



Neighborhood Legal Services Association

WAYS TO HELP – PRO BONO VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES – www.nlsa.us

Why Pro Bono?

By volunteering your time and/or financially supporting civil legal aid to the poor, attorneys are in a unique position to bridge the justice gap in our community.

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Ways to Help: How you can help NLSA today

Listed in this section are the various pro bono opportunities currently available. Find one, or several, that complement your passion. If you don't see an opportunity that interests you, or if you have an idea for a volunteer initiative, please contact us, as we welcome your ideas.

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Help Your Community

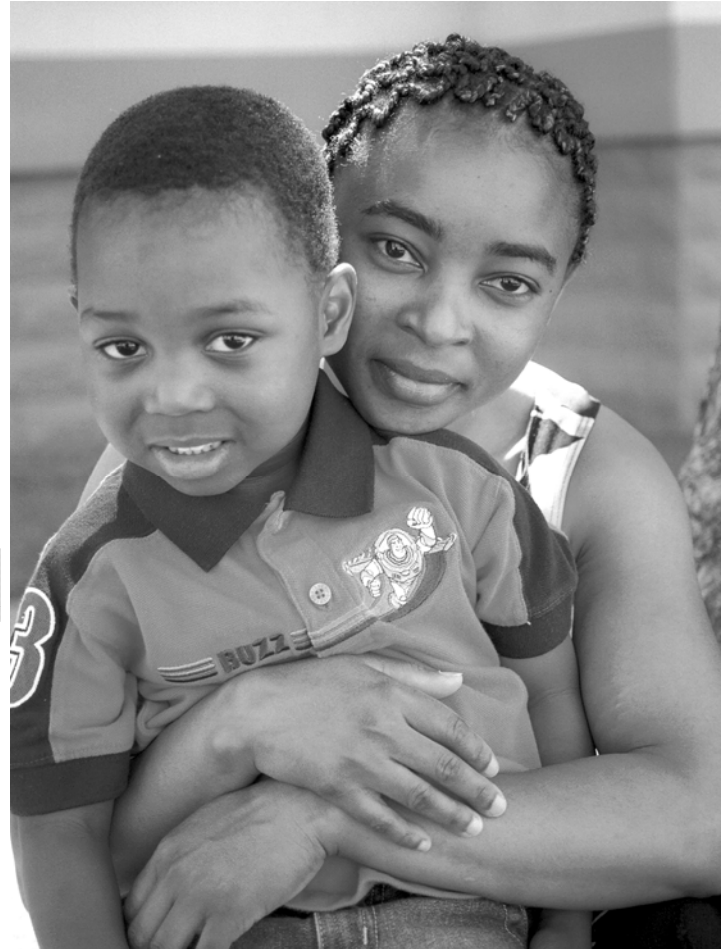
Whether it's participating in our Landlord/Tenant Pro Bono Referral Program in Butler, providing counsel at a Family Law clinic in Allegheny, volunteering for an afternoon of pro bono work in Beaver, or preparing living wills for the elderly in Lawrence, learn more about NLSA's numerous pro bono opportunities organized by county.

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How: How NLSA's Pro Bono Referral Program works

NLSA staff is committed to making the referral process beneficial for both the client and volunteer attorney. In this section, learn more about training and support, the referral process, and other useful information regarding how our Pro Bono Program works.

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Our laws guarantee basic rights and protections for all of us – not just those who can afford legal counsel.

NLSA provides civil legal assistance to vulnerable and low-income individuals and families in our region who otherwise could not afford legal help. Yet, NLSA only has resources to help a fraction of those in need. Your volunteer support and financial assistance to NLSA helps our neighbors in crisis return to safe, productive lives.



The Pennsylvania Code

Rule 6.1 Voluntary Pro Bono Public Service

“A lawyer shall render public interest legal service. A lawyer may discharge this responsibility by providing professional services at no fee or a reduced fee to persons of limited means or to public service or charitable groups or organizations, by service in activities for improving the law, the legal system or the legal profession, and by financial support for organizations that provide legal services to persons of limited means.”

“NLSA helped me to rely on myself instead of my family.” – Deborah, NLSA client

Why Pro Bono?

