Remote Pro Bono Opportunities With Philadelphia Area Legal Aid Nonprofit Partners

Although the city's courts and administrative offices are closed due to the outbreak of COVID-19, Philadelphia's low-income residents, families, small businesses, and nonprofits are still facing daily challenges that threaten their basic human needs, such as shelter, safety, substance, health, and child custody. Area nonprofit public interest and civil legal aid organizations are operating remotely (click here to view a description of their remote operations and links to helpful resource pages and relevant materials) and have developed remote pro bono opportunities for volunteers who are interested in helping them meet the needs of their clients during this critical time. Below is a summary of some of these opportunities:

- **Community Legal Services (CLS)** is seeking volunteers to research and evaluate whether items are eligible to be removed from a client's criminal record. Training is provided. For more information, please contact Jessa Boehner at CLS via email at jboehner@clsphila.org.

- **Military Assistance Project (MAP)** provides free legal services to the military affiliated community in the form of pro bono consumer and selected veterans' administrative law services. MAP is seeking volunteer attorneys to help broaden the scope of its bankruptcy services for veterans due to the health/economic crisis. For more information and to volunteer, contact Dennis Miller at dmiller@militaryassistanceproject.org.

- **Philadelphia Legal Assistance (PLA)** has launched **The Unemployment Compensation (UC) Application Service**, a volunteer-operated hotline to assist people with applying for unemployment compensation who cannot use the on-line application due to lack of a computer or internet access. PLA has set up a system where volunteers will speak on the phone with a recently unemployed worker while accessing the unemployment compensation application on the volunteer's computer screen. The volunteer will walk the worker through the questions and prompts, input their answers, and address any points of confusion, especially around the question of why they are no longer working, which can be complicated for many workers. Volunteers may include attorneys, law students and paralegals. Training will be provided. Other language capabilities aside from English would be helpful. All volunteers must agree to the following:
  - Read all of the volunteer materials before beginning their assignment;
  - Speaking with people on the phone, and filing their unemployment claims (each call would take approximately 30 minutes);
  - Assisting people in determining the type of separation they have due to covid-19; and
  - Keeping the coordinator up to date about any issues and the volunteer's continuing availability.

  To participate as a volunteer for the UC Application Service Project, please sign up using this google form.

- **Philadelphia VIP** has developed a web page containing descriptions of pro bono opportunities in the following areas that are well suited for remote work: probate; wills and advance planning; small businesses and nonprofits; and deed transfers. This web page includes an overview of the expectations and commitment required by volunteers; guidance on how to communicate remotely with clients; links to detailed descriptions of available cases; and an online volunteer application. VIP is also launching an opportunity for volunteers to have one-hour consultations with small business and nonprofits in need of legal advice, including legal issues resulting from the COVID-19 crisis; VIP’s website will be updated with volunteer sign-up information by April 13.
- **SeniorLAW Center** has a diversity of remote pro bono opportunities to help seek justice for older people who are at the epicenter of the COVID-19 crisis. Several are below and more will be forthcoming on their website.
  - **Pro Bono Action for Community Impact in PA**: help pursue systemic change through pro bono in this partnership project of SeniorLAW Center and AARP, seeking research on best practices, model legislation and drafting of community education materials. SeniorLAW Center has a number of COVID-19 focused projects seeking legal memoranda and drafting one-page and web-based educational pieces for older Pennsylvanians. Two examples are 1) Pennsylvania's Health Care Agents and Representative Act and 2) Guidance for student loan co-signers facing default. If you are interested, please contact Renee Chenault Fattah at rchenaultfattah@seniorlawcenter.org or 215-701-3205.
  - **Assisting Seniors through the Pennsylvania SeniorLAW HelpLine**: SeniorLAW Center is providing an online training for volunteer attorneys to provide legal counseling through the Pennsylvania SeniorLAW HelpLine, a toll-free telephone service offering free, confidential legal advice, brief services, information and referrals to those 60 and over throughout Pennsylvania. This training focuses on common areas of law requested by callers and the professional responsibility requirements of pro bono and helpline service. Participants will be trained on the logistics of handling a HelpLine call. Each participant will be able to choose the area(s) of law on which they will focus when counseling senior callers. This is a limited representation opportunity. Volunteers make HelpLine calls remotely at times convenient to them. Volunteer attorneys are asked to view online trainings, which will be accessed along with the client referrals on SeniorLAW Center's online attorney portal. If interested, please contact Joanna Jarzebowska at jjarzebowska@seniorlawcenter.org or 215-701-3216. Please note, if SeniorLAW Center reaches capacity on the number of attorneys interested in volunteering on the PA SeniorLAW HelpLine, volunteers will be placed on a wait list.
  - **Assisting Seniors with Vital Life Planning Documents**: Volunteer to assist older adults 60 years and over to complete critical end of life planning documents through telephone-based services. Attorneys will draft life planning documents (Simple Will, Financial Power of Attorney, Health Care Power of Attorney, and Living Will; form documents provided). Notarization and witnessing will occur by e-notarization or final execution at a later date. Volunteers will complete a substantive online training and pro bono attorney online portal training. If interested, please contact Joanna Jarzebowska at jjarzebowska@seniorlawcenter.org or 215-701-3216.
  - **Grandparents Raising Grandchildren**: SeniorLAW Center seeks pro bono attorneys with family law experience for limited representation opportunities through their Grandparents Raising Grandchildren (GRG) Project. Services will be provided by telephone. Clients would be pre-screened via SeniorLAW Center's intake process before they are sent to a pro bono attorney for legal advice, information, counsel and, when appropriate, brief services. To participate, volunteers must complete a 90-minute video training. To learn more, please contact Janine Dunlap Kiah, Project Director, Pursuing Justice for Grandparents Raising Grandchildren in Pennsylvania, at 215.716.5071 or jkiah@seniorlawcenter.org.

*For more general information about Pro Bono Opportunities in Philadelphia, [click here](link). Additional resource information and pro bono opportunities are available at [www.paprobono.net](http://www.paprobono.net).*