

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES FOR ATTORNEYS THROUGH THE MEMPHIS AREA LEGAL SERVICES PRO BONO PROJECT

In addition to the more traditional matching of one case to one attorney, Memphis Area Legal Services offers a variety of opportunities to attorneys interested in volunteering. A summary of these opportunities is provided below, but in addition to case handling or direct client contact, volunteer attorneys can be instrumental in access to justice issues through other methods. MALS is always looking for volunteer attorneys to sit on their Board of Directors, to work on the Equal Justice Campaign, to draft or edit community education brochures, to provide Continuing Legal Education programs to other volunteer attorneys, to create training manuals and forms for use by MALS staff and other volunteers, and to advise the Private Attorney Involvement attorney and paralegal about implementation of new programs or ways to improve existing programs.

Advice and Counsel or Brief Service: One of the biggest problem areas identified by our eligible client population based on a recent survey is in consumer issues. For the past few months, volunteer attorneys have been providing advice and counsel assistance over the telephone on consumer, debt and landlord/tenant issues. On occasion, volunteers have assisted clients by writing letters or reviewing documents.

Hospice/AIDS: MALS trains workers for the hospice and AIDS/HIV service providers on advance directives, end of life and disability planning and intake eligibility issues. When the service provider identifies clients who are eligible and in need of legal assistance they will complete an intake, and contact MALS with the information. MALS will then arrange for a volunteer attorney to prepare and execute the necessary documents. This service will necessitate that the volunteer attorney go to the client most of the time.

Attorney of the Day in General Sessions Court: Working with General Sessions Judge Phyllis Gardner and the Memphis Bar Association's Access to Justice committee, MALS will provide two attorneys once a week in the afternoon to advise pro se litigants about procedures, defenses and will assess case merit for possible referral.

Bankruptcy and Alternatives Project: Again working with the MBA Access to Justice Committee, plus Judge Jennie Latta, the MemphisDEBT Collaborative and the Association of Ministers, this project is working to create Community Education programs on issues related to consumer debt, money management and bankruptcy alternatives. Potential clients will attend a workshop training and at the end of the program be screened for services. Volunteer attorneys will provide either representation on consumer and debt related issues or bankruptcy protection where appropriate.