

Step-by-Step Checklist and Related Resources for Starting and Sustaining a Court-Based Pro Bono Program

Purpose of the Checklist and Related Resources

This version of the Checklist and the accompanying materials were developed to help develop and sustain court-based pro bono programs. The information contained here reflects insight and experience from judges, legal aid organizations and others who have developed and implemented court-based pro bono programs. This document includes an overview of the process for setting up a successful pro bono program as well as helpful resources.

The checklist is available online at www.chicagobarfoundation.org. We will continue to build on the materials as more information becomes available, and we welcome you to send program descriptions or sample materials to add to the collection for use by your colleagues across the state. We encourage the use of the templates and sample documents to develop new programs. Please contact Samira Nazem, Director of Pro Bono & Court Advocacy at The Chicago Bar Foundation at 312.554.8356 or snazem@chicagobar.org.

Step-by-Step Checklist for Starting and Sustaining a Court-Based Pro Bono Program

This checklist provides a roadmap for developing a court-based pro bono program. Consider using this tool when you are evaluating a particular legal need inside the courthouse can be met through pro bono service.

1. Preliminary Evaluation

- Define the need and goals for a potential program
- Determine whether the need is likely to be successfully addressed through a pro bono program
- Determine whether any legal aid organization is handling cases in the area and evaluate the potential for partnership
- Identify existing models for similar pro bono programs
- Determine program complexity and required staffing
- Determine program costs
- Decide whether to proceed with the program

2. Getting Started

- Identify a model that will effectively and efficiently meet the program goals
- Identify the staffing resources that will be necessary to run the program
- Evaluate potential for malpractice insurance, through a partner legal aid organization or otherwise
- Identify pilot phase, if needed

3. Implementing the Program

- Establish criteria for case screening
- Establish and draft program policies and procedures as needed
- Establish plan for placing cases

4. Working with Volunteers

- Evaluate potential for general or specific volunteer group
- Draft volunteer opportunity description, if appropriate
- Identify need for training and resources for providing same
- Recognize your volunteers

5. Sustaining Your Program

- Periodically communicate with relevant stakeholders
- Periodically evaluate your program

Introduction, Background and Relevant Rules

Defining Pro Bono

Basic Definition: Free legal services from volunteer attorneys to low-income individuals and certain nonprofit organizations or training that supports the provision of legal aid or pro bono services to those clients.

Illinois Rules

The preamble to the **Illinois Rules of Professional Conduct**, Section 6(a), states as follows:

It is also the responsibility of those licensed as officers of the court to use their training, experience, and skills to provide services in the public interest for which compensation may not be available. It is the responsibility of those who manage law firms to create an environment that is hospitable to the rendering of a reasonable amount of uncompensated service by lawyers practicing in that firm. Service in the public interest may take many forms. These include but are not limited to *pro bono* representation of persons unable to pay for legal services and assistance in the organized bar's efforts at law reform. An individual lawyer's efforts in these areas is evidence of the lawyer's good character and fitness to practice law, and the efforts of the bar as a whole are essential to the bar's maintenance of professionalism. To help monitor and quantify the extent of these activities, and to encourage an increase in the delivery of legal services to persons of limited means, Illinois Supreme Court Rule 756(f) requires disclosure with each lawyer's annual registration with the Illinois Attorney Registration and Disciplinary Commission of the approximate amount of his or her pro bono legal service and the approximate amount of qualified monetary contributions.

[Illinois Supreme Court Rule 756\(f\)](#) defines pro bono in Illinois and requires all attorneys licensed in Illinois to report, in connection with the attorney's annual ARDC registration, pro bono legal services provided and qualified monetary contributions made during the preceding 12 months.

Supreme Court Rule 756(f) contains a broad definition that illustrates four distinct ways in which lawyers can use their unique training, experience and skills to help the public on a pro bono basis. Under the rule, qualifying "pro bono legal services" include (a) legal services to a person of limited means; (b) legal services to an organization designed to address the needs of persons of limited means; (c) legal services to certain charitable, religious, civic, or community organizations; and (d) pro bono training intended to benefit legal service organizations or lawyers who provide pro bono services. According to Rule 756(f), "persons of limited means" are not only those persons with household income below the federal poverty standard but also those persons frequently referred to as the "working poor." The Rule does not require lawyers to perform pro bono service, only that lawyers report their service under the Rule. The full text of the Rule as well as a summary of its requirements is included at www.iardc.org.

