Pro Bono Legal Services for NUSL Students

Introduction

Providing pro bono legal services to clients in need is an important duty of all attorneys. You can begin your career of pro bono legal service while you are in law school. This handout provides information about (1) the nature of pro bono legal services, (2) the benefits of providing pro bono legal services, and (3) the ways in which the Supreme Judicial Court (SJC) of Massachusetts recognizes the pro bono legal services of law students.

What are Pro Bono Legal Services?

Pro bono legal services are law-related services that are (1) unpaid, (2) receive no academic credit, and (3) serve the needs of individuals or groups with limited access to legal representation or who are underrepresented in the legal system. These services may be performed for charitable, religious, civic, community, governmental, or educational organizations.

Reasons for Doing Pro Bono Legal Service

1. Increase Access to Justice. Legal services organizations in Massachusetts must turn away two of every three income-eligible individuals who seek assistance. You can do your part to keep the doors of the courthouse open to those who need access to justice.

2. Make a Difference in Someone’s Life. By using your legal skills to assist an individual in crisis, you can change that individual’s life - and enrich your own.

3. Learn and Network. Providing pro bono legal services is an excellent way to learn about the legal system, hone specific professional skills, and meet other attorneys.

4. Build Your Resume. Pro bono work can enhance your resume. Qualifying for the SJC Pro Bono Honor Roll for Law Students, or being selected for an Adams Award for outstanding pro bono work (see the back of this flyer for more information), will signal to future employers that you have a strong commitment to increasing access to justice for all.

5. Begin a Habit of Legal Professionalism. When you join the legal profession, you will have a professional responsibility to provide legal services for individuals who are unable to pay. According to the American Bar Association’s Model Rules of Professional Conduct, “[a] lawyer should aspire to render at least (50) hours of pro bono publico legal services per year.” Providing pro bono legal services to clients in need while you are still in law school is the first step toward developing an important professional habit.
Recognition for Pro Bono Legal Work

1. **The Supreme Judicial Court (SJC) Pro Bono Honor Roll for Law Students.** If you complete 50 hours of pro bono legal work during your time as a law student, you are eligible to have your name placed on the annual *SJC Pro Bono Honor Roll for Law Students.*

2. **The Adams Award.** Every year the SJC Standing Committee on Pro Bono Legal Services selects approximately four individuals to receive the prestigious *Adams Pro Bono Publico Award* for outstanding pro bono service. One of the awards each year goes to a law student. If you perform truly outstanding pro bono work while in law school, you may be nominated for the Adams Award by a supervisor or faculty member.

3. **The Adams Award Ceremony.** Pro Bono Honor Roll certificates and the Adams Awards are presented each fall at the Adams Award Ceremony at the John Adams Courthouse.

The SJC Pro Bono Honor Roll for Law Students: Mechanics

- Review the *Law Students Pro Bono Honor Roll Requirements and Guidelines* at [https://www.mass.gov/guides/law-students-pro-bono-honor-roll-requirements-and-guidelines](https://www.mass.gov/guides/law-students-pro-bono-honor-roll-requirements-and-guidelines). The requirements are complex; it is a good idea to familiarize yourself with them sooner rather than later.

- Track your hours. Track the date, type of work, and number of hours worked. Please do not count transportation, training, or observation time. Your log is for your personal use. NUSL uses an honor system for the SJC Pro Bono Honor Roll.
  
  - There are many opportunities at NUSL to participate in pro bono services. For example, all hours worked for the International Refugee Assistance Project (IRAP) count as pro bono hours. If you are unsure whether your work counts as pro bono service for the SJC honor roll, please consult the *Law Students Pro Bono Honor Roll Requirements and Guidelines* (see link above).
  
  - Hours for which you receive course credit or academic credit do not count as pro bono hours. Clinic hours do not count as pro bono hours. Co-op hours do not count as pro bono hours unless you work co-op hours above and beyond what is required (i.e., 35 hours/week for 11 weeks). Pro bono hours performed at a firm as part of a co-op do not count as pro bono hours.

- Ask NUSL to certify your hours. Once you have logged 50 hours of pro bono time, fill out the online form at [https://nuslasa.wufoo.com/forms/sjc-pro-bono-honor-roll/](https://nuslasa.wufoo.com/forms/sjc-pro-bono-honor-roll/) to request NUSL certification. *Please submit the questionnaire by the second Friday in September.* Please contact Jennifer if you have questions about the certification process.

- If you have general questions about the *SJC Pro Bono Honor Roll for Law Students,* please contact Elizabeth Ennen at e.ennen@northeastern.edu. Please consult the *Law Students Pro Bono Honor Roll Requirements and Guidelines* website (see link above) prior to contacting her, as many common questions are answered on that website.