

Pro Bono “Post-Covid” Opportunities

BY MICHAEL WENDLBERGER, ESQ.

As we try to turn the page on COVID-19, we must not forget the lessons learned during the pandemic. During COVID, everything went virtual: court hearings, depositions, firm meetings, CLEs, conferences, bar exams, and even law school graduations. The pandemic taught us that we could do anything virtually.

As we return to the new “normal,” ask yourself, what lessons learned during COVID do we want to keep, and what lessons do we want to forget? We have the technology to live our lives virtually; the question remains, should we?

We spent two years being apart from our colleagues. We spent two years working efficiently from home, attending hearings and meetings while working on other matters. In exchange, we lost the face-to-face hearings, the chit-chat in the court hallways, and the comradery.

Today, many courts allow both virtual and in-person hearings. This change means volunteering for a pro bono case is easier than ever. Today, you can represent a child, attend the hearing remotely, and while waiting for the court to call your case, you can continue to work on paying matters. One practical tip, when attending a pro bono hearing online, inform the court that you are a pro bono volunteer. Courts appreciate your time and dedication to providing access to justice to the community. So let the court and other attorneys know you are a pro bono hero. Your work as a volunteer may encourage others to get involved and improve access to justice in our community.

Beyond Court Hearings

The ease of volunteering for pro bono work goes beyond attending court hearings online. Before the pandemic, the idea of a virtual meeting with a client was not an option. Either the client or the attorney needed to trek across town. Today, you can visit

with a client virtually via video chat, allowing you to meet with your client from the comfort of your office.

If you don't want to take cases, you can still get involved by volunteering for our Ask-A-Lawyer Program, which is easier than ever. All of our Ask-A-Lawyer programs are now virtual. The Legal Aid Center of Southern Nevada (LACSN) vets each client by doing more upfront work to ensure the client's needs meet the particular Ask-A-Lawyer event. We screen new clients virtually, reviewing documents online and following up with calls. And where appropriate, we refer clients to LACSN's intake department for further analysis. We strive to create the best possible volunteering environment. The ease of volunteering for our Ask-A-Lawyer program, coupled with the high need in the community, resulted in a 25 percent growth in our Ask-A-Lawyer programs last year.



POST-COVID-19



VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT: Marjorie Guymon

Need more reasons to get involved?

LACSN offers virtual CLEs, sample pleadings, mentors, and malpractice insurance. In addition, under Nevada Supreme Court Rule 210, an attorney can receive one hour of CLE credit for every three hours spent on a pro bono matter, up to four CLE credits. Legal Aid Center can help track your pro bono time and ensure you receive the CLE credit for your pro bono service.

Change the world and help others. Legal Aid Center needs your help now more than ever. You can help. Take a case and get involved today!

It's so easy to help that some pro bono attorneys take cases in bunches. Recently, the Legal Aid Center of Southern Nevada (LACSN) asked Marjorie A. Guymon if she would consider taking a guardianship matter. LACSN sent her three cases for review. When she was asked if she wanted to take one case, she responded by taking all three cases.

Like many pro bono volunteers, Guymon understands the importance of pro bono. She started taking pro bono cases with LACSN in 1993 and never stopped. She has received numerous awards for her pro bono work, including Legal Aid Center's Lied Award for most pro bono cases taken by a law firm in 2008.

"Of course, helping those in need of legal services who cannot otherwise afford them is a responsibility of every licensed attorney," Guymon said "Feeling good about doing it is a positive byproduct. But I enjoy providing pro bono services to clients of the Legal Aid Center of Southern Nevada because of the large number of people who are truly grateful and even express relief at receiving the legal assistance they need. Knowing that I have improved someone's day or situation in some small way is a wonderful reward."

The selfless act of taking a pro bono case helps the entire community by reducing the access to justice gap in our community. The Legal Aid Center of Southern Nevada is thankful to Guymon and every pro bono attorney who dedicates their time and energy to provide a voice in court to those most in need.

MICHAEL WENDLBERGER is the director of the Pro Bono Project at Legal Aid Center of Southern Nevada. He is a graduate of the William S. Boyd School of Law with more than 10 years of experience in litigation. He is active in the Clark County Bar Association, enjoys helping others, and strives to reduce the access to justice gap in Nevada. He can be reached at mwendlberger@lacs.org or 702-386-1429.

