

Pro Bono in Your Own Time

The Access to Justice Department of the Utah State Bar is pleased to offer pro bono opportunities in your own time, whether you have one, two, or more hours to contribute. New programs – Lawyer of the Day and Free Legal Answers – allow you to quickly help people from your home or office via telephone and the web.

What do these three cases have in common? (1) A family receives an extra thirty days to move out of their apartment instead of a three-day eviction. (2) A young man dismisses a debt case over a bogus gym contract and saves thousands of dollars. (3) A woman gets temporary orders to maintain custody of her children. In each case, a pro bono attorney spent no more than two or three hours to help that person achieve the result.

These three cases are just a few examples of what is called limited scope, limited representation, or unbundled services. Some people do need a full representation pro bono attorney – but one of the most successful innovations in pro bono has been the expansion of limited scope services. These services include free legal advice clinics such as Tuesday Night Bar, the Lawyer of the Day program for brief advice over the phone, or the pro se calendars from where the examples above are derived.

Limited scope pro bono accomplishes two things: it provides attorneys with an opportunity that doesn't require a significant time commitment, and it helps the many pro se individuals in our court system get legal advice and representation. In various surveys around the nation, attorneys have consistently ranked "time" as the number one reason they do not do more pro bono work. Between billable hours, family, and other commitments, it can be hard to find time to fit a serious pro bono matter into one's schedule. We've created a simple chart at the bottom of this article that lists the type of pro bono opportunities available by the time commitment required.

As for the need, there are many people who cannot afford an attorney, or do not think they need an attorney and file pro se.



The numbers are always striking. And they are striking in a particular manner – the way that many defendants may be deprived of due process through an asymmetrical system where one side is nearly always represented. Let's look at the court filings for fiscal year 2016. In 99% of the 59,496 debt collection cases filed in Utah, only one party (the creditor) had an attorney. In 96% of eviction cases, the tenant was unrepresented. In 80% of divorce cases the respondent is unrepresented (and in 53% of cases so is the petitioner). There is a huge need, particularly in cases where the other side is represented, for attorneys to step in to protect pro se individuals in our complex court system.

If you have a very brief amount of time, cannot go to court to do pro bono work, or prefer to answer questions from your office or home, we have two new options: Lawyer of the Day and Free Legal Answers. Lawyer of the Day allows volunteer attorneys to give brief legal advice over the phone to individuals pre-screened by the Utah Courts' Self-Help Center. Utah.freelegalanswers.org is a new website where qualifying individuals (based on income and area of law) post questions which attorneys can answer at their convenience. For both of these programs, there is no responsibility of being attorney-of-record, no document preparation, no court appearances, etc. Free CLE web modules in family law are available to participating attorneys who need a refresher in this area.

Attorneys do more volunteering than most professionals, and if these new ways to serve will make it possible for you to help those in need, please write to probono@utahbar.org.

Choose your pro bono opportunity to match your available time.

	Statewide	Salt Lake County	Northern Utah	Weber & Davis Counties	Provo	St. George	Park City
1 Hr.	Free Legal Answers						
2 Hrs.	Lawyer of the Day (on-call phone line)	Tuesday Night Bar	Thursday Night at the Bar (Logan)	Domestic Violence Pro Bono Lawyers (Farmington)	Timpanogos Legal Center	Senior Legal Clinic Program	Tuesday Night Bar
		Pro Bono Initiatives Clinics (Street Law, Family Law, Rainbow Law, etc.)	Tuesday Night Bar (Brigham City)	Community Legal Clinic (Ogden)	Tuesday Night Bar	Talk to a Lawyer Clinic	
		Matheson Debt Collection Pro Se Calendar		Weber County Bar Night (Ogden)		Utah Veterans Legal Clinic	
		West Jordan Landlord Tenant Pro Se Calendar					
		Senior Center Legal Clinics					
		Homeless Youth Legal Clinic					
		Utah Veterans Legal Clinic					
3 Hrs.		Family Law Pro Se Calendar			Family Law Pro Se Calendar		
		Utah Crime Victims Legal Clinic					
4 Hrs.	Guardianship Signature Program						
	Timpanogos Legal Center Virtual Document Clinic						