

Encouraging Pro Bono Legal Services

1. Introduction

Free legal aid and services in India is primarily the mandate of National Legal Services Authority and State Legal Aid Services authorities which has a wide presence throughout the country. However, the legal needs of people continue to grow requiring meaningful contribution from the legal community. Pro Bono legal service as a concept has not gained much momentum in the country and remains more of an ad hoc, individualized practice lacking an institutional structure. Pro Bono comes from the Latin expression “pro bono publico” meaning “for the public good”. Many lawyers provide poor and underprivileged clients with valuable legal advice and support without seeking any professional fee. Unfortunately, this laudable tradition of public service has not received any deserving recognition. In many countries pro bono legal support has emerged as the dominant means of dispensing free representation to poor and underserved clients.

The Constitution of India by virtue of Article 39 A directs the State to provide free legal aid to the poor and weaker sections of the society, to promote justice on the basis of equal opportunity. Further, Article 14 and 22 (2) of the Constitution ensures equality before law. Also, the United Nations Sustainable Development – Goal 16 underscores the obligation of States ‘to ensure equal access to justice for all’. Keeping in line with these obligations and with a view to encourage pro bono legal services the Department of Justice (DoJ) intends to create a database of lawyers willing to provide their services to litigants identified under Section 12 of The Legal Services Authority Act of 1987. DoJ has already written to all Bar

Councils and Bar Associations across the country to provide information of lawyers who are engaged in providing pro bono legal services to the poor and those who otherwise cannot afford legal representation.

We welcome lawyers and legal professionals to **register** and provide information related to their areas of expertise and practice.

2. Objective

- 1. To encourage** lawyers and legal professionals to provide pro bono legal services
- 2. To recognize** pro bono legal work being provided by lawyers and legal professionals
- 3. To create** a database capturing vital information of lawyers for appropriate positions in the relevant field

3. Scope

Creation of the database will assist the Department of Justice in identifying lawyers providing pro bono services. The information could be utilized by DoJ to create a liaison between entitled to legal services under The Legal Services Authority Act, 1987 and a qualified lawyer providing pro bono services having expertise or interest in the related matter. The government has also proposed to include and recognize pro bono legal assistance provided by lawyers as a yardstick to be considered for appointment to appropriate positions. The database therefore will act as an additional tool for the authorities to assess pro bono services provided by lawyers.

5. Eligibility

- Has enrolled with a Bar Council
- Has been practicing as an advocate at the Bar
- Age is no bar for creating a profile for pro bono
- Those between 44-54 years of age will be provided the option to provide additional information if interested to be considered for appropriate positions.

6. How to Register?

- Interested lawyers may fill in the registration form by following the link: <http://serviceonline.gov.in/serviceLinkHome.html?serviceToken=GEnPsEv0YR546>
- Kindly read the terms and conditions before filling in the form.
- The applicant must be registered with serviceplus, if you already have a service plus id you can login with the same to register for pro bono.
- If you do not have a serviceplus id, kindly click on the Register Yourself in menu. you to the After registration you can login to create a profile for pro bono.
- You would be required to furnish proof of birth (eg. birth certificate or 10th/12th mark sheet)