

**TEMPLE AMERICAN INN OF COURT**

**DECEMBER PROGRAM MATERIALS**

**DECEMBER 16, 2010**

**PA Rule 6.1 – Voluntary Pro Bono Publico Service**

**Pennsylvania Bar Association – Pennsylvania Direct Service Pro Bono Plan**

***How New or Re-Tooling Lawyers Can Get Experience*, Debra L. Bruce,  
(reprinted from The Legal Intelligencer, October 14, 2010)**

***The Lawyer Who Says ‘Yes’ Pro Bono Work Benefits Attorneys and  
Clients Alike*, Geneva Campbell (reprinted from The Legal Intelligencer,  
May 25, 2010)**

***ETHICS IN ACTION – Universal Template for a Mentoring Project Temple  
Inn of Court*, by Carl H. Delacato, Jr. © 2007**

- Cesspool
- Disciples
- Candidati
- Cosca
- Salons
- Errata
- Risorse

## PA Rule 6.1 | Voluntary Pro Bono Publico Service

### PUBLIC SERVICE

#### Rule 6.1 Voluntary Pro Bono Publico Service

A lawyer should 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.

#### Comment:

[1] The ABA House of Delegates has formally acknowledged “the basic responsibility of each lawyer engaged in the practice of law to provide public interest legal services” without fee, or at a substantially reduced fee, in one or more of the following areas: poverty law, civil rights law, public rights law, charitable organization representation and the administration of justice. This Rule expresses that policy but is not intended to be enforced through disciplinary process.

[2] The rights and responsibilities of individuals and organizations in the United States are increasingly defined in legal terms. As a consequence, legal assistance in coping with the web of statutes, rules and regulations is imperative for persons of modest and limited means, as well as for the relatively well-to-do.

[3] The basic responsibility for providing legal services for those unable to pay ultimately rests upon the individual lawyer, and personal involvement in the problems of the disadvantaged can be one of the most rewarding experiences in the life of a lawyer. Every lawyer, regardless of professional prominence or professional workload, should find time to participate in or otherwise support the provision of legal services to the disadvantaged. The provision of free legal services to those unable to pay reasonable fees continues to be an obligation of each lawyer as well as the profession generally, but the efforts of individual lawyers are often not enough to meet the need. Thus, it has been necessary for the profession and government to institute additional programs to provide legal services. Accordingly, legal aid offices, lawyer referral services and other related programs have been developed, and others will be developed by the profession and government. Every lawyer should support all proper efforts to meet this need for legal services.

[4] Law firms should act reasonably to enable and encourage all lawyers in the firm to provide the pro bono legal services called for by this Rule.



Model Pro Bono Plan

PUBLIC RESOURCES

## PENNSYLVANIA DIRECT SERVICE PRO BONO PLAN

### **Introduction**

The Pennsylvania Bar Association recognizes the responsibility of every lawyer to render public interest service. Rule 6.1 of the Rules of Professional Conduct provides:

A lawyer should render public interest service. A lawyer may discharge this responsibility by providing professional service 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.

The model plan that follows is designed to provide individual lawyers, acting through their local bar associations, with an opportunity to discharge their public interest service responsibility through participation in an organized direct service program. The program has been designed to encourage maximum participation by attorneys, the servicing of as large a number of disadvantaged individuals as possible, the utilization of technology for efficiency and effectiveness and the delivery of high quality representation.

The plan is a model. It is anticipated that individual counties will incorporate variations and modifications that are appropriate to their individual circumstances and that local bars believe will enhance operations within their jurisdictions. This model plan is subject to review on an annual basis and will be modified based on the actual experience of individual attorneys and bar associations.

While Rule 6.1 recognizes each attorney's responsibility to provide public interest legal services (hereinafter referred to as "pro bono services"), the method of discharging that responsibility is at the discretion of each attorney. The purpose of this plan is to propose one method that addresses a clear public need that is perceived to exist in all counties of the commonwealth. The Legal Services to the Public Committee of the Pennsylvania Bar Association (PBA) may consider the development of additional model programs as is appropriate or useful to the bar in fulfilling the goal of public interest service.

The Legal Services to the Public Committee recommends that the addressing of the civil legal needs of all indigent persons not serviced by publicly funded legal service programs be adopted as special pro bono project of the PBA and by county bar associations. As a special project, it is hoped that the PBA and county bar associations will encourage their members to extend meaningful public interest effort in programs that directly service the legal needs of the indigent in addition to the other forms of public service recognized in Rule 6.1.

