

The Law Society of Singapore

Pro Bono Guide



THE LAW SOCIETY
OF SINGAPORE

Pro Bono Guide

The Law Society of Singapore, established in 1967, is the representative body for all lawyers in Singapore.

The Law Society's mission is to serve its members and the community by sustaining a competent and independent Bar which upholds the rule of law and ensures access to justice.

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Foreword

An important part of the Law Society of Singapore's mission is to serve the community by facilitating access to justice.

Our members from both small and large firms have a proud tradition of rendering voluntary service in various ways. Some volunteer with Law Society administered schemes such as the Criminal Legal Aid Scheme, the Community Legal Clinics and Project Law Help. Others may volunteer their services through organizations such as the Legal Aid Bureau, Singapore Association of Women Lawyers and Association of Criminal Lawyers of Singapore. Still others may volunteer at legal clinics run by groups such as Jamiyah, the Catholic Lawyers Guild, the Lawyers' Christian Fellowship and those offered by Family Service Centres.

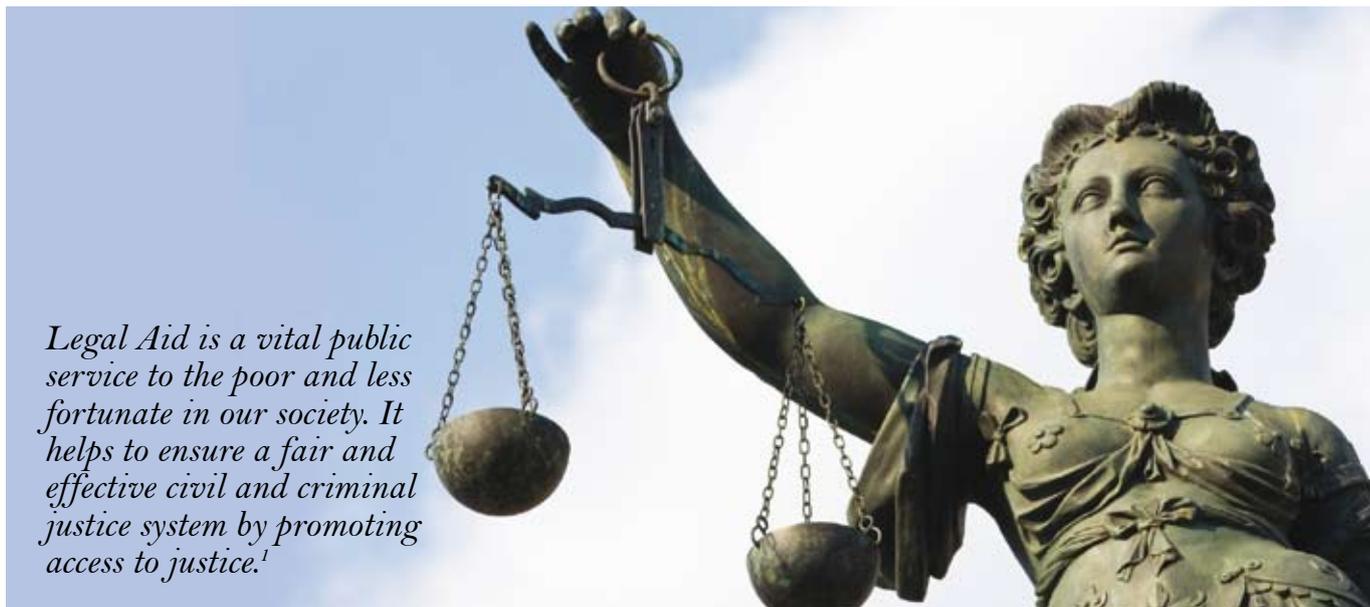
With an apparent plethora of avenues for pro bono service, the Pro Bono Guide is a welcome handbook for a new lawyer embarking on pro bono service for the first time or a lawyer seeking to fulfil the recommended minimum annual tith of 25 pro bono hours per year.

The publication of this guide clearly demonstrates the commitment of the Law Society towards instilling a spirit of volunteerism within the profession, a spirit which plays such an important role in forging the bonds of camaraderie among all our members.

Our profession is an honourable one and we should always strive to infuse a sense of vocational purpose in our lawyers which transcends the confines of fee paying practice.

Highlighting to our members the many volunteer opportunities listed in this guide, will go a long way towards helping our members achieve that sense of purpose, fulfilment and connectedness to the community through the selfless exercise of their vocation.

Michael Hwang, SC
President
The Law Society of Singapore



Legal Aid is a vital public service to the poor and less fortunate in our society. It helps to ensure a fair and effective civil and criminal justice system by promoting access to justice.¹

Important icons to recognise



Valuable information



How to volunteer



Contact Information



Further Reading

Introduction

The Law Society of Singapore actively promotes pro bono work to address the legal needs of those who cannot afford legal services. Many of its members serve as volunteers for pro bono schemes run by various organizations and agencies. Over the years, the Law Society has itself initiated and implemented various pro bono schemes to help the needy.

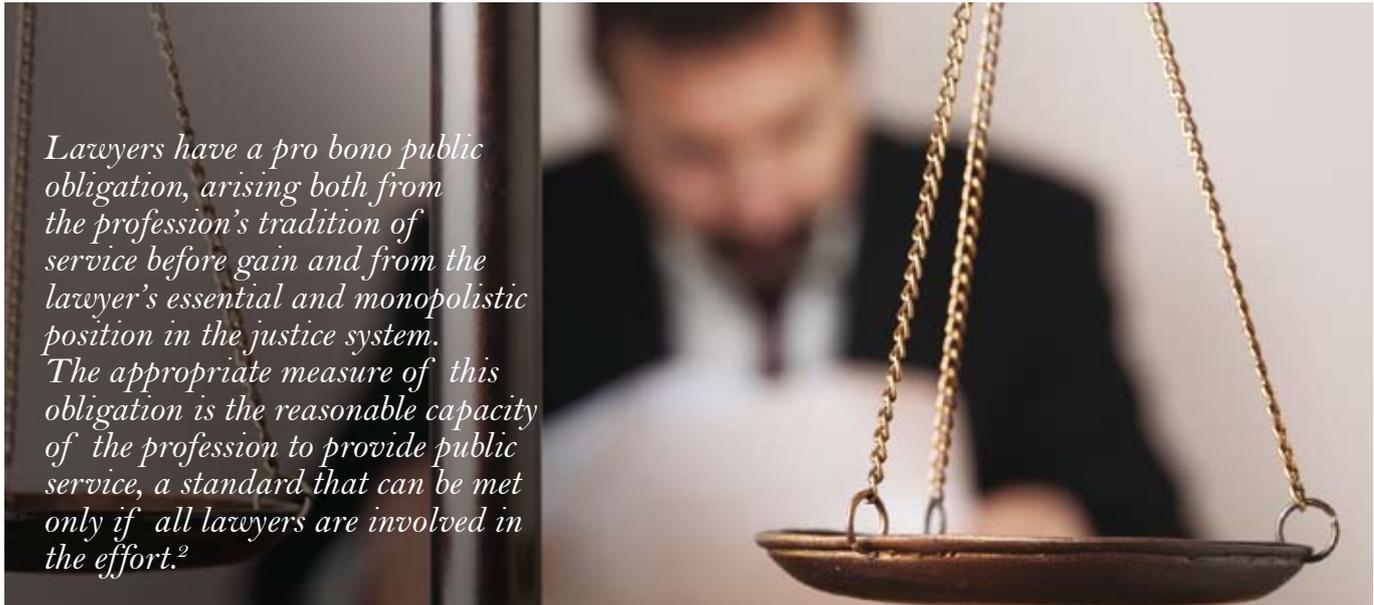
In 2006, the Law Society established a Legal Aid Review Committee to undertake a comprehensive review of the provision of legal aid in Singapore. A number of key recommendations were made in the report, chief among which was a pledge by every lawyer of 25 hours per year for pro bono work and the establishment of a Pro Bono Services Office to coordinate the Law Society's pro bono initiatives.

In 2007, the Law Society adopted the recommendations of its Legal Aid Review Committee and established the Pro Bono Services Office to manage and administer its pro bono initiatives.

The Pro Bono Guide

The Pro Bono Guide aims to give lawyers in Singapore a comprehensive overview of pro bono volunteer opportunities with various organizations and agencies serving the community. It is hoped that this guide will help all lawyers renew and fulfill their yearly pro bono pledge regardless of specialization or seniority.

¹ Report of the Legal Aid Review Committee of the Law Society of Singapore, Oct 2006.