Access to justice is essential not only to our system of justice, but to the quality of life in our region. Having adequate legal representation often means the difference between shelter and homelessness, nourishment and hunger, economic stability and bankruptcy, or productive work and unemployment. In a very clear way, the availability of civil legal aid prevents an upward spiral of costly social programs.

Yet, NLSA only has resources to help a fraction of those in need. Legal needs studies consistently report that legal aid programs serve only one person out of every five who need civil legal assistance.

We can do more to ensure that justice is accessible to all in our community. Your volunteer support and financial assistance to NLSA helps families in crisis return to safe, productive lives. Your time, talent, resources and personal touch can make all the difference.

Steadfast support of equal access to justice is not merely a choice for an attorney. It is an obligation taken on with the skills of the profession and allegiance to the profession’s Code of Conduct.

By volunteering your time and/or financially supporting NLSA and civil legal aid to the poor, attorneys are in a unique position to bridge the justice gap in our community.

In the four counties (Allegheny, Beaver, Butler and Lawrence) served by NLSA, thousands of low-income people and victims of domestic violence critically need civil legal services they cannot afford. An estimated 199,432 people in the NLSA service area have incomes below the federal poverty guidelines and are, therefore, eligible for our services.

NLSA plays a significant role in providing civil legal services to those who have nowhere else to turn. Our biggest hurdle is keeping up with the demand for services. It is only with your help that NLSA can respond to the overwhelming demand. Representation by counsel is essential not only to make our legal system function properly but to deliver on the promise of *Justice for All!*



Ways to Help

You can help transform the lives of domestic violence victims as well as the lives of low-income individuals and families with urgent legal problems. Numerous case-handling and other civil volunteer opportunities are available at NLSA. Listed in this section are the various pro bono opportunities currently available. Find one, or several, that complement your passion. If you don't see an opportunity that interests you or if you have an idea for a volunteer initiative not listed here – please contact us as we welcome your ideas.

We invite you to join the indispensable community of volunteer attorneys who help NLSA broaden access to legal services for the poor.

- **Represent victims of domestic violence in Protection from Abuse hearings** by contacting your local NLSA Office:

Pittsburgh/Allegheny County

Mary Ann Troper-Malley
412.586.6134
troperma@nlsa.us

Butler County

Geraldine Redmond
724.282.3888
redmondg@nlsa.us

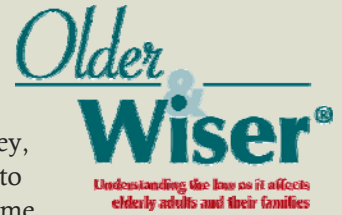
Beaver County

Michelle DeBord
724.371.3901
debordm@nlsa.us

Lawrence County

Claudia Bistyga
724.658.2677
bistygac@nlsa.us

- **Participate in our *Older&Wiser*® program** as a presenter at a community educational program held in collaboration with Pennsylvania state legislators. Presenting an *Older&Wiser*® seminar is a unique opportunity for you, as an attorney, to gain exposure to people of all income levels while providing a much needed public service to the elderly, their families and their caregivers. NLSA provides the content including a custom PowerPoint presentation and takeaway materials. Current seminar topics include:



1. **Protections Through Powers of Attorney and Living Wills;**
2. **Dealing Effectively With a Healthcare Facility;**
3. **Understanding Retirement**
4. **Learning About Last Wills and Living Trusts;**
5. **Predatory Lending & Older Adults;**
6. **Navigating Medicaid; and**
7. **Guarding Against Senior Fraud.**

Volunteer attorneys conduct the seminar presentation and follow-up Q&A session as well as provide full-fee, reduced-fee and free-of-charge referral information. Volunteers may make available business cards with the understanding that any referrals resulting from the seminar must be provided at a fee of \$20-\$35 for the first half-hour (equivalent to the Lawyer Referral Services in NLSA's service area).

Legal expertise is also needed to develop content for new *Older&Wiser*® seminars on proposed new topics including: Reverse Mortgages; Pros and Cons of Long-Term Care Insurance; Identify Theft; and Understanding Veteran's Benefits.

To learn more about *Older&Wiser*® or to serve on the program's pro bono panel, contact Joe Olimpi at 724.371.3900 or olimpij@nlsa.us.