It is recognized that many county bar associations have established programs and that complex interactions between and among multiple programs, including local bar associations and foundations, must be coordinated to make comprehensive service to the indigent a reality. This model is not intended to replace existing programs, but to serve as a format for the establishment or modification of an organized direct service program. The Legal Services to the Public Committee stands ready to work with any county bar association that believes that outside consultation may be of use in coordinating, implementing or modifying its program.

The PBA Legal Services to the Public Committee will attempt to monitor the implementation of this plan in various counties, to catalogue variations and modifications adopted by individual counties, to collect data concerning the operation of various county plans and to disseminate useful reports concerning the impact of this form of pro bono activity for evaluation by interested parties and institutions. The committee also will attempt to analyze the cost of program administration and the proper allocation of those costs.

Rule 6.1 recognizes various forms of pro bono activities that fulfill a lawyer's responsibility to render public interest legal services. This program, however, is designed only to address satisfaction of that responsibility through the following provisions: direct civil legal services to poor persons; legal services and financial aid to organizations that have as their primary purpose the provision of civil legal services or assistance to the poor; the training or monitoring of attorneys participating in pro bono programs or staffing legal service programs; and the development of and delivering of community education programs for low income individuals. Other programs and model programs that address other aspects of pro bono public service may be produced and circulated for consideration by the profession in the future.

### ***The Proposed Program***

**1. Start Up**

Each county bar association will be asked to adopt a resolution committing it to establish or to maintain an ongoing direct service pro bono program. Bar associations that currently operate direct service pro bono programs will be asked to review their programs in consideration of the model provided by this program.

As part of the proposed resolution, each bar association should commit itself, where it has not already done so, to the establishment of a committee to oversee the establishment of the pro bono program, program evaluation and implementation of any necessary changes.

A model resolution and program statement is below.

**2. Eligibility**

The plan adopted by each local bar association must include a definition of those eligible for service. The eligibility standard must be known to and accepted by the members of the association. The PBA Legal Services to the Public Committee recommends that the eligibility standards for service from the governmentally funded legal services organizations be adopted by each local program.

**3. Participation of Bar Association Members**

**a) Participation.** It is well recognized that neither government funded nor pro bono programs, alone or jointly can meet the legal needs of the poor. It also is recognized that financial assistance in and of itself would not meet the need. Thus, bar association members are encouraged to give of their time and financial resources to help meet the legal needs of the indigent.

**b) Assumed Participation.** Although participation in the direct service pro bono program is strictly voluntary, as a special pro bono project of the county bar association in response to Rule 6.1, all members of the local bar association initially will be assumed to want to participate in it. The model program provides appropriate methods for the collection of information from the members of local associations concerning their views, areas of interest and capacities.

**c) Financial Contribution.** Rule 6.1 recognizes the giving of financial support "for organizations that provide legal services to persons of limited means" as one of the methods by which a lawyer may discharge his or her responsibility to provide public interest service. In addition to direct service, all attorneys are encouraged to consider making financial contributions to civil legal service programs.

It is recognized that some members will elect to address their public interest obligations solely with contributions. While the amount of any contribution in lieu of service must rest with the conscience of each individual attorney, the PBA suggests that an appropriate annual payment would be equal to the value of the average number of hours of time program in a normal calendar year. The great differences in billing rates customary in various financial contribution fees is a matter within the oversight of each county bar association. It is recommended that the annual financial contribution amount be forwarded to the local legal services program or to such other entity that provides free civil legal services to persons of limited means as the attorney may select.

**d) Services Anticipated.** Participants in this direct service pro bono program can anticipate providing service in several ways. The direct provision of legal services to needy individuals is anticipated to be the most common. It is important for each program to set a target for the quantity of service that will be requested of each participant. The target may be stated as a number of cases or as a number of hours of service. The PBA recommends that local bar associations consider targets of a minimum of three cases or 15 to 25 hours per calendar year.

Special forms of providing service through mentoring and co-counseling with legal service attorneys, providing staff training to formal legal service and pro bono programs and the provision of public educational programs on matters of interest to disadvantaged persons also can be expected to be available through this program. The PBA Legal Services to the Public Committee currently is considering model mentoring and public and professional educational programs that will be available to local bar associations as adjuncts to and as part of this direct service pro bono program.

