

LAD
Subcommittee on Publicity and Pro Bono
4/21/03
Possible Action Items

Publicity:

Goal: Continually restate problem of cutbacks to Legal Aid and pro bono organizations and the resulting need of the disadvantaged for legal services as often as possible.

1. Ensure articles are in all state and district bar publications;
2. E-mail distribution of facts and other information;
3. Bar officers and LAD Committee members should include the cutbacks and need for pro bono in all presentations to lawyers, law firms and bar meetings;
4. Create press releases, posters and graphics on need, pro bono work and recognition of lawyers doing pro bono work;
5. Work with PR people and firms to help with publicity;
6. Enlist notable lawyers and judges, in addition to the MSBA President and LAD Committee chair, to help get out message state-wide on need and pro bono.
7. A sample press release or introduction to information packages is attached.

Pro Bono:

Goal: Recruit thousands of lawyers to do pro bono and support infrastructure to put them to work.

1. Enlist Chief Justice of Supreme Court and other judges in each judicial district to create a joint bench and bar effort for pro bono in their area. Each district will be encouraged to develop its own action plan to encourage pro bono and address the crisis in their district;
2. Do Managing Partner and corporate general counsel kick-off event. Have creative, specific list of action items to ask them to do with a timetable;
3. Adopt a Legal Aid office. Form partnerships between law firms and corporate counsel departments, and Legal Aid to provide lawyers and resources to help their local legal aid office. For example, pro bono lawyers do triage phone intake, take cases, etc.;
4. Adopt a poverty law area or issue. A law firm or corporate counsel department would become the experts on an area of law, help with training lawyers in the area, help write briefs and take cases;

5. Be sure to consider infrastructure needs when increasing pro bono work. Be sure there are adequately funded organizations to train, mentor and provide malpractice insurance to lawyers, as well as publicize services and screen and track clients;
6. Recognize that some clients have been turned away from Legal Aid because of reductions in staff. Calls to Legal Aid for help are way down and many potential clients have stopped trying to get access to justice. It may take some time for the disadvantaged to return to Legal Aid and the pro bono organization;
7. Create a fund within the MSBA to accept donations and distribute them to pro bono infrastructure organizations;
8. Encourage lawyers to volunteer legal services of at least 50 hours a year or make a significant financial contribution to the MSBA Foundation for pro bono work;
9. Consider for profit mechanism to help fund pro bono infrastructure. For example, CLE training, legal research, legal temporary service where lawyers volunteer to do project and payment goes to MSBA Foundation for pro bono;
10. Consider efforts to specifically increase family law pro bono, i.e. year of family law.