



## General Background

The Pro Bono Program was created by Legal Aid of Western Ohio (LAWO) in 2006 to improve our ability to meet the ever growing and diverse needs of our client communities by involving private attorneys, law students, and paralegals in providing access to justice for our clients. LAWO's Pro Bono Program, formally known as Private Attorney Involvement (PAI), has a director and two part-time paralegals working under the direct supervision of LAWO's Director of Advocacy. It covers 25 of the 32 counties in LAWO's service area. LAWO also provides funding for the Greater Dayton Volunteer Lawyer's Project (GDVLP), which covers 6 Miami Valley counties, and the Toledo Bar Association (TBA) Pro Bono Legal Services Program, which covers Lucas County.

## Opportunities for Pro Bono Legal Work

LAWO and partner agencies GDVLP and TBA administer several projects to help meet the demands for civil legal assistance through pro bono participation. These include:

- Direct pro bono referrals
- Batch pro bono clinics
- Brief advice clinics in person or virtually
- Pro se legal clinics in person or virtually
- Community Legal Education
- Co-counseling arrangements
- Corporate Counsel brief advice phone appointments with clients

## Support for Pro Bono Attorneys

Pro bono attorneys receive support as an incentive to participate and make their participation as efficient and rewarding as possible. Volunteer attorneys receive:

- Malpractice insurance at no cost for the duration of the client's case
- Sample pleadings and forms
- Reimbursement of extraordinary litigation & out-of-pocket expenses
- Free Continuing Legal Education
- Case maintenance & follow-up for the duration of the case
- Yearly tracking of volunteer hours for CLE credit
- Subject matter support by in-house attorneys, e.g., a volunteer attorney handling a foreclosure case will have access to an attorney for consultations

## Opportunities to Participate in Innovative Projects

The PAI project leverages its pro bono capacity by partnering with county bar associations and corporate law departments whenever possible.

**LiveChat Project:** Offers volunteer attorneys the opportunity to help low-income persons in your community or any of our 32 counties right from your home or office computer, smart phone, or tablet. Using web-based technology, you can provide advice to eligible low-income persons with relatively uncomplicated legal needs. Chat appointments are scheduled based on your availability.

**Legal Aid Line Pro Bono Phone Clinic:** Pro bono attorneys from Marathon Petroleum's legal department and several affinity groups provide brief counsel and advice via pre-scheduled phone appointments with clients from across LAWO's 32 county service area through LAWO's Legal Aid Line. Groups of 5-15 attorneys and paralegals can provide legal advice followed by referrals and written instructions to as many as 40 clients in an afternoon. Volunteers receive free Continuing Legal Education in areas of poverty law in preparation for the clinics, e.g., housing, consumer debt collection, landlord-tenant, and domestic relations. Attorney teams have commented that they enjoy the team-building aspect of training and working together, making this clinic ideal for an in-house/outside law firm project. Pro bono attorneys can provide counsel and advice from remote locations.

## ALLEN COUNTY

**Bar Association Email Blast:** The Allen County Bar Association sends descriptions of available cases and updates to its volunteers by mass email. This system increases efficiencies and allows LAWO's pro bono program to increase full representation case placement.

Batch Clinic: The Allen County Domestic Relations Divorce Clinic in Lima provides clients with a pro bono attorney, selected by Judge Staley. These cases are screened for issues such as assets, debts, retirement, or custody. LAWO staff members prepare all of the documents and assist with filing the action. At the monthly clinic, the clients meet with the pro bono attorney and review and sign the pleadings and forms. Any minor changes are made by LAWO staff in attendance. LAWO staff copy the pleadings and forms and walk the client to the Clerk of Courts to file the new case. The pro bono attorney attends the hearing with the client to finalize the divorce case.

#### HANCOCK COUNTY

Pro Se Divorce Clinic: LAWO has partnered with the Hancock County Bar Association to develop a clinic for pro se divorce filers. Volunteer attorneys instruct and assist residents in completing the numerous forms and pleadings required for a divorce or dissolution. Volunteer attorneys and paralegals receive a free Continuing Legal Education course before providing their pro bono service.

Kinship Care Pro Se Clinic: To address legal issues from the opioid epidemic, LAWO has partnered with the Hancock County Bar Association to develop a clinic to assist grandparents raising their grandchildren as well as other family caregivers. Applicants are prescreened and scheduled for an appointment to meet with a pro bono attorney at a clinic. Volunteer attorneys instruct and assist residents in completing Grandparent Powers of Attorney, Caretaker Affidavits, or in some circumstances, a complaint for custody.

#### LOGAN AND SHELBY COUNTIES

Virtual Office Clinic: The federal district court for the Southern District of Ohio supports LAWO counsel and advice clinics in the Southern District's rural counties. LAWO staff screen applicants and identify their legal issues before setting appointments with pro bono attorneys via video conferencing during monthly clinics. The applicants receive advice. Attorneys can provide ongoing representation at their discretion. LAWO staff attorneys and paralegals will partner with volunteers to minimize case work and travel time.

#### MERCER COUNTY

Batch Clinic: The Mercer County Domestic Relations Divorce Clinic in Celina provides clients with a pro bono attorney. These cases have no issues such as assets, debts, retirement, custody, etc. LAWO staff prepare all of the documents and assist with filing the action. At the monthly clinic, the clients meet with the pro bono attorney and review and sign the pleadings and forms. Any minor changes are made by LAWO staff in attendance. LAWO staff copy the pleadings and forms and walk the client to the Clerk of Courts to file the new case. The pro bono attorney attends the hearing with the client to finalize the divorce case.

#### SANDUSKY COUNTY

Pro Se Divorce Clinic: LAWO has partnered with the Sandusky County Bar Association to develop a clinic for pro se divorce filers. Using a self-guided interview, pro se filers answer questions using ATJ Author, which then generates the complaint and other documents. Volunteer attorneys instruct and assist residents with finalizing the numerous forms and pleadings required for a divorce.

#### SHELBY COUNTY

Pro Se Divorce Clinic: LAWO has partnered with the Shelby County Bar Association to develop a clinic for pro se divorce filers. Using a self-guided interview, pro se filers answer questions using ATJ Author, which then generates the complaint and other documents. Volunteer attorneys instruct and assist residents with finalizing the numerous forms and pleadings required for a divorce.

#### DEFIANCE, FULTON, HENRY, PAULDING, PUTNAM, WILLIMAS, & VAN WERT COUNTIES

LAWO has partnered with local domestic relations and juvenile courts to help pro se filers complete the numerous forms and pleadings required for divorce, paternity, custody, and parenting time matters. Clinics are held in person and virtually.

*Clinics can be replicated in other counties of our service area upon request & pro bono attorney availability.*

If you are interested in volunteering with LAWO staff for any of these limited action clinics, please contact Melissa LaRocco, Pro Bono Director, at 419-930-2479 or [mlarocco@lawolaw.org](mailto:mlarocco@lawolaw.org)