**4. Administration**

The local bar association is responsible for establishing a workable administration for the program. Cooperation between local bar associations and the legal service program servicing that county is encouraged. Where a local bar association has staff, the pro bono program may be administered by the local staff in coordination with the local legal services program. Where a local bar association is without staff, the pro bono program may be administered by the local legal services program in coordination with the local oversight committee appointed by the bar association as may be agreed to by the bar association and the legal services program.

**5. Professional Responsibility and Quality Control**

Clients accepted by attorneys through this program become direct clients of the attorney upon acceptance of the matter by the attorney. Each such client is entitled to all of the diligence, care and obligations that the attorney owes to all other clients. Where a lawyer has agreed to provide pro bono service through the direct rendering of legal assistance to indigent individuals, and where referral is made by the local legal services program, each lawyer will be responsible for providing the local legal services program with a closing summary indicating action taken with the consent of the client absent other agreement between the local bar association and the local legal services program.

**6. Client Satisfaction**

Local bar associations and their members should recognize and agree that the legal service program may send periodic inquiries concerning the status of cases and send a questionnaire on how the case was handled and what happened to each client referred by that legal service program.

**7. Professional Liability Insurance**

The local bar association should be certain that participating attorneys and the referral agency are covered by reasonable policies of professional liability insurance. Local bar associations should be aware that coverage is available through local legal services programs upon negotiation of acceptable cooperation agreements.

**8. Program Initiation and Monitoring**

The PBA Legal Services to the Public Committee will work with local bar associations to assist in the implementation of local programs based upon this model across the commonwealth. The committee also will attempt to collect information and data concerning the operation of local bar association programs that will be of use in improving the delivery of public interest service in the future.

**9. Future Adjuncts to the Direct Service Pro Bono Program**

The PBA Legal Services to the Public Committee is currently working to develop the following adjuncts to the direct service pro bono program outlined herein. It is intended that these future programs will enhance and expand the direct delivery of legal services to persons of limited means and will provide additional and fulfilling ways by which lawyers will be able to discharge their public interest service responsibilities.

**a) The Training Program:**

The PBA and the Pennsylvania legal services community, on an annual basis, will provide at least one annual training on substantive poverty law issues and on trial advocacy skills for those attorneys participating in county pro bono programs. Additionally, the legal services community will provide participating pro bono attorneys with pleading forms and other information about cases with which the attorneys are unfamiliar. As herein noted, the PBA Legal Services to the Public Committee and the Pennsylvania legal services community currently are cooperating in the development of mentoring and other professional education programs for legal services and pro bono attorneys.

**b) The Community Education Program:**

The PBA Legal Services to the Public Committee and the Pennsylvania legal services community will develop a community education program specially designed to inform disadvantaged individuals of their rights and responsibilities under the law. The program will utilize written and videotaped material on various poverty law issues, both for informational and self-help purposes. The PBA and the Pennsylvania legal services community will produce such material jointly and, where necessary, will help local bar associations and local legal services programs secure equipment and facilities necessary for such programs.

**c) The Mentoring Program:**

The PBA Legal Services to the Public Committee and the Pennsylvania legal services community will develop a training program designed to pair experience private sector litigates with inexperienced pro bono attorneys and legal services staff to help develop the litigation skills of said attorneys. The mentoring program is anticipated to include, but not be limited to, training in issue identification, client communication, case theory and strategy, development of pleadings, trial advocacy and the co-counseling of cases. The cases used to develop such skills could come from either the inexperienced or experienced litigator's office. The mentoring concept also may be extended to other areas of special expertise within the private bar which may be of use to legal service and pro bono attorneys.

**d) Other Public Interest Programs:**

In addition to the foregoing, the PBA Legal Services to the Public Committee will explore the development of other model programs designed to assist local bar associations in productively channeling the public interest legal service efforts of their members in areas such as providing services at reduced fees to persons of limited means.

**10. The Technical Assistance Program**

The PBA acting through its Legal Services to the Public Committee and the Pennsylvania legal services community will attempt to provide technical assistance to local bar associations and legal services programs in the development, implementation and evaluation of pro bono programs upon request.

**HELPFUL DOCUMENTS**

Sample County Bar Association Resolution  
Sample Direct Services Plan  
Sample Participant Information Form

*Pennsylvania Bar Association, 100 South Street, Harrisburg, PA 17101 • 800.932.0311 • Inquiries • 2010 All Rights Reserved  
Disclaimer*

## The 2010 Law Firm Outsourcing Survey

Order Now: Visit [www.almlegalintelligence.com](http://www.almlegalintelligence.com).