Other Rules and Statutory Provisions Relevant for Court-Based Pro Bono Programs

The Illinois Supreme Court also has implemented progressive rules that allow a variety of attorneys to engage in pro bono service in Illinois. Copies of the relevant rules and statutes are included in the Conference materials.

- House counsel admitted under [Illinois Supreme Court Rule 716](#) are permitted to engage in pro bono service without any additional registration or affiliation requirement.
- [Illinois Supreme Court Rule 756](#) allows retired and inactive attorneys, and attorneys registered in other states but not in Illinois, to perform pro bono service so long as certain procedural safeguards are followed, such as registering with the ARDC and working with a sponsoring entity.
- Under [Illinois Supreme Court Rule 756\(j\)](#), retired and inactive Illinois attorneys and attorneys who are licensed in other states but not in Illinois are also allowed to engage in pro bono service if they do the following: (1) file a registration form with the ARDC; (2) work with an approved sponsoring entity (such as a legal aid organization or law clinic); (3) complete any training required by the sponsoring entity; and (4) annually register with the ARDC ongoing participation in a pro bono program. The forms needed to register under the Rule are available at www.iardc.org.
- [Section 5-105.5](#) of the Illinois Code of Civil Procedure provides as follows:

When a party is represented in a civil action by a civil legal services provider or attorney in a court-sponsored pro bono program, all fees and costs relating to filing, appearing, transcripts on appeal, and service of process shall be waived without the necessity of a motion for that purpose, and the case shall be given an index number or other appropriate filing number, provided that (i) a determination has been made by the civil legal services provider or attorney in a court-sponsored pro bono program that the party is an indigent person and (ii) an attorney's certification that that determination has been made is filed with the clerk of the court along with the complaint, the appearance, or any other paper that would otherwise require payment of a fee.
- [735 ILCS 5/5-105 \(g\)](#) provides as follows:

A court, in its discretion, may appoint counsel to represent an indigent person, and that counsel shall perform his or her duties without fees, charges, or reward." Currently, there are no additional guidelines or rules about this appointment statute. In the coming year, the Access to Justice Commission is evaluating the potential for additional guidelines to encourage and support voluntary pro bono appointments.

- [Rule 6.5 of the Illinois Rules of Professional Conduct](#) Allows a lawyer to undertake short-term, limited scope pro bono representation without performing a formal conflict check so long as the lawyer is unaware of any conflicts of interest and the other requirements of the rule are met. [Rule 6.5 of the Illinois Rules of Professional Conduct: Empowering Lawyers to Provide More Pro Bono](#), by Bob Graves & Steve Pflaum, provides a helpful overview of the rule and how the rule can be utilized in court-based pro bono programs.
- [Illinois Supreme Court Rules](#) 11, 13 and 137 allow lawyers to represent clients in litigation for only a portion of a case, allowing the potential for additional pro bono opportunities for attorneys who want to make a more limited time commitment. Pro bono programs offering limited scope opportunities may encourage additional volunteers to get involved.

Preliminary Evaluation

Utilizing volunteers to address the legal needs of low-income and other vulnerable people coming to court without lawyers may be an effective mechanism to improve the administration of justice. Some court-based pro bono programs may require only simple screening and matching mechanisms. Other programs may require legal aid or other partners to provide more robust case screening and volunteer training and support. The strongest programs consider the needs and viewpoints of other potential stakeholders (including local legal aid organizations, bar associations and pro bono attorneys) to design programs that are likely to last.

Most Important Inquiries:

- What need will be met through pro bono service?
- Are legal aid or other organizations operating in this space and, if so, are they potential partners in a program?
- How will cases be screened?
- Will volunteers be interested and able to manage the expected pro bono service? Will volunteers need training and support?
- Taking into account the program complexity, is there capacity to appropriately staff the program through resources in the court or potential partners?

