

Public Service

A message from the MSBA Student and Professionalism Committees

There are five core values in the legal profession: 1) Respect and Fairness; 2) Public Service; 3) Honesty, Integrity and Trustworthiness; 4) Competent, Prompt, and Diligent Representation; and 5) Quality of Justice. This piece addresses public service.

Society depends upon lawyers to provide services to those who cannot afford them. But public service is more than just providing free legal services. It is about committing one's self to civic engagement. As members of the legal profession we are obligated to give back to the community and make it stronger.

Core Value: Pro Bono Service

Rule 6.1 of the **Minnesota Rules of Professional Conduct** states that:

[a] lawyer should aspire to **render at least 50 hours of *pro bono publico* legal services per year.** In fulfilling this responsibility, the lawyer should provide a substantial majority of the 50 hours of legal services without fee or expectation of fee to (1) persons of limited means or (2) charitable, religious, civic, community, governmental and educational organizations in matters which are designed primarily to address the needs of persons of limited means.

The comment to Rule 6.1 calls pro bono service a “professional responsibility” and an “individual ethical commitment of each lawyer.”

Examples In Action

Some simple ways to serve others include volunteering in a local soup kitchen, reading books to children, volunteering with a restorative justice program, and volunteering with the Minnesota Justice Foundation (MJF).

How wonderful it is that nobody need wait a single moment before starting to improve the world.

Anne Frank

What does this mean for me?

Maintaining the value to serve others means that you:

- **Actively participate in the community.** Seek out volunteer opportunities which interest you.
- **Make time for others.** No matter how busy you are, serving others should be high on your priority list.
- **Use your special gifts and abilities** to give back to your community. Lawyers have a privileged role in society. This privilege comes with responsibility to try to improve our communities.
- **Treat others with fairness and respect.** Recognize that we all contribute differently to a common goal. Make your goal the improvement of the common good.
- **Seek to grow professionally** by learning new areas of law and to grow personally by developing diverse relationships.
- **Help others.** Be committed to promoting equal access to the legal system and educate others about the law.
- **Learn what resources are available** in your community to assist others. When you cannot provide assistance yourself, be able to refer people to agencies that can help them.

Why wait until after law school to begin serving those around you? Life will always be busy and there will always be competition for your time. By serving others as you build your legal career you begin forming the patterns that you should aspire to throughout your legal career. You are developing your credibility as a lawyer by living out the core values of the legal profession.