30 Day FREE  
Web Trial

# The Legal Intelligencer

THE OLDEST LAW JOURNAL IN THE UNITED STATES

Home News Firms & Lawyers Courts Judges Surveys/Lists Columns Verdicts

Home > How New or Re-Tooling Lawyers Can Get Experience

## Young Lawyer

Font Size:  

# How New or Re-Tooling Lawyers Can Get Experience

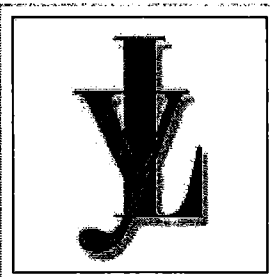
Debra L. Bruce

The Legal Intelligencer | October 14, 2010

Print Share Email Reprints & Permissions Post a Comment



Debra L. Bruce



A lot of lawyers today find themselves in the unexpected position of trying to practice law in an area in which they have insufficient experience. Some of them are new lawyers who had hoped to get hired upon graduation and receive on-the-job training under the guidance of experienced lawyers. Some were downsized in the recession and, because of a slow market for their existing expertise, they find it necessary to develop a new area of practice. Other lawyers just want to make a change into a different type of practice.

This article sets out a number of ideas on how to garner needed experience when you don't already have the support system to provide it. Since I'm a Texas lawyer, I cite examples of Texas programs, but other jurisdictions have similar options.

- Participate in a pro bono program or volunteer lawyers group.

A number of volunteer lawyer organizations take on matters for low-income clients who don't qualify for legal aid. Some provide training and mentorship in exchange for a commitment to take on a certain number of pro bono cases. Although these organizations always need more volunteer lawyers, this is a perfect time to join in. The National Pro Bono Week observance runs from Oct. 24-30, 2010. Check out the ABA listing of pro bono and public service organizations for one in your jurisdiction.

By way of example of the career development benefits gained from volunteering, the Houston Volunteer Lawyers Program provides forms, training, mentoring and even malpractice coverage for the areas of law commonly handled

public service, you can develop relationships with experienced attorneys who care about helping others. They may be pleased to refer their smaller cases to you to help you get started in building a new practice.

- Look for sponsored mentor programs.

Many state and local bar associations and law schools have an official mentor program. They attempt to find an appropriate match for your needs. The career services office of your law school can steer you to their mentors, and the ABA has a list of some state bar mentor programs.

If you find that there are more potential mentees than mentors available, consider trying to join up with others who seek help in the same practice area. Perhaps you can find a mentor willing to meet regularly with a small group of mentees to give some instruction, share forms and answer questions. The volunteer mentors may be paying forward the invaluable assistance they received from a gracious experienced lawyer in the past. Express your willingness to do the same.

- Be willing to work for free.

You may notice a theme here of giving away your services. Think of it as payment-in-kind for valuable opportunities and guidance. Offer to "carry the briefcase" of an experienced lawyer for free.

It's not easy to get trial experience today. I know a lawyer who already had several trials under his belt, yet he regularly offered to second-chair cases with his friends for free. He just wanted time in front of a jury. He still does that occasionally on an interesting matter, although he has decades of high-dollar experience and has tried more than 75 cases to verdict. Don't let your ego stand between you and the experience you want.

In the early 1990s (another challenging era for lawyers), a former in-house client asked me for a job. Although I knew he was very bright, I didn't want the responsibility of another salary on the payroll, so I declined. He asked if we had a corner he could work out of, just to have an address. We made space for him, and over time I began handing off to him the work I didn't like to do. I told him how much time I felt was appropriate for the task and gave him guidance. He wrote off any excess time he expended because of his inexperience in the practice area. It turned into a win-win situation, which now he sometimes refers to as the "Debra Bruce School of Law."

- Offer reverse mentoring.

You may have more to offer a potential mentor than you realize. In this economic downturn, some real estate lawyers may want to learn more about bankruptcy work. Find a solo or small firm that handles bankruptcy matters, but doesn't have any real estate lawyers in-house. Offer to share your in-depth real estate expertise on their bankruptcy cases, in exchange for guidance in taking on your own bankruptcy cases. Alternatively, you might offer to work for them now on bankruptcy cases, and give them guidance and work on real estate matters during the next boom, when bankruptcy work drops off.

