

ABA/ NLADA 2008 Equal Justice Conference

*Developing and Sustaining Pro Bono Programs for Small and Mid-Size Law Firms*

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**Brief Description:**

Do you think your firm is too small to have a pro bono program? Do the firms in your program's service area have too few attorneys to make a meaningful pro bono commitment? Think again! Join in an interactive discussion about creating and sustaining pro bono initiatives within smaller firms. Discuss ways to: define the parameters of a firm's program; find pro bono opportunities and projects that fit each firm and practice; identify creative ways to associate with other firms or organizations; develop realistic and efficient program administration; and apply long-range planning techniques for a successful pro bono program.

**Topical Outline:****I. Introduction of Speakers and Brief Overview of Existing Programs and Initiatives****II. Starting from Scratch: Building a Brand New Pro Bono Program**

- a. Why do you want to do pro bono legal work?
- b. How do you define pro bono legal work?
- c. What are your firm's unique strengths? What are your practice areas? Are you willing, and is it feasible to learn a new area of the law in order to do pro bono work?
- d. What realistic annual commitment are you willing to make towards pro bono? What are you/your firm doing now in terms of pro bono?
- e. Should pro bono be mandatory at your firm? Why or why not?
- f. What kind of budget are you willing to commit towards a pro bono program?
- g. What is the best way for your firm to administer your program? Formal or flexible?
- h. What do you see as the greatest impediment to starting a pro bono program at your firm and what ways are there to resolve it?
- i. What incentives are you willing to offer in order to encourage pro bono work?
- j. How are you going to get pro bono work?

**III. Unique Small Firm Challenges and Making a Greater Impact Through Association**

- a. What can small firms and solo practitioners do to help our low-income population and still maintain a viable practice?

- b. Do small firms in your community collaborate on pro bono projects?
- c. How do individuals in need of legal services find attorneys willing to do pro bono work?
- d. How do you encourage non-attorneys from your firms to participate in pro bono matters?
- e. What kinds of pro bono matters do groups of small firms handle?
- f. How does your firm motivate attorneys to participate in pro bono activities?
- g. What are some challenges or impediments to handling pro bono work and how do you deal with them?
- h. How do attorneys in your area intersect/interact with the local legal aid office?
- i. Is there any recognition for attorneys who participate in pro bono work?
- j. What do you think is the greatest misconception about small firms and pro bono work?

#### **IV. Using Your State Bar Resources to Enhance Your Pro Bono Program**

- a. How can your state bar pro bono coordinator help you develop your pro bono program?
- b. What training is available through your state pro bono program?
- c. What resources are available through your state pro bono program for small and mid-size firms?
- d. Does your state bar pro bono coordinator make direct matter referrals? Do you want to accept such referrals?
- e. What services can your state pro bono coordinator provide to you?
- f. How can your local bar and the state pro bono coordinator work together to provide pro bono opportunities?
- g. What are some of the best ways in which your state pro bono office can enhance your firm's pro bono efforts?
- h. What malpractice benefits are available to your firm through your state bar's pro bono office?

- i. How can your state pro bono office assist in defraying the cost of pro bono representation?
- j. Is collaborative law/limited scope representation on pro bono matters a good choice for your firm?

## **V. Sustaining Your Pro Bono Program**

- a. How far ahead should you plan?
- b. How much time are you willing to commit to coordinating pro bono efforts at your firm?
- c. What are the best ways to promote pro bono efforts both within and outside of your firm?
- d. What can you do to provide incentive for members of your firm to do pro bono work?
- e. Does your management team/senior partner support pro bono efforts?
- f. How should you report on pro bono efforts?
- g. How should you measure the success of your pro bono efforts?
- h. What are your pro bono goals this year? Next year? Two years from now?
- i. What is the greatest obstacle you see in sustaining your pro bono efforts?
- j. How can you marry your firm's strengths with a successful pro bono program?

## **VI. Questions/Resource Material Review**

### **Notes:**

This is an interactive workshop designed to give attendees an opportunity to respond and ask questions about developing and sustaining pro bono programs and to discuss the unique challenges that face small and midsize firms in creating sustainable pro bono programs.

### **Bibliography & Website Links:**

1. <http://www.abanet.org/legalservices/probono/home.html> (ABA Center for Pro Bono)
2. <http://www.nlada.org/> (National Legal Aid and Defender Association)

3. <http://www.cpbo.org/> (Corporate Pro Bono)
4. <http://www.abanet.org/legalservices/sclaid/home.html> (ABA Standing Committee on Legal Aid and Indigent Defendants)
5. <http://www.abanet.org/litigation/committees/probono/lapp.html> (ABA Litigation Assistance Partnership Project)
6. <http://www.probonoinst.org/> (Pro Bono Institute)
7. <http://www.clasp.org/> (Center for Law and Social Policy)
8. <http://www.lsc.gov/> (Legal Services Corporation)
9. <http://www.povertylaw.org/> (Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law)