Define the Needs and Goals of a Potential program. *What need will be met with pro bono volunteers?*

A simple description of the program, even just a sentence or two, will help clarify purpose of the program. Below are two examples, and there are many more ways to approach the project description.

Example 1. Pro se litigants need brief advice and assistance completing forms in divorce cases.

Example 2. Pro se litigants need representation in jury trials in municipal court.

Determine whether the Need is Likely to be Successfully Addressed through a Pro Bono Program

The primary goal of any court-based pro bono program is to meet existing or emerging needs of low income and other vulnerable people coming to court without lawyers and to improve the administration of justice. Programs will require some level of case screening or eligibility standards, volunteer attorneys with subject-matter expertise or a topic that is amenable to training, and an approach that will interest pro bono volunteers.

The following questions help determine the level of need:

- How many pro se litigants need assistance?
- Are any legal aid organizations working in this area? If so, do they have capacity to handle additional cases? Are they turning away cases?

- Are private attorneys handling these claims for low-income clients (on contingency fee or because fees may be available)?
- With support from a legal aid organization or information from a self-help center, could these potential clients represent themselves? Depending on matter complexity and the type of resources available for pro se litigants, brief advice, settlement assistance or self-help may be the most effective forms of assistance, through a volunteer program or otherwise.

While pro bono volunteers can provide a great deal of assistance, they are not a panacea. As a threshold inquiry, determine whether volunteers are likely to be interested in the kinds of work needed and whether the matters are appropriate for pro bono placement. Two primary considerations:

- **Expertise Needed.** Are attorneys with expertise willing to handle the cases pro bono? Alternatively, can pro bono attorneys be trained to handle the matters in a reasonable amount of time? If experts are not likely pro bono candidates and the subject matter is so complex that pro bono attorneys cannot be trained in a reasonable amount of time, then the program may not be realistic.
- **Appeal to Pro Bono Volunteers.** Pro bono attorneys handle cases for a variety of reasons, which might include helping people in need, contributing a particular expertise, improving the system or developing skills. In addition, a variety of other factors may influence a volunteer's decision to get involved – the time required and the “feel good” factor are just a couple of examples. Court-based pro bono service may be especially appealing to attorneys who already practice in court, but other attorneys may be interested as well. In the early stages of planning, consider whether the proposed program will have some kind of appeal to pro bono attorneys or a particular group of attorneys. Some questions to ask here:
 - Are particular types of volunteers likely to be especially interested? Could subject-matter experts handle the cases?
 - Does the program offer an attractive training opportunity? What kinds of skills can attorneys gain through your program?
 - What time commitment is required?

Determine which Organizations are Active in the Relevant Area

Legal aid organizations, bar associations and law schools can be instrumental in developing and implementing court-based pro bono programs. Reach out to your local organization(s) to determine whether they are active in the particular subject matter or have an interest in exploring a potential program. Legal aid organizations may provide screening, training or volunteer support. Similarly, bar associations or particular bar committees may be interested in partnering to develop and implement a program, and may be particularly helpful in identifying subject-matter experts and recruiting volunteers.

Helpful Resources

- www.IllinoisProBono.org
On this website, you can search for pro bono programs by subject matter, geographical location and other characteristics.

- The Pro Bono Committee of the Illinois Supreme Court's Commission on Access to Justice is happy to help investigate. Contact Samira Nazem, Director of Pro Bono & Court Advocacy at the CBF and Volunteer Committee Staff, at 312-554-8356 or snazem@chicagobar.org.

□ Identify Existing Models for Similar Pro Bono Programs

Existing models can help you decide the best structure for your particular program. In addition, programs may be able to share training materials, standard forms, automated documents and lessons learned.

- The American Bar Association (ABA) hosts information on [The State of Judicial Facilitation of Pro Bono](#). In addition, the [ABA's Resource Center for Access to Justice Initiatives](#) has access to information about programs across the country.
- www.IllinoisProBono.org contains information about pro bono programs in Illinois
- The Conference materials provide examples of court-based pro bono programs from throughout Illinois, along with sample documents.

