

Matching Supply with Demand in Family Law Matters: Innovations and Resources

Cheryl Zalenski
Assistant Staff Counsel
ABA Center for Pro Bono
312 988 5770
zalenskc@staff.abanet.org

Kimberly Rommel-Enright, Esq.,
Pro Bono Coordinator
Legal Aid Society of Palm Beach County
(561) 655-8944
kenright@legalaidthpb.org

Charles Hodges
Director, State Bar of Texas Family Law Section
(972) 871-2727
charlie@Koonsfuller.com

Brief Description: How can programs strive for a better match between clients in need of assistance and available pro bono attorneys? Hear about innovative approaches to creating more pro bono capacity, then brainstorm techniques to take home.

Topical Outline:

- I. Background: “The Impact of Family Law Cases on Pro Bono Programs”
 - a. Issues impacting attorneys’ willingness to handle pro bono cases
 - i. Complexity of cases
 - ii. “Burnout” factor
 - iii. Family law not a part of attorney’s private practice
 - iv. Inefficiencies in court procedures
 - v. Attorneys lack sufficient resources for family law cases
 - b. Issues impacting programs’ ability to handle family law cases
 - i. Volume of family law cases
 - ii. Staff burnout
 - iii. Tensions between staffed legal services unit and pro bono staff
 - iv. Effect of domestic violence funding on program priorities
 - v. Limited attorney pool in rural areas
 - vi. Lack of organized system to deal with pro se litigants
 - vii. Client circumstances
 - c. Recommendations
 - d. Examine and restructure program priorities
 - e. Plan with other providers
 - f. Educate the public

- g. Educate attorneys
 - h. Provide support for volunteers
 - i. Provide mentoring
 - j. Involve retired attorneys
 - k. Involve the courts and judiciary
 - l. Pro se assistance
 - m. Telephone counsel
 - n. Kiosks
 - o. Unbundling
 - p. Reduced fee cases
 - q. Conflict waivers
 - r. Involve paralegals
 - s. Tap into bar associations' family law sections
- II. Florida Bar family law section: program description
- a. Mentoring family law attorneys.
 - b. How the program started.
 - c. Establishing pilot projects.
 - d. How the program can increase family law services.
- III. State Bar of Texas Family Law Section: program description
- a. Free seminars around the state to educate attorneys on the fundamentals of divorce.
 - b. The price of admission to the seminar, which qualifies for mandatory CLE credit, is a commitment to handle two family law pro bono matters in the next twelve months.
 - c. Primarily in rural areas.
 - d. How the Family Law Section partners with pro bono programs.
 - i. Obtain location.
 - ii. Other logistical issues.
- IV. Your challenges? Your solutions?
- V. Interactive discussion.

Bibliography & Website Links:

“The Impact of Family Law Cases on Pro Bono Programs” (available at <http://www.abanet.org/legalservices/probono/familylawsurvey.html>)