



NEIGHBORHOOD LEGAL SERVICES

PRO BONO OPPORTUNITIES GUIDE

Ways to Help – Volunteer Attorney Opportunities

WHY PRO BONO?

When you join the fight to make equal access to justice a reality by volunteering your time and financially supporting NLS, you are directly improving the lives of those in your community.

HELP YOUR COMMUNITY

Whether it's participating in our Custody Advice Pro Bono Program in Butler and Allegheny, or preparing living wills for the elderly in Lawrence, NLS has numerous opportunities for you to make an impact in your community of choice.



MAKING CONNECTIONS: HOW NLS'S PRO BONO REFERRAL PROGRAM WORKS

NLS staff is committed to making the referral process beneficial for both the client and the volunteer attorney. In this section, learn more about training and support, the referral process and other useful information regarding how our Pro Bono Program works.

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WHY PRO BONO?

Access to justice is essential not only to our system of justice, but to the quality of life in our region. Having adequate legal representation often means the difference between shelter and homelessness, nourishment and hunger, economic stability and bankruptcy, or productive work and unemployment. In a very clear way, the availability of civil legal aid helps prevent a costly spiral into poverty.

Legal needs studies consistently report that legal aid programs serve only one person out of every five who need civil legal assistance. Support of equal access to justice is not merely a choice – it is an obligation of the profession; an obligation that attorneys take on when they acquire the skills of the legal profession and pledge their allegiance to the Code of Professional Conduct.

Working together, we can do more to ensure that justice is accessible to all in our community. Your volunteer support and financial assistance to NLS helps families in crisis return to safe, productive lives. Your time, talent, resources, and personal touch can make all the difference in the lives of people who have nowhere else to turn for legal help.

When you join the fight to make equal access to justice a reality by volunteering your time and financial support to NLS, you are directly improving the lives of those in your community and upholding the promise of our profession — a legal system in which every voice shall be heard.

In the four counties (Allegheny, Beaver, Butler & Lawrence) served by NLS, thousands of low-income individuals and families, victims of domestic violence, and the elderly are in critical need of civil legal services that they cannot afford. Nearly a quarter million people in NLS's four county service area have incomes at or below 125% of the federal poverty guidelines* and are therefore eligible for our services. To put this in perspective, a family of four with an annual income of \$32,750 falls below the federal poverty* threshold.

NLS plays a significant role in providing civil legal services to those who have nowhere else to turn. It is only with your investment that we can respond to and deliver on the promise of **Justice for All!**

**Based on the 2020 poverty threshold for a family of four (two adults and two children) published by the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services.*

THE PENNSYLVANIA CODE

Rule 6.1 Voluntary Pro Bono Public Service

“A lawyer shall render public interest legal service. A lawyer may discharge this responsibility by providing professional services at no fee or a reduced fee to persons of limited means or to public service in activities for improving the law, the legal system or the legal profession, and by financial support for organizations that provide legal services to persons of limited means.”

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WAYS TO HELP

You can help transform the lives of domestic violence victims and low-income individuals and families with urgent legal problems. Numerous case-handling and other volunteer opportunities are available at NLS. Listed in this section are the various pro bono opportunities currently available. Find one, or several, that complement your passion. If you don't see an opportunity that interests you or if you have an idea for a volunteer initiative not listed here, please let us know as – we welcome your ideas.

We invite you to join the indispensable community of volunteer attorneys who help NLS broaden access to legal services for the poor.

For more information, visit our website at www.nlsa.us or email us at support@nlsa.us.

