

Staff Attorney

The Pro Bono Project's mission is to provide free, quality civil legal services to underrepresented people by engaging volunteer lawyers to render pro bono assistance. Founded in 1986, The Project currently serves Orleans, Jefferson, Plaquemines, St. Bernard, St. Tammany and Washington parishes. In 2021, The Project helped more than 5,000 people, and has served over 40,000 clients since 1996.

The Pro Bono Project recruits, trains and mentors volunteer attorneys on civil legal aid cases. Low-income clients who meet financial and legal eligibility requirements are matched with a volunteer lawyer who can provide pro bono representation on a variety of issues including successions, simple estate planning, divorce, provisional custody by mandate, child in need of care, intrafamily adoption, immigration, housing, and Chapter 7 bankruptcy. The pro bono mentoring method of providing technical subject matter expertise to volunteer lawyers is an efficient approach for the private bar to positively contribute to their community. The Project's panel of approximately 2,000 volunteer attorneys represents an extensive and diverse pool of legal expertise, creating the opportunity for The Project to respond to a variety of legal problems. The Project has created programs and clinics for specialized populations in need of free legal advice and currently manages the Self-Help Resource Centers at Orleans Parish Civil District Court (CDC) and at the Twenty-Fourth Judicial District Court (JDC) in Jefferson Parish where *pro se* litigants seek assistance with filing petitions on family law matters (i.e., divorce, custody, etc.).

Position Description: The staff attorney handles a wide variety of civil law matters, using a variety of methods including advice and referral, brief service, transactional work, negotiation, and litigation. In addition to direct representation of clients, staff attorneys supervise the work of interns/externs, provide legal information to the public in person and virtually via The Pro Bono Project's Self-Help Resource Centers, and prepare and conduct trainings for staff and volunteers. The Pro Bono Project's attorneys are supported in professional development endeavors and are encouraged to participate in task forces, committees, social service organizations, and local bar associations.

This staff attorney position has a particular focus on Children's Law and is responsible for all child-in-need-of-care (CINC) matters at The Pro Bono Project. However, the staff attorney will gain experience in a variety of different practice areas by handling cases ranging from: Special Immigrant Juvenile Status (SIJS); uncontested Article 103 divorce; drafting and executing wills, powers of attorney, and living wills; non-urgent housing matters; uncontested custody; and intrafamily adoption.

The staff attorney and Director of Legal Services meet weekly to review active cases, both for the benefit of the staff attorney providing direct services and to prepare cases for volunteer assignment. The staff attorney works with the Director of Legal Services to pair as many cases as possible with volunteer attorneys. They further support volunteers by helping to coordinate trainings and workshops and by providing technical legal support and mentoring.

This position requires regular court appearances at Jefferson Parish Juvenile Court, the 34th Judicial District Court in St. Bernard Parish, Orleans Parish Juvenile Court, and other venues. The staff attorney is responsible for generating data on case matters as requested by the Executive Director and Director of Legal Services, and will keep the Director of Legal Services informed of case-related trends and any changes to the law.

Additionally, the staff attorney assists with the Self-Help Resource Centers at the Orleans Parish Civil District Court and the 24th Judicial District Court in Gretna. Duties include, but are not limited to, providing information on court approved forms, coordinating volunteer attendance at the centers, and developing center resources.

The ideal staff attorney is a positive team player possessing intellectual curiosity, strong communication skills, and a passion for public interest work. The staff attorney must be able to prioritize and manage a caseload, maintain case records with up to date and accurate documentation, and interact in a clear and supportive manner with our staff and volunteer attorneys. The staff attorney must be organized, attentive, and able to meet deadlines; they will receive last minute CINC appointments from the court that require a quick response, and may expect some off-hours contact from child clients, court personnel, counsel for other parties, and/or witnesses. Occasional evening or weekend obligations on behalf of The Pro Bono Project may be required. The staff attorney reports to the Director of Legal Services.

Duties for this position include:

- Handling a direct representation caseload;
- Recruitment, training, mentoring, and assignment of cases to volunteer attorneys, including helping to organize and conduct CLE seminars and preparing case referral packets;
- Grant reporting, including maintaining appropriate documentation related to given caseload and grants, tracking case outcomes, and performing statistical grant reports;
- Commitment to learning and staying up-to-date in CINC and related fields.
- Assisting at the Self-Help Resource Centers;
- Identifying and submitting potential publication stories highlighting novel or affecting cases that may be of interest to volunteers and/or funders; and
- Other duties as assigned.

Qualifications:

- Juris doctor from an ABA-accredited law school, and license to practice law in Louisiana.
- Must be qualified by the Louisiana Supreme Court to represent children, or be willing to obtain qualification within three (3) months of hiring.
- Must be a notary or willing to become a notary.
- Basic knowledge of children's law is preferred but not required.
- Previous experience working with volunteers, or teaching/mentoring attorneys or other professionals is a plus.
- Deep commitment to public interest law and to increasing access to justice for the indigent population, including sensitivity and patience. Prior experience working with low-income clients a plus.
- Excellent organization, communication and writing skills required.

- Computer proficiency (Word, Acrobat, Excel, etc.) and knowledge of and/or commitment to learn PRIME case management software.
- Valid, unexpired Louisiana driver's license and personal transportation.

Additional Desired Qualifications

- Fluency in Spanish, Vietnamese, or American Sign Language.

Salary

This is a salaried, full-time position. The Pro Bono Project is an equal opportunity employer. The salary for this position is commensurate with similarly-situated non-profit legal service organizations, based on experience and qualifications. Benefits include health insurance, parking, a defined contribution retirement plan, and vacation, holiday, and medical leave policies. The Pro Bono Project is a 501(c)3 organization and a qualified employer for the purposes of the federal Public Service Loan Forgiveness (PSLF) program.

Application Details

The deadline to submit an application for this position is June 10, 2022. Please send a resume, cover letter, and list of references to: C.C. Kahr, Executive Director at cckahr@probono-no.org. If you require reasonable accommodations to participate in the hiring process, please communicate your request to Kathryn Lafrentz at klafrentz@probono-no.org as soon as possible. No phone calls please.