Lawyers have a pro bono public obligation, arising both from the profession's tradition of service before gain and from the lawyer's essential and monopolistic position in the justice system. The appropriate measure of this obligation is the reasonable capacity of the profession to provide public service, a standard that can be met only if all lawyers are involved in the effort.²

Pro Bono Publico

What is Pro Bono? "Pro Bono" comes from the Latin phrase "Pro Bono Publico" which means "for the public good".

In the legal context, Pro Bono refers to free or subsidized legal help for needy persons. Pro Bono includes work done for (a) legal or natural persons of limited means and (b) non-profit organizations meeting a community need.

The key characteristics of pro bono work are actual delivery of legal services to (a) persons of limited means & (b) non-profit organizations that serve those persons.

² The Lawyer's Pro Bono Publico Responsibility, by Barlow F. Christensen.

The Need for Pro Bono Assistance

Navigating our legal system is complex and well beyond the ability of most lay persons. Access to the services of a lawyer can make a huge difference to whether a person's legal rights are protected or enforced. However, the cost of engaging a lawyer is beyond the reach of the disadvantaged.

Although state sponsored legal aid schemes exist in Singapore, there are many in the community who are not eligible for such schemes and who cannot afford to pay for legal and court fees.



Legal Aid Review Committee Report, see <http://www.lawsociety.org.sg> "Resource Library: "1. Committee Reports".

An Obligation to Meet This Need

Lawyers have a professional and ethical obligation to provide pro bono assistance in our community. There are 2 sources from which this pro bono obligation can be said to arise:

- (1) Our calling or vocation as lawyers
- (2) A social contract with the community arising from our monopoly over legal advice & representation.

Our Vocation as Lawyers

A lawyer is a member of a profession which is traditionally considered a calling or a vocation as distinguished from an ordinary job or trade.

A vocation is not only an occupation for which a person is suited, trained or qualified. It is also the inclination to undertake a certain kind of work often in response to a perceived summons or calling. A vocation is therefore carried out more for its altruistic benefit than for income, which is regarded as a secondary aspect, however beneficial.

For many of us the motivation to become lawyers would likely include some elements of this altruistic call.

Social Contract

Only lawyers have the special skills, knowledge and license needed to secure access to justice for the needy. We have been granted a monopoly in terms of exclusive access to the Courts to represent clients and to practice law. This monopoly gives rise to a social contract with the community to provide pro bono assistance to the public as no one else is competent to do so.



The Benefits of Pro Bono Work

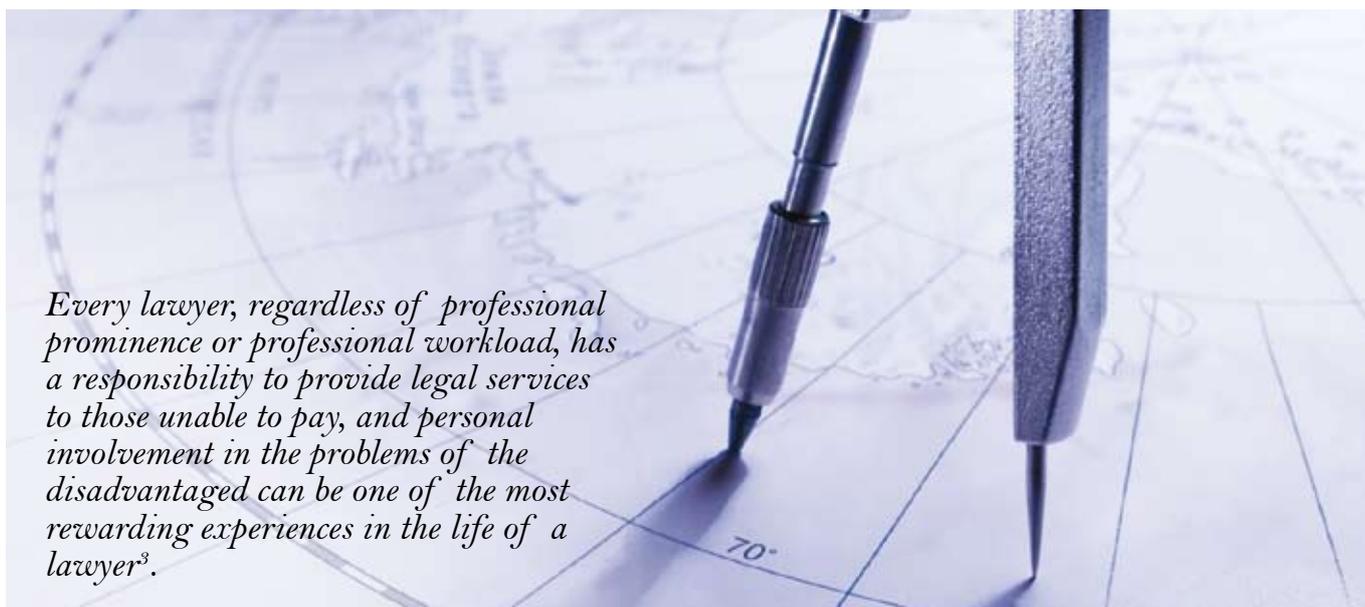
Pro Bono benefits the provider as well as the receiver.

Professional Development

The nature of many pro bono cases often puts young lawyers in new situations— independently conducting client interviews, structuring practical and cost effective solutions, handling civil and criminal cases. Since young lawyers are often allowed greater autonomy on pro bono matters, they can use their cases to develop skills much earlier than they otherwise might on larger, more complex cases. Pro bono work therefore provides young lawyers meaningful training and professional development opportunities. Pro bono work accelerates their transformation into skilled and experienced lawyers who can independently handle complicated matters with high-paying clients.

Strengthening Your Practice

A clear and strong pro bono culture within a practice provides benefits beyond practical training skills. Pro bono activity can build relationships within a practice. Undertaking a pro bono project can serve as a positive team building enterprise involving the whole practice and providing excellent opportunities for senior lawyers to mentor their juniors. Pro bono work can also improve firm-wide morale by giving lawyers meaningful and fulfilling avenues to exercise their skills for the good of the community. Representing or assisting needy clients with important legal matters gives lawyers a sense of connectedness and purpose, assuring them that their efforts matter, that they make a difference in their community. Lawyers engaged in pro bono work often work closely with individual clients one-on-one. In contrast to the often impersonal nature of some complex litigation and business practice, this experience often proves deeply satisfying. Pro bono work also affords associates as well as partners the opportunity to work on cases involving diverse legal issues and develop a wide array of legal skills.

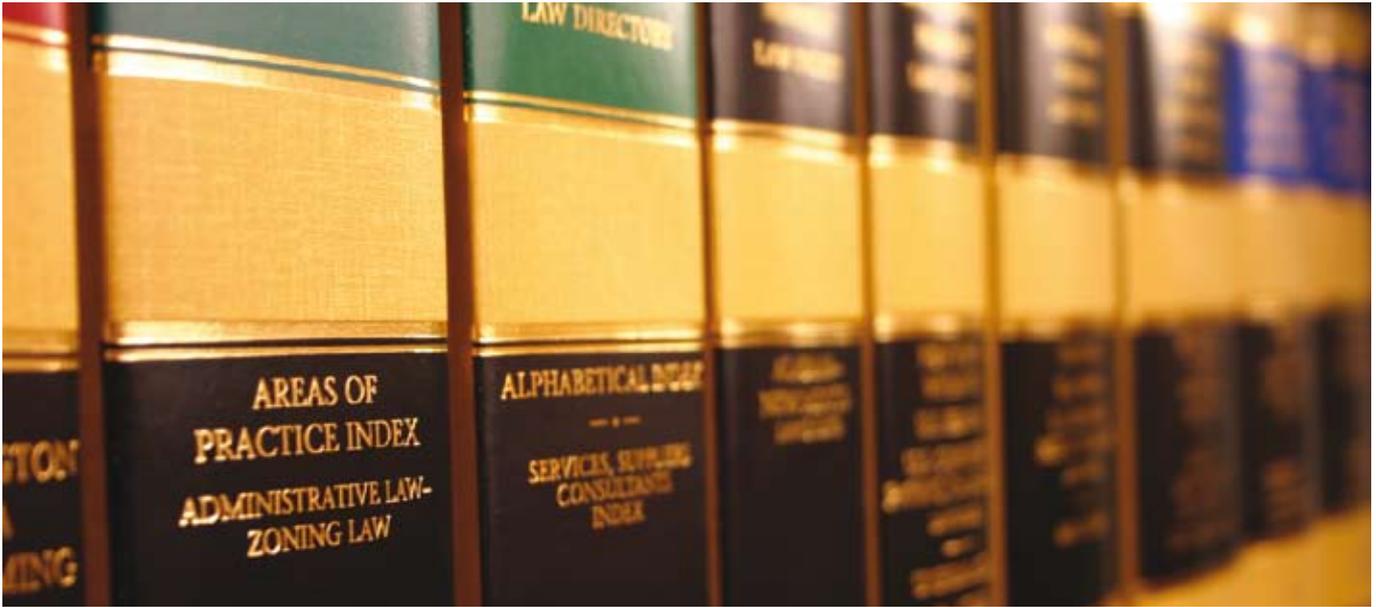


An Overview of the Main Pro Bono Schemes in Singapore

Various organizations and agencies run legal aid and pro bono advice schemes in Singapore. The following table gives a broad overview of the main schemes providing volunteer opportunities for lawyers. Succeeding chapters will give more information on these and other volunteer schemes including how to sign up as a volunteer.