□ Determine Program Complexity and Required Staffing

All pro bono programs require some level of screening, training or other support. The level required varies greatly depending on the case type, complexity and subject matter of the cases, as well as the types of volunteers that the program will utilize. In court-based pro bono programs, it is possible for the judge, court staff or other court resources to provide much of the needed infrastructure, especially when the program relies upon subject-matter experts to handle the cases, eliminating the need for volunteer training and support. In other programs, partners may be required to provide the appropriate levels of screening, training and ongoing support.

In terms of complexity, pro bono programs run the gamut. Understanding where the proposed program falls on the continuum is essential to evaluating the resources required to run the program. Consider several factors:

Screening. Some level of screening is required to ensure that cases are appropriate for pro bono representation. Many, but not all, pro bono programs have some income eligibility guidelines. In addition, for ongoing representation, screening may involve determining that a pro se litigant has a colorable claim or defense and that pro bono representation would be appropriate in a case in which the other party is represented by an attorney. Court clerks or other court staff also may help with this basic screening. In some programs, more advanced screening will be required to ensure that the case merits the investment of pro bono resources. In those programs, a legal aid organization may be an excellent partner.

Training. How much training is needed? If the volunteers are already subject-matter experts, then little will be required. On the other hand, if the volunteers do not have relevant substantive and/or practice experience, then partners will be needed to provide training and support. Potential partners to provide training include legal aid organizations, bar associations and law schools.

Support and Supervision. If the program will rely on subject-matter experts, then ongoing support and supervision by a program partner will not be necessary. If the program will rely on lawyers or law students unfamiliar with the subject matter or procedure, it is essential to identify a partner who can provide support and advice from the perspective of an advocate.

These factors should guide the evaluation of how much staff capacity will be needed for the program. A few programs may need basic judicial screening to refer cases to volunteers who already know the area and will require only limited oversight. Many programs will require training and ongoing support and, therefore, will require program partners.

If the issues raised here cannot be resolved, a pro bono program is not likely to be successful.

Determine Program Costs

All programs will have some costs, but the amount of those costs will vary greatly. For legal aid organizations, partnering with the court is generally a great opportunity, but they may not have the capacity to provide all of the staff support necessary. However, new pro bono programs may provide the opportunity to apply for specific grants or other support. Similarly, bar associations or schools may be able to provide some staff resources to create the necessary infrastructure. Whatever the situation, it is important to consider the costs to the court and the program partners.

Balancing All Information, Decide Whether to Proceed with Program

The biggest investment will likely be the time required to create and run the program. As far as the benefits, the most obvious are that litigants will receive much-needed legal assistance and the administration of justice will be more fair and efficient. There are, however, a number of other benefits from court-based pro bono programs, including that community partners may gain a deeper understanding of and investment in the administration of justice. Potential downsides of a program that does not work include frustrated volunteers and poorly represented litigants. Evaluating and anticipating the program needs will help ensure that the time and resources required to implement a new program will be a worthwhile investment.

Getting Started

Identify a Model that Will Effectively and Efficiently Meet Your Goals

Pro bono programs may utilize a variety of models to deliver legal services. Brief advice, settlement assistance, appointment or referral programs are common possibilities. See the Examples of Court-Based Pro Bono Programs in Illinois, including the Conference Materials, for specific examples and supporting materials.

Panel Program. In a panel program, cases are either distributed to the list of potential volunteers or assigned by rotation. Volunteers either accept cases in which they are interested or accept the assignment based on the program rules. In some programs, court staff is able to manage the referral and distribution programs. In other programs, a partner legal aid organization may distribute cases to its pool of volunteers.