ALLEGHENY COUNTY

- **Volunteer to accept pro bono case referrals in any of the following substantive legal areas: child custody advice, unemployment, debt advice (needs vary depending on county), Chapter 7 or Chapter 13 Bankruptcy, guardianship, or landlord-tenant advice.** For more information, contact Judy Hale, Pro Bono Manager, at 724.371.3888 or via email at halej@nlsa.us.
- Attorneys are needed to **represent clients at unemployment compensation referee hearings.** For more information, contact Judy Hale, Pro Bono Manager, at 724.371.3888 or via email at halej@nlsa.us.
- Volunteers are needed to handle **litigation defense cases** involving consumer credit card debt. For more information, contact Judy Hale, Pro Bono Manager, at 724.371.3888 or via email at halej@nlsa.us.
- Volunteers are needed to handle Protection from Abuse (PFA) cases. For more information please contact Mary Ann Troper-Malley at 412.586.6134 or via email at troperma@nlsa.us

- **Family Law Telephone Advice Pro Bono Project** needs volunteers to provide telephone advice on custody matters. For more information, contact Judy Hale, Pro Bono Manager, at 724.371.3888 or via email at halej@nlsa.us.
- Participate in a **short-term task force to institutionalize/ expand NLS's Arbitration Pro Bono Program.** Attorneys who serve on an arbitration panel in Allegheny County can designate their fee be paid directly to NLS. Working with our program partners, NLS is looking for volunteers familiar with the processes to help us improve and institutionalize this program. To volunteer, contact Christine Kirby at 412.586.6137 or via email at kirbyc@nlsa.us.
- **Elder Law Project** needs volunteers to handle small estates. For more information, please contact Judy Hale, Pro Bono Manager, at 724.371.3888 or via email at halej@nlsa.us.

BEAVER COUNTY

Beaver County attorneys interested in volunteering to assist low-income families are invited to contact Nikki Christopher at 724.598.4184 or via email at christophern@nlsa.us

BUTLER COUNTY

- Participate in the **Landlord/Tenant Pro Bono Referral Program** and provide representation of tenants in eviction proceedings before a Magisterial District Justice.
- Accept a Custody Referral and **provide representation in a custody action before the Court of Common Pleas** of a custodial parent whose child has just been snatched or who has been sued for custody. For more information, contact Nikki Christopher at 724.598.4184 or via email at christophern@nlsa.us.

LAWRENCE COUNTY

- Provide **one hour of free service for the elderly.** Volunteers are needed for up to one (1) hour of pro bono advice and limited service in the following civil matters for indigent persons' age 60 or older:
- Divorce, custody, support and PFA issues
 - Landlord/Tenant and real estate law
 - Debtor/creditor, bankruptcy and consumer law
 - Estates, guardianships, and adoptions
 - Civil litigation, personal injury, and contract disputes
 - Social Security, workers' compensation, unemployment compensation, pensions and insurance issues
 - Employment issues
- Volunteer to **prepare documents for the elderly.** Pro Bono attorneys prepare wills, living wills and/or powers of attorney for indigent persons' age 60 or older. Interested volunteers should contact Nikki Christopher at 724.598.4184 or via email at christophern@nlsa.us

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HOW NLS'S PRO BONO PROGRAM WORKS

NLS needs volunteers who will accept one or more cases a year (depending on difficulty and time required) or participate in various projects. The staff at NLS is committed to making the referral process beneficial for both the client and volunteer attorney. Every effort is made to tailor our procedures to suit the needs of individual practitioners and law firms. Volunteers can accept work or other volunteer tasks according to their own schedules and will be provided opportunities to use their own expertise to develop new areas of the law. Attorneys interested in volunteering are encouraged to email support@nlsa.us or contact the NLS office in their county. Please see page 7 for NLS office locations.

TRAINING AND SUPPORT

In most referral areas, other than PFA cases, volunteers need experience in the substantive law area. Periodically, NLS offers various Continuing Legal Education (CLE) trainings on substantive legal topics experienced by legal aid clients. Prospective pro bono volunteers are invited to participate in these CLE workshops.

Continuing Legal Education (CLE) credits are available free of charge for participants who accept case referrals. Visit our website, at www.nlsa.us for the latest information on upcoming CLE courses. NLS staff attorneys, experienced in legal concerns of the poor, are available to answer questions and to mentor volunteer attorneys. In addition, a number of private attorneys with specialized skills have agreed to serve as mentors and/or consultants to pro bono volunteers. Malpractice insurance will be provided by NLS for all pro bono cases.