	LAW SOCIETY	GOVERNMENT	OTHERS
<i>Individuals</i>			
Civil Legal Aid	-	Legal Aid Bureau [Cap.5] * Most civil matters * Formal means & merits test * Citizens & PRs only	-
Criminal Legal Aid	Criminal Legal Aid Scheme [Cap.6] * Most criminal offences * Formal means test * All nationalities	Supreme Court Assigned Counsel Scheme [Cap.7] * Death penalty offences * No formal means test * All nationalities	Association of Criminal Lawyers of Singapore [Cap.8] * Community Court referrals * No formal means test
General Legal Advice	Community Legal Clinics [Cap. 10]	Legal Aid Bureau [Cap. 5]	Aware [Cap.10], Catholic Lawyers' Guild [Cap. 10], Jamiyah [Cap.10], SAWL [Cap. 10]
<i>Corporations i.e. charities, non profits & social enterprises</i>			
Legal Aid for corporations	Project Law Help [Cap. 9] * Corporate matters	-	Joint International Pro Bono Committee [Cap. 9] * Cross Border Corporate matters The Kind Exchange * Corporate matters [Cap. 9]

³ Model Rule 6.1 of Professional Conduct, American Bar Association, Comment #1.



CIVIL LEGAL AID

The Legal Aid Bureau

Background

The Legal Aid Bureau (LAB), a government body, was established in 1958 to provide legal advice, assistance and aid to persons of limited means. LAB is governed by the Legal Aid and Advice Act (Cap 160) and the Legal Aid and Advice Regulations (Revised Edition 1996).

Nature of Services Provided by LAB

LAB provides the following services:

- (a) legal advice – oral information and advice
- (b) legal assistance in the form of drafting simple documents such as deeds of separation; and
- (c) legal aid in the form of representation in court for civil matters such as family law, monetary claims, estate matters, accident claims and probate matters.

Applicants may attend at LAB's office to register for LAB's services:

Address:

45 Maxwell Road
#08-12,
The URA Centre
East Wing,
Singapore 069118

Contacts:

Tel: 1800-325 1424
Fax: 6325 1402
Website: www.lab.gov.sg
E-mail: lab_enquiry@lab.gov.sg

Registration hours:

Mondays to Fridays
8:30 am to 12:30 pm
2:00 pm to 5:00 pm
Saturdays
8:30 am to 12:30 pm

Scope of Legal Aid

Under s5(1) of the Legal Aid and Advice Act, the LAB may give legal aid to citizens and permanent residents of Singapore for most⁴ Civil Proceedings which are:

- a. In the High Court and the Court of Appeal;
- b. In the District and Magistrates' Courts;
- c. Before any person to whom a case is referred in whole or in part by a District Court;
- d. Under the Women's Charter; and
- e. Before the Syariah Court.

Legal Aid will not be granted to applicants who admit full liability of the claim against them and who want the LAB to assist in negotiations with their creditors, eg. for instalment payments or a reduction in payment.

LAB Caseload

There were 10,082 new cases registered for legal aid, assistance and advice in FY08. The work of the LAB is handled by legal officers who are members of the Singapore Legal Service, together with their support staff. About one third of LAB's legal aid cases are assigned out to a panel of volunteer lawyers ("the Panel"). The volunteer lawyers are known as "Assigned Solicitors". (See "Assigned Solicitors" below.)

Criteria for Applicants

Before a member of the public can qualify for civil legal aid from LAB, he has to satisfy the following criteria:

- (a) he must be a Singapore citizen or a Singapore Permanent Resident;
- (b) he must satisfy the means test; and
- (c) he must satisfy the merits test.

4 Under the Legal Aid and Advice Act, LAB may not give legal aid for civil proceedings in respect of defamation, breach of promise to marriage, inducement of spouse to leave the other, relator actions, applications under Parliamentary Elections Act or Presidential Act, judgment summons and judgment debt payment by installments

The Means Test

To qualify for legal aid, an applicant to LAB must have a disposable income of not more than S\$10,000 per annum and a disposable capital of not more than S\$10,000.

Disposable income is defined in the Act as:

the income of the Applicant together with the income of the spouse (if any) during the last 12 months prior to the application after deducting the following:

- S\$3,500 per annum for each dependant of the Applicant or the spouse;
- S\$4,500 personal deduction per annum for the Applicant;
- Rent (if any) not exceeding S\$1,000 per annum; and
- the full contribution of the Applicant to his CPF account.

Disposable capital means the value of property the Applicant owns, excluding:

- the subject-matter of the proceedings;
- the wearing apparel of the applicant;
- the tools of the applicant's trade;
- furniture used in his house;
- a dwelling house owned and exclusively used by the applicant and his family as their home assessed at an annual value of not more than S\$7,800, or an HDB flat owned and exclusively used by the applicant and his family as their home; and
- savings of the applicant of up to S\$30,000 (if the applicant is 60 years old and above); and
- the Applicant's monies standing in his CPF account.

Where an applicant fails the means test but is facing hardship, the Director may in any case in his/her discretion, grant aid to the applicant if he/she:

- is living separate and apart from his spouse and where it appears to the Director in his absolute discretion to be reasonable to do so to relieve hardship, disregard the income of the spouse;
- is suffering from any sudden physical or mental disability which permanently and severely restricts his capacity to earn an income and where it appears to the Director in his absolute discretion to be reasonable to do so to relieve hardship,
 - a. in determining the disposable capital, exclude savings of the applicant up to \$30,000; and
 - b. in determining the disposable income, deduct a further amount of:
 - i. \$1,000, in the case of an applicant who has also suffered a sudden loss of income and requires legal aid to defend or take legal proceedings as a matter of urgency; or
 - ii. \$2,000 in any other case.
- has suffered a sudden loss of income and requires legal aid to defend or take legal proceedings as a matter of urgency, and where it appears to the Director in his absolute discretion to be reasonable to do so to relieve hardship:

- a. regard the total disposable income limit to be \$5,000 during the period of 6 months immediately preceding the date of application; and
- b. regard the ‘disposable income’ to mean the income of an applicant together with the income of the spouse of an applicant during the period of 6 months immediately preceding the date of application, after deducting:
 - i. \$1,750 for each dependent;
 - ii. \$2,250 personal deduction for the applicant;
 - iii. an amount not exceeding \$500 for rent (if any);
 - iv. an amount equal to the applicant’s contribution to the Central Provident Fund.

On the other hand, it should be noted that under Section 8(3) of the Legal Aid and Advice Act, the Director retains the discretion to refuse aid if it appears to him unreasonable for the applicant to receive it, in the particular circumstances of the case. Thus, an applicant may, in certain circumstances, still be refused aid even if he passes the means test⁵.

The Applicant will be asked to provide LAB with all documentary evidence of his income and capital, and to swear a statutory declaration setting out information of his assets and means⁶.

The Merits Test

Once the Applicant passes the means test, the LAB legal officer or Assigned Solicitor will then review the applicant’s case and prepare a legal opinion on whether there is merit to the Applicant’s case. This is to sift out unmeritorious claims. The Opinion is reviewed by the Legal Aid Board consisting of a Director and two solicitors from the Panel who will decide whether legal aid ought to be granted to the Applicant.

If the applicant is successful, a Legal Aid Certificate is issued to him by LAB and, if there are court proceedings, will be duly filed in court. Where there are pending proceedings in court, an Emergency Certificate may be issued first, pending the outcome of the merits test.

Contribution by Applicant

The applicant may be required to pay a small financial contribution to LAB. How much contribution is payable by him depends on his financial means, the nature and complexity of the case, the amount of work done in his case and the amount of money recovered for him. The amounts would usually range from about \$450 to \$700 for the whole proceedings for a legal aid case.

The contribution collected goes into the Legal Aid Fund. Legal costs and interest paid by the opposing party also goes into this Fund. It is from this Fund that assigned solicitors are paid an honorarium for the assistance rendered to the applicant.

⁵ For example if the applicant comes from an extremely wealthy family, and is work-capable, but presently unemployed.

