



Rising to the Call: Pro Bono in Our Times of Crisis

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From COVID-19 to natural disasters to political protests, the last year brought challenges like we have never known. Your legal skills are needed to help our most vulnerable community members. Get tips from this free guidebook, *Rising to the Call*, on how to connect with statewide pro bono efforts and find free training opportunities in areas of law including housing, employment, government benefits, disaster relief and civil rights.

As lawyers, we have the power to positively impact lives, to ease the anxiety and suffering of those in crisis, and to offer hope of justice and new beginnings. We can amplify our influence by working as part of organized pro bono efforts.

Current crises = critical pro bono needs!

- Little access to legal information, services and courts
- Societal discrimination & bias
- Exploitation of people in vulnerable situations
- Lack of diversity in legal profession
- Language, tech and education barriers
- Massive cuts to funding for free legal aid
- High cost of legal services & education

And add to that the pressure and chaos of current events:

- Pandemic
- Business closures
- Unemployment
- Evictions
- Growing protests
- Environmental disasters
- Elections and uncertainty

The benefits of volunteering (for YOU!)

- Competence
- Confidence
- Legal skills
- Subject matter expertise
- Reputation

Pandemic & other disaster-related urgent community legal needs

- Workers' rights
- Consumer law/disaster relief
- Benefits assistance
- Landlord-tenant/various laws
 - Eviction
- Immigration
- Family law
- Free speech/protest/criminal defense

Free training, resources, supervision and support

- Workshops and training
- Supervision
- Malpractice insurance
- Access to research materials
- Mentorship
- Collaborate with a team
 - Mentors: experts in their field
 - Team spirit, lifelong bonding with peers and supervisors

Good for your reputation and career

- Teamwork builds credibility and trust among peers
- Frontline work boosts credibility within communities served
- Leadership opportunities and access that cannot be bought

And, volunteering feels good and makes you happy!

- Be of service to others
- Become part of something bigger than yourself
- Use your skills for something aligned with your mission
- Challenge yourself to learn and grow
- Make new friends and colleagues

Considerations when choosing a pro bono opportunity

- What do you like doing?
- What special skills or language fluencies do you have, or want to gain?
- How much time do you have to spend on your commitment?
- Do you have special needs that may need to be accommodated?

Varying ranges of commitment ~ depends on your schedule and interest

- Intake/triage
- Limited scope
 - Lawyer and client agree that the lawyer will handle some parts of the case and the client will handle others
- Full scope
- Legal research
 - Lawyer is hired to provide legal services on all aspects of a case from start to finish

Pro bono opportunities range from limited, discrete tasks . . .

- Active listening during intake
- Explaining legal procedure
- Strategizing and explaining options
- Referring to help for next steps
- Assisting with forms or tech
- Interpreting / translating

. . . to full-scope representation

- Representing client in litigation (alone or part of team)
- Negotiating pre-litigation
- Contracts/transactional
- Assisting with forms or tech
- Interpreting/translating





And a growing number of virtual options

- Counsel & advice
- Assistance with forms
- Negotiations
- Drafting demand letters
- Legal research/brief-writing
- Court hearings
- Know-Your-Rights presentations

An overview of California Pro Bono opportunities

- Training:
 - pbtraining.org
 - pli.edu
- probono.net
- lawhelpca.org
- Onejustice.org
- Your local bar association



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