



Organization With More than 50 Years of Service in Northern Nevada Gets a New Name

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BY DEONNE CONTINE, ESQ.

Washoe Legal Services recently announced it has a new name – Northern Nevada Legal Aid – which will help us expand regional awareness of and access to our services, and the understanding of our mission. Same location, same services, same mission!

Northern Nevada Legal Aid (NNLA) is a 501(c)3 non-profit legal aid organization founded in 1965. Since that time, we have assisted thousands of vulnerable northern Nevada residents who cannot afford to hire an attorney.

Any northern Nevada attorney looking for pro bono legal opportunities can find them with us; we serve a growing population in a region that faces a diverse array of civil justice issues.

In 2021 alone, NNLA served more than 8,800 clients, and we could not have done so without the help of our pro bono attorneys. Whether you are interested in giving pro bono legal advice, working as a pro bono immigration or child's lawyer, volunteering your time in one of many other service areas, or contributing in lieu of pro bono, we have opportunities for you.

Pro bono work is a fulfilling way to spend your time doing what you became a lawyer to do: helping people. Our pro bono team reports feeling richly compensated for their time in goodwill and professional satisfaction. The benefits you derive from your pro bono experience will be your own, but we promise you will leave the experience with more than you came into it with.

“It is a privilege to get to know our clients and be a part of their lives,” said Sarah Bordelon, an attorney at Holland & Hart’s Reno office. “In the Child Advocacy Program, we meet regularly with our clients. When we have serious issues to discuss, those meetings can be emotionally challenging, but they can also be a lot of fun when our clients share their interests and passions with us. Overall, it is gratifying to help children navigate a very difficult time and earn their trust as their advocate.”

Here are just a few of the benefits you receive when you volunteer your time as a pro bono attorney with Northern Nevada Legal Aid.

- Feeling good by giving back.** Volunteering your time as a pro bono lawyer helps the people who need it most. That is enough on its own, but you get something, too. You get the satisfaction of giving back—as well as the psychological benefits that come with it. According to an article from the *Greater Good Science Center*, “Compared to people who didn’t volunteer, people who had volunteered in the past year were more satisfied with their lives and rated their overall health as better.”¹
- Learning new areas of the law.** If you would like to learn more about a particular area of the law, this is your chance. Pro bono lawyers for senior citizens don’t have to be elder law experts. Pro bono divorce lawyers don’t have to have divorce cases under their belts. Through pro bono work, you can gain valuable knowledge and skills in a wide variety of practice areas. We are here to help and can provide training and support. And we can often pair you with a mentor or someone who can answer your questions.

- Satisfying ethical requirements.** Under Rule 6.1 of the Nevada Rules of Professional Conduct, all licensed attorneys should be aiming for at least 20 hours of pro bono work every year. We have enough pro bono cases available to satisfy that requirement many times over.
- Earn Free CLE credits.** Not only do you receive free CLE credit for pro bono training CLEs, but you also receive one credit for every three hours of time you commit to legal aid pro bono casework. You can earn up to a maximum of four CLE credit hours per year.

Finally, we know that everyone is busy and sometimes the press of business and family obligations prevents us from taking on new opportunities. That’s OK—our professional rules provide an alternative in NRPC 6.1(a)(3) to the 20-hour pro bono goal by contributing \$500 or more to an organization like NNLA.

The State Bar of Nevada streamlines that contribution as part of the annual license renewal process. Sarah Ferguson, an attorney at McDonald Carano in Reno, and a NNLA volunteer attorney and board member, appreciates the ease of contributing in lieu of volunteering.

“During these difficult times, there are more Nevada families than ever in need of legal assistance,” Ferguson said. “Whether it’s avoiding foreclosure, protecting children from abuse, or helping seniors or veterans, the need for legal representation in our community is acute. I am proud to know that with a single check mark on my dues renewal 100 percent of my donation will be put towards finding legal solutions for Nevada families through Northern Nevada Legal Aid.”

Unequal access to justice is a solvable problem. But it’s not going to be solved unless we all do what we can. Taking a pro bono case is such a rewarding experience. It is an opportunity to learn a new area of law, satisfy your

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David Clark, Janeen Isaacson, Joe Garin

Our team includes former state bar prosecutors and bar counsel, and attorneys with more than 30 years of experience.

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ethical requirements under NRPC 6.1, earn CLE credit, and most importantly, serve the most in need in our community. With all the issues surrounding COVID-19 right now, our clients need us now more than ever and we could use your help. Please consider taking a pro bono case today—you will be happy you did.

If you are interested in learning more about pro bono service, please visit our website at nlegalaid.org or call us at 775-329-2727.

ENDNOTE:

1. https://greatertgood.berkeley.edu/article/item/how_volunteering_can_help_your_mental_health, Accessed August 8, 2022

DEONNE CONTINE is executive director of Northern Nevada Legal Aid. She also spent more than 10 years in state service, which included serving in the cabinet of Nevada's two most recent governors and representing state agency clients for the Attorney General. She has a bachelor's degree from UC Berkeley and a J.D. from the William S. Boyd School of Law.



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