The Legal Aid Society of Columbus and Southeastern Ohio Legal Services Pro Bono Program

The Legal Aid Society of Columbus and Southeastern Ohio Legal Services (“Legal Aid”) provide civil legal help for low-income individuals and seniors in Central and Southeastern Ohio. Legal Aid also operates a pro bono program that engages the private bar throughout our communities. In 2020, Legal Aid converted several of our pro bono programs to virtual formats so that we can continue to serve clients while minimizing health risks for volunteers, staff, and clients.

Benefits of Pro Bono Work

- **Training**: Legal Aid provides free, live CLEs on poverty law topics as well as online access to recordings.

- **Malpractice Coverage**: The Legal Aid malpractice policy provides primary coverage for pro bono cases and programs.

- **Mentors**: Legal Aid staff attorneys mentor volunteers who need additional support.

- **CLE Credit**: Attorneys can receive CLE credit for their pro bono hours donated through Legal Aid. Six hours of volunteering equate to one hour of CLE, and attorneys can earn up to six hours of CLE per reporting period.

Attorneys interested in handling cases or providing pro bono legal advice must be active and in good standing with the Supreme Court of Ohio. Corporate status, Emeritus, and New Lawyer Mentoring options are available. 1108
Volunteer Resource Center (VRC)
The VRC is a case referral program that utilizes two sets of volunteers: attorneys who accept litigation–oriented case referrals and in-house volunteers who sign up for weekly 3-hour shifts to handle client intake, case evaluation and referral of cases to the pro bono attorney panel. The VRC first contacts pro bono counsel to confirm availability and clear conflicts. Cases are screened for merit prior to referral.

HOUSING PROJECT
*Scope: Representing Tenants in Evictions*
Representation Includes: Municipal court hearings; settlement negotiations; motion practice; filing answers/counterclaims
Average Hours Per Case: 5-10
Anticipated Case Length: 2 weeks-9 months (depending on limited vs. full rep)
Ideal For: New Attorneys, Litigators, Corporate Counsel (Co-counseling option available)
Online Training Includes: Recorded CLE & Attorney Toolkit
COVID Protocols: Cases take place at the Convention Center with court-mandated safety precautions; No-contact negotiation-only options

CONSUMER PROJECT
*Scope: Representing Consumers Sued by Debt Buyers*
Representation Includes: Motion practice; answers/counterclaims; discovery; pretrial conferences; settlement negotiations
Average Hours Per Case: 5-15
Anticipated Case Length: less than 1 year
Ideal For: New Attorneys, Litigators
Online Training Includes: Recorded CLE & Attorney Toolkit
COVID Protocols: Majority of representation can be handled remotely; court-mandated safety precautions

UNEMPLOYMENT COMPENSATION APPEAL PROJECT
*Scope: Representing Unemployment Compensation Claimants in Appeal Hearings*
Representation Includes: Case review and Administrative Hearings (Telephonic)
Average Hours Per Case: 4-6
Anticipated Case Length: Less than 2 weeks
Ideal For: New Attorneys, Litigators, Employment Attorneys, Corporate Counsel
Online Training Includes: Recorded CLE & Toolkit
COVID Protocols: No in-person contact necessary

VRC SHIFT VOLUNTEERS
*Scope: Interviewing and Referring Tenants Facing Evictions*
Position Includes: Calling and interviewing clients, reviewing leases, consulting with Legal Aid staff for case acceptance decisions
Average Hours Per Shift: 3
Anticipated Commitment: 3 month minimum
Ideal For: Retired or Inactive Attorneys and Paralegals
Online Training Includes: Recorded CLE & Volunteer Manual
COVID Protocols: Remote shifts only
Case Referral Projects

CHAPTER 7 PRO BONO BANKRUPTCY PROJECT
Scope: Representing Debtors Filing Ch 7 Bankruptcies

Representation Includes: Petition and schedules; 341 meeting; reaffirmation agreements; fee waiver application
Average Hours Per Case: 6-10
Anticipated Case Length: 6-9 months
Limited Engagement Only
Ideal For: Consumer Bankruptcy Attorneys
Online Training Available and Document Collection Provided
COVID Protocols: Virtual 341 hearings; minimal in-person contact with clients

LOW-INCOME TAXPAYER CLINIC
Scope: Representing Individuals Involved in Tax Controversies with IRS

Representation Includes: Oral and written negotiation; offers in compromise
Average Hours Per Case: 10-20
Anticipated Case Length: 9-12 months
Ideal For: Corporate and Transactional attorneys
COVID Protocols: No in-person contact necessary

IEP ADVOCACY PROJECT
Scope: Representing Children and Families in the Individualized Education Program (IEP) process

Representation Includes: Attendance at IEP meetings; editing IEP; school contact
Average Hours Per Case: 6-15
Anticipated Case Length: 3-6 months
Ideal for: Transactional and New Attorneys