Legal Advice or Help Desk. Court-based help desks may utilize volunteers in a variety of ways. At general help desks or desks that deal with complex subjects, it may be challenging rely upon volunteers unless they have significant experience in the area. On the other hand, some desks address discreet areas of law that are amenable to basic training, such as collections or expungement. Bar associations or particular committees may be well-positioned to oversee volunteer recruitment and sign-up for some desks. Other desks rely upon court, library or self-help center staff to oversee volunteer sign-up and client registration. Whatever the staffing model, it is important to set clear expectations for clients and volunteers about whether they will be receiving/providing legal information or brief advice, and to be clear about the scope of the service. Depending the subject-matter, it may be necessary to have a supervisor present to answer questions and oversee the desk. Several help desks staffed by legal aid organizations have successfully incorporated volunteers and are able to provide training and supervision so that volunteers are able to increase the number of clients served at the desk. Note that Rule 6.5 of the Illinois Rules of Professional Conduct eases conflicts issues for pro bono attorneys providing brief advice and can be an important planning and recruiting tool.

Settlement Assistance and Mediation Programs. Many courts rely upon volunteers for settlement assistance and mediation programs. These programs take a variety of forms and have been very successful in a variety of settings.

Collaborative. In collaborative pro bono programs, multiple stakeholders work together to develop and run a program. Stakeholders may include multiple legal aid organizations, a court, social service providers, law firms or other interested parties.

Identify the Staffing Resources that Will be Necessary to Run the Program

Every pro bono program needs a staff person who is responsible for managing the program. Particularly in court-managed programs, court staff, library staff or other existing staff within the courthouse may be in a good position to manage the program ar certain aspects of it, such as

client and volunteer registration. When different people or organizations are responsible for aspects of the programs, it is important to establish regular communication and to be clear about roles and responsibilities. The functions that will need to be covered in most programs include the following:

- Volunteer recruitment, sign-up and communication
- Volunteer training and support, if not relying on subject-matter experts
- Case screening
- Case placement or coordination of client outreach and sign-up for brief-advice programs
- Volunteer recognition
- Overall monitoring and point of contact

Identify the Potential for Malpractice Insurance, though a Partner Legal Aid Organization or Otherwise

The availability of malpractice coverage may be an important issue for some volunteers, particularly retired and inactive, in-house counsel and government attorneys who either do not have any malpractice coverage or whose employer's malpractice insurance does not extend to pro bono work. Many legal aid organizations and some bar associations provide malpractice coverage to their volunteers, and may be able to cover volunteers in court-based programs in which they are partnering.

Identify Pilot Phase, if needed

When starting a new program, and especially involves an innovative model or new collaboration, consider starting with a pilot phase. In the pilot phase, consider the following approaches:

- Work with a limited number of volunteer partners, who commit to developing the program, including by providing detailed feedback and acting as ambassadors for the program when it is ready to expand. These volunteers should understand that the program is a pilot and they will be working to evaluate and solve minor issues as the program gets off the ground.
- Establish criteria and systems to track and evaluate the program, including client and volunteer satisfaction. Implement changes based on the feedback before launching the program.
- Conduct regular meetings with relevant stakeholders, which may include the court, staff or other personnel involved in the program, partner organizations, and volunteers.

Implementing the Program

Establish Criteria for Case Screening

Screening can be a particularly challenging aspect of court-based pro bono programs. A good program has responsibility not to waste staff or volunteers' time by referring cases that do not have merit or when the client will be unable or unwilling to work with pro bono counsel.

At minimum, the following should be considered:

- **Financial Eligibility.** All legal aid organizations have some financial eligibility guidelines for their intake process and many have strict requirements that they must follow as required by government funding or private grant agreements. Court programs may choose to follow similar guidelines or to relax those requirements to serve more court patrons. Most firms and many volunteers also have financial eligibility guidelines, though those vary widely and may be relaxed in many situations. Whatever the decision, it is important to be clear about the financial eligibility requirements for participation in a pro bono program, if any, and to be mindful of restrictions or limitations that apply for legal aid partners.
- **Colorable Claim or Defense.** Volunteers have limited resources and to the extent possible should not be required to invest significant amounts of time in cases where there is no possibility of prevailing on the merits. In programs that involve extended representation, most programs develop guidelines to address this issue in the referral guidelines. The issues are different in settlement assistance programs or advice desks, where volunteers often provide critical information and advice to participants who are not well positioned, providing an important service for the litigants and the court.
- **Willingness and Ability to Work with Pro Bono Attorneys.** Some unrepresented litigants may be unable or unwilling to work with pro bono counsel. In these situations, providing pro bono counsel for extended representation is not likely to be productive.