⁶ Under Section 21 of the Legal Aid and Advice Act, it is an offence to knowingly make a false statement or representation in the legal aid application. The penalty is a maximum fine of \$5,000, or a jail term of up to 6 months, or both.

LEGAL AID BUREAU WORKFLOW

When the applicant attends at the LAB's office, a preliminary means test will be done. If he passes this means test, his case will be registered⁷. An appointment date will be fixed within 2 weeks for the applicant to give his statement before a commissioner for oaths. A detailed means test will be done at this stage. Thereafter, the case will be sent to a legal officer for an evaluation of the merits. The legal officer may assign the case out at this stage, or proceed to deal with it himself. Either the legal officer or the assigned solicitor will put up an opinion to the Legal Aid Board on the merits of the case. If aid is granted, the applicant will be informed, and either the legal officer in charge of the case, or the assigned solicitor will proceed to deal with the matter. The legal officer may also assign the case out at this stage.

The Privileges of an Aided Person

Under Section 12(4) of the Legal Aid and Advice Act, the legally aided person has the following privileges:

- (a) He shall not be liable in respect of any proceedings to which the legal aid certificate relates for court fees or for such fees payable for the service of process or for any fees due to the Sheriff in connection with the execution of process;
- (b) He shall be entitled to be supplied free of charge with a copy of the judge's notes of evidence in any proceedings to which the legal aid certificate relates; and
- (c) He shall not, except where express provision is made in the Legal Aid and Advice Act, be liable for costs to any other party in any proceedings to which the legal aid certificate relates.

ASSIGNED SOLICITORS

Types of Cases Assigned

Examples of cases assigned by LAB to assigned solicitors are:

- Cases in which both Plaintiff and Defendant have applied for legal aid, in which case there is a conflict of interest in the LAB acting for both of them; and
- Cases involving specialised areas of the law such as the law of medical negligence and Syariah law.

Assigned solicitors may express their preference to the Director of Legal Aid when appointed to the panel of assigned solicitors as to the type of cases he is assigned.

Accepting Assignments

A staff member of LAB will call the assigned solicitor in advance to check that he agrees to accept a particular case before assigning it to him.

7 Unless his case involves an area of the law beyond the LAB's purview (e.g. defamation, criminal matters), or there are obviously no merits to his case. A duty legal officer is present for consultation during registration hours.

Assigned Solicitor's Fees

Under R 15(1) of the Legal Aid and Advice Regulations, the sums allowed to an assigned solicitor in connection with proceedings in the Court of Appeal, High Court and Subordinate Courts shall be the full amount allowed on taxation of the costs on account of disbursements and 50% of the amount allowed on account of solicitor and client costs. If the costs claimed do not exceed \$750, the Director of Legal Aid may approve the payment of these costs without taxation.

Joining the Panel as an Assigned Solicitor

Assigned solicitors have selflessly contributed a significant amount of time, energy and resources in assisting and acting for aided persons. They are a key pillar of LAB's mission to provide access to justice for the less privileged. Those interested in becoming assigned solicitors with LAB may fill in and e-mail or fax to LAB the application form which is downloadable from LAB website www.lab.gov.sg

Further Information – The Assigned Solicitor's Guide

LAB has published a comprehensive reference manual ("The Assigned Solicitor's Guide), setting out information, together with the relevant legal provisions and practical matters, that assigned solicitors would find useful when assisting and acting for aided persons. Copies of this may be obtained by writing to or e-mailing the Law Society Pro Bono Services Office, or the Legal Aid Bureau directly or by downloading from www.lab.gov.sg.

Other Volunteering Opportunities

Lawyers who are Qualified Persons according to Section 2 of the Legal Profession Act, but who do not have a practising certificate, may volunteer at the Legal Aid Bureau under the Volunteer Lawyers Scheme. Such volunteers may assist in handling case-files, giving legal advice, attending court hearings and other work at the Bureau, on a part-time basis.

LAB also operates a volunteer scheme for legally-trained persons. Such volunteers may take statements from applicants, draft legal opinions and court documents, conduct legal research or be involved in special projects.

Those interested in volunteering under these schemes may sign up from LAB's website www.lab.gov.sg.



CRIMINAL LEGAL AID

The Law Society's Criminal Legal Aid Scheme ('CLAS')

Background

There is no Government aid for non capital criminal offences. The Law Society therefore set up the Criminal Legal Aid Scheme ("CLAS") in 1985 to ensure that the poor in Singapore would be able to receive legal representation in non capital criminal cases for which they were claiming trial. It is open to all persons in Singapore regardless of nationality.

The Pilot Scheme was launched on 2 September 1985. In the beginning, legal aid was only available in cases involving theft. The scheme however has been extended over the years and as of 2007, CLAS covers a total of 15 statutes, namely:

1. Arms & Explosives Act
2. Arms Offences Act
3. Computer Misuse Act
4. Corrosive & Explosive Substances & Offensive Weapons Act
5. Dangerous Fireworks Act
6. Enlistment Act
7. Explosive Substances Act
8. Films Act
9. Miscellaneous Offences (Public Order and Nuisance) Act
10. Misuse of Drugs Act
11. Penal Code
12. Prevention of Corruption Act
13. Undesirable Publications Act
14. Vandalism Act
15. Women's Charter [Sections 65(8) and 140(1)(i)]

In addition CLAS has, since 1st September 2005, also extended aid to cases involving mentally ill accused persons (regardless of their plea). Since June 2006 CLAS has also extended aid to youthful offenders (16 – 18 years old) before the Community Court.

CLAS currently has five full time staff who manage the day-to-day applications for criminal legal aid as well as attend to enquiries from the public.

Funding & Support

CLAS's main source of funding comes from the Law Society's CLAS annual charity golf event, with donations made by members of the legal profession, the judiciary, foundations and institutions such as the Singapore Academy of Law and the Lee Foundation, and other corporate sponsors, such as Singapore Pools Pte Ltd. Since its inception, the tournament receives the strong and unwavering support of Senior Minister Professor S Jayakumar who personally ensures that donations continue to come in each year.

The 300+ CLAS volunteer lawyers do not receive any payment for the legal services they render. In most cases, the volunteers also waive disbursements paid on behalf of the accused persons as part of their contribution towards pro bono work.

CLAS also receives the invaluable support of volunteer interpreters from all parts of Asia including Thailand, Myanmar, Bangladesh, and, of course, Singapore.

Applying for CLAS Aid

When an application is made, the applicant is interviewed by the Law Society to determine whether he is a suitable candidate for criminal legal assistance.

The first question is whether the charge relates to a type of offence covered by CLAS.

Next, the applicant must satisfy the means test, which includes an income test and a disposable asset test.

The income test for a single applicant is an income of not more than \$1,300 nett per month, and for married applicants a combined income of not more than \$1,700 nett per month. Where the married applicant has dependants (excluding spouse), an allowance of \$160 per dependant is added to the \$1,700 nett monthly ceiling.

In the disposable asset test, the single applicant who owns private property or private motor-cars worth more than \$3000 are not eligible for assistance under the scheme. The ceiling amount is \$5,000 for married applicants. For the purposes of this test, HDB flats are not considered private property and a truck, van, lorry or pick-up are not classified as a private motor-car. Applicants who operate a business or have savings or shares the total nett value of which exceeds the sum of \$3,000 (for single applicants) or \$5,000 (for married applicants) are similarly not eligible for assistance. For this purpose, "shares" does not include SBS, NTUC Fairprice or SingTel shares.

In any event, the CLAS Committee has a residual discretion to grant aid in deserving cases where the application fails the CLAS criteria. Applicants are entitled to appeal against a rejection by writing to the Chairman of the CLAS Committee.



CRIMINAL LEGAL AID

The Supreme Court's Legal Assistance Scheme for Capital Offences ('LASCO')

Background

Under the Supreme Court's Legal Assistance Scheme for Capital Offences ('LASCO'), all accused persons facing capital charges in the High Court will be assigned legal representation by volunteer lawyers on the LASCO's Register of Counsel.

Criteria for Assignment

Under the scheme, anyone facing a capital charge is eligible to be assigned counsel. No means test or other eligibility criteria is imposed. In most cases, two counsel will be assigned – one to lead, and one to assist. It is usually open to the lead counsel to propose an assistant. Alternatively, an assisting counsel will be appointed by the Supreme Court Registry.

Types of Cases

The types of cases for which assigned counsel may represent an accused person are manifold – these include capital offences under the Penal Code (e.g. murder, kidnapping) or the Misuse of Drugs Act, as well as non-capital cases under the Corruption, Drug Trafficking and Other Serious Crimes (Confiscation of Benefits) Act. They may also include representing the accused person at appeals to the Court of Appeal, or for the purpose of appealing to the President for clemency.

