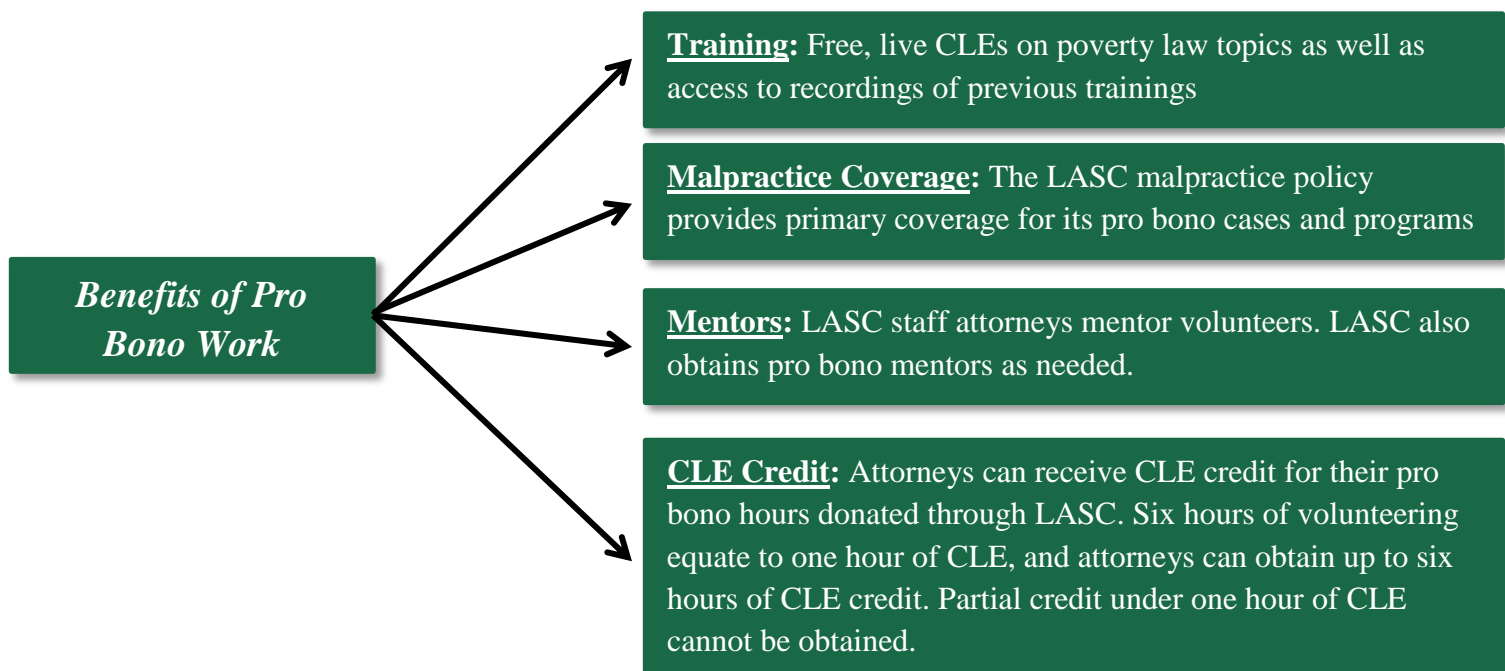


## *The Legal Aid Society of Columbus: Pro Bono Program*

The Legal Aid Society of Columbus (LASC) is a nonprofit law firm that provides civil legal assistance for low-income individuals and seniors in Franklin, Madison, Morrow, Union, Delaware and Marion counties. To complement the work of its staff attorneys, LASC manages a number of pro bono projects. In exchange for their work, attorneys participating in a pro bono project through LASC receive several benefits:



Attorneys interested in handling cases or providing pro bono legal advice must be active and in good standing with the Supreme Court of Ohio. To sign up for a project, complete the hard copy application at the end of these materials or submit an online application:

<http://www.columbuslegalaid.org/index.php/probono/pbapp>.

## ***Case Referral Projects***

Eligible applicants who contact LASC may be sent to a pro bono attorney to represent them through one of the following projects. Before assigning any case, LASC staff or in-house volunteers will first contact pro bono counsel to confirm availability and to offer the attorney an opportunity to conduct a conflict check.

