



*Making Justice Accessible*

## PRO BONO PROGRAM

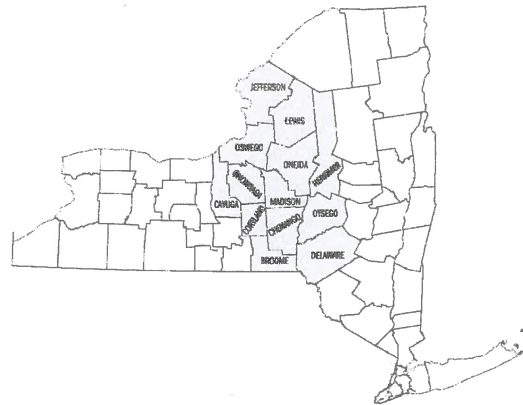


**Serving low-income persons in Central and Northern New York**

### The Pro Bono Program

The Pro Bono Program is a collaboration between The Legal Aid Society of Mid-New York, Inc. (LASMNY) and private attorneys to provide free legal services to low-income people across LASMNY's 13-county service area:

Broome, Cayuga, Chenango, Cortland, Delaware, Herkimer, Jefferson, Lewis, Madison, Oneida, Onondaga, Oswego, Otsego



According to "Documenting the Justice Gap in America," a 2009 report by the Legal Services Corporation, only a very small percentage of legal problems experienced by low-income persons, about one in five or less, are addressed with the assistance of an attorney.

Pro bono attorney involvement is crucial to help meet the pressing legal needs of the indigent within our communities.

### Volunteer Opportunities

**Bankruptcy:** join our Pro Bono Bankruptcy referral panel and represent clients in Chapter 7 bankruptcies, or mentor and train new attorneys

**Child Support:** provide advice and counsel on child support matters, or represent clients at Support Magistrate hearings

**Consumer Clinics:** meet individually with clients to advise on debt collection or other consumer matters

**Divorce:** meet individually with clients on divorce matters, provide pro se advice in uncontested divorce proceedings, or represent clients in contested or uncontested divorces

**Estate Planning:** prepare simple wills, health care proxies and powers of attorney

**Landlord-Tenant Project:** be a lawyer for the day for tenants in housing court

**Unemployment Insurance:** represent clients in UIB hearings by phone or in-person

**Veterans Clinics:** be a lawyer for the day at local veterans centers

**Legal HelpLine:** accept referrals on civil legal matters of your choice or give telephone advice from your office as a HelpLine volunteer



In 2015 pro bono attorneys accepted 1,053 new cases and completed 1,029 cases for LASMNY clients. Since 2000 more than 350 attorneys have participated in our pro bono programs.

## FAQs about the Pro Bono Program

### I already do “pro bono” work on my own. Why should I volunteer through LASMNY?

- We pre-screen applicants; no referrals are made unless they qualify for service.
- We provide malpractice coverage for all pro bono cases referred.
- We provide training, research, forms and other support.
- We can provide CLE credit if you spend at least 1.0 hour on pro bono work.
- We annually recognize attorneys in local bar newsletters and nominate outstanding volunteers for county and statewide pro bono honors.
- Our Student Intern Program recruits and trains outstanding undergraduate pre-law and law students as pro bono interns. We can place interns at the offices of pro bono attorneys to assist with LASMNY assignments.

### I probably don’t do the kinds of work your clients need. Can I really be of help?

We actually provide a wide range of civil legal advice. The Legal Helpline gives legal advice on any civil legal matter to financially eligible clients. This enables us to refer cases in almost any area of civil law. Attorneys can also give telephone advice from the convenience of their own offices as a Legal Helpline volunteer.

### Can I help in an area that is new to me?

Yes. We can train and mentor attorneys learning a new area of law.

### What are “reverse referrals”?

If you are contacted by a low-income person that you want to help pro bono, we can tell you within minutes if they meet our guidelines. If so, the pro bono case is opened and automatically “referred” back to you.

## Pro Bono Partnerships

LASMNY frequently partners with local bar associations, universities, and other service providers. Some recent collaboration include:

- American Civic Association - Immigration Forum
- Binghamton University - Student Internship Program
- Binghamton Vet Center - Talk to a Lawyer Series (Veterans)
- Broome County Bar Association - Senior Legal Clinics
- Colgate University - Bankruptcy Consumer Project
- Crime Victims Assistance Center - Immigration Clinics
- Feerick Center for Social Justice - Attorney Emeritus Program
- Onondaga County Bar Association - Elder Law Fair
- Sixth Judicial District Pro Bono Committee
- Syracuse University College of Law - Personal Bankruptcy Clinic
- CNY Veteran’s Outreach Center; Utica, NY - Pro Bono Advice Clinics
- Volunteer Lawyers Project of Onondaga County - Pro Se Divorce Clinics

LASMNY has partnered with the Attorney Emeritus Advisory Council to administer volunteer opportunities for attorneys who register as an Attorney Emeritus. The designation grants increased benefits and recognition for both working and retired attorneys. Contact us for more information.

## Contact Us

The Pro Bono Program is staffed by attorneys and paralegals at our three main offices. Contact us to find out more about volunteer opportunities in your area.

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Visit LASMNY’s Website: [www.lasmny.org](http://www.lasmny.org)

