

Community Legal Aid

A non-profit law firm serving the legal needs of low-income individuals and families in central northeast Ohio



www.communitylegalaid.org

Attorneys

The Volunteer Legal Services Program has volunteer opportunities to meet varying volunteer interests, skill sets, and practice areas. Prospective clients are pre-screened by Legal Aid and routed to appropriate program(s) within our service area.

If you are unsure if there is a volunteer opportunity that meets your needs, please e-mail or call (330) 983-2695.

To learn more about the benefits offered to volunteers, and to read about the Power of Pro Bono click [here](#).

How to Get Involved

To get involved, fill out the [Volunteer Attorney Application](#) and return it by e-mail, fax (866-978-1690), or mail (Volunteer Legal Services Program, 50 South Main St., Ste. 800, Akron, OH 44308). Please call (330) 983-2695 with questions or to inquire about specific opportunities.

Program Details

Benefits to Pro Bono Attorneys:

- Volunteers can attend [Legal Aid sponsored CLE's](#) for free! Active volunteer attorneys receive regular notices of upcoming CLE opportunities.
- VLSP provides malpractice insurance at no cost for pro bono case referrals.
- To the extent possible, VLSP reimburses extraordinary litigation expenses on pro bono cases (pre-approval necessary.)
- VLSP provides sample pleadings and forms to be used as models.
- VLSP sends weekly V-Blast! emails that briefly describe cases that are available for volunteer referral. Volunteers who do not wish to receive emails will receive calls when an available case meets their case acceptance criteria.
- VLSP staff provide case support, assistance and follow-up throughout the duration of a case.

- VLSP keeps time records on pro bono cases
- Assistance is available from Ohio State's Pro Bono Research Group.
- Volunteers receive discounts on National Consumer Law Center publications.

Expectations of Volunteers:

- VLSP requests that volunteers send a copy of the final decree or other appropriate documentation that work has been completed.
- VLSP asks volunteers to treat Legal Aid clients with the dignity and respect given to other clients.
- VLSP requests that volunteers provide clients with quality legal assistance that conforms with the rules of professional conduct and reasonable standards of practice for attorneys.

?Volunteer Programs and Opportunities

Pro Bono Program

Volunteer attorneys provide low-income and elderly clients with individual legal representation. Volunteer attorneys advise VLSP staff of the areas of the law in which they are willing to receive referrals and we offer appropriate cases to the volunteer for consideration. In certain types of cases, private attorney contracts provide the volunteer with some compensation.

Counsel and Advice Clinics

Clients visit designated shelters and community centers seeking advice about legal problems or concerns. Volunteer attorneys provide brief advice and make referrals within the community (as appropriate). VLSP staff are on-site at each clinic to provide assistance.

Reduced Fee Program

Legal Aid receives over sixty applications for divorce representation each week. Volunteer lawyers on our reduced fee panel help families with relatively simple divorces start new lives. Cases are prescreened for level of complexity and VLSP escrows a \$250 attorney fee. Lawyers just beginning a family law practice are mentored by our staff attorneys and more experienced private practitioners

Pro Se Clinics

Legal Aid pre-screens potential clients for simple cases in which people can represent themselves after receiving assistance with paperwork. Eligible participants attend a class taught by a volunteer attorney who assists in preparing pro se pleadings and guides them through the process of filing their case and what to expect as it continues. VLSP provides follow-up as appropriate and the volunteer's commitment ends at the completion of the class, which usually takes a couple of hours.

Jerome L. Holub Bankruptcy Project

The Jerome L. Holub Bankruptcy Project is our newest program, launched in conjunction with the Akron Bar Association. The Jerome L. Holub Bankruptcy Project seeks to provide low income residents of Summit County with a fresh start through a Chapter 7 bankruptcy. Volunteer law students interview potential clients, prepare client files, and assist with document collection; by the time a case is referred to a volunteer attorney, much of the leg work has been done and the case is almost ready to file. Law Students are available for additional support throughout the case.

Municipal Court Project

Launched to combat the rise of credit card lawsuits, the Municipal Court Project seeks to educate clients on how to represent themselves in court. Volunteers teach informational classes and assist clients in preparing pro se documents. There is a two hour time commitment per clinic. VLSP is also seeking volunteers who would enter into a limited representation agreement (in accordance with Ohio Rules of Professional Conduct 6.5 and 1.2(c)) and represent clients at the hearing to argue the merit of the client's motion to dismiss.

Mentoring

Our mentoring projects draw on experienced attorneys' wealth of knowledge to assist newer volunteer attorneys with the representation of Legal Aid clients. We invite attorneys to speak at CLEs or informal meetings for volunteers or to be a "go to" person for questions on a specific area of the law.

New Projects

VLSP is constantly in the process of launching new projects and looking for new ideas. Currently, we are working to start a Veteran's Project and a Children's Law Project. If you are interested in becoming involved in a new initiative, please call Jennifer van Dulmen, the Managing Attorney of the Volunteer Legal Services Program at (330) 983-2531.

 [Attorney Volunteer Application.doc](#)

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