



Orientation Packet for Volunteers

Pro Bono Attorney FAQs

WELCOME AND THANK YOU!

Thank you for your interest in volunteering with Legal Services Vermont (LSV)! LSV is a nonprofit legal services law firm that works to empower individuals and families, help them earn knowledge and skills that will let them stand up for themselves, and enable them to take power by controlling and managing their civil legal matters. LSV's Pro Bono Program matches volunteer attorneys with litigation/non-litigation opportunities based on their interests and availability.

To support your participation and ensure the best attorney/client interaction, **LSV pre-screens clients for financial eligibility and to ensure that their legal problems can be solved by a lawyer.** LSV also provides malpractice insurance, training, mentoring, and reimbursement for expenses like mileage, filing fees and copying. By volunteering with LSV you can make a significant difference in the lives of low-income Vermonters by providing much needed legal services to those most in need.

Legal Services Vermont (LSV) works with clients to narrow the gap between the promise of justice and the difficult reality of achieving it.

FIND ANSWERS TO THESE COMMON QUESTIONS:

1. [What opportunities are available to volunteers?](#)
2. [What can I expect if I want to participate in a legal clinic?](#)
3. [What can I expect if I agree to take a case as a direct referral?](#)
4. [What expenses are eligible for reimbursement and how do I get reimbursed?](#)
5. [Does LSV offer malpractice insurance to pro bono attorneys?](#)
6. [What if I have a legal question about how to help my client?](#)
7. [What if I need training on a particular area of law? How can I suggest training ideas I have?](#)
8. [What do I do if I am having difficulty reaching or communicating with my client?](#)
9. [My client requires an interpreter, do you have a service I can use?](#)



Pro Bono Attorneys FAQs

10. What if the client needs additional help after I handled the pro bono matter I agreed to work on?
11. What happens if I get an award of attorney's fees?
12. What if I am too busy to take a case right now but want to at a future time?

LEGAL SERVICES VERMONT'S 2022 PRIORITIES INCLUDE:	
	HOUSING. <i>Maintain and improve housing stability and quality</i>
	CONSUMER & BENEFITS. <i>Improve financial stability for low-income individuals and families</i>
	FAMILY. <i>Preserve and protect family stability and safety</i>
	LEGAL ASSISTNACE & EDUCATION. <i>Empower low-income individuals and families</i>
	OUTREACH. <i>Improve access to legal assistance and information</i>

1) WHAT OPPORTUNITIES ARE AVAILABLE TO VOLUNTEERS?

There are many opportunities available for pro bono through LSV. Attorneys can take individual cases as a **direct referral** in several areas that LSV does not specifically cover including family law, probate, certain real property issues such as zoning or real estate, guardianship matters, bankruptcy and more. You can tell us more about your legal experience and volunteer interests by filling out our [Volunteer Inquiry Form](#).

Attorneys may also get involved in several **"lawyer for the day" clinics** such as the **Rent Escrow Clinics** running in Rutland, Addison, Chittenden, and Washington counties. Clinics such as these offer a chance to help clients for the rent escrow hearing under Vermont's limited appearance rules and only require the commitment of a few hours.

LSV also coordinates a **Reduced Fee & Pro Bono Bankruptcy Program**. Through this program LSV initially screens and evaluates low-income clients who are interested in pursuing a simple Chapter 7 bankruptcy. After answering initial questions, reviewing options, and encouraging clients to gather all the needed information, LSV sends eligible clients a list of private bankruptcy attorneys who have agreed to offer a reduced fee.

Pro Bono Attorneys FAQs



Have an idea of a type of case you would be willing to take or an idea for a legal clinic?

REACH OUT!!

We're always open to new ways to expand pro bono opportunities.



2) WHAT CAN I EXPECT IF I WANT TO PARTICIPATE IN A LEGAL CLINIC?

You can find information about our schedule of upcoming clinics, training videos, and materials on our [Pro Bono Program Opportunities](#) website



At this time, some clinics are entirely remote, one is in person, and some can offer hybrid options – attorneys do not have to be in person to volunteer at these legal clinics and there are many ways to provide legal help. We offer clinic-specific training to all volunteers.