Ways to Help *(continued)*

- **Volunteer to accept Chapter 7 or Chapter 13 Bankruptcy referrals.** For more information, contact Ron Fischer, NLSA Pro Bono Coordinator at 412.586.6153 or via email at fischerr@nlsa.us. Attorneys in Beaver, Butler and Lawrence County are invited to contact Michelle DeBord, Managing Attorney, at 412.371.3901 or via email at debordm@nlsa.us.
- Attorneys are needed to **represent clients at unemployment compensation referee hearings.** For more information, contact Ron Fischer, NLSA Pro Bono Coordinator 412.586.6153 or via email at fischerr@nlsa.us. Attorneys in Beaver, Butler and Lawrence County are invited to contact Michelle DeBord, Managing Attorney, at 412.371.3901 or via email at debordm@nlsa.us.
- Volunteers are needed to handle **litigation defense cases** involving a variety of areas including contracts, consumer debt and landlord-tenant cases. For more information, contact Ron Fischer, NLSA Pro Bono Coordinator at 412.586.6153 or via email at fischerr@nlsa.us.
- **Join our Equal Justice Campaign Committee.** The *Equal Justice Campaign* is the cornerstone of legal aid giving and provides essential funding that ensures the delivery of legal services to the poor. Volunteers work to develop campaign strategies and provide inspiration to a network of hundreds of attorneys, judges and individuals toward a common fundraising goal. To volunteer, please contact Christine Kirby at 412.586.6137 or via email at kirbyc@nlsa.us.

- NLSA intends to establish a **Planned Giving Advisory Council**. Volunteers are needed with expertise in estate planning and planned giving to help NLSA establish a viable program. Volunteers would advise NLSA on the development of promotional materials and strategy to implement planned giving. If interested, please contact Christine Kirby at 412.586.6137 or via email at kirbyc@nlsa.us.



“NLSA gave me the chance I needed to work and support my kids.”

– Melissa, NLSA client

Questions?

For more information on any of NLSA’s pro bono volunteer opportunities, email us at support@nlsa.us.

Other Ways to Help

Allegheny County

- Volunteer to provide counsel to clients attending NLSA's **Debt Advice or Family Law Clinics**. These clinics are held on alternating Wednesday evenings from 5:30 PM to 7:30 PM. Contact Barbara Kern at 412.586.6138 or via email at kernb@nlsa.us.
- Volunteer to assist the elderly by providing legal services through our **Elder Law Project**. Lawyers are needed to handle small estate and guardianship cases as well as preparation of living wills and powers of attorney. For more information, contact Ron Fischer, NLSA Pro Bono Coordinator at 412.586.6153 or via email at fischerr@nlsa.us.
- Participate in a **short-term task force to institutionalize/expand NLSA's Arbitration Pro Bono Program**. Attorneys who serve on an arbitration panel in Allegheny County can designate their fee be paid directly to NLSA. Working with our program partners, NLSA is looking for volunteers familiar with the processes to help us improve and institutionalize this program. To volunteer, contact Ron Fischer, NLSA Pro Bono Coordinator at 412.586.6153 or via email at fischerr@nlsa.us or Christine Kirby, NLSA Development Officer at 412.586.6137 or via email at kirbyc@nlsa.us.

Beaver County

- Volunteer for **an afternoon of pro bono work**, weekdays at our Bridgewater Office. Private attorneys are needed to give advice to 4-5 legal aid clients with problems in housing, consumer and/or family areas. For more information, contact Michelle DeBord, Managing Attorney at 412.371.3901 or via email at debordm@nlsa.us.

Butler County

- Participate in the **Landlord/Tenant Pro Bono Referral Program** and provide representation of tenants in eviction proceedings before a District Justice.
- Accept a Custody Referral and **provide representation in a custody action before the Court of Common Pleas** of a custodial parent whose child has just been snatched or who has been sued for custody.

