



## Why Do Pro Bono Work?

### **I. Professional Obligation**

It is our ethical obligation as attorneys in Illinois to provide pro bono assistance to persons in need of legal services who cannot afford them.

The preamble to the Supreme Court of Illinois Rules of Professional Conduct provides, in pertinent part, as follows:

It is the responsibility of those licensed as officers of the court to use their training, experience and skills to provide services in the public interest for which compensation may not be available. An individual lawyer's efforts in these areas is evidence of the lawyer's good character and fitness to practice law.

### **II. Unmet Legal Needs**

The most obvious and compelling reason to perform pro bono work is the need to address the gap between the millions of persons who need assistance but cannot afford or obtain it, and the limited resources available to meet those needs through legal service organizations. The assistance provided by volunteer attorneys is critical to supplement the full-time legal aid attorneys.

### **III. Recruiting and Retention; Morale**

Competition for hiring good legal talent can be intense. Companies with active pro bono programs likely enjoy a competitive advantage, particularly when a new attorney may be deciding between opportunities with substantially similar or even identical compensation and benefit structures.

In today's environment, attorneys are more mobile than at any time in the past. The costs of replacing departing attorneys are high (often involving recruitment fees and training expenses) and the time involved in transitioning a new attorney is substantial. A strong pro bono culture can contribute to a positive office environment and, in turn, strengthen attorney loyalty to the corporation.

Finally, a successful pro bono program can provide opportunities for lawyers from different practice areas, along with non-lawyer staff, to work together as a team. Pro bono victories and awards can be shared with the entire office, fostering a sense of pride and accomplishment among attorneys and staff.

### **IV. Marketing**

Pro bono is an effective marketing tool that can provide positive publicity, heightened visibility, opportunities to work with other departments of the corporation, improved client relationships, and evidence of good corporate citizenship. With most corporations investing significantly in community service and corporate citizenship projects, pro bono is an excellent means for the corporation's legal staff to use their special skills and training to add to the corporation's community contributions.

### **V. Training and Professional Development**

Pro bono projects can also be used as training vehicles to provide a wide variety of high quality skills training. Through pro bono work, junior attorneys may try cases and gain substantial client contact earlier in their career. With adequate supervision, junior attorneys can be afforded greater autonomy in a pro bono matter, gaining meaningful work experience and accelerated professional development opportunities that benefit both the individual attorney and the employer.