Requirements for Assigned Counsel

The Registrar of the Supreme Court maintains a Register of Counsel, which comprises Lead Counsel and Assisting Counsel. Any advocate and solicitor who is of good standing and reputation is eligible to apply to be emplaced on the Register of Counsel. In addition, they must meet the following criteria for each category of assigned counsel:

Category	Years in practice	Experience – Involvement in:
Lead Counsel	5	(a) 2 capital trials; OR (b) 1 capital trial and 5 criminal appeals (MA / CCA); OR (c) 5 non-capital criminal trials, of which at least 3 must be in the High Court.
Assisting Counsel	3	(a) 2 criminal trials; OR (b) 1 criminal trial and 2 criminal appeals (MA / CCA)

Additionally, counsel who do not meet the above criteria for Leading or Assisting Counsel, may apply to the Registrar of the Supreme Court, to be appointed as Junior Assisting Counsel. The appointment of Junior Assisting Counsel is at the discretion of the Registrar.

For the purpose of assignment as Lead, Assisting or Junior Assisting Counsel, counsel's previous experience from the Bench or as a Deputy Public Prosecutor and/or State Counsel may be taken into account.

Honorarium

All assigned counsel will be paid an honorarium for their professional services rendered. The amount of honorarium paid in each case varies; it depends on the amount of work done and the complexity of the case and is determined by the Registrar of the Supreme Court.

The factors taken into account in determining the honorarium payable include:

- the time spent by the counsel visiting the accused in prison in order to interview him;
- the number of hearing days taken up;
- the volume of documents which counsel had to peruse; and
- the amount of research done by counsel.

Assigned Counsel may also seek reimbursement of expenses that have been reasonably incurred. It is however advisable for counsel to seek approval from the Registrar of the Supreme Court before incurring expenses that are substantial or not normally required.

For more information on the LASCO, please visit the Supreme Court's website at www.supcourt.gov.sg

Amicus Curiae Scheme

On 1 August 2009, the Supreme Court implemented a new amicus curiae scheme. Lawyers interested in volunteering for this scheme may contact the Supreme Court's Criminal Matters Section (Tel: 6332 4276) for details.



CRIMINAL LEGAL AID

The Association of Criminal Lawyers of Singapore's Community Court Assistance Scheme

Background

The Association of Criminal Lawyers of Singapore (ACLS) was registered on 3 August 2004 as a separate organisation for members of the Bar practising criminal law. Membership to the ACLS is not limited to members of the Bar, it is open to all who are law graduates from recognized universities as well as academic staff.

Scheme

With the launch of the Community Court in 2006, the ACLS commenced a legal aid programme offering representation to accused persons within the purview of this initiative.

The ACLS takes on cases referred to it by the Community Court without the formal application of any "means test", and assigns one of its members to volunteer pro bono as defence counsel for the accused person.



CORPORATE LEGAL AID

Charities and Other Non-Profit Organizations

PROJECT LAW HELP

Background

The Law Society officially launched the Project Law Help (PLH) scheme in January 2006.

The Terms of Reference for PLH are as follows:

- (1) To make provision for a scheme by which legal practices and advocates and solicitors can provide pro bono non-litigation commercial legal advice to charities, non-profit organisations and voluntary welfare organisations.
- (2) To facilitate, promote, support and encourage a sustainable commitment to pro bono work within the legal profession in Singapore.

Scheme

To qualify for Project Law Help, the organisation must meet the following criteria:

- (1) Be a charity / voluntary welfare organisation/ non-profit organisation in Singapore with an objective to meet community concerns or needs;
- (2) Be in need of legal advice that does not involve court proceedings; and
- (3) Have limited or no financial resources to pay for such advice.

Organizations which qualify for assistance are matched with law firms who are willing to provide free non-litigation commercial legal advice.

JOINT INTERNATIONAL PRO BONO COMMITTEE

Background

The Joint International Pro Bono Committee is an initiative of a group of international and Singapore law practices with the support of the Law Society of Singapore.

Scheme

The purpose of the committee is to match interested Singapore and international law practices with cross-border pro bono opportunities involving economic and social development in emerging markets. Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) such as the Gates Foundation, Clinton Global Initiative, Ashoka, and many others are engaged in increasingly complex and ambitious efforts in areas such as public health, education, microfinance, and social investment. Sophisticated legal expertise has a role to play in facilitating such initiatives, and Singapore's emergence as a hub for international NGOs will create a greater opportunity for meaningful, high-impact international pro bono projects.

For more information please contact Mr. Joe Anderson at j.nextgen@gmail.com, Ms. Maree Myerscough at Maree.Myerscough@lw.com or the Pro Bono Services Office at 65360650 / probonoservices@lawsoc.org.sg

THE KIND EXCHANGE

Background

The Kind Exchange is an online meeting place for matching volunteer professionals in Singapore including lawyers with community groups that need professional services. It recognises the time & energy constraints of successful professionals whilst acknowledging these people still wish to participate in community development meaningfully.

Scheme

The Kind Exchange – www.thekindexchange.com – is a platform whereby volunteers can search for specific discreet one-off or project based tasks (“KindDeeds”) to be performed for a community organisation. If a listed KindDeed is of interest and relevant to the member eg: a lawyer is interested in reviewing a lease for a recreation centre for at-risk youth, the member clicks Take Action and his/her expression of interest is then forwarded to the group. The Kind Exchange is an introductory service only; it relies on the initiative, tenacity, perseverance and professionalism of its members to do what they say they're going to do. It is clear that administration of community groups suffers greatly from lack of resources, so it is The Kind Exchange's intention to both increase the level of professionalism and decrease the costs of running the 'back end' of our community's most vital organisations.

For more information, please visit www.thekindexchange.com or telephone Julie Englefield directly on 98507061.



GENERAL LEGAL ADVICE

Legal Clinics

LAW SOCIETY'S COMMUNITY LEGAL CLINICS

Background

The Law Society launched the Community Legal Clinic scheme on 10 September 2007 at 2 locations: the North-West and South-East Community Development Councils ("CDCs").

The clinics run 4 nights a week every week of the year save for Public Holidays and the eve of Public Holidays.

Scope

The Community Legal Clinics provide free basic legal advice to needy citizens and permanent residents on personal matters only (as opposed to business/corporate matters), and the advice is given to the applicant in-person.

Operations

The Community Legal Clinics operate at each of the 2 CDCs for 2 nights a week from 7 pm to 9:30 pm, on alternate days (Mondays & Wednesdays at North-West CDC, Tuesdays & Thursdays at South-East CDC).

For each clinic session, 2 or more volunteer lawyers are in attendance and each case is allocated 20 minutes for general legal guidance on a one to one basis. A pre-registration interview is required prior to attendance at the Community Legal Clinic. Other than applicants who apply directly to the Pro Bono Services Office, Clinic applicants also include referrals made by social workers, counselors and other social service practitioners under an arrangement between the National Council of Social Services and the Pro Bono Services Office. The Community Legal Clinics aim to provide holistic care for the applicants. Whenever appropriate, the Pro Bono Services officers will refer applicants who might

benefit from psycho/socio/financial assistance to CDCs such as North West and South East CDCs, Family Service Centres or other Social Service Agencies.

LEGAL CLINICS BY OTHER ORGANIZATIONS

Lawyers have been volunteering their services for many years at other legal clinics in many parts of Singapore. The following organizations run legal clinics on a regular basis

AWARE

Background

AWARE (www.aware.org.sg) is an advocacy group dedicated to promoting gender equality. Since its inception in 1985, AWARE has made women's perspectives national issues and has focused on Research & Advocacy, Public Education, and Direct Services.

AWARE's mission is to identify areas for improvement in gender equality, encourage positive change, and support women in realising their highest potential. It believes that gains made by women are not gains made at the expense of men. Rather, they are gains which benefit families and society as a whole.

AWARE has a team of 18 lawyers, both male and female. Membership is open to all lawyers, legally qualified non-practitioners and law graduates.

AWARE is a not-for-profit non-government organisation and is funded solely by donations, grants, and member subscriptions.

To volunteer, please email aware@aware.org.sg

Legal Clinics

AWARE provides free legal counselling for female members of the public, whose income is below \$3000 per month. The clinic is run on the 2nd and 4th Thursday of the month, from 7pm til 9pm. Registration is done through our Helpline on 1800 774 5935 (Monday to Friday, 3-9.30pm). A confirmation call will be given 1-2 days before. If we cannot reach the caller, we will cancel the appointment. The legal clinic is held at Block 5 Dover Crescent, #01-22, S, 130005.

Catholic Lawyers Guild (Singapore)

Background

The Catholic Lawyers Guild provides mutual support and encouragement among Catholic lawyers for the sanctification of their professional work, as well as legal assistance to the Church and to persons in needy cases.