### **Volunteer Resource Center (VRC)**

The VRC is a case referral program that sustains two types of volunteers: attorneys who agree to take cases on a pro bono basis and in-house volunteers who sign up for weekly shifts to handle client intake, case evaluation and referral of cases to our pro bono attorney panel. The VRC addresses several substantive areas:

#### **VRC Housing Project - Tenants facing evictions in Franklin County**

VRC in-house volunteers conduct phone interviews and review documentation in an effort to ensure that the program is referring viable cases in which a pro bono attorney can provide meaningful assistance to the client. Depending on the merits and client goals, attorneys handle oral hearings before magistrates, negotiate favorable settlement agreements, and file answers and/or counterclaims on the damages portion of the cases.

#### **VRC Consumer Project – Consumers sued for credit debt by debt buyers in Franklin County**

This program offers attorneys an opportunity to obtain experience litigating in Municipal Court. Sample discovery, pleadings, and research outlines are available to new volunteers.

#### **Unemployment Compensation Appeal Project**

LASC assigns volunteer attorneys for clients who are denied unemployment compensation, face an appeal by a former employer after approval for benefits, or disagree with a decision of the Department of Job & Family Services. Unemployment Compensation Review Commission hearings are typically conducted by telephone. Mentors with extensive experience in this field are available.

#### **ICAN Escrow Project (Improving Conditions and Neighborhoods) – Tenants in Franklin County**

Tenants who are eligible to deposit their rent (“escrow”) are referred to pro bono attorneys, who will represent them in their escrow actions. Attorneys file applications, represent tenants at mediation, and litigate applicable motions authorized by statute. This project is ideal for attorneys who wish to make an impact in the lives of tenants who are taking affirmative, positive steps to improve their housing conditions.

## ***Case Referral Projects***

### **Chapter 7 Pro Bono Bankruptcy Project**

Eligible clients seeking a Chapter 7 bankruptcy meet with in-house student volunteers who conduct initial meetings and assist with document collection. LASC then refers clients to pro bono attorneys who provide limited representation: preparing and filing the bankruptcy petition and schedules, attending the 341 meeting of creditors, handling any reaffirmation agreements and filing an application for waiver of the filing fee.

### **Low-Income Taxpayer Clinic Referrals**

LASC operates a Low-Income Taxpayer Clinic ("LITC") to provide legal advice and representation to individuals involved in tax controversies. Legal Aid thoroughly screens each case and then sends appropriate matters to pro bono counsel for negotiation with the IRS. This program is well suited for transactional and corporate attorneys who desire to offer pro bono service outside of the courtroom setting. *See below for an annual brief service tax clinic opportunity ("Tax Court Calendar Call").*

### **Seniors Referrals for Wills, Living Wills and Powers of Attorney**

Low-income seniors seeking wills, powers of attorney, and advanced directives are referred to private attorneys and Assistant Attorneys General for pro bono document drafting and execution. Many clients served through this project request a home visit, and attorneys can limit representation based on client location. Free training and template forms are available to attorneys participating for the first time. *Note: Seniors residing in certain residential facilities may receive on-site assistance through our PACO Wills clinics referenced below.*

### **Legal Aid Reduced Fee Referral Project (LARP) – Reduced Fee Referrals**

The Legal Aid Reduced Fee Referral Project (LARP) is comprised of a panel of attorneys who accept reduced fee referrals for uncontested divorces and Chapter 7 bankruptcies. Each participant is expected to take a minimum of two pro bono cases per year, but the number of reduced fee cases attorneys can accept is not limited.



## ***Brief Advice and Service Clinics***

LASC partners with a number of community groups to offer brief advice and service clinics. Interested attorneys should fill out a Pro Bono interest form, at which point they will receive a clinic schedule, a volunteer information packet, and a list of the volunteer clinic coordinators. Although many clinics are held at faith-based establishments, religious activity is separate from the legal advice given.

### **Monthly Brief Advice & Referral Clinics** **(Located at local “Interfaith” sites)**

In partnership with the Columbus Bar Association, LASC sponsors legal clinics throughout Columbus on weekday evenings. Attorney volunteers meet with individuals to analyze problems, identify community resources, and offer legal advice on a variety of topics.