REFERRAL PROCEDURES

To ensure that volunteer attorneys are able to spend their time effectively, NLS conducts the following initial services:

1. Prior to a client referral, experienced NLS staff determines a client's financial eligibility and identify the nature and urgency of their legal problem.
2. NLS contacts the volunteer with necessary information on the case. The volunteer then checks for any conflicts and determines whether he or she can accept the case.
3. If the case is accepted, NLS prepares a brief description of the case, collects and copies all appropriate documents and presents the case to the volunteer.

(NLS does NOT screen referrals in Allegheny County for merit. Private attorneys may determine degree of assistance based on their evaluation of merit.)



EXPENSES

Volunteers will charge no fee for services but may be reimbursed for out-of-pocket and litigation expenses with the prior approval of NLS. The volunteer may accept any attorneys fees awarded by the court, so long as the client pays nothing. Volunteers may elect to donate/direct attorney fees to NLS's Equal Justice Campaign.

RECORD KEEPING

To ensure an efficient pro bono program for volunteers and clients alike, accurate records and reporting systems must be kept. Periodic case follow-up by NLS staff will ensure that the volunteer's support needs are met, and cases are handled in a timely fashion.

CLE CREDIT FOR PRO BONO SERVICE

Neighborhood Legal Services is one of the providers for a new CLE pilot project which allows attorneys who volunteer with us to earn up to three (3) CLE credits each year. To be eligible to receive CLE credit, the following procedure must be followed:

1. The pro bono work must be done on a case that is a direct referral from NLS. CLE credit cannot be offered for pro bono work done on behalf of another organization.
2. You are allowed to obtain three (3) CLE substantive credits a year; you must complete five (5) hours of pro bono work for each credit.
3. Obtain and complete the official CLE confirmation of service form from NLS and submit the form for all CLE credit requests. Email completed forms to Attorney Amy Carpenter at carpentera@nlsa.us.
4. Separate forms must be completed for each pro bono case.
5. You should only submit your hours when you have completed work on a case.
6. Each month, NLS will submit to the CLE Board the names of all attorneys who have completed five (5) hours of pro bono work; the CLE Board then awards 1 CLE substantive credit. The CLE Board will post the credit to your account.

Please note at the end of the calendar year, if you have not gotten your 3 credits, any hours that remain that year will be transferred to your record for the next calendar year. Questions regarding CLE credits and/or to obtain necessary forms, please email Amy Carpenter at carpentera@nlsa.us.



PAPROBONO.NET

Paprobono.net is an online resource that provides members with resources. In addition, the website provides forums where volunteers can actively participate in Pennsylvania's pro bono community. Users of the **Paprobono.net** website are attorneys and paralegals who are dedicated to improving access to justice.

The site was created to support advocates in their representation of low-income individuals in need of civil legal assistance. The website contains a variety of tools to help advocates in representing legal aid clients. Some features, like current news items and general calendar events (i.e. Listing free CLE training events), are available to the public, but most of the tools are only accessible to members of the "Practice Areas" listed on the site.

Paprobono.net is free to use but you must be an approved member of the site to access and contribute materials to the Library. Online library resources include training materials, litigation materials, and links to helpful internet resources.

NLS encourages pro bono volunteers to visit the website at www.paprobono.net. Click on the "Join the Pennsylvania Civil Law Practice Area" link on the home page if you choose to become a member of the site.

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES TO ADVANCE EQUAL JUSTICE

NLS is pleased to introduce two new ways volunteer attorneys can help advance the mission of equal justice: The Court Awards Strategy Steering Committee and Emerging Leaders for Justice, a leadership opportunity for new attorneys.

