

Palmetto Pro Bono

Get Involved. Make a Difference!



Serving others

No matter where you live or work across the Palmetto State, there is a child, family, veteran, or senior citizen who could use your help and legal expertise.

Did you know nearly a quarter of South Carolinians live at or below 125 percent of the federal poverty level? A vast majority of those households experience civil legal problems such as issues with housing, benefits, and family matters but cannot afford the services of a lawyer. The state's hardworking legal aid organizations are simply unable to meet the legal needs of these citizens without assistance from attorneys like you.

When you volunteer just a few hours a year as part of the SC Bar's Pro Bono Program, you can help someone overcome obstacles and get back on their feet. Whether it's by providing direct representation, taking part in clinics, or answering questions for those of low or modest means, there are plenty of ways to give back in our state.



Why should you volunteer?

One of the hallmarks of the legal profession is its demonstrated commitment to service to those who are unable to afford representation.

Rule 6.1 of the South Carolina Rules of Professional Conduct states a lawyer should render public interest legal service and may discharge this responsibility by:

- (1) providing professional services at no fee or reduced fee to persons of limited means or to public service or charitable groups or organizations;
- (2) participating in activities for improving the law, the legal system or the legal profession; and
- (3) providing financial support for organizations that provide legal services to persons of limited means.

In addition to helping those in need and meeting a professional obligation, you gain practical experience and skills when performing pro bono work. Your legal career is a lifelong learning endeavor, and pro bono work is a way to continuously learn and grow in the practice of law.

When you take on pro bono clients, you can develop and enhance skills such as:

- Negotiating with clients and opposing counsel
- Drafting pleadings
- Learning more about new courts
- Writing briefs

How can you get involved?

Direct Representation

The SC Bar Pro Bono Program receives about 350 calls a month from applicants seeking legal assistance. Applicants are screened for income eligibility, which is at or below 125% of the federal poverty level, and to determine if their legal issue is one a volunteer attorney might be willing to take on. Interested in taking a case? Email Betsy Goodale at bgoodale@scbar.org or visit www.scbar.org/probonovolunteer.

Palmetto Volunteer Lawyer Project



You can also check out available pro bono cases through the Bar's Palmetto Volunteer Lawyer Project at www.scbar.org/pvlp. The site features "cards" that provide information about the case, the name of the organization seeking assistance for the client, and the county in which assistance is needed. The clients have been vetted by the posting organization to ensure they meet the organization's requirements for pro bono assistance. Cases are available across the state and in a variety of practice areas.

You can search by county, subject matter/legal problem type, or organization. You can also set preferences and receive an email when cases meeting those preferences become available. There is no need to register as a volunteer with the Palmetto Volunteer Lawyer Project. Instead, if you are interested in a case, simply click "Interested" on the card and provide your name, email address, telephone number, and Bar number.

By expressing interest, you are not committing to accept the case. Instead, the organization that posted the case will send you an email with additional information about the case so you can check for conflicts and make a final determination whether you wish to accept the case. If you determine, after receiving the additional information, that the case is more than you can take on, that there is a conflict, or that you cannot take the case for any other reason, simply let the posting organization know.

The Palmetto Volunteer Lawyer Project provides an opportunity for attorneys across the state to learn about some of the state's legal aid organizations that need pro bono volunteers to assist the organizations' clients with legal matters. Some of these organizations serve specific areas of the state, while others are statewide. They also serve different needs.

Guardian ad Litem and Mediators

The Pro Bono Program and its partner organizations are often in need of attorneys to serve as pro bono guardian ad litem and mediators in pro bono cases. If you are willing to serve in this capacity, submit the volunteer form above or contact Betsy Goodale at (803) 576-3808 or bgoodale@scbar.org.

Legal Clinics

Clinics are held on various legal topics at libraries, churches, senior centers, and other locations around the state. Topics vary from family law to tax issues. Each clinic is 30 to 45 minutes long. The Bar also offers Law School for Non-Lawyers at technical colleges across the state. Law School for Non-Lawyers is a seven-week course covering a variety of legal topics. Volunteers are needed to be presenters at clinics and to teach sessions on the topics included in the Law School for Non-Lawyers curriculum. Email Betsy Goodale at bgoodale@scbar.org for more information.