### **YWCA Family Center Legal Clinic**

LASC partners with the YWCA to offer an on-site brief advice clinic at the YWCA Family Center, an emergency family shelter in Columbus. Volunteer attorneys and law students from both OSU Moritz and Capital University meet on-site with shelter residents who seek legal information and advice. The clinics are held on Tuesday evening every three weeks.

### **Adult Shelter Assistance Project**

Residents of Faith Mission, Nancy’s Place, and the Van Buren Front Door Shelter receive legal advice from pro bono attorneys through this program, which offers four clinics per month. Attorneys, in groups of two or three, attend these evening clinics and are assisted onsite by law students who handle client intake.

### **Paralegal Association of Central Ohio (PACO)** **Wills Clinic**

Through a collaboration with PACO, evening clinics are held at low-income senior residential facilities (and sometimes at other senior sites), matching volunteer attorneys with law students and paralegals to help clients prepare and execute wills, durable powers of attorney, health care powers of attorney, and living wills. A clinic schedule is available upon request.

## ***Brief Advice and Service Clinics***

### **VA Clinic**

LASC sponsors and provides volunteers for a weekly brief advice clinic serving low-income veterans at the Chalmers P. Wiley Ambulatory Care Center. Clinics take place every Thursday from 9-12:00.

### **Bankruptcy Bypass Clinic**

“Uncollectable” elderly and permanently disabled clients who contact LASC expressing a desire to end creditor harassment are enrolled in a periodic evening clinic. Law students meet with clients to verify uncollectability and creditor information. LASC then sends letters to the clients’ creditors, with the express purpose of stopping the creditor or debt collector contact. Experienced bankruptcy practitioners supervise students and answer questions.

### **“Fresh Start” Clinic**

These quarterly Franklin County clinics are offered for ex-offenders who are transitioning back into society and anxious to address the collateral sanctions resulting from their criminal records. Pro bono attorneys are paired with law student volunteers to assist eligible clients with completing pro se record sealing forms. For those who are not eligible for “expungement,” the clinic attorneys and volunteers offer advice and self-help information about Certificates of Qualification for Employment (CQE).

### **Special Education Advice Clinic**

Volunteer attorneys from JPMorgan Chase’s Legal Department and the law firm Jones Day are available to meet with clients and answer questions that relate to special education issues. In partnership with Disability Rights Ohio, LASC offers this clinic on the Third Monday of each month from 6-7:30 p.m. at the Run the Race Club at 880 South Wayne in the Hilltop neighborhood. If families arrive with other legal questions outside of education, they can still receive information and advice.

### **Naturalization Clinic**

In July 2015, LASC will be hosting its first pro bono brief service Naturalization clinic for Lawful Permanent Residents who have naturalization questions or need assistance with completing paperwork. The clinic will also include volunteers from JPMorgan Chase’s Legal Department, but LASC is seeking assistance from immigration attorneys who are willing to mentor volunteers or meet directly with clients. The clinic will reoccur several times per year if there continues to be a need for this service.

## ***Annual Events***



### **Tax Court Calendar Call**

Pro bono tax attorneys can participate in the U.S. Tax Court Calendar Call in Columbus. Attorneys assist low-income, unrepresented taxpayers to resolve their tax issues by offering advice to petitioners or negotiating with IRS Counsel as part of a Tax Court sponsored effort to address the high numbers of unrepresented litigants. Volunteers are not required to enter an appearance or provide ongoing representation.

### **Family Empowerment Day**

LASC offers a brief advice clinic at Family Empowerment Day, a July event spearheaded by the Franklin County Child Support Enforcement Agency and community partners. The overall event encourages non-custodial parents to participate in the life of the child and deal with support issues.

### **Central Ohio Homeless Veterans Stand Down**

Each year LASC coordinates a pro bono brief advice clinic at the Central Ohio Homeless Veterans Stand Down. Stand Down is held each October and offers holistic assistance to veterans experiencing homelessness.

### **Pro Bono Mentoring:**

LASC benefits greatly from experienced attorneys willing to field questions and discuss strategy.

### **Impact Litigation Referrals:**

LASC is seeking firms willing to partner on affirmative cases that have the potential to benefit a large number of low-income individuals who are not directly involved in the litigation.