If you are a recent graduate with no legal experience to share, you may have other valuable skills. Offer to mentor a more senior lawyer in using technology or social media. Be willing to spend time on the phone dealing with tech support to help resolve their problems. Set up a blog or a Facebook page for the law firm and write some posts for their approval, based on recent significant cases you discussed in school. Introduce them to apps for their iPhone that are useful for mobile lawyering. What seems quick and easy to you may be baffling or too time consuming for them to handle alone.

- Get involved with the blogging community.

**LAW.COM**

ned self-interest, but bloggers are incredibly generous with their knowledge. Start following the legal bloggers in your area of interest. Read topical articles on JD Supra ([www.jdsupra.com](http://www.jdsupra.com)). You will learn a lot about the cutting-edge issues in your practice area.

**SIGN IN**

Post comments when you find a blogger's information or viewpoints helpful or informative. Tweet links to their blog posts or articles on Twitter or re-tweet their tweets there. Share links to their informative articles in relevant groups on LinkedIn or Facebook, and give them a heads up about it.

Soon, you will have a cyber-relationship with someone who is knowledgeable, well-connected and usually helpful. They might even devote a blog post to some of your questions. When you have benefited them in advance by spreading their name and their words, many will accept an invitation to have a conversation offline.

- Take practice-specific CLE and other legal training courses.

Some CLE courses, especially the "nuts and bolts" courses, will include sample forms and drafting advice. Sometimes they give discounts for new lawyers or graduates who are not yet licensed to practice. The speakers almost always welcome questions. (It lets them know you were listening.) Check out Solo Practice University (where I write a monthly blog post) for online courses from experienced lawyers about how to practice in specific areas.

- Research bar association benefits and resources.

I find that most lawyers have no idea about the extent of resources available to them through their bar associations and law schools. Get online, and call the practice management division of your state bar association, the ABA, or even another state bar. Many such websites are so loaded with content that it's hard to find what you need. Ask what they have to help new lawyers or lawyers who are re-tooling.

Watch the brief 10-Minute Mentor videos created by the Texas Young Lawyers Association and the State Bar of Texas. (They're free to anyone.) Subscribe to the TexasBarCLE Online Library for access to the articles from past CLE courses. Watch the free monthly webcast in the "Practice Tips in Good Times and Bad" series offered by the State Bar of Texas. To learn of upcoming practice tips programs, visit [www.TexasBarCLE.com](http://www.TexasBarCLE.com) each month and click the "Webcasts" tab.

There is more help than you realize in gaining the experience you need. It just takes some online research, plus getting out to talk to other lawyers. Don't let fear or your ego keep you from becoming the lawyer you want to be! •

**Debra L. Bruce** is president of Lawyer-Coach LLC, a law practice management coaching and training firm. She practiced law for 18 years before becoming the first Texas lawyer credentialed by the International Coach Federation (ICF). She has served as vice-chair of the law practice management committee of the State Bar of Texas and as leader of the Houston chapter of ICF. She can be contacted with questions or comments at 713-682-4353 or [debra@lawyer-coach.com](mailto:debra@lawyer-coach.com).



LAW.COM

Welcome to the New Law.com. [Click here](#) to register and get started.

SIGN IN



## The Legal Intelligencer

THE OLDEST LAW JOURNAL IN THE UNITED STATES

[This Site](#) [Law.com Network](#) [Legal Web](#)
**30** Day FREE Trial

[Contact](#) [RSS](#) [Twitter](#) [Facebook](#)
[Home](#) [News](#) [Firms & Lawyers](#) [Courts](#) [Judges](#) [Surveys/Lists](#) [Columns](#) [Verdicts](#) [Public Notices](#) [Advertise](#) [Subscribe](#)

Home &gt; The Lawyer Who Says 'Yes'

Pro Bono

Font Size:

## The Lawyer Who Says 'Yes'

### Pro Bono Work Benefits Attorneys and Clients Alike

Geneva Campbell

The Legal Intelligencer | May 25, 2010

[Print](#) [Share](#) [Email](#) [Reprints & Permissions](#) [Post a Comment](#) | [Comments \(1\)](#)


Geneva Campbell



Six single parents were on the verge of losing their homes. Five senior citizens' benefits were cut. Four victims of domestic violence needed to secure custody of their children. Three students required amended birth certificates to register for college courses. Two community groups sought to incorporate to serve their neighborhoods.

