

PRACTICE MANAGEMENT

FINDING TIME FOR PRO BONO

By Erika Winston

Taking on pro bono cases can be challenging when time and resources are limited. While large firms commonly implement initiatives to encourage pro bono work, small and mid-size firms may not have the same capabilities. Here, representatives from smaller firms share their insights for active involvement in pro bono when resources are limited.



JESSICA ADLER

Founder
The Law Office of Jessica E. Adler

I handled multiple pro bono cases at my former firm, and it is much easier to do so when you have coworkers and staff who are able to help you. Now that I have my own practice, I find it is often preferable to take on discrete projects, like advice and referral clinics, where you can commit a set amount of time. Taking on an entire case can be difficult, particularly because you don't know how much time it will ultimately require.

There [are] opportunities available through the D.C. Bar Pro Bono Center. They help to maximize your time and you don't have to be an expert in any particular practice area, which is especially useful for new attorneys.



THOMAS B. KELLEY

Partner and Pro Bono Committee Chair
Levine Sullivan Koch & Schulz, LLP

As a firm that handles a lot of civil rights-related issues, we get numerous requests for legal assistance. Our pro bono committee makes sure that we don't overextend ourselves. The committee considers all pro bono requests. If they represent bona fide free speech issues and do not involve massive litigation, we will summarily okay them. If the case does involve extensive litigation, we take turns researching how involved the case will likely become and interviewing lawyers who may be willing to take on the matter.

For firms seeking to expand their pro bono service, I suggest finding organizations that assist people who are unable to hire attorneys. Make them aware of your practice and your willingness to take on cases.



BECKI YOUNG

Co-Founder
Hammond Young Immigration Law

Immigration is a great area to get involved in pro bono work. From Violence Against Women Act cases to asylum matters, there are opportunities to make a difference in the lives of people.

We have a moral and ethical obligation to do pro bono work as attorneys, but there is definitely a financial cost. Each of our pro bono clients is treated exactly like a paying client, so we provide our associates with all of the resources they would normally utilize. For small firms with financial limitations, there are still ways to give back. Take on pro bono cases from organizations instead of individuals. These matters tend to attract more exposure and can end up being lucrative.

Jessica Adler, courtesy of The Law Office of Jessica E. Adler; Thomas B. Kelley, courtesy of Levine Sullivan Koch & Schulz, LLP; Becki Young, courtesy of Hammond Young Immigration Law

Erika Winston is a regular contributor to Washington Lawyer.