

Law-Related Pro Bono Services For NUSL Students

Introduction

- As a law student, you have the opportunity to increase access to justice by providing “law-related pro bono services.” This handout provides information about (1) the nature of law-related pro bono services, (2) the benefits of providing law-related pro bono services, and (3) the ways in which the Supreme Judicial Court (SJC) of Massachusetts recognizes the law-related pro bono services of law students.

What are Law-Related Pro Bono Services?

- “**Pro bono legal services**” are legal services that are provided “without compensation or expectation of compensation to persons of limited means, or to charitable, religious, civic, community, governmental, and educational organizations in matters that are designed primarily to address the needs of persons of limited means.” Mass. R. Prof. C. Rule 6.1, Voluntary Pro Bono Publico Service.
- “**Law-related pro bono services**” are services performed, without compensation or academic credit, to support or assist “pro bono legal services.” Law students are encouraged to provide law-related pro bono services. Examples of law-related pro bono services include assisting attorneys at trial, interviewing clients and witnesses, drafting legal documents, preparing cases for trial, and conducting legal research and writing.

Reasons for Providing Law-Related Pro Bono Services

- **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.
- **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.
- **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.
- **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.
- **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.

SJC Recognition for Law-Related Pro Bono Services

- **The Supreme Judicial Court (SJC) Pro Bono Honor Roll for Law Students.** If you complete 50 or more hours of law-related pro bono service during your time as a law student and have your hours certified by your law school, your name will be placed on the *SJC Pro Bono Honor Roll for Law Students* and you will be invited to the annual Pro Bono Honor Roll Ceremony for Law Students.
- **The Adams Pro Bono Publico Awards.** 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 outstanding pro bono work while in law school, you may be nominated for the Adams Award by a supervisor or faculty member. Recipients of the Adams Award are honored at the Adams Award Ceremony in the fall.

The SJC Pro Bono Honor Roll for Law Students: Mechanics

- **Step One: Track your “Law-Related Pro Bono Service” hours.**
 - Please track the date, type of work, and number of hours you devote to law-related pro bono service during your law school career. (Your log is for your personal use. NUSL uses an honor system for the SJC Pro Bono Honor Roll.)
 - To determine whether a particular type of work meets the definition of “law-related pro bono service,” please review the additional information about the SJC Pro Bono Honor Roll Program available [online](#) and in a [downloadable PDF](#). The criteria for “law-related pro bono service” are complex; it is a good idea to familiarize yourself with them sooner rather than later.
 - There are many opportunities at NUSL to participate in law-related pro bono services. For example, all hours worked for the International Refugee Assistance Project (IRAP) count as pro bono hours. The follow hours do not “count”: hours for which you receive academic credit or compensation; clinic hours (unless you exceed the number of hours required for the clinic); co-op hours (unless you exceed the number of hours required for the co-op); and hours devoted to transportation, training, or observation.
- **Step Two: After you have completed 50 or more hours, please request that NUSL certify your hours to the SJC.**
 - To request that your hours be certified, please complete the [online form](#) available at <https://nuslasa.wufoo.com/forms/sjc-pro-bono-honor-roll/>. **Please submit the form by the second Friday in September.** The law school will then certify your hours to the SJC. Please contact Renay Frankel or Shannon Al-Wakeel if you have questions about the certification process.