It functions as a non-profit organisation with spiritual aims, namely, to assist its members, who are lawyers or legally trained persons professing the Catholic faith, to obtain sanctity in the profession, through the practice of virtues. For newly qualified or graduated Catholic lawyers, the guild helps them realise their profession as a noble calling of their faith.

To volunteer, please email clgsingapore@yahoo.com.sg

Legal Clinics

The Catholic Lawyers Guild provides free legal counselling or advisory services for members of the public (regardless of religion), every 2nd, 3rd & 4th Mondays of the month (except public holidays) between 7.30pm – 9.00pm.

Church of the Risen Christ:	2nd Monday of the month
Joseph's Church (Victoria Street) :	3rd Monday of the month
Church of the Holy Trinity:	4th Monday of the month

Jamiyah (Muslim Missionary Society of Singapore)

Background

Jamiyah's activities encompass various educational, religious, welfare and social programmes. Support for Jamiyah comes from the government, philanthropic organisations both locally and overseas, other Muslim and non-Muslim bodies, individual donors and well-wishers enabling it to serve for the betterment of the community, in particular the less fortunate.

To volunteer, please email info@jamiyah.org.sg

Legal Clinics

Jamiyah has a panel of Muslim and non-Muslim volunteer lawyers. They provide legal advice and counselling to clients of all races who come to their Legal Clinics seeking assistance in solving problems such as family disputes, matrimonial problems, division of property and others. In cases relating to Islamic Law, they will be referred to a special panel.

Venue:

Jamiyah Headquarters, Level 4.

No.31 Lorong 12 Geylang

Singapore 399006

Tel : (65) 67431211

Fax : (65) 67450610

For appointment dates, please contact Mdm Napsiah Rakisan at 67431211 Ext-28

Appointment sessions:

Wednesday, 6.00pm to 7.00pm

Saturday, 3.00pm to 5.00pm

Lawyers' Christian Fellowship

Formed in 1978, the Lawyers' Christian Fellowship (LCF) is a sectional group of the Graduates' Christian Fellowship. LCF encourages and supports Christian lawyers to relate the practice of their faith to the practice of their profession and to serve the community at large through their legal expertise and other gifts.

To volunteer, please email gcfsging@gcf.org.sg

Legal Clinics

BLC Legal Clinic

When: Every last Friday of the month

Time: 8pm - 10pm

Venue: Boscombe Life Centre, 248 Joo Chiat Road #01-01, Singapore 427503

No. of lawyers required: 2 lawyers per month

Commitment: 1-2 times per year (roster basis)

Requirements: Experience in criminal, family or general litigation preferred

Contact person: Gregory Vijayendran (Email: gregory.vijayendran@rajahtann.com)

Charis Legal Clinic

When: Every 3rd Saturday of the month

Time: 7pm - 9pm

Venue: Charis Gospel Church, 987, Serangoon Road Singapore 328147.

No. of lawyers required: 2 lawyers per month

Commitment: 1-2 times per year (roster basis)

Requirements: Experience in workmen's compensation, family or general litigation preferred

Contact person: Xhuanelado Owen (Email: owen@kalco.com.sg)

Singapore Association of Women Lawyers

Background

The Singapore Association of Women Lawyers (SAWL) is a professional body and a non-profit organization. It has made significant contributions to simplify the law for the ordinary person. SAWL was formed in 1974 by a small group of 16 women lawyers with a cause to serve the community. Membership is open to women lawyers, legally qualified non-practitioners and law students. SAWL is an affiliate of the Singapore Council of Women's Organisations (SCWO), the national umbrella organization of women's organizations.

Some of SAWL's objects are:

- To spread the knowledge of the laws of Singapore and other countries;
- To enhance and promote the welfare of women and children;
- To advance opportunities for women in industry, business, education and the professions;
- To press for laws for the advancement and protection of women and children.

To volunteer, please email info@sawl.org.sg

Legal Clinics

The Singapore Association of Women Lawyers (SAWL) has been conducting free legal counselling to members of the public since the legal counselling project was first launched at the Kallang and Queenstown Community Centres in 1976. This is currently provided to all members of the public at community centres and the Family Court.

For the latest listing of SAWL legal clinics, please go to www.sawl.org.sg

SCWO – Maintenance Support Central

The Singapore Council of Women's Organisations (SCWO) is the umbrella body of 51 women's organisations in Singapore. SCWO is in the process of establishing a Maintenance Support Central located at the SCWO premises at 93 Waterloo Street, which will provide, amongst other services, legal advice, counselling and video-link filing, to shorten the process of recovery for claimants who have experienced defaults of maintenance orders which have been established by the courts pursuant to separation or divorce. The provision of services to claimants will include also credit bureau reporting and financial and family counselling.

Venue:

Singapore Council of Women's Organisations

96 Waterloo Street

Singapore 187967

Tel: (65) 68370611

Fax: (65) 68370081

To volunteer, please email, volunteer@scwo.org.sg

Special Needs Trust Company

Background

The Special Needs Trust Company (SNTC) is the only non-profit trust company in Singapore. Set up to provide affordable trust services for persons with special needs, SNTC partners The Insolvency and Public Trustee's Office, which invests and manages the trust funds.

SNTC is supported by the Ministry of Community Development, Youth and Sports (MCYS) and National Council of Social Service (NCSS).

For more information please go to www.specialneedstrust.org.sg

Legal Clinics

SNTC conducts free legal briefings once a month to potential settlers on the concept of a trust and on the terms set out in SNTC's trust deed.

Volunteer lawyers do not need to be specialists in trust law, only a good understanding of trusts is required. Proficiency in Mandarin would be of great assistance.

To volunteer, please contact

Ms Esther Tan (General Manager)

DID: 65936498

Email: Esther_tan@specialneedstrust.org.sg

Address:

298 Tiong Bahru Road

#03-07 Central Plaza

Singapore 168730

Tel: 6278 9598



Volunteering

The following information summarizes volunteer opportunities for various pro bono initiatives. If you have any general queries on volunteering please contact the Pro Bono Services Office at 6536 06050/email: probonoservices@lawsoc.org.sg

CIVIL

Legal Aid Bureau Assigned Solicitor Scheme

- (1) Scheme: Representation in civil matters for needy citizens and permanent residents
- (2) Volunteer Requirements: Practicing in a Singapore Law Practice.



The Legal Aid Bureau is located at 45 Maxwell Rd #08-12
The URA Centre, East Wing Singapore 069118
Tel: (65) 1800 325 1424 (toll-free)
Fax: (65) 63251402
E-mail: LAB_ENQUIRY@LAB.GOV.SG
Website www.lab.gov.sg



To sign up as an Assigned Solicitor, please complete the sign-up form which can be downloaded from LAB's website homepage.



For a better understanding of the position and role under the law of Assigned Solicitors acting in legal aid cases, read the Assigned Solicitor's Guide available for download from LAB's website homepage.

Legal Aid Bureau Volunteer Lawyer Scheme

(1) Scheme: LAB operates a volunteer scheme for lawyers who are Qualified Persons according to Section 2 of the Legal Profession Act, but who do not have a practising certificate. Volunteers may assist in handling case-files, giving legal advice, attending court hearings and other work at the Bureau, on a part-time basis. (2) Volunteer Requirements: Qualified Person according to Section 2 of the Legal Profession Act



For more information please call/email the Legal Aid Bureau or sign up from LAB's website www.lab.gov.sg.

Legal Aid Bureau Legally Trained Volunteer Scheme

(1) Scheme: LAB operates a volunteer scheme for legally-trained persons who are interested in helping the less privileged. Volunteers attend at the LAB's offices During this time, they may carry out duties such as statement-taking from applicants, the drafting of legal opinions and court documents, legal research, and special projects. (2) Volunteer Requirements: Legally Trained (3) Average Pro Bono Time Commitment: One morning or afternoon a week for 4 hours at a time for a minimum period of 4 months. (4) Support Given For Volunteer: Training will be provided for the volunteer, as well as a mentor.



For more information please call/email the Legal Aid Bureau or sign up from LAB's website www.lab.gov.sg.

CRIMINAL

Criminal Legal Aid Scheme (CLAS)

(1) Scheme: Free legal representation for non capital cases where accused claims trial (2) Volunteer Requirements: Practicing in a Singapore Law Practice (3) Average Pro Bono Time Commitment: 25 to 100 hours per lawyer per annum (4) Support Given For Volunteer Lawyers: Sourcing for assisting counsel/volunteer psychiatrists/volunteer interpreters, ad hoc legal research and paralegal support by volunteer law undergraduates, mentoring for junior lawyers by senior CLAS practitioners.