Lawrence County

- Provide **one hour of free service for the elderly**. Volunteers are needed for up to one (1) hour of pro bono advice and limited service in the following civil matters for indigent persons age 60 or older:
 - Divorce, custody, support and PFA issues
 - Landlord/Tenant and real estate law
 - Debtor/creditor, bankruptcy and consumer law
 - Estates, guardianships, and adoptions
 - Civil litigation, personal injury, and contract disputes
 - Social Security, workers compensation, unemployment compensation, pensions and insurance issues
 - Employment issues
- Volunteer to **prepare documents for the elderly**. Pro bono volunteers prepare wills, living wills and/or powers of attorney for indigent persons age 60 or older. Interested volunteers should contact Claudia Bistyga by phone at 724.658.2677 or via email bistygac@nlsa.us.



“NLSA kept me from being set out on the street.” – Mamie, NLSA client

Training and Support

In order to assist volunteers in the representation of clients referred by NLSA, periodic training sessions on the particular substantive areas of the law are offered. Continuing Legal Education (CLE) credits are available free of charge for training participants who accept case referrals. Visit our website, www.nlsa.us for the latest information on upcoming CLE courses. NLSA staff attorneys, experienced in legal concerns of the poor, are available to answer questions and to mentor volunteer attorneys. In addition, a number of private attorneys with specialized skills have agreed to serve as mentors and/or consultants to pro bono volunteers.

As previously indicated, malpractice insurance will be provided by NLSA for all pro bono cases. (Please note in Allegheny County, secondary malpractice insurance coverage is provided by the Allegheny County Bar Foundation.) NLSA also provides office space to interview clients, duplicating and filing services, training and access to mentors to assist you with any questions.

How NLSA’s Pro Bono Program Works

NLSA needs volunteers who will accept one or more cases a year (depending on difficulty and time required) or participate in various projects. The staff at NLSA is committed to making the referral process beneficial for both the client and volunteer attorney. Every effort is made to tailor our procedures to suit the needs of individual practitioners and law firms. Volunteers can accept work or other volunteer tasks according to their own schedules and will be provided opportunities to use their own expertise to develop new areas of the law.

Expenses

Volunteers will charge no fee for services but may be reimbursed for out-of-pocket and litigation expenses with the prior approval of NLSA. The volunteer may accept any attorneys fees awarded by the court, so long as the client pays nothing. Volunteers may elect to donate/direct attorney fees to NLSA’s Equal Justice Campaign.

Referral Procedures

To ensure that volunteer attorneys are able to spend their time most effectively, NLSA conducts the following initial services:

1. Prior to a client referral, experienced NLSA staff determine a client’s financial eligibility and identify the nature and urgency of their legal problem.
2. NLSA contacts the volunteer with necessary information on the case. The volunteer then checks for any conflicts and determines whether he or she can accept the case.
3. Upon acceptance, NLSA will write a brief description of the case, collect and copy all appropriate documents and present the case file to the volunteer. (NLSA does screen referrals in Allegheny County for merit. Private attorneys are advised to refuse the case if no merit.)

Expenses

So that efficiencies can be evaluated and pro bono volunteers can demonstrate their pro bono contributions at year-end, accurate records must be kept and reported back until the appropriate cases are completed and closed. Periodic case follow-up by NLSA staff will ensure that the volunteer's support needs are met.

Record Keeping

PA Probono.net is an online resource that provides members with an interactive opportunity to obtain and share information and resources and actively participate in Pennsylvania's equal justice community. Users of the PA Probono.net website are attorneys and paralegals who are dedicated to improving access to justice.



The site was created to support advocates in their representation of low-income individuals in need of civil legal assistance. The website contains a variety of tools to help advocates in representing legal aid clients. Some features, like current news items and general calendar events (ie. listing free CLE training events), are available to the public, but most of the tools are only accessible to members of the "Practice Areas" listed on the site.

PA Probono.net is free to use but you must be an approved member of the site to access and contribute materials to the Library, which includes training materials, litigation materials, and links to helpful internet resources.



"My whole neighborhood is better off because of NLSA." – Leo, NLSA client



Neighborhood Legal Services Association

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Pittsburgh, PA 15222

www.nlsa.us | (866) 761-6572



The official registration and financial information of Neighborhood Legal Services Association may be obtained from the Pennsylvania Department of State by calling toll-free within Pennsylvania 1-800-732-0999. Registration does not imply endorsement. Federal regulations applying to NLSA require that we notify all donors that no funds can be expended by NLSA for any activity prohibited under P.L.104-134 or otherwise prohibited by 45 C.F.R. § 1600 et seq.