- **Join our Equal Justice Campaign Committee.** The Equal Justice Campaign is the cornerstone of legal aid giving and provides essential funding that ensures the delivery of legal services to the poor. Volunteers work to develop campaign strategies and provide inspiration to a network of hundreds of attorneys, judges and individuals toward a common fundraising goal. To volunteer, please contact Christine Kirby at 412.586.6137 or via email at kirbyc@nlsa.us.
- Develop Community Legal Education presentations and materials. Expert help is needed to improve outreach materials in various substantive legal areas. For more information, contact Christine Kirby at 412.586.6137 or via email at kirbyc@nlsa.us.
- NLS intends to establish a **Planned Giving Advisory Council**. Volunteers are needed with expertise in estate planning and planned giving to help NLS establish a viable program. Volunteers would advise NLS on the development of promotional materials and a strategy to implement planned giving. If interested, please contact Christine Kirby at 412.586.6137 or via email at kirbyc@nlsa.us.

QUESTIONS?

For more information on any of NLS's pro bono volunteer opportunities, email us at support@nlsa.us.



SKILL-BASED VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

Opportunities exist in various skill-specific areas such as web development, grants research and writing, marketing communications, human resources, and language translation services to name a few. NLS routinely posts skill-specific volunteer opportunities on the Catchafire.org and Taprootplus.org volunteer platforms. For a current listing of skill specific and/or specialty projects, please browse the open volunteer projects posted by Neighborhood Legal Services on these sites.

GENERAL ORGANIZATION EMAIL INQUIRIES

General Pro Bono/Resource Development inquiries:
support@nlsa.us

Newsletter/Informational Requests:
enews@nlsa.us

General Program Email & Webmaster:
webmaster@nlsa.us

Community Education/Speaker's Bureau Requests:
speakers@nlsa.us

CONTACT US TOLL FREE:
(866) 761- 6572

ALLEGHENY COUNTY

928 Penn Avenue
Pittsburgh, PA 15222-3799

Local Telephone: 412-255-6700
Telephone Intake/ Eligibility Screening Hours:
M-TH 9am to 12pm. Voicemail can be left until 1pm. Calls will be returned from 1pm to 4:30pm.
Office Hours: M-TH 9am to 12pm and 1pm to 3pm

BEAVER COUNTY

Stone Point Landing, Suite 204A
500 Market Street
Bridgewater, PA 15009

Local Telephone: 724-378-0595 or 724-774-3522
Telephone Intake/ Eligibility Screening Hours:
M-TH 9am to 12pm. Voicemail can be left until 1pm. Calls will be returned from 1pm to 4:30pm.
Office Hours: M-TH 9am to 12pm and 1pm to 3pm

BUTLER COUNTY

Holly Pointe Building, Suite 306
220 South Main Street
Butler, PA 16001

Local Telephone: 724-282-3888
Telephone Intake/ Eligibility Screening Hours:
M-TH 9am to 12pm. Voicemail can be left until 1pm. Calls will be returned from 1pm to 4:30pm.
Office Hours: M-TH 9am to 12pm and 1pm to 3pm

LAWRENCE COUNTY

125 East North Street
Temple Building, Suite 329
New Castle, PA 16101-3751

Local Telephone: 724-658-2677
Telephone Intake/ Eligibility Screening Hours: M-TH 9am to 12pm.
Voicemail can be left until 1pm. Calls will be returned from 1pm to 4:30pm.
Office Hours: M-TH 9am to 12pm and 1pm to 3pm



NEIGHBORHOOD LEGAL SERVICES



Funded, in part, by the Commonwealth and through a contract with the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED). The official registration and financial information of Neighborhood Legal Services Association may be obtained from the Pennsylvania Department of State by calling toll-free within Pennsylvania, 1-800-732-0999. Registration does not imply endorsement. Federal regulations applying to NLSA require that we notify all donors that no funds can be expended by NLSA for any activity prohibited under P.L. 104-134 or otherwise prohibited by 45 C.F.R. §1600 et seq.

