

# PRO BONO MENU

The Access to Justice (ATJ) program of the Justice Initiatives Department has developed or supports a number of opportunities for members of the legal community to give their time and resources to those whose economic challenges make access to legal help difficult, if not impossible. The overall ATJ program is designed to provide every attorney and firm in the state with one or more options for fulfilling their pro bono obligation.

Our goal in developing this “menu” (**see below**) is to allow attorneys flexibility in serving the community by choosing the ways that best fit their skills and circumstances to provide assistance. Our goal is that every attorney in Michigan will support the provision of free legal services to the poor—either by providing direct pro bono services or by contributing financially to the programs providing these services through the Access to Justice Campaign. The Bar recognizes each option equally.

## 1. The Contribution Option.

The ATJ funds are a means to support statewide programming to maintain access to civil legal services. The funds are a part of an endowment to exponentially increase the financial support of attorneys for those in need of legal help. The guideline for financial giving, established by the Voluntary Standard that was ratified by the Representative Assembly of the State Bar of Michigan in 1991, addresses these objectives.

- **Voluntary Standard designated minimum annual monetary commitment - \$300**
- **Voluntary Standard designated minimum donation of hours per year – 30 hours**

The ATJ Campaign is in its’ sixth year of existence and provides funding to address legal matters confronting low and moderate-income individuals across the state. The designated minimum annual monetary commitment of \$300 goes toward direct services for those in need and building an endowment to make the most effective future use of donations.

The commitment of time is of equal importance to the cases and the people who need assistance. The work provided by Michigan attorneys toward improving access for low and moderate - income individuals is tremendous, yet the need remains.

We encourage you to use this menu to make choices about how you might help us aid those in need of civil legal assistance in your community. The commitment of attorneys throughout Michigan to the importance of access to justice for all emphasizes the honor of our profession and leads to a more just and civil society for all Michigan residents.

## 2. The Direct Service Options

### A. Statewide Programs

--Complex Litigation. The MI-LAPP program (Michigan Litigation Assistance Partnership Program) is a statewide program that refers more complex litigation cases. The MI-LAPP program is targeted to larger law firms (firms that are comfortable committing 40 or more hours to a single case or matter) but smaller firms with a commitment to public interest law are also welcome participants.

--Non-litigation Work.. Community Legal Resources (CLR) manages a statewide pro bono panel that provides assistance to non-profits in corporate and transactional matters. CLR is targeted to larger law firms (that often have a corporate department) but smaller firms with experience in this work are also welcome participants.

--Subject Area Specialties The MI-LAPP program has developed specialty panels in the following legal areas—education law (both expulsion and special education); immigration law; pension law issues (primarily QDRO's in family law cases) and appeals. If you or your firm has expertise in or a strong interest in one of these areas, contact the MI-LAPP administrators.

--State Bar Sections. Several bar sections have their own pro bono programs or have worked with MI-LAPP to connect section members with pro bono cases in the sections' legal specialty.

--ACLU. The American Civil Liberties Union utilizes lawyers on a statewide basis to work on a variety of civil liberties cases and matters.

### B. Local Programs

--Programs sponsored by local legal services organizations. Almost all local legal services programs administer pro bono programs. These programs normally refer out individual cases—divorces, custody cases, consumer cases, bankruptcies, etc. The programs normally fully support the referred cases—e.g., by providing malpractice insurance, by assisting with research, etc. These programs are excellent opportunities for solo practitioners and smaller firms with local practices.

--Programs sponsored by local bar associations. In some counties, the legal services program and the local bar association jointly sponsor a pro bono program. In other counties, the local bar association sponsors its own program. These programs also tend to focus on individual cases and are excellent opportunities for lawyers with a concentration in that local practice.

--Programs sponsored by specialty non-profits. In some areas, local non-profits (most frequently domestic violence programs) sponsor their own pro bono programs. These programs refer cases, often DV-related individual family law cases, for clients of the agency.

--Court-based programs. In several counties, local Bar associations, legal services programs, or courts have established help desks at the courthouse. These offices provide either general or more specific advice to individuals on a walk-in basis. Each of these offices has a pro bono component to its services—a lawyer can volunteer for a set amount of time (usually a 2 to 4 hour shift). Lawyers do not accept cases and do not retain any case responsibilities after serving their shift. (Counties currently operating these programs include: Genessee, Ingham, Kent, and Washtenaw.)

--Legal clinics. In several counties, Bar associations or legal aid programs operate clinics. In this model, a number of clients are scheduled for a clinic interview at a set time. Staff and/or pro bono attorneys interview the clients and, depending on the clinic model, advise the clients as they proceed pro se or accept the case for full representation. This model shares the “limited time/limited responsibility” aspects of the court-based clinics, but often includes the option of more intensive individual services in appropriate cases.

How to contact programs.

To Connect With Any of the Statewide Programs: Please call or e-mail Gregory Conyers at the State Bar: 1-517-346-6358 or [gconyers@mail.michbar.org](mailto:gconyers@mail.michbar.org)

To Connect with one or more of your local programs: A complete directory of all local programs is contained in the Pro Bono Reference Manual. If you can't find what you're looking for in the Reference Manual, please call or e-mail Greg Conyers at the addresses listed above.