Establish and Draft Program Policies and Procedures as Needed

Having clear program policies and procedures will increase efficiency and ensure that program partners and volunteers understand the rules, roles and responsibilities. Policies and procedures vary greatly depending on the nature of the pro bono program. For example, the Trial Bar Pro Bono Program established by the Federal Court for the Northern District of Illinois regulates the program through detailed local rules that establish the procedure creating the volunteer panel, standards for case referral and criteria for volunteers to decline appointments. Most programs do not require court rules and instead the policies and procedures are set forth in program documents. Whatever the form, the following are important considerations for any program:

- Roles and responsibilities of the volunteer and any partner organizations
- Case referral standards and eligibility guidelines
- The process for accepting or declining representation

- Responsibility for out-of-pocket costs
- What happens if a volunteer wants to withdraw from a case
- What happens if fees are available or awarded in the case

WORKING WITH VOLUNTEERS

Volunteers participate in pro bono activities for a variety of reasons, and may be particularly motivated to participate in pro bono programs in which the court is a partner.

Why Lawyers Volunteer for Pro Bono Service

Lawyers volunteer their time for many different reasons. Many lawyers perform pro bono service because it is the right thing to do and part of our professional responsibility as lawyers. However, pro bono programs might tap into some other motivations to increase the volunteer pool and understanding common concerns of volunteers may help appropriately tailor a program. For example, some volunteers may want to gain certain skills or experience (such as trial, negotiating, interviewing or drafting). If a program will allow attorneys to build certain skills, this may be a selling point for particular groups, firms or populations. In addition, a primary reason that volunteers may hesitate to sign-up for pro bono service is concern about how much time a case will require and balancing pro bono obligations with work for paying clients. Designing programs with more limited time commitments is one way to address this concern. Another solution is to involve a legal aid organization that can provide back-up support to their volunteers. Overall, understanding the potential volunteer and discussing any potential barriers to participation in advance will help design a program that is likely to work well for everyone.

Evaluate Potential for General or Specific Volunteer Group

Broadly speaking, consider whether a particular pool of volunteers may be interested in the proposed program. Some possibilities include: lawyers who are already experts in the subject matter; newer lawyers; retired attorneys; paralegals; law students and large firms. Some programs may be appropriate for a general audience, but some will have more success targeting a particular group and tailoring the program to the goals of that group. Set forth below are some basic considerations for some target volunteer pools:

Subject-Matter Experts. Involving lawyers who already have relevant experience or who regularly appear in a particular courtroom can be a great strategy, particularly for court-based programs. Some lawyers and law firms are looking for opportunities to use their particular expertise and will welcome the opportunity. In other circumstances, subject matter experts may not be as likely to get involved, and there may be conflicts that prevent them from doing so. If you are considering relying on subject matter experts, it is a good idea to research the potential issues. For some preliminary research, consider reaching out to bar association committees in the relevant areas, specialty bar associations or even just a few attorneys you know in the area. These conversations should give you a general idea of the interest level.

Newer lawyers. Newer lawyers are often especially eager to build skills. In addition, in a challenging job market, they may have more time to dedicate to pro bono. However, because they have less experience, they will likely require more training, support and supervision, as well as malpractice insurance. If program partners are able to provide that additional support, newer attorneys can be excellent volunteers.

Retired attorneys. Retired attorneys may have a lot of experience and wisdom to bring to a program. While programs targeting only retired attorneys are rare, this volunteer pool can be a great resource. Some court-based programs rely upon retired attorneys to serve as mediators or to staff legal advice desks. Illinois Supreme Court Rule 756 permits attorneys on retired and inactive status to perform pro bono work so long as they register with the ARDC and work with a sponsoring entity.

Paralegals. Paralegals may be excellent volunteers in court-based programs, particularly in self-help centers and to assist with other non-legal functions.

