Committee Newsletter | Spring 2014, Vol. 1 No. 2

Introduction

Dear Members of the YLD Access to Legal Services Committee:

Thank you for being a member of our Committee. In this edition of our newsletter, we have focused on recent programming updates and other initiatives that may be of interest to you. Please contact us for more information or to get involved with the work of our Committee!

Thank you to our committee vice-chairs, Jenny Haberlin and Christopher Johnsen, and our committee emerging leader, Jordan Haygood, who contributed to this edition of the newsletter!

Please look out for updates regarding future programming we are planning, including a second installment of our Opportunities for Practices in Rural Communities teleconference and a program on the Ethics of Pro Bono (focusing on unbundled legal services). Additionally, if you have an interest in further news and analysis concerning access to justice issues, please visit the ABA Access to Justice Blog: http://abaatj.wordpress.com/

Thank you.
Morgan Macdonald
Chair, YLD Access to Legal Services Committee

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The Chicago Bar Foundation Supports Innovative Pro Bono Programs
NEWS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

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This report by the Legal Services Corporation (LSC) (accessible here: http://www.lsc.gov/sites/default/files/LSC/lscgov4/PBTF_%20Report_FINAL.pdf) provides an overview of the state of civil legal services in the United States and relating recommendations. The report stresses that due to the increase in demand and a reduction in funding, legal services organizations are more frequently looking for assistance from pro bono counsel. According to the report, more than one in five American quality for civil legal assistance by an LSC funded program. The recommendations in the report include the following:

Bar Leaders and Judiciary:

- Recruit pro bono lawyers and support and applaud pro bono efforts, to the extent permitted;
- Bar associations encourage, support and celebrate pro bono;
- Amend attorney practice, judicial ethics and cle rules to support pro bono;
- Strengthen state access to justice commissions;

Legal Profession as a Whole

- Recognize the importance of providing access to the justice system and the role pro bono lawyers can play
- Recognizing the cost of developing and maintaining an effective pro bono program

More information and further recommendations can be found in the LSC Report.

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The Oklahoma Bar Association Provides Pro Bono Assistance to Veterans through Various Events and Initiatives

The Oklahoma Bar Association has created an innovative pro bono assistance program called the “Heroes Program.” This program was launched on Veterans Day 2010 to provide legal advice and assistance to those who have honorably served the United States. Through this program, lawyers from across Oklahoma stand at the ready to give legal advice and assistance to Oklahoma's veterans, enlisted service members, and Guard and Reserve members. The mission is to offer free one-on-one legal advice and assistance to our nation's
service members past and present who have honorably defended our freedoms who otherwise cannot afford or do not have access to the legal services they need. Whether it is help with a disability claim, family law issues, landlord-tenant problems, consumer rights questions or any other legal issue which might befall our men and women in uniform, Oklahoma Lawyers are ready to help. More information on the program and how you can participate may be found here: http://okbar.org/heroes/Welcome.aspx

The Oklahoma Bar Association Military Assistance Committee (MAC) has engaged in innovative pro bono initiatives to assist veterans in need.

- On February 22, 2014, the MAC held a yellow ribbon event in Tulsa. There are approximately 150 members of the 1220th Engineering Unit who returned from Afghanistan a couple of months ago and the event is designed to serve those members of the military and their families. Lawyers helped answer legal questions and signed up soldiers who qualified to the Heroes program.

- On March 1, 2014, the MAC held a pre-deployment yellow ribbon event for 90 members of certain military groups set for deployment in April 2014 and their families. Lawyers involved provided assistance with legal questions.

A resource that the MAC relies upon can be found here on the “Lawyers for Warriors” website: http://lawyersforwarriors.blogspot.com/p/cle.html. The site provides resources for lawyers who are interested in helping America’s veterans.

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The Chicago Bar Foundation Supports Innovative Pro Bono Programs

The Chicago Bar Foundation’s Justice Entrepreneurs Project (JEP) is accepting applications for its third class of lawyers who will begin the program in May 2014. The JEP is looking for entrepreneurial and public interest-minded recent law graduates who are interested in creating their own law practices serving low and moderate income clients. This is a highly innovative pro bono initiative that provides a community of support for young lawyers. More information can be found here: http://chicagobarfoundation.org/jep/

Lawyers Needed to Participate in YLS eMentoring Project with Richards Career Academy.

The Young Lawyers Section of the Chicago Bar Association is teaming up with Chicago Public Schools’ Richards Career Academy to host its annual e-mentoring program. The program serves approximately 40 high school students enrolled in Law & Public Safety. Over a 14-week period, lawyer volunteers commit to participating in a February kick-off lunch at the CBA, a weekly email exchange, a mid-term visit to Richards Career Academy, and a May closing lunch at the CBA. Topics of the email exchanges include substantive legal topics in their curriculum, college/law school prep, job interviewing, and the practice of law. For more information or to volunteer, email yls@chicagobar.org.