To volunteer, please contact the Pro Bono Services Office at 6536 0650 / probonoservices@lawsoc.org.sg

Supreme Court Assigned Counsel Scheme

(1) Scheme: Free legal representation for non capital cases (2) Volunteer Requirements: Practicing in a Singapore Law Practice



Supreme Court of Singapore, 1 Supreme Court Lane, Singapore 178879
General Enquiries Line: (65) 6336 0644 Fax: (65) 6337 9450
Website : www.supcourt.gov.sg



To sign up as an Assigned Counsel, please complete the sign-up form which can be downloaded from the Supreme Court's website under Home > Criminal Proceedings > Information for Accused Persons section.



For more information on the LASCO scheme, please read the Guidelines for LASCO available for download from the Supreme Court's website under Home > Criminal Proceedings > Information for Accused Persons section.

Supreme Court Amicus Curiae Scheme



On 1 August 2009, the Supreme Court implemented a new amicus curiae scheme. Lawyers interested in volunteering for this scheme may contact the Supreme Court's Criminal Matters Section (Tel: 6332 4276) for details.

Association of Criminal Lawyers of Singapore's Community Court Assistance Scheme

(1) Scheme: Free legal representation for Community Court referrals
(2) Volunteer Requirements: Practicing in a Singapore Law Practice



To volunteer, please email Mr Sunil Sudheesan at sunil@khattarwong.com

CORPORATE

Project Law Help

(1) Scheme : Free non-litigation commercial legal advice offered by volunteer law practices for charities, non-profit organizations and voluntary welfare organizations with limited or no financial resources to pay for legal advice (2) Volunteer Requirements: Local practice with corporate expertise (3) Average Pro Bono Time Commitment: 50 hours per practice per annum (4) Support Given For Volunteer Practices: comprehensive letter of engagement incorporating relevant disclaimers.



To volunteer, please contact the Pro Bono Services Office at 6536 0650 / probonoservices@lawsoc.org.sg

Joint International Pro Bono Committee

(1) Scheme: Cross-border pro bono projects involving economic and social development in emerging markets (2) Volunteer Requirements: Singapore and Foreign Law Practices/ lawyers with corporate expertise.



To volunteer, please contact Ms. Maree Myerscough at Maree.Myerscough@lw.com or the Pro Bono Services Office at 6536 0650 / probonoservices@lawsoc.org.sg

The Kind Exchange

(1) Scheme: Pro Bono assistance for specific discreet one-off or project based transactions for community organizations (2) Volunteer Requirements: Singapore and Foreign Law Practices with corporate expertise



To volunteer, please contact Ms. Julie Englefield at 9850 7061.



For more information on The Kind Exchange please visit www.thekindexchange.com

GENERAL LEGAL ADVICE

Law Society's Community Legal Clinics

(1) Scheme: free legal clinics for needy Singaporeans & PRs dispensing basic legal advice for personal matters (i.e. business/commercial matters excluded) (2) Volunteer Requirements: Called to the Singapore Bar (3) Average Pro Bono Time Commitment: 2 ½ to 15 hours per volunteer per annum (4) Support Given For Volunteer Lawyers: comprehensive legal clinic manual, advance notice of clinic cases for scheduled session by way of a detailed clinic case list/synopsis, pre-registration interview/clinic administration/ paralegal support/clinic attendee follow-up handled by the Pro Bono Services Office including referrals to social service agencies for psycho/socio issues.



To volunteer, please contact the Pro Bono Services Office at 6536 0650 / probonoservices@lawsoc.org.sg

AWARE's Legal Clinics

(1) Scheme: free legal clinics (2) Volunteer Requirements: Practicing in a Singapore Law Practice



To volunteer, please email aware@aware.org.sg



For more information please visit www.aware.org.sg

Catholic Lawyers' Guild Legal Clinics

(1) Scheme: free legal clinics (2) Volunteer Requirements: Practicing in a Singapore Law Practice



To volunteer, please email clgsingapore@yahoo.com.sg

Jamiyah's Legal Clinics

(1) Scheme: free legal clinics (2) Volunteer Requirements: Practicing in a Singapore Law Practice



To volunteer, please email info@jamiyah.org.sg



For more information please visit www.jamiyah.org.sg

Lawyers' Christian Fellowship

1) Scheme: free legal clinics (2) Volunteer Requirements: Practicing in a Singapore Law Practice



To volunteer, please email gregory.vijayendran@rajahtann.com or owen@kalco.com.sg

Singapore Association of Women Lawyers

(1) Scheme: free legal clinics (2) Volunteer Requirements: Practicing in a Singapore Law Practice



To volunteer, please email info@sawl.org.sg



For more information please visit www.sawl.org.sg

SCWO – Maintenance Support Central

(1) Scheme: Legal advice, counselling and video-link filing, to shorten the process of recovery for claimants who have experienced defaults of maintenance orders which have been established by the courts pursuant to separation or divorce. (2) Volunteer Requirements: Practicing in a Singapore Law Practice.



To volunteer, please email, volunteer@scwo.org.sg

Special Needs Trust Company (SNTC)

(1) Scheme: free legal briefings for potential settlers on the concept of a trust and on the terms SNTC's trust deed (2) Volunteer Requirements: Practicing in a Singapore Law Practice, good understanding of trusts.



To volunteer, please email Esther_tan@specialneedstrust.org.sg



For more information please visit www.specialneedstrust.org.sg

Other Legal Clinics



If you are looking to volunteer for a legal clinic operating in your neighbourhood you may wish to consult the comprehensive list of legal clinics operating in Singapore maintained by the Pro Bono Services Office. For a copy of the list please email probonoservices@lawsoc.org.sg or view the list in the pro bono section (Community Legal Clinics) of the Law Society's website: www.lawsociety.org.sg

MISCELLANEOUS

Ad Hoc Pro Bono Referral Scheme

Persons may be ineligible for representation under LAB or CLAS but nonetheless are in urgent need of pro bono legal representation.

The Ad Hoc Pro Bono Referral Scheme (the "APR Scheme") matches such needy cases where the persons are ineligible for the existing legal aid schemes with volunteer lawyers on an ad hoc basis.

These volunteer lawyers have indicated willingness to undertake pro bono representation for 1 or 2 such needy cases per year. Referrals for such assistance may come from legal clinic volunteers who are barred from acting for any person to whom they have given free advice at a legal clinic by virtue of rule 10 of the Legal Profession (Publicity) Rules or through the Courts.

The Pro Bono Services Office will conduct an assessment of the person's suitability for pro bono assistance and prepare a report which is circulated to the volunteer lawyers for a match up. The decision to undertake a case under the APR Scheme is left entirely at the discretion of the pool of volunteers. If no lawyers are willing to undertake the case, the applicant and referral party are informed accordingly.



To volunteer, please contact the Pro Bono Services Office at 6536 0650 / probonoservices@lawsoc.org.sg

Knowledge Database Contributor

(1) Scheme: Assist in editing, compiling & contributing to volunteer manuals, guides and other information resources for volunteers/pro bono initiatives (2) Volunteer Requirements: Legal Degree (3) Average Pro Bono Time Commitment: 10 – 25 hours per annum (4) Support Given For Volunteers: access to library resources, paralegal support.



To volunteer, please contact the Pro Bono Services Office at 6536 0650 / probonoservices@lawsoc.org.sg

Mentor/Specialist Resource

(1) Scheme: Mentoring of new volunteers &/or specialist resource for volunteer queries on practice areas (2) Volunteer Requirements: Practice Specialist (3) Average Pro Bono Time Commitment: 10 – 25 hours per annum (4) Support Given For Volunteers: Administrative support.



To volunteer, please contact the Pro Bono Services Office at 6536 0650 / probonoservices@lawsoc.org.sg

General Volunteer Opportunities

National Volunteer & Philanthropy Centre

The National Volunteer & Philanthropy Centre (NVPC) promotes and develops general volunteerism and philanthropy in Singapore.

NVPC's website is as an outstanding resource for general volunteer opportunities and programs in Singapore www.nvpc.org.sg

Board Match

In support of the Charity Council's efforts to strengthen corporate governance in the charitable/NPO sector, the Law Society encourages its members to participate in Board Match.

NVPC's Board Match programme ("Board Match") seeks to build capacity in the non-profit sector by matching individuals committed to the idea of strengthening non-profit boards in charitable and other Non-Profit Organisations (NPOs) in Singapore. Through this initiative, NVPC seeks to attract committed individuals from the various professions in Singapore to help in NPO board renewal.

Board Match presents excellent opportunities for experienced professionals to share relevant experience, skills and knowledge as a Board member or member of other Board committees of NPOs. Stronger boards help build a stronger non-profit sector through raising public confidence in the good work of the charities and other non-profits in Singapore.



