

PARALEGAL OR LAW STUDENT PRO BONO VOLUNTEER ENROLLMENT FORM
MEMPHIS AREA LEGAL SERVICES PRO BONO PROJECT

NAME: _____

CIRCLE ONE: 1L 2L 3L GRADUATE PARALEGAL N/A

CURRENT ADDRESS: _____

TELEPHONE NUMBERS (CELL): _____ **(OTHER)** _____

EMAIL ADDRESS: _____

SKILLS (COMPUTER, FOREIGN LANGUAGE): _____

DATE OF BAR: _____ **HOW REFERRED TO MALS:** _____

AVAILABILITY: DAYS (CIRCLE ALL THAT APPLY AND INDICATE TIMES BELOW DAY)

MONDAY **TUESDAY** **WEDNESDAY** **THURSDAY** **FRIDAY** **SATURDAY**
__ TO __ __ TO __ __ TO __ __ TO __ __ TO __ __ TO __

DATE AVAILABLE TO START: _____ **LAST DATE:** _____

RANK AREAS OF INTEREST WITH 1 BEING THE HIGHEST:

__ **ADOPTIONS** __ **BANKRUPTCY** __ **COLLECTIONS** __ **CONSUMER**
__ **ELDER LAW** __ **EMPLOYMENT** __ **FAMILY LAW** __ **BENEFITS**
__ **ADVANCE DIRECTIVES** __ **DOMESTIC VIOLENCE**
__ **PREDATORY LENDING** __ **LANDLORD/TENANT**

OTHER: _____

____ **I WILL VOLUNTEER AT A CLINIC OR ASSIST WITH INTAKE AT THE OFFICE.**

BY SIGNING MY NAME AND THE DATE, I CERTIFY THAT I AM A STUDENT IN GOOD STANDING AT AN ACCREDITED LAW SCHOOL IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA OR I AM A PARALEGAL STUDENT OR PARALEGAL VOLUNTEER. I AGREE TO ABIDE BY THE RULES OF CONFIDENTIALITY AND THE RULES OF PROFESSIONAL RESPONSIBILITY AS OUTLINED IN THE TENNESSEE RULES OF COURT AND WILL COMPLY WITH THE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES OF MEMPHIS AREA LEGAL SERVICES AS A CONDITION OF VOLUNTEER PARTICIPATION AND HAVE READ AND WILL COMPLY WITH THE ATTACHED ETHICS MEMORANDUM.

LAW/PARALEGAL STUDENT/PARALEGAL NAME AND DATE

FAX OR MAIL THE COMPLETED QUESTIONNAIRE TO LINDA WARREN SEELY, 109 N. MAIN ST., 2ND FLOOR, CLARIDGE HOUSE, MEMPHIS, TN 38102. PHONE- 255-3417 AND FAX 843-6789.

ETHICS MEMORANDUM

Before you graduate from any accredited school of law or paralegal professional school you will be required to successfully complete a course in professional responsibility. This course will cover many important rules that regulate the practice of law. It will affect your ability to prosper to competently represent clients. Without oversimplifying the complex rules, it is important that you become fully aware of issues that may arise in the context of any pro bono legal work you may undertake even before you enroll in the professional responsibility course. The purpose of this memorandum is to be sure you are aware of the issues and have the tools you need to handle them. In addition we want to draw your attention to issues of professionalism that should be part of your becoming a successful lawyer. You are reminded that when you entered law school you took an oath to adhere to the ideals of student professionalism.

Ethical Issues

1. Unauthorized Practice of Law

As a paralegal/law student you may be viewed by non-lawyers as possessing legal knowledge and skills and there is no doubt that you will be asked for legal advice or assistance from family, friends and even strangers. It is unethical, and may even be illegal for you to offer legal advice, assistance, document drafting, any appearance of representation or in any way appear to be giving a legal opinion to a person or entity until you are fully licensed in that jurisdiction. If someone were to rely on your advice you could cause serious harm. A disclaimer that you are "just a student" is not sufficient. Not only could you be subject to civil or criminal penalties, but you could jeopardize your admission to the Bar.

In the context of pro bono work it is essential that you follow this rule. Not only could it cause damage to you or a client, but also the reputation of the Pro Bono Program. It is important that you not give legal advice to a client or a prospective client. This does not mean that you cannot convey legal information that an **attorney supervisor** tells you to give to a client. It also does not mean that you can't teach a curriculum about the law. It does mean that if you are asked a question about a specific legal issue you should never try to apply the law to a particular set of facts. When in doubt or the line is unclear check with your attorney supervisor or the Director of the Pro Bono Program. Always explain to the client why you cannot provide an answer.

2. Confidentiality

When volunteering in a legal setting you are likely to learn information about clients and potential clients. Almost without exception this information is "confidential" which means it is protected by the ethical obligation of confidentiality regardless of the source of the information and should not be discussed with others outside the office, Although you are not an attorney yet, you have an obligation to your attorney supervisor to abide by the professional rules of conduct and keep all information confidential. This is true even after you leave a specific office regardless of whether the issue has been solved,

3. Conflicts of Interest

It is important for you to note that volunteering in one office and the subsequent exposure to confidential information may create a conflict of interest situation if you move to another office or project. You should keep track of any placements where you volunteer and inform your supervising attorney if you believe there is a potential for a conflict.

For example, you volunteered for the Homeless Legal Clinic and your supervising attorney had you helping with a landlord-tenant case where the tenant was the client. Later in your legal career you volunteered at the local legal services office and were asked to help with a case against the same tenant you earlier assisted.

The important point to remember is to not to try and solve these issues by yourself. You must inform your supervising attorney and let him or her make the determination on how to proceed. Your supervising attorney is responsible for overseeing all aspects of work done by non-attorneys to be sure they are complying with the rules. Your violation of these rules could subject the attorney to disciplinary action and could cause the client harm.

Professionalism Issues

Civility is a key component to effective and professional communication. Being rude, aggressive, obnoxious or even distracted when talking with attorneys, the public or clients is not what is expected of any students engaged in pro bono work for Memphis Area Legal Services.

Respect and dignity for the law and lawyers are also key elements of a true professional. Honesty, fair play and integrity when dealing with clients, the public, attorneys and fellow law and paralegal students are inherent in the concept of professionalism.

At all times and in all situations you should be diligent about the work you volunteered to do. If for any reason, you have a question or a concern or are unable to complete an assignment, notify Ms. Seely immediately. You do your clients and the program a much better service by withdrawing from an assignment that has become overwhelming or you don't understand. Never be shy about asking questions and asking for help or guidance.

Through your pro bono experience you will have the opportunity to show everyone you have the ethic of excellence and can bring great honor and respect to yourself, your law school and your profession.

Should you have questions during any pro bono activity you should discuss them with Linda Warren Seely, the Director of the Pro Bono Program