

Frequently Asked Questions about Pro Bono:



Q: What about malpractice insurance?

A: Most legal aid organizations in Illinois have a malpractice policy that covers pro bono volunteers. You should always confirm this with the organization before agreeing to handle a matter.

Q: Do I need to have experience in the substantive area of law in which I wish to volunteer?

A: In most cases, no. Legal aid organizations have trainings and materials to assist you in handling a matter in a new area, along with the free resources available through www.IllinoisProBono.org.

Q: What if I don't have office space?

A: Many legal aid organizations can provide you with office space at which you can schedule appointments to meet with your client. They may also have work space available for you if you need a computer, internet access or photocopies. You should confirm the availability of these resources with the organization.

Q: What if I need help along the way?

A: The legal aid organization will have staff attorneys that can provide you with guidance and direction in your pro bono matter. You should not hesitate to contact them if you run into issues or need additional assistance. PILI can also assist you in identifying possible organizations and pro bono opportunities that may be of interest to you.

Q: Are there non-litigation pro bono opportunities available?

A: Yes, many opportunities exist for pro bono attorneys to do transactional work. Ask your legal aid organization for specific opportunities.

Statewide Pro Bono Resources

Visit www.IllinoisProBono.org for statewide pro bono opportunities and resources. Users can access free online training materials and resources to assist you with your pro bono matter. Users can also search available pro bono opportunities based on a variety of factors, including location, type of opportunity, area of law, skills and time availability.

www.IllinoisProBono.org

Pro Bono Opportunities in Northern, Central and Southern Illinois

Land of Lincoln Legal Assistance Foundation, Inc. is an Illinois nonprofit that provides free civil legal services to low-income persons and senior citizens in 65 counties in central and southern Illinois.

www.lollaf.org

Prairie State Legal Services, Inc. is a nonprofit that offers free legal services for low-income persons and those age 60 and over who have serious civil legal problems and need legal help to solve them. Prairie State has 12 office locations serving 36 counties in northern Illinois.

www.pslegal.org

About PILI

PILI, the Public Interest Law Initiative, cultivates a lifelong commitment to public interest law and pro bono service within the Illinois legal community to expand the availability of legal services for people, families and communities in need.



www.pili.org

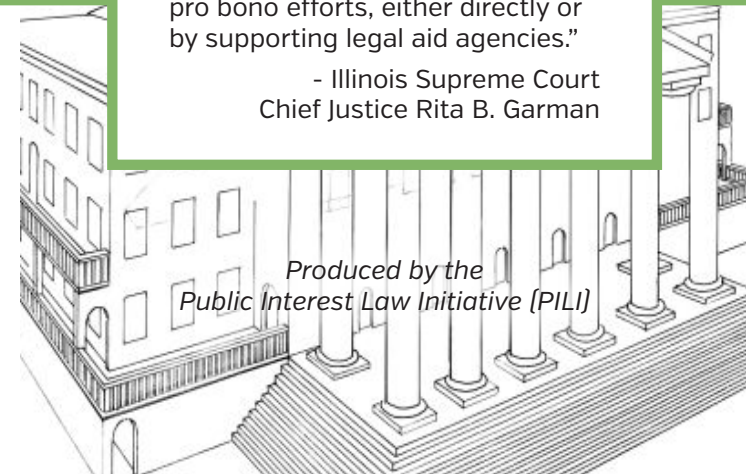
Pro Bono Opportunities and Resources in Illinois

for
Retired and Inactive Attorneys
Out of State Licensed Attorneys
House Counsel Status Attorneys
Government Attorneys
Paralegals

“Pro bono service is not only personally rewarding, it is an important component of professionalism. By engaging in pro bono service, the attorney helps close the justice gap that affects our most vulnerable neighbors. On behalf of the Illinois Supreme Court, I encourage all eligible attorneys to participate in pro bono efforts, either directly or by supporting legal aid agencies.”

- Illinois Supreme Court
Chief Justice Rita B. Garman

Produced by the
Public Interest Law Initiative (PILI)



What is Pro Bono?

Pro bono publico is a Latin term meaning “for the public good.” While there are various definitions throughout the country of what constitutes pro bono, the Illinois Supreme Court has adopted Rule 756(f), which defines pro bono as:

- legal services without charge or expectation of a fee to persons of limited means;
- legal services to charitable, religious, civic, community, governmental or educational organizations in matters designed to address the needs of persons of limited means;
- legal services to charitable, religious, civic or community organizations in furtherance of their organizational purpose; or
- training intended to benefit legal aid organizations or lawyers who provide pro bono services.

Pro Bono for Retired, Inactive and Out of State Licensed Attorneys in Illinois

Recent amendments to Illinois Supreme Court Rule 756 aim to increase the number of attorneys who can provide critical pro bono legal services by allowing attorneys who are retired, inactive and licensed out of state to do pro bono in Illinois.

If you are a retired, inactive or out of state attorney interested in doing pro bono, you need to work with the organization where you want to volunteer (known as a “sponsoring entity,” see the column at the right) to complete a registration form and submit it to the ARDC [Attorney Registration & Disciplinary Commission]. If you want to volunteer with multiple organizations, you need to submit separate forms for each one. You must annually renew your registration with the ARDC, and agree to complete any training required by the organization. Out of state attorneys also need to disclose all other state admissions when they register to do pro bono in Illinois.

Why do Pro Bono?

Members of the legal profession are uniquely positioned to make a difference for low-income and underrepresented individuals and families with legal needs at a time when the need has never been greater. The number of people living in or near poverty in Illinois - one third of the population of the state, or over 4 million people - has been rising steadily, while funding for legal aid programs continues to shrink. Pro bono attorneys can help meet the growing demand for legal services, making equal access to justice not just a dream, but a reality for people and families in need.

Any attorney doing pro bono under this rule must notify the ARDC within 30 days of ending participation in the pro bono program.

A **sponsoring entity** is defined by the rule as “a not-for-profit legal services organization, governmental entity, law school clinical program or a bar association providing pro bono services.” To qualify as a sponsoring entity, an organization needs to: [1] submit an application to the ARDC describing the pro bono program in which attorneys covered under Rule 756 may participate; [2] verify that they will provide appropriate training and support to pro bono attorneys, as well as malpractice insurance; and [3] notify the ARDC if the organization ceases to qualify under this rule. Sponsoring entities are also responsible for notifying the ARDC when any attorney’s participation in their program ends.

Pro Bono for House Counsel

Attorneys with limited admission status under Rule 716 are authorized to provide pro bono legal services in Illinois without any additional registration or other pro bono-specific requirements.

Pro Bono for Government Attorneys

While government attorneys may have restrictions limiting their ability to do pro bono work, pro bono can still be an active part of their practice. In fact, pro bono opportunities exist that are especially well-suited for government attorneys, including ones that take place outside of regular business hours and do not involve the provision of direct legal services. Those interested in doing pro bono work should consult with their ethics office to confirm what limitations exist on their ability to do legal work outside of their employment.

Pro Bono for Paralegals

Paralegals can and do play a critical role in providing pro bono service. From conducting intakes and legal research, to assisting staff and pro bono attorneys with representation, volunteer paralegals are an integral part of legal aid organizations’ ability to provide free legal services to those in need.