SC Free Legal Answers



Free Legal Answers (<https://sc.freelegalanswers.org>) is a virtual legal advice clinic. South Carolinians who meet certain financial requirements can post their civil legal question to the website. Lawyers can log on at any time and, while remaining anonymous, provide information and basic legal advice without any expectation of long-term representation. Free Legal Answers does not involve real-time interaction with the user. The most common questions posted involve family, housing, consumer/financial, employment, and benefits issues. The purpose of the website is to increase access to advice and information about non-criminal legal matters to those who cannot afford it or otherwise access it. There is no fee for the use of the system or for the advice and information provided by the lawyer. The website will keep track of your pro bono time for you. There are also resources available on the website.

Law Related Education Programs

Pro bono work includes participating in activities for improving the law, the legal system, or the legal profession. The South Carolina Bar Law Related Education Division has a multitude of opportunities to become involved in civic education, including programs and competitions for students and teachers. These include mock trial, iCivics, Project Citizen, and We the People. Find more information on these programs and how to volunteer at www.scbar.org/lre.

Other Pro Bono Opportunities

If you want to tailor your pro bono work to a particular group of people, subject matter, or geographical area, visit www.scbar.org/probono_opp to see a complete list of organizations in need of pro bono attorneys including organizations assisting crime victims, domestic violence survivors, veterans, human trafficking survivors, the homeless, fathers, previously incarcerated persons, and immigrants.

What resources does the SC Bar offer volunteer attorneys?

Our program is an attorney-centered program and designed to make pro bono work easy to perform. Find helpful forms and a variety of resources at www.scbar.org/probono_forms.

Currently, there are links to information on consumer, landlord/tenant, foreclosure, family law, and bankruptcy issues.

Pro Bono Malpractice Insurance and Expense Reimbursement

The Pro Bono Program can provide assistance with expenses such as filing fees and service of process fees, as well as other expenses with prior approval. The program also provides malpractice coverage for attorneys who participate in activities sponsored by or take pro bono cases through the program. The same assistance is provided if you engage in pro bono work outside the program. Clients are considered eligible if they meet the income guidelines for policy coverage (at or below 200 percent of the federal poverty level) for the Pro Bono Program. Simply submit a short form online (www.scbar.org/opencase) to let us know you are taking on a pro bono case and when the case is completed (www.scbar.org/closecase). Malpractice coverage is effective only when the Pro Bono Program receives notice of the pro bono representation.

Finally, there is a form you can submit online (www.scbar.org/reporthours) to report hours spent on other pro bono projects.

Carolina Clerks—USC School of Law

Law students are available to perform all reasonable law clerking duties such as research and drafting for qualifying cases that fall within the parameters of Rule 6.1 or Rule 608. Foreign language assistance may also be available. Simply contact the USC School of Law Pro Bono Program by phone (803) 777-3405 or email robinspd@law.sc.edu.

Charleston School of Law—Clerks

The Charleston School of Law's Pro Bono Program is always seeking new pro bono opportunities for its students. If you have questions about the program or would like help from Charleston School of Law students with work that meets the program requirements, contact Michelle Condon, Director of Public Service and Pro Bono, at mcondon@charlestonlaw.edu or (843) 377-2457.

Mentors

If you would like to take a pro bono case but would feel more comfortable doing so if you had a mentor, the Pro Bono Program can provide you with a mentor who you can turn to with questions and guidance during your handling of the case.

Recognition for a job well done

The South Carolina Supreme Court publishes an annual Pro Bono Honor Roll recognizing South Carolina attorneys who provide 50 hours or more of pro bono legal service in a manner set forth in Rule 6.1. Those who provide this service and wish to be included on the Honor Roll need only indicate as much on their annual License Fee Statement. Reporting of pro bono hours is otherwise not required.

The SC Bar Pro Bono Board recognizes members by presenting annual Pro Bono Awards and certificates to be used toward the cost of both SC Bar CLE seminars and publications.

\$50 certificate for attorneys who serve between 25 and 34.99 hours

\$100 certificate for attorneys who serve 35 or more hours

Join your colleagues in helping make a difference in the lives of others.

Sign up to be part of Palmetto Pro Bono today!

Contact:

Betsy Goodale | SC Bar Pro Bono Program Director
(803) 576-3808 | bgoodale@scbar.org
www.scbar.org/probono



South Carolina Bar
Pro Bono Program