SENIORS REFERRAL PROJECT
Scope: Preparing and Executing Simple Wills and Advance Directives for Seniors and Veterans

Representation Includes: Document preparation and review
Average Hours Per Case: 2-5
Anticipated Case Length: Less than 1 month
Ideal for: Transactional and Government Attorneys; Estate Planning Attorneys
COVID Protocols: Ohio Justice Bus handling in-person document execution; Ability to serve by drafting or reviewing documents remotely

VETERANS PRO BONO PROJECT
Scope: Representing Veterans with VA Benefits Issues and Discharge Upgrade Applications

Representation Includes: Full case representation; Options for limited scope, including record review only; Drafting argument and appearing at administrative hearing
Average Hours Per Case: 10-15; 3-4 hours for a records review
Ideal For: Attorneys with VA Accreditation
COVID Protocols: Minimal in-person contact
Brief Advice Clinics

Legal Aid works with community partners to offer brief advice clinics. Interested attorneys should note their interest and availability by completing an online virtual clinic application. For 2020 and the foreseeable future, nearly all advice clinics will be “virtual,” which will involve pre-established clinic times, during which volunteers will call and advise pre-screened clients.

Average Hours per Clinic: 1-3
Participation Based on Attorney Preference
Limited Engagement Only
Ideal For: Transactional and Government Attorneys; Attorneys who cannot commit time to full case representation
Online Training and Attorney Toolkits Available
COVID Protocols: All clinics are virtual for foreseeable future; No in-person contact necessary

Brief Advice Clinics
Legal Aid sponsors monthly advice clinics. Attorney volunteers meet with individuals to analyze problems, identify community resources, and offer legal advice on a variety of topics. Co-sponsors (and sites, when in-person clinics resume) include churches, Job & Family Services, public libraries, community centers, VA facilities, and courts. Evening and daytime options are available.

Driver’s License Reinstatement Clinics
In partnership with local courts and clerks’ offices, Job & Family Services, Child Support Enforcement Agencies, and the Ohio BMV, Legal Aid will be offering special clinics focused on license reinstatement. Information for 2021 clinics will be made available upon request.

Homeless Shelter Advice Clinics
Note: Clinics are virtual for foreseeable future but will resume when conditions are safe for residents and volunteers.

Legal Aid offers on-site brief advice clinics for residents at the YWCA Family Center, Van Buren Adult and Family Shelters, and the Faith Mission Shelters downtown and on E 8th Avenue, which are emergency family and single adult shelters in Columbus.

Divorce Clinics
Legal Aid offers clinics for individuals filing or responding to divorces. Pro se videos are available to guide clients through Supreme Court forms, and volunteer lawyers provide advice to pro se litigants.
**Brief Service Clinics**

*Average Hours per Clinic: 2-4*

*Participation Based on Attorney Preference*

*Limited Engagement Only; Co-Counseling Available*

*Ideal For: All Attorneys; Attorneys who cannot commit time to full case representation*

*Recorded CLEs, Attorney Toolkits, and Onsite Mentors Available as Needed*

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**Tenant Advocacy Project (TAP)**

Legal Aid offers several court-based clinics for tenants with eviction hearings in Franklin, Delaware, and Fairfield counties. Attorneys handle eviction hearings or negotiate resolutions, including drafting agreed entries. For the majority of cases, in-person representation is necessary, although Legal Aid is exploring virtual hearing possibilities. Court-mandated social distancing, mask wearing, and other safety precautions are in place.

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**Naturalization Clinics**

In collaboration with community and bar partners, Legal Aid hosts a bi-annual Naturalization clinic for Lawful Permanent Residents who need help completing Naturalization applications.

COVID Protocols: Naturalization clients are referred for remote assistance on a 1:1 referral basis until in-person clinics resume.

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**PACO Wills Clinics**

Note: In-person clinics are currently on hold due to COVID restrictions. In partnership with the Paralegal Association of Central Ohio, Legal Aid sponsors evening clinics at senior residential facilities to help clients prepare wills and advance directives.

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**Bankruptcy Bypass Clinics**

Note: In-person clinics are currently on hold due to COVID restrictions. “Uncollectable” elderly and disabled clients who seek an end to creditor harassment are enrolled in this bi-monthly evening clinic. Non-attorneys meet with clients to verify uncollectability and creditor information. Legal Aid then sends letters to creditors, with the purpose of stopping creditor or debt collector contact. Bankruptcy attorneys supervise students and answer questions.

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**Clean Slate Clinics**

Recurring clinics are offered for individuals transitioning back into their communities who wish to address the collateral sanctions of their criminal records. Attorneys assist eligible clients with completing pro se record sealing forms and online applications for Certificates of Qualification for Employment (CQE).