One lawyer said yes to all of these clients and dozens more. Kimberly Dolan began volunteering with Philadelphia Volunteers for the Indigent Project (VIP) in 1994. Over the span of 16 years, she has accepted 51 pro

bono cases for VIP and also served on VIP's board for seven years, including as board president from 2007-08.

Though the story of Dolan's commitment is extraordinary, she remains humble because she believes that pro bono work did as much good for her career as the good she does for low-income Philadelphians.

Clearly, pro bono work is beneficial for clients who have serious legal issues that threaten their quality of life and basic human needs. Lawyers who volunteer their skills to fight for access to justice understand that even if a client does not have mental, physical or financial advantages, they deserve to be heard.

The American Bar Association Standing Committee on Pro Bono and Public Service conducted a national survey of its members that revealed that 70 percent of the attorneys that responded participate in pro bono work out of a combined sense of professional duty and personal satisfaction.

The second factor that motivated 43 percent of attorneys to take pro bono cases was the recognition of the needs of the poor. However, there is a third factor: Pro bono work helps attorneys by building and perfecting their legal skills. Without abandoning the moral principles that rest at the heart of pro bono service, we can discover some of its practical professional advantages.

Pro bono work gives attorneys the opportunity to broaden their substantive knowledge beyond their private practice and gain experience in multiple practice areas. For example, Dolan has accepted cases in 20 different substantive legal areas, from children's Social Security petitions to immigration litigation, special education suits, probate disputes and tax claims. Experience in several legal areas allows lawyers to obtain invaluable expertise, strengthening their knowledge of the law and increasing their marketable skills.

Another reason pro bono work is beneficial for attorneys is the opportunity to gain courtroom experience and negotiations practice. Many lawyers practice for years without ever stepping foot into a courtroom or handling their own clients independently. Pro bono work allows an attorney to try a case, deliver arguments, interview witnesses, develop a relationship with a client, and negotiate settlements. These skills are especially important for younger associates who earn a chance at autonomy through pro bono cases that will only enhance their business with fee-paying clients.

Dolan's first case with VIP was the defense of a community group that was in an auto accident during one of their sponsored trips. Dolan went to court to defend the client against a parent who claimed that her child was injured in the accident. She sorted through the evidence, conducted conferences with clients and witnesses, and worked to get the claim dropped, all before later accepting the task of helping the same community group to incorporate as a nonprofit.

Moreover, pro bono work offer attorneys training and networking opportunities. VIP hosts free CLE trainings every month for volunteers who agree to accept a pro bono case. The information learned in these trainings applies not only to the pro bono cases but cases in private practice as well. VIP provides a mentoring program for its volunteers who are new to pro bono or new to a specific practice area. These mentors are men and women like Dolan with a



Lawyer who want to help the next generation of community conscious attorneys. Pro bono can also  
 Welcome to the New Law.com. Click here to register and get started.  
 lead to leadership positions in the community and in legal associations.

These above-mentioned benefits extend to firms with pro bono programs and requirements. As Jack Londen of Morrison & Foerster writes in his article "The Economics of Pro Bono Work," "The indirect effects of a pro bono program can have a positive impact on revenue by enhancing and supporting firm goals and activities that create a competitive edge for law firms." A firm can increase its visibility with more experienced attorneys, and can distinguish itself as a supporter of the individual growth of its employees. Corporations share in these benefits, as volunteerism increases the aptitude and productivity of the staff and allows the company to give back to the community where it does business.

However, although the professional benefits are significant, we must not forget the palpable effect that pro bono work has on the Philadelphia community. Attorneys stand as the guardians at the gates of justice who must refuse to allow the legal system to take advantage of low-income Philadelphians simply due to their inability to pay.

Dolan understands the impact an attorney can have on the lives of the citizens, including Mabel Foster. (Client's name has been changed to protect her privacy.) Dolan said, "Taking Mabel's tangled title case turned out to shape my legal career in ways that I could not have foreseen."

Mabel came to VIP in 2003 to try to acquire title for the home she lived in for 35 years. She raised her children in that home, watched her grandchildren mature there, and was devastated because the house was in jeopardy of being taken away.