At the clinics, whether virtual or in person, **LSV staff participate and are available to assist volunteers with their cases and consult as needed.** LSV also provides necessary intake forms and court forms for the volunteers as needed. LSV staff provides any necessary follow up legal services, so the volunteer's commitment is truly limited to the legal clinic.

In addition to our website, attorneys can contact us by calling our Pro Bono Coordinator, Bradley Showman at 802-383-2115 or by email at volunteer@lawlinevt.org.

3) WHAT CAN I EXPECT IF I AGREE TO TAKE A CASE AS A DIRECT REFERRAL?

Our Pro Bono Coordinator will work to match you with a client based on your interests and time commitment. When we have identified a volunteer opportunity, **we will provide you with a brief description of the case, along with sufficient information to conduct a conflict check.** We ask that you advise us within three business days if a conflict exists or if you will accept the referral. If you accept the referral, we will send you a case description and intake notes, as well as all documents the client has provided to LSV. LSV recommends that you meet with your pro bono client as soon as practicable so that you can both establish expectations and results.

Once you have accepted a referral, LSV will request a status update from you every sixty (60) days or so until the representation has ended. **At the conclusion of the case,** you will send back to us a **Case Closure Form** (See Appendix A) and if applicable, a **Reimbursement Form** (See Appendix B) which asks for the following information:

Pro Bono Attorneys FAQs



CLOSING FORM INFORMATION

- ☑ A brief, general **overview** of what happened in the case;
- ☑ Any new information about the **names of attorneys** who worked on the referral and the **number of hours** spent on the case;
- ☑ A **copy of the documents** evidencing the finalization of the case or representation (e.g., final court order, copy of drafted will, etc.);
- ☑ If requesting reimbursement for expenses, a completed “Reimbursement Form” with attached receipts

4) WHAT EXPENSES ARE ELIGIBLE FOR REIMBURSEMENT AND HOW DO I GET REIMBURSED?

LSV can reimburse pro bono attorneys for certain fees, such as mileage, copying and filing fees. Please check in with the Pro Bono Coordinator if you are unsure whether something is reimbursable before incurring the expense. At the end of a case, a pro bono attorney can fill out the **Reimbursement Form** (*Appendix B*) and submit it, along with any relevant receipts. LSV will then review and send payment to the pro bono attorney for all eligible expenses.

5) DOES LSV OFFER MALPRACTICE INSURANCE TO PRO BONO ATTORNEYS?

Yes! LSV offers malpractice insurance for any case we refer to you. You do not need to do anything to sign up for the coverage. The LSV insurance retainer includes coverage for any volunteer who takes on a case, as long as you are the volunteer of record in our case management system. Even if you have your own malpractice coverage LSV’s insurance is the primary carrier for our pro bono cases.

6) WHAT IF I HAVE A LEGAL QUESTION ABOUT HOW TO HELP MY CLIENT?

Please let us know! The Pro Bono Coordinator is an attorney who will help talk out legal issues, connect you with another staff member or volunteer with knowledge in that area of law, or provide additional resources if you run into a problem or need help working out next steps in a pro bono case.

AVAILABLE SUPPORTS FOR PRO BONO ATTORNEYS

Malpractice Insurance



Legal Questions & Answers



Training & Resources



Pro Bono Attorneys FAQs

7) WHAT IF I NEED TRAINING ON A PARTICULAR AREA OF LAW OR HAVE SUGGESTIONS FOR TRAINING?

LSV is here to support you! If you are willing to work with pro bono clients in an area of law you are not familiar with, we have access to various resources in our training library. This could include CLE-recorded videos, sample forms and pleadings, or other manuals.

If you have an idea or would take a pro bono case if you had the right training, please talk to us about it and we will see if it is something we can coordinate.

8) WHAT DO I DO IF I AM HAVING DIFFICULTY REACHING OR COMMUNICATING WITH MY CLIENT?

Sometimes you may agree to help a client and find you cannot reach them. If a client does not respond after several attempts by phone, mail, and email, please let us know. We will help you try to contact the client and can also help you close out the case if the attempts to reach the client are unsuccessful.

If you are experiencing problems communicating with your client, please discuss this with us. **We would be glad to help troubleshoot** and talk out possible solutions. If continuing to work with a particular client is not possible, we can help you wrap up services and try to find a different referral for the client. We are here to help work out any client-related issues should they arise, we would rather hear from you than not, so please discuss with us if you face a client-related problem.

