally, in a partnership with Community Legal
Services and the PBA, the Clean Slate Review Project provides information and advice regarding the sealing of past criminal records. All of these programs provide a wealth of opportunities for people with legal questions to get prompt and informed responses, so please reach out using the websites above if you need the PBA’s services or what to volunteer.

As an intern with the PBA’s Pro Bono Office, I have seen firsthand the amazing work that counties all around the state do to offer legal services. Local community service has always been a large part of my life, but it is incredible to work with an organization that helps people on such a wide scale and with as many local branches as the PBA. The efforts of the PBA Pro Bono Office also extend beyond providing legal aid to clients; last week, I had the chance to partake in the Law Day activities that the office organized for middle school, high school, and college students around Pennsylvania. These programs not only get students to think about law as a profession, but they also get students to think about how the law impacts everyday life. However, to continue PBA programs and pro bono services, we need attorneys to sign up and offer their time to provide legal aid through PAProbono.net.

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