In January 2003, Dolan was personally contacted to take the case. She remembered, "I reluctantly agreed, looking at the pile of work on my desk and fighting the winter blues." The case was officially referred to Dolan, and she never regretted the decision to make time for Mabel. Dolan filed a quiet title action against the absentee owner and transferred the title into her client's name. Mabel returned to VIP thrilled to have Dolan as her volunteer attorney, saying, "Everyone should know how nice Ms. Dolan is! Everyone should know that she helped me, saved my house, and now I'm block captain to help my neighbors like she helped me." In addition to handling Mabel's individual housing matter, Kim testified before a state legislative committee that was considering changes to Pennsylvania law regarding adverse possession to extend her help to other Pennsylvanians who seek title to the only homes they know.

Dolan's aid to Mabel did not stop at the tangled title issue. Four years later, when Mabel told Dolan she had trouble paying her bills while caring for her grandson, Dolan once again offered her services free of charge. She negotiated a payment plan with the Philadelphia Water Department as well as the city for back taxes. Mabel said, "Ms. Dolan met me at the Water Department to speak on my behalf.

Because of her, I only had to pay \$38 per month on a water bill, and before she helped, I was paying hundreds of dollars." A year later, Dolan volunteered to eradicate Mabel's credit card debt. Presently, six years after she initially met with her client, Dolan is helping Mabel create her will.

Helping Mabel helped Dolan in many ways. Not only did she gain the satisfaction from assisting a woman who sincerely needed legal assistance, but along the way, she also built her expertise and discovered a new passion. Dolan fine-tuned her skills in five different practice areas on Mabel's case alone: adverse possession, tangled title, tax, and consumer debt and wills. She also networked with pro bono and legal services attorneys as well as other nonprofits committed to equal access to justice.

Most importantly, through Mabel's case Dolan stayed in contact with Regional Housing Legal Services, the nonprofit organization that eventually offered her a position as staff attorney to help people like Mabel every day. Dolan said emphatically, "Saying 'yes' to Mabel opened new doors for me."

Saying 'yes' to a low-income client can open doors for all attorneys who embrace the professional, practical and charitable value of the opportunity. Dolan said 'yes' to Mabel and 50 other clients. VIP says 'yes' to 2,500 clients every year. Through pro bono, all attorneys have the opportunity to say 'yes' to justice too. Won't you consider saying 'Yes'?

*Geneva Campbell, development and communications associate, joined the Philadelphia Volunteers for the Indigent Program staff in August 2009 as a Philly Fellow. She works on public relations materials, the VIP Web site, as well as reporting on events. In addition, she assists with development initiatives and proposals. She is a recent magna cum laude graduate of the University of Pennsylvania, earning her BA in English literature and French studies. She will attend the University of Pennsylvania Law School in the fall of 2010.*

## **ETHICS IN ACTION**

### **UNIVERSAL TEMPLATE FOR A MENTORING PROJECT TEMPLE INN OF COURT**

**MISSION:** To create a user-friendly mentoring system within the Temple American Inn of Court which extends across pupillage teams and experience levels.

**REQUIREMENTS:**

It must have a built-in reporting requirement so interaction can be tracked

It must have a level of flexibility because members' schedules can change on short notice.

Client confidentiality issues must be respected, so public events, proceedings and venues are preferred, but not mandatory.

**ASPIRATIONAL GOAL:**

To give a modern context to the historical concept of the four person "mess" which was the normal dining configuration at the Old English Inns.

**MECHANICS:**

You have been matched with three other Inn Members to participate in a mentoring project.

The Mentoring Groups will be called "Quartets."

There are four members in each "Quartet." This is the same number as appeared in a dining group or "mess" under the old Inn system in England.

Quartet assignments have purposely blurred age, practice area and pupillage team boundaries.

The Quartet must pledge to and accomplish 1.5 hours of mentoring before the end of the Inn season.

Absolute attendance is not mandatory within the mentoring process, but each member is expected to devote 1.5 total hours of time to activity with at least one or more other members of the Quartet.

Locations and events are flexible. Suggestions include, without limitation:

- a) meals
- b) attendance at arbitrations
- c) attendance at hearings
- d) attendance at trials
- e) attendance at mediations
- f) attendance at settlement conferences

#1563319 v2

- g) attendance at Bar Association events
- h) attendance at civic/charity events
- i) going for a walk
- j) sporting events

One Quartet will serve as the Oversight Team to which each Quartet will report its mentoring activity.

The Oversight Team will, in advance of the May meeting, provide a report to the Executive Committee.

In addition, the Oversight Team will deliver a report on the the Mentoring Project for the year at the June Closing Dinner .

Created 2007 by Carl H. Delacato, Jr. © 2007  
215-446-6255