9) MY CLIENT REQUIRES AN INTERPRETER, DO YOU HAVE A SERVICE I CAN USE?

We do! Our office uses **Language Line** as our interpreter service. If you require an interpreter to speak with your client, please let us know and we can provide access to our Language Line account. If you require in person interpretation, including ASL, please let us know and we can discuss reimbursement options with you.

10) WHAT IF THE CLIENT NEEDS ADDITIONAL HELP AFTER I HANDLED THE PRO BONO MATTER I AGREED TO WORK ON?

If your pro bono service has ended but your client has identified a new legal issue or needs further assistance beyond the scope of your representation, you should let us know. We can point the client to other resources or potentially assist them on our help line. You may also re-direct new legal issues to our intake line at 800-889-2047.

**AVAILABLE
CLIENTS
SUPPORTS**

just call



or email!



Pro Bono Attorneys FAQs

11) WHAT HAPPENS IF I GET AN AWARD OF ATTORNEY'S FEES?

If you have a case in which the court permits an award of attorney's fees, you or your firm may retain those fees. This arrangement should be clearly set forth in your retainer letter to avoid any confusion at the conclusion of the matter. If attorney's fees are recovered the case is no longer considered a pro bono referral. That means moving forward in the case, it would not be covered under our malpractice insurance and you would have to discuss a fee arrangement with your client.



12) WHAT IF I AM TOO BUSY TO TAKE A CASE RIGHT NOW BUT WANT TO AT A FUTURE TIME?

If you are interested in pro bono opportunities, but too busy to take a case or participate in a clinic right now, we can keep your name on our attorney list and check back periodically to see if you are available.



Pro Bono Case Closure Form

Attorney Name: Click or tap here to enter text.

Client: «FirstName» «LastName»

LSV Case No: «CaseNum»

Funding Code:

Information pre-filled out by LSV Pro Bono staff

Date Case was Closed: Click or tap to enter a date.

Number of Hours Spent on the Case: Click or tap here to enter text.

Please provide a brief summary of the case and how you assisted the client:

Click or tap here to enter text.

Please check what best describes how you were able to assist the client:

- Legal Advice Only**
- Limited Action** (example, prepared will, POA, etc.)
- Negotiated Settlement Without Litigation** (please attach settlement/other agreement)
- Negotiated Settlement With Litigation** (please attach decision)
- Administrative Agency Decision** (please attach decision)
- Uncontested Court Decision** (please attach decision)
- Contested Court Decision** (please attach decision)
- Other (Specify)** Click or tap here to enter text.

Did you help increase or obtain a money award for the client (i.e. benefits, child support, settlement, maintenance)? **Yes** **No**

If yes, what was the amount? \$Click or tap here to enter text.

Did you help decrease a client's financial obligation (i.e. debt, child support, back rent, wage garnishment, or other money judgment)? **Yes** **No**

If yes, what was the amount? \$Click or tap here to enter text.

Were you awarded attorney's fees? **Yes** **No**

Additional Comments About Case/Client:

Click or tap here to enter text.

Program Feedback: *Please provide any suggestions, areas for growth or improvement, and strengths of the program that we may use to improve the pro bono case placement process.*

Click or tap here to enter text.

I am willing to take a new pro bono case, please contact me about availability.



Pro Bono Case Reimbursement Request Form

Attorney Name: _____ Date: _____
Client: _____
LSV Case No.: _____ Funding Code: _____

Were attorney's fees awarded: Yes No

Total Amount Requesting: \$ _____

Purpose of Request:

- Filing Fee: \$ _____
- Interpreter: \$ _____
- Subpoena: \$ _____
- Deposition: \$ _____
- Copying: \$ _____
- Mileage: 0.625 (2022 rate) x _____ (miles) = \$ _____
- Other (explain): _____

Make Check(s) Payable to: _____ Mail Check to (if same, write "same"): _____

Advocate Signature: _____ Date: _____
(Please attach supporting documentation and receipts as appropriate)

Internal Use Only

For Expenses Over \$100.00:

Approved By: _____ Approval Date: _____
Project Director

Please return to: Legal Services Vermont 274 North Winooski Ave. Burlington, VT 05401, or email to volunteer@lawlinevt.org