### **Co-Counseling with LASC Staff:**

Private attorneys occasionally co-counsel with LASC staff attorneys on certain cases that require a great deal of time, complexity or resources. Firms or attorneys willing to assist will be approached on a case-by-case basis.

### **“In-House” Volunteer Opportunities:**

LASC welcomes volunteer attorneys who are willing to support the work of our teams by committing to a regular schedule during business hours for at least three months. This is an excellent opportunity for new lawyers to gain skills under the supervision of an experienced attorney while working part-time elsewhere or job-searching. Retired attorneys are also encouraged to consider joining the Volunteer Resource Center.



## ***Other Pro Bono Opportunities at LASC***



**PRO BONO PROJECT 2015 INTEREST FORM**

Available online at [www.columbuslegalaid.org/index.php/probono/pbapp](http://www.columbuslegalaid.org/index.php/probono/pbapp)

Attorney Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Firm Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_ Preferred Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

I am willing to mentor other attorneys in \_\_\_\_\_ Ohio Bar Admission number: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

**If you change your location or phone number, please notify Pro Bono Coordinator Dianna Parker Howie.**

**I. PRO BONO Options:**

<b>Program</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Sign me up!</b>	<b>Need training?</b>
A. VRC Housing Project	Represent tenants in eviction actions filed in Franklin County.		
B. VRC Consumer Project	Represent consumers in actions filed by debt buyers suing for credit card debt in Franklin County.		
C. VRC Unemployment Compensation Appeal Project	Represent clients in administrative hearings who are facing denial of their unemployment compensation benefits.		
D. VRC ICAN Escrow Project	Represent tenants dealing with housing conditions issues in escrow actions.		
E. Chapter 7 Pro Bono Bankruptcy Project	File simple Chapter 7 bankruptcies for low-income debtors with no real estate and no non-exempt assets.		
F. Low-Income Taxpayer Project	Assist taxpayers who are denied their much needed income tax refund or threatened with collection action by the IRS.		
G. Fresh Start Clinics	Assist with criminal record sealing forms and Certificates of Qualification for Employment.		
H. PACO Wills Clinics	Assist low-income seniors on-site at senior facilities with drafting and executing wills, living wills, and powers of attorney.		
I. Brief Advice Clinics	Provide on-site information, advice, and referrals for individuals at periodic community clinics.		
J. Seniors Referral Project	Conduct home visits and assist seniors with executing wills, living wills, and powers of attorney.		
K. Naturalization Clinic	Assist with Naturalization applications for LPRs.		
L. Special Ed Clinic	Answer special education questions at brief advice clinic.		

If you are willing to assist clients outside Franklin County, please list the counties here: \_\_\_\_\_

**II. REDUCED FEE Options – Legal Aid Reduced Fee Referral Project (“LARP”):**

<b>Program</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Willing to Participate</b>	<b>Need Training First</b>	<b>Willing to Accept payments</b>	<b>Willing to Interview at no charge</b>
A. LARP Domestic	Uncontested Divorces without children at a reduced rate (\$150 + filing fees)				
	Uncontested Divorces for clients with children at a reduced rate (\$250 + filing fees)				
	Uncontested Divorces for clients residing in Madison County (\$300 for clients with no children; \$400 for clients with children)				
B. LARP Bankruptcy	Bankruptcy representation for clients who own real estate at a reduced rate (\$450 + filing fee)				
	Bankruptcy representation for clients who do not own real estate at a reduced rate (\$350 + filing fee)				
	Bankruptcy representation for clients who reside outside Franklin County (see above for rates)				

**LARP Participants ONLY:**

We rely on you to let us know if you are receiving too many referrals or too few. There is no limit on the number of reduced fee cases that LARP attorneys can take. If you have not signed up for a Pro Bono Project listed in the first section, please list below the type of cases you are willing to accept pro bono in order to participate in the LARP program: \_\_\_\_\_

**III. Special Language Skills** (including sign language): Please specify: \_\_\_\_\_

**IV. Additional Training Needs:** Please specify any topics on which you seek training: \_\_\_\_\_

***Please return this form by mail or email to:***

Dianna Parker Howie, LASC Pro Bono Coordinator  
 1108 City Park Avenue, Columbus, OH 43206  
 Phone: (614) 737-0184; Email: dhowie@columbuslegalaid.org