

Using Statewide Partnerships to Present a Comprehensive Menu of Pro Bono Opportunities

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Brief Description:

The Cleveland Bar Association (CBA) has launched three initiatives this year, aimed at increasing lawyer involvement in pro bono legal services and public service:

- 1) "Our Commitment to Our Community" (OCTOC), a campaign that obtained pledges of over 70,000 lawyers hours to be committed to pro bono and public service in 2005, covering over 2000 lawyers and over 30 firms and legal departments.
- 2) Brief Advice and Referral Clinics, "Law Firm Clinics" and Substantive Law Clinics -- over 30 scheduled for 2005 -- in collaboration with the Legal Aid Society of Cleveland.
- 3) The Pro Bono Improvement Task Force, comprised of representatives from bar associations, law schools, the nonprofit community and legal services organizations to:
 - (a) develop new pro bono projects to meet unmet legal needs;
 - (b) develop electronic communications to match volunteer interests and availability to projects or clients in need; and
 - (c) foster communication and collaboration among legal service organizations regarding pro bono service.

Topical Outline:

- I. The Need
 - a. Recent statistics have revealed that Cleveland has the largest number of poor families of any city in the United States.
 - b. The major CBA strategic plan called for the CBA to be more visibly involved in the Cleveland community. In 2004, the CBA led an effort to study regional cooperation among various levels of government in Northeast Ohio.
 - c. Attention to greater lawyer involvement matched the need in Cleveland with the CBA's strategic vision.

- II. "Our Commitment to Our Community"
- a. Law Firms and lawyers were asked to make the following commitments:
- i. To commit to a specific number of hours for 2005 to be devoted to pro bono or public service.
1. Pro bono means providing legal services without a fee or expectation of a fee or for a reduced fee to:
- A person of limited means.
 - Charitable, religious, civic, community, governmental, and educational organizations in matters designed primarily to address the needs of those of limited means.
 - Groups or organizations seeking to secure or protect civil rights, civil liberties, or public rights.
 - Charitable, religious, civic, community, governmental, or educational organizations in furtherance of their organizational purposes.
 - Matters and activities that improve the law.
2. Public service means providing services to organizations seeking to secure or protect civil rights, civil liberties, or public rights, or to charitable, religious, civic, community, governmental, or educational organizations.
- ii. To commit to a specific pro bono project to be undertaken in 2005.
- iii. For law firms, to commit to four "core principles:"
1. Establish a pro bono goal within the firm budget.
 2. Give credit toward billable hour requirements and/or bonuses for hours worked on approved pro bono matters.
 3. Encourage firm management and other leading partners to do pro bono work -- personally and visibly.
 4. Promote broad-based participation in pro bono activities by lawyers in all practice groups.
- b. The pledge campaign was conducted in three phases:
- i. A pre-announcement campaign. Major firms and friends of the bar were approached to sign on. One-on-one meetings with managing partners.
- 9 law firms and 1 legal department committed to the program.
- ii. A campaign for "founding participants." One-on-one meetings with managing partners. Special recognition given.
- 18 Firms and 1 legal department, representing 1,500 lawyers, made commitments as Founding Participants.
- iii. The general campaign, including:
1. One-on-one meetings with managing partners
 2. A forum for managing partners of the 24 largest firms featuring talks from
 - Esther Lardent (Pro Bono Institute) on organizing law firm pro bono efforts

2. Employment law advice - held as part of Law Day activities. Staff by members of CBA's Labor and Employment Section.

IV. Pro Bono Improvement Task Force

- a. Goal - to improve the delivery of pro bono services in Cleveland.
- b. Composition of the task force - representatives from:
 - i. The Cleveland Bar Association
 - ii. Cuyahoga County Bar Association
 - iii. Federal Bar Association
 - iv. Legal Aid Society of Cleveland
 - v. Ohio Legal Assistance Foundation
 - vi. United Way Services of Cleveland
 - vii. Catholic Charities Corporation
 - viii. Jewish Community Federation
 - ix. Christian Legal Services
 - x. Business Volunteers Unlimited
 - xi. Association of Corporate Counsel of America
 - xii. Cleveland Marshall School of Law
 - xiii. Case Western Reserve School of Law
- c. Tasks undertaken
 - i. Study unmet legal needs in Cleveland
 - ii. Develop means to match volunteer lawyers and projects in clients
 - iii. Promote communication and collaboration among legal assistance providers
- d. Achievements (through April 15, 2005)
 - i. Formation of the Cleveland Legal Assistance Provider Coalition
 - Sixteen organizations providing legal services to the poor or the nonprofit community
 - ii. Development and publication of a directory of legal assistance providers
 - iii. Organized a networking opportunity for legal assistance providers to meet law firm managers/pro bono coordinators for potential recruitment of volunteers.

Website Links:

<http://www.clevelandbar.org>

<http://www.lasclev.org>

<http://www.olaf.org>