COVID Protocols: In-person clinics are currently on hold. Periodic virtual events and 1:1 referrals are available, involving no in-person contact.
New Programming: Community Economic Development

Average Hours per Engagement: 2 hours including document review and consultation
Limited Engagement Only; Co-Counseling Available
Ideal For: All Attorneys; Transactional Attorneys
COVID Protocols: No in-person contact necessary

Through this new pro bono project, Legal Aid is reducing impediments to obtaining legal advice for nonprofits, businesses, and individuals with ideas that will transform our communities into a more accessible, equitable, and robust region. We accomplish these objectives by connecting local changemakers with transactional attorneys to help them achieve their goals. Cases include client interviewing and transactional representation and frequently involve one of these topics:

- Nonprofit Entity Incorporation
- By-Law Drafting & Updates
- Internal Governance, Policies, & Procedures
- Fundraising Regulation and Requirements
- IRS Regulatory Interpretation
- Social Enterprise Issues
- For-Profit Entity Incorporation
- Commercial Lease Review
- Property Acquisition and Zoning
- Contract Drafting and Review
- Dispute Resolution
- Liability Waiver and Form Development

New Programming: Bridging the Divide

Average Hours per Engagement: 2 hours including document review and consultation
Participation Based on Attorney Preference
Limited Engagement Only; Co-Counseling Available
Ideal For: All Attorneys; Attorneys who cannot commit time to full case representation
COVID Protocols: No in-person contact necessary

Utilizing an innovative technology platform, Bridging the Divide will connect Columbus attorneys with rural litigants navigating the custody process for children impacted by the opioid epidemic. Attorneys receive training on the legal standards and relevant pleadings necessary to successfully navigate custody litigation with the goal of providing critical legal advice and hearing preparation guidance to individuals, including grandparents and third party caregivers, who are representing themselves in court proceedings. Legal Aid mentors are available in real time, and pro bono attorneys will be provided with template hearing preparation outlines, FAQs, and other necessary tools.
Annual Events (All in-person events are on hold due to COVID-19)

Corporate Days of Service
In-house counsel groups from local corporations partner with Legal Aid to offer one-day trainings combined with pro bono clinics. Topics include Naturalization, Record-sealing, and Wills.

Tax Court Calendar Call
Pro bono attorneys who participate in the U.S. Tax Court Calendar Call in Columbus help low-income, unrepresented taxpayers resolve their tax issues by offering advice to petitioners or negotiating with IRS Counsel.

Family Empowerment Day
LASC offers a general brief advice clinic at this summer event spearheaded by the Franklin County Child Support Enforcement Agency. The event encourages non-custodial parents to participate in the lives of their children.

Central Ohio Homeless Veterans Stand Down
LASC coordinates a pro bono brief advice clinic at the Central Ohio Homeless Veterans Stand Down. Stand Down is held each October and offers holistic assistance to vulnerable veterans.

Other Pro Bono Opportunities

Pro Bono Mentoring:
Legal Aid benefits greatly from experienced attorneys willing to assist new practitioners.

Impact Litigation Referrals:
Firms partner with Legal Aid on larger-scale affirmative cases that have the potential to benefit a large number of low-income individuals.

“In-House” Volunteer Opportunities:
LASC and SEOLS welcome volunteer attorneys who are willing to support the work of our teams by committing to a regular schedule during business hours for at least three months. This is an excellent opportunity for new lawyers to gain skills under the supervision of an experienced attorney while working part-time elsewhere or job-searching. Retired attorneys are also encouraged to consider joining the Volunteer Resource Center for a weekly 3-hour shift (referenced on page 1).
Available online at https://www.columbuslegalaid.org/get-involved/attorney/attorney-pro-bono-application/

If you are only interested in virtual/remote opportunities, please use this abbreviated form: https://oslsa.wufoo.com/forms/zx6si961rm5zp6/

Attorney Name: ___________________________________________ Address: ___________________________________________

Firm Name: _______________________________________________ Email: _____________________________________________

Preferred Phone: __________________________________________

☐ I am willing to mentor other attorneys in Ohio Bar Admission number: _________________

☐ Special Language Skills: ________________________________

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<th>Program</th>
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<td>B. VRC Consumer Project</td>
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<td>C. VRC Unemployment Compensation Appeal Project</td>
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<td>D. Chapter 7 Pro Bono Bankruptcy Project</td>
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<td>E. Low-Income Taxpayer Project</td>
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<td>F. IEP Advocacy Project</td>
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<td>G. Seniors Referral Project</td>
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<td>H. Veterans Pro Bono Project</td>
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<td>R. Bridging the Divide</td>
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<td>S. Other/General civil</td>
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<td>T. “In-House” Volunteering</td>
<td>Not currently available</td>
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Please list other areas of law here: ________________________________________________________________

Please return this form by email to: Dianna Parker - dparker@oslsa.org