To volunteer, please contact contact NVPC at 1800 325 0965 or email boardmatch@nvpc.org.sg



For more information on NVPC/Board Match please visit www.nvpc.org.sg



Support for Volunteer Lawyers

The Law Society Pro Bono Services Office exists to support you in your volunteer work. We provide a number of services to help you optimize your pro bono time. For more information on the support and services listed below, please contact the Pro Bono Services Office at 6536 0650 / probonoservices@lawsoc.org.sg

GENERAL SUPPORT

Ad Hoc Pro Bono Assessment Scheme

Do you or your firm undertake ad hoc pro bono work not covered or referred by formal legal aid schemes such as CLAS or LAB?

Under the Ad Hoc Pro Bono Assessment Scheme (the “APA Scheme”), the Pro Bono Services Office assists practitioners who are planning to do pro bono work for needy persons by conducting an assessment of the prospective client’s suitability for pro bono assistance.

The assessment covers a means test similar to the one administered by CLAS and assesses whether the person would benefit from any social service agency referral.

After the assessment interview, a report is prepared by the Pro Bono Services Office (the “APA Report”) and sent to the practitioner. The APA Report will provide the results of the abovementioned means test and any recommended social service agency referral. It also includes a case synopsis giving useful background on the client’s legal problem and the relief sought.

The practitioner can then make an informed decision on whether to take on the case on a pro bono basis.

Ad Hoc Pro Bono Referral Scheme

Saw a deserving case at a legal clinic but are unable to take it up because of the rule 10 prohibition in the Legal Profession (Publicity) Rules?

Persons may be ineligible for representation under LAB or CLAS but nonetheless are in urgent need of pro bono legal representation.

The Ad Hoc Pro Bono Referral Scheme (the “APR Scheme”) matches such needy cases where the persons are ineligible for the existing legal aid schemes with volunteer lawyers on an ad hoc basis.

These volunteer lawyers have indicated willingness to undertake pro bono representation for 1 or 2 such needy cases per year. Referrals for such assistance may come from legal clinic volunteers who are barred from acting for any person to whom they have given free advice at a legal clinic by virtue of rule 10 of the Legal Profession (Publicity) Rules.

The Pro Bono Services Office will conduct an assessment of the person’s suitability for pro bono assistance and prepare an APA report (see above), which is circulated to the volunteer lawyers for a match up. The decision to undertake a case under the APR Scheme is left entirely at the discretion of the pool of volunteers. If no lawyers are willing to undertake the case, the applicant and referral party are informed accordingly.

Volunteer Initiative Support Scheme

Are you involved in regular pro bono work for a particular group of persons or community in need but are not receiving organizational support?

The Volunteer Initiative Support Scheme (“VISS”) seeks to assist practitioners undertaking such pro bono work with administrative support and volunteer coordination and mobilization.

In particular, the Pro Bono Services Office can help to identify other practitioners undertaking similar pro bono work and help form volunteer groups dedicated to such similar work or community.

The Pro Bono Services Office can assist the group with knowledge database management by capturing and synthesizing practice information and expertise specific to the legal needs/issues for the needy group. The consolidated information will be used to produce volunteer manuals, materials and precedents to assist new volunteers.

The Pro Bono Services Office can also assist in:

- (a) recruitment drives and publicity for the volunteer group to increase awareness of the group's pro bono work and to attract more volunteers;
- (b) law awareness events/seminars for the benefit of members of/service providers to the needy group; and
- (c) referring requests for legal assistance to group members

Social Service Agency Referrals

Do you have a dysfunctional pro bono client who would benefit from social service agency assistance?

The Pro Bono Services Office can help alleviate the burden often encountered by practitioners in searching for relevant assistance schemes to help dysfunctional pro bono clients. Our Pro Bono Service Officers can give guidance on relevant social service agencies/schemes and assist in making a referral.

PROGRAM SPECIFIC SUPPORT

Community Legal Clinics

- Comprehensive legal clinic manual, advance notice of clinic cases for scheduled session by way of a detailed clinic case list/synopsis.
- Pre-registration interview/screening of clinic applicants.
- Clinic administration/paralegal support.
- Clinic attendee follow-up handled by the Pro Bono Services Office including referrals to social service agencies for psycho/socio issues.

Criminal Legal Aid Scheme (CLAS)

- Sourcing for assisting counsel/volunteer psychiatrists/volunteer interpreters.
- Ad hoc legal research and paralegal support from volunteer law undergraduates.
- Mentoring for junior lawyers by Senior CLAS practitioners.

Project Law Help

- Comprehensive letter of engagement incorporating relevant disclaimers.



Volunteer Opportunities for Law Students

The Law Society Pro Bono Services Office provides a number of volunteer opportunities for law students. To volunteer, please contact the Pro Bono Services Office at 6536 0650 / probonoservices@lawsoc.org.sg

Community Legal Clinic Support

The Law Society's Community Legal Clinics operate in the evening Mondays to Thursdays throughout the year. Volunteers assist our officers with the administration of the clinics and our volunteer lawyers by interpreting and recording advice rendered to clinic applicants.

Paralegal Support Scheme for Criminal Trials

Under this scheme, volunteers provide paralegal support for volunteer lawyers undertaking criminal trials. The paralegal support includes conducting research and recording notes of evidence during trial. During term time, the trial attachments are restricted to short trials not exceeding 3 days in length. The attachments provide law students with excellent exposure to trial advocacy, criminal procedure and practice at the criminal bar.

Research Support Group Initiative

The Law Society Pro Bono Services Office provides a number of volunteer opportunities for law students. To volunteer, please contact the Pro Bono Services Office at 6536 0650 / probonoservices@lawsoc.org.sg

Vacation Attachment Program

Vacation attachments with the Pro Bono Services Office are typically for a period of 2 weeks.

During the attachment, volunteers:

1. are given an overview and tour of the Subordinate Courts;
2. are briefed on the schemes administered by the Pro Bono Services Office;
3. assist our officers to interview and register applicants for the Community Legal Clinics (CLCs) and the Criminal Legal Aid Scheme (CLAS);
4. accompany our officers to interview CLAS applicants at the Institute of Mental Health or in remand;
5. summarize the legal issues faced by CLC applicants and assist in the preparation of the CLC case list/synopsis;
6. provide general administrative support for the Pro Bono Services Office;
7. sit in and take notes for lawyers giving advice at the legal clinics; and
8. provide research assistance on legal issues encountered

National University of Singapore (NUS) Pro Bono Group

Background

The National University of Singapore (NUS) Pro Bono Group was started up in 2005 with the aim of informing, involving and inspiring law students to meet society's legal needs through pro bono legal work. Since then it has developed and expanded to include involvement with a multitude of organisations, including Law Society's Pro Bono Services Office, the Subordinate Courts and the Ministry of Education.

Projects

Each of the 100+ members every academic year are involved in projects that span from providing assistance to pro bono lawyers, to awareness and research projects.

The Pro Bono Services Office has been a key partner in the NUS Pro Bono Group's activities. Student volunteers assist in note-taking and administrative procedures during the Community Legal Clinics as well as in trials under the Criminal Legal Aid Scheme (CLAS). Students have also volunteered at ad hoc events such as the Supreme Court Open House 2009 and the Law Awareness Week 2009.

Currently, students are also involved in research projects evaluating legislative reforms, as well as awareness projects that reach out to various pockets in the community, through presentations and workshops.

The NUS Pro Bono Group is also a key participant in the Subordinate Court's University Court Friends programme, where students help applicants to the courts with administrative and procedural issues.

Opportunities

The NUS Pro Bono Group is always looking for opportunities to collaborate with various organisations in the provision of pro bono legal work.



More information about the group, such as its current initiatives can be found at www.nusprobono.wordpress.com



It can also be contacted at nusprobonogroup@gmail.com.

Singapore Management University (SMU) Pro Bono Club

Background

The SMU Pro Bono Club (“the club”) was founded in 2008 to nurture the “pro bono” spirit among the law students in SMU. The club co-operates with the Law Society of Singapore, Subordinate Courts and other partners to provide excellent opportunities for law students to give back to society while applying legal knowledge they have learnt.

To date, club members have participated in a wide range of ongoing activities such as the University Court Friends Programme, Community Legal Clinics and Criminal Legal Aid Scheme (CLAS) Trials, as well as Pro Bono Services Office Attachments.

The club has also assisted in ad-hoc events such as the Supreme Court Living Court House and Project Law Reach. In addition, club members have the freedom to initiate new projects and events.

Opportunities

The club will continue to promote interest in community service and strives to develop a greater range of activities for law students to engage in meaningful pro bono work.



For more information, please email smuprobono@gmail.com



THE LAW SOCIETY
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