

Where do the cases come from?

All cases originate with a referring attorney in a military legal assistance office. The military attorney interviews the client, collects substantive case information, and screens for income eligibility, as most referred clients will typically have a paygrade of E6 or lower. The attorney will also determine whether the case is legally meritorious and has adequate cause for referral based on an analysis of a number of qualitative factors. Thus, participating firms can be assured that only those clients with the most significant legal needs will be referred.

How do I receive potential referrals?

Registration is quick and easy! Visit the Project website at www.militaryprobono.org and click the “Join this Area” link. You will be prompted to provide information that will become your registered profile with the site. Once you are registered, you will be eligible to receive requests for case referrals via email when a servicemember has a case in your geographic area and within your substantive legal area(s) of expertise.

How many cases will I have to accept?

Though we hope you will take as many cases as you can, registration with the site does not obligate you in any way. When you receive a referral request, you may respond only if you are interested in the case. If you are uncertain about the referral and would like additional information, you may discuss the case further with the Project Director.

How do I prevent conflicts of interest?

All referral requests will be accompanied with sufficient information for you to run a conflict check within your firm. When you register with our website, you may choose to designate a legal assistant or some other member of your firm to receive this conflict check information. The Project will never send you confidential case information until you have confirmed that you are willing to take the referral and that no conflict exists.

Are cases screened to ensure that only meritorious cases are referred to my firm?

All referred cases will originate with military handling attorneys, typically in military legal assistance offices. These attorneys will assess the client’s case against the Project’s substantive legal area guidelines and will determine whether the client meets the financial eligibility guidelines, and whether the client has a meritorious legal position and available legal remedy based on the facts as understood by the attorney. The full case referral will be secondarily reviewed by a supervising military attorney, typically of higher rank than the handling attorney, to ensure that the referral is substantively meritorious and contains all information necessary for a pro bono attorney to quickly assess the case. Finally, the ABA Project Director, who is an attorney, will review the case for merit while making determinations about appropriate firm placement.

What kinds of cases might I receive?

You will be sent only cases within your substantive legal area of expertise and that arise in a forum where your practice is based. Case types will typically involve the following legal areas: landlord-tenant, for tenants in all manner of disputes with landlords, including eviction; consumer law, particularly predatory lending issues and those implicating the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act, and including some chapter 7 bankruptcies; family law cases where a significant interest of a servicemember is at stake in a disputed proceeding; employment law, including cases involving the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act; probate, including assistance to a servicemember’s next of kin; trusts and estates; and guardianship, especially where a servicemember’s spouse or family member seeks to secure a guardianship of an incompetent servicemember.

What happens once I accept a case?

Acceptance of a case will allow you full access to case materials through the Project website. When

accepting a referral, you are agreeing to assist the servicemember to reach a resolution of his or her civil legal issue without charge. The Project itself requires only that you indicate completion of specified case milestones through the website and provide certain pieces of case-closure information once you complete the case. The reporting requirements through the Project website are minimal and will require only a few minutes of your time.

How do law firm Pro Bono Coordinators get the firm’s attorneys involved in the Project?

If you supervise your firm’s pro bono work, you may register with the Project website as a pro bono coordinator and will be the point-of-contact for pro bono requests to your firm. You will have full access to all of the casefiles being handled by your firm’s attorneys on a pro bono basis for the Project.

I know very little about legal issues specific to military personnel in civil cases. If I accept a referral, where can I go for support and training?

Members of the military have special legal protections that may be asserted in civil proceedings under certain circumstances. For example, the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act can be a powerful tool to protect the legal rights of military personnel. Once you register with the Project website, you become part of a large, national community of advocates that can support you in your pro bono work. You can connect with other attorneys, review pleadings in an online brief bank, pose questions on an email distribution group, or download educational materials from our online learning library. In short, you will have many resources available to help you competently represent your military pro bono client.

We welcome your firm’s participation! Please visit www.militaryprobono.org, or contact ABA Military Pro Bono Project Director Jason Vail at (312) 988-5783, or vailj@staff.abanet.org.

About the Military Pro Bono Project

Extended American military missions overseas have generated unprecedented civil-law challenges for servicemembers, many of whom have left family, home, and job for years at a time to serve their country in Iraq, Afghanistan, and other locations.

Our servicemembers are increasingly saddled with legal needs that distract them from their mission and can make their already difficult daily lives even more challenging. These needs are arising in the areas of consumer law, family law, landlord-tenant, employment law, and other areas. Their families often unfortunately require assistance in the area of probate, trusts and estates, or guardianship law.

The ABA Military Pro Bono Project is directly helping servicemembers who are sacrificing greatly for their country by moving pro bono referrals straight from military law offices to willing-and-able private sector lawyer volunteers throughout the country. Unlike several legal service programs that have surfaced to assist veterans, the Military Pro Bono Project is uniquely focused on provision of pro bono services to *active-duty servicemembers*, many of whom remain deployed to areas of conflict.

In many states a military Judge Advocate is not allowed, by state court rules, to appear in court on behalf of a servicemember client. Many active-duty servicemembers, including members of the National Guard and Reserve components, have legal disputes arising in their home areas where their service branch simply has no legal assistance presence. Volunteer lawyers under the program will be in position to handle a qualifying court case for an active-duty servicemember who otherwise would lack access to representation. **Please join our effort to ensure civil legal assistance for our nation's servicemembers!**

This pamphlet will give you an overview of how your firm can get involved in the Project. More detailed information is available on the Project website, www.militaryprobono.org, under the "About the Project" tab.



The ABA Military Pro Bono Project is a program of:



ABA Standing Committee on Legal Assistance for Military Personnel (LAMP)



ABA Section of Litigation



A Guide For Volunteer Pro Bono Attorneys and Firms

www.militaryprobono.org