Law students. While law students are more limited in what they can do, most law schools are seeking meaningful opportunities for their students. In addition, students who are licensed under Illinois Supreme Court Rule 711 may be eager to use that license in court-based settings. Law schools may excellent partners, and can often provide supervision through clinical programs or some level of coordination and support for their students. Most law schools have pro bono and/or public interest law staff, who may coordinate programs or provide a good connection to students, clinical faculty or other resources within the law school. The [ABA Center on Pro Bono](#) maintains a list of contacts at area law schools.

Large law firms. Every firm is different. Some goals that may be more prominent at large law firms include opportunities that provide litigation experience or build certain skills, such as negotiation. In addition, some firms have or would like to establish signature projects, so if your subject matter fits, they may be especially interested.

General audience. Some programs may work for all kinds of attorneys and there may be no need to target a particular audience.

Draft Volunteer Opportunity Description, if appropriate

It is helpful for potential volunteers to have a written description of the opportunity and the expectations.

The most important information that volunteers need to know is (1) the specific activities they will engage in; (2) when they need to do the work and how long it will take; (3) the skills needed and whether training is offered to teach those skills; and (4) how to get involved.

Identify Need for Training and Resources for Providing Same

A successful pro bono program may include both veteran attorneys, skilled in the areas in which they volunteer, and attorneys wanting to experience a new area of law. If volunteers are not experienced in the subject matter, then training and support will be needed. In these situations, it is necessary to involve a partner who can provide advice from the perspective of an advocate, such as a legal aid organization or law school clinic. However, judges and court personnel can participate in volunteer training programs and provide important perspective to attorneys who participate in the training programs.

□ Appreciate and Recognize Your Volunteers

Supporting and Retaining Your Volunteers

Retention is a challenging but exceptionally important part of working with volunteer attorneys. Volunteers who have a positive experience volunteering are likely to step up again to help people in need. Constantly cheerlead volunteers by publicly celebrating their service, building an *esprit de corps* amongst them, and giving them recognition with their employers and the community at large for their contributions.

Recognition ranges from thanking your volunteers when they appear in court, issuing press releases with the names of your volunteers or crating formal awards. At the outset, the court can take simple steps to appreciate volunteers and make it easier for pro bono attorneys to incorporate pro bono service into busy practices.

- **Thank Volunteers.** When volunteers appear in your courtroom, a simple thank you goes a long way. The volunteer feels good about performing a public service. Other attorneys in the room take note. This
- **Procedural Accommodations.** Call cases with pro bono attorneys first. When attorneys volunteer on pro se calls, allow them to schedule motions that day if possible. When appropriate, allow continuances for pro bono attorneys to get up to speed in a case. Allow for liberal discovery schedules. These procedural accommodations make it easier for pro bono attorneys to incorporate pro bon into busy practices.
- **After conclusion of the case, give feedback.** Particularly when the program involves more junior attorneys, after the case has concluded and all appeals periods have passed, consider providing feedback to the attorneys that will help them improve their skills. Your unique perspective can help them develop as professionals.

Volunteer Recognition

Much has been written about the importance of recognizing volunteers. Recognition and appreciation can take many forms. In addition to more formal awards (discussed more fully below), consider the following:

- **Nominate a volunteer to be a Face of Justice on Illinois Legal Aid Online.** ILAO creates an excellent video of featured volunteers, which is great recognition for the individual volunteer. In addition, many firms will post the video to their website or distribute it internally, which has the additional benefit of highlighting your program and encouraging pro bono in general. Visit www.IllinoisProBono.org for information and instructions.
- **Hold Volunteer Appreciation Events.** Many programs hold monthly, quarterly or annual events for volunteers. These range from informal lunches in the courthouse to formal luncheons where awards are presented.
- **Issue press releases listing the names of your volunteers.** The press release provides recognition in and of itself, and local publications may run stories about the program or particular volunteers.

Formal awards are another great way to recognize outstanding volunteer commitment and awards. Many courts issue their own awards for service. Volunteers also can be nominated for bar association or other awards. Some examples of established awards are included below.

Local Awards

ISBA John C. McAndrews Award. The ISBA established the John C. McAndrews Award to honor the extraordinary commitment of individuals, bar associations, or law firm/corporate legal departments to providing free legal services to the income eligible in Illinois or expanding the availability of legal services to the income eligible in Illinois. Nominations are typically accepted in early spring and the award is presented at the ISBA annual meeting in early summer. More information is available at www.isba.org.

Northern District of Illinois and the Chicago Chapter of the Federal Bar Association Pro Bono Awards. Since 1999, the Northern District of Illinois and the Chicago Chapter of the Federal Bar Association have presented pro bono awards to outstanding pro bono attorneys for their work on cases that are no longer pending in the District Court. Nominations are typically solicited in early spring and award recipients are recognized at an annual awards reception.

Seventh Circuit Bar Association Pro Bono Awards. Since 2010, the Seventh Circuit Bar Association has presented annual awards to celebrate the profession's commitment to community service and honor outstanding pro bono and public service work by members of the bar. Awards are given out for work in the 7th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals, U.S. District Courts in Illinois and U.S. Bankruptcy Courts in Illinois. Nominations are accepted for individual attorneys, groups of attorneys, firms or other organizations. Nominations are typically solicited during the winter and are presented at the Seventh Circuit Bar Association's Annual meeting in late spring.

CBA/CBF Pro Bono and Public Service Awards. Each year the CBF partners with The Chicago Bar Association to recognize exemplary attorneys in our legal community through the CBF/CBA Pro Bono and Public Service Awards. The Pro Bono and Public Service Awards celebrate outstanding members of the legal profession who have used their talents and resources to improve access to justice for the less fortunate in our community. These six awards are presented each year at the CBA/CBF Pro Bono and Public Service Awards Luncheon in July. Nominations are typically due in May. More information is available on the CBF's [website](#).

Public Interest Law Initiative Awards. Each year, PILI presents awards to acknowledge those whose work epitomizes the ideal of access to justice for all, including a Distinguished Service Award, a Pro Bono Initiative Award and two PILI Alumni Awards. Recipients are recognized at PILI's annual luncheon, typically in late November or early December. More information is available at www.pili-law.org.

National Awards

Several organizations at the national level present pro bono awards. Some examples are included below.

ABA Pro Bono Publico Awards. Each year the Standing Committee on Pro Bono and Public Service presents five awards to individual lawyers and institutions in the legal profession that have demonstrated outstanding commitment to volunteer legal services for the poor and disadvantaged. The awards are presented at the Pro Bono Publico Awards Assembly Luncheon during the ABA August Annual Meeting. More information is available on www.americanbar.org.

National Legal Aid and Defender Association Awards. NLADA sponsors 13 awards honoring the distinguished men and women whose outstanding service and achievements advance the cause of equal access to justice. More information about these awards is available at www.nlada.org.

Other ABA Awards. Many ABA sections and committees present pro bono awards to their members and relating to specific subject matter. If your volunteer is active in the ABA, you might consider one of these awards. A chart of the ABA awards is available at www.americanbar.org.

Sustaining the Program

Periodically Communicate with Relevant Stakeholders

Regular communication will ensure that the program stays on track and continues to evolve. Some programs hold quarterly stakeholder meetings while others have more frequent communication. Whatever method you choose, it is important for program partners to stay connected.

Periodically Evaluate the Program

Periodically evaluating the program will help ensure the program is meeting its original goals and will help identify any potential problems or issues.

Impact. The measures of success or impact will vary depending on the program. Collecting information allows the program to evaluate whether the program is a good investment allows a story to be told to potential funders and volunteers.

Volunteer Satisfaction. Period email surveys or evaluation forms can help identify whether adjustments can be made to improve the volunteer experience and ensure that volunteers will continue to participate in the program. An annual evaluation distributed through SurveyMonkey or another free online program allows you to collect anonymous feedback from volunteers.

Litigant Satisfaction. Collecting information from participants about their experiences can provide useful information. Simple forms handed out at the time of service can be effective and provide immediate feedback.