



Roundtable: Building Effective Pro Bono Immigration Legal Programs

April 9, 2025, 1:00 – 2:00 PM ET

Transcript

Introduction

Jennie Guilfoyle: Welcome, everybody. We're so glad that you could be here with us for today's roundtable on building strong pro bono programs for immigration legal services. I'm Jennie Guilfoyle. I'm the Legal Director at VECINA, and I'm going to be the facilitator for today's roundtable. I have been working in the nonprofit immigration space for almost 25 years now in a variety of different organizations, much of that time spent doing training and supporting nonprofit practitioners, and also pro bono practitioners.

Today's Speakers

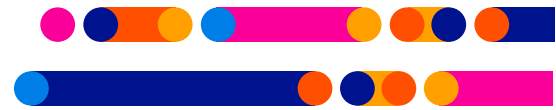
JG: I am really excited to introduce you to our amazing set of panelists for today's roundtable. We really are lucky to have such an amazing group of advocates who've been working in the immigration space for many, many years. I think it's correct that all of our panelists today have worked both in the nonprofit and in private law firms doing immigration related work. They all bring an incredible depth of experience with building pro bono programs from many different sides of the equation. I'm just going to quickly introduce you to our panelists, and then we'll jump in and get started with today's amazing discussion.

First, we have Jayme Cassidy. Jayme is the Pro Bono Transactions Counsel at McDermott Will & Emery LLP. Jayme has dedicated her career to access to justice, advocating for underrepresented communities and engaging in systemic solutions to empower them. Some of the work that Jayme has done in the past before joining McDermott Will & Emery, she has served as the Executive Director of the Pennsylvania Legal Aid Network, where she provided strategic leadership for nine regional legal aid organizations and six specialized legal resource organizations. She was also the Pro Bono Advocacy Director at Legal Services of Greater Miami. Jayme, we're so excited to have you.

Next, we have Kristin Clarence, who is the Pro Bono Coordinator at a large nonprofit in Virginia, the Legal Aid Justice Center, that engages in a lot of immigration work. Kristin is a lawyer and a community activist, and volunteer with more than a decade of experience supporting immigrants. Her legal background is international law, and she's worked as a lawyer and sometimes a lobbyist for DC law firms for more than 12 years.

Next, we have Jessica Oliff Daly, who is the Pro Bono Coordinator at the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society HIAS in Pennsylvania, where she facilitates all aspects of the organization's pro bono work in collaboration with its legal service programs. Before joining HIAS Pennsylvania, Jessica also worked at both small and large law firms as well as several public education-focused nonprofit organizations and the juvenile rights practice of the Legal Aid Society of New York.

Finally, we have Theresa Dykoschak, who's the Pro Bono Director at The Advocates for Human Rights in Minnesota, where she promotes volunteer engagement and increases capacity to leverage contributions from more than 1,000 volunteers on an annual basis. Before she served in that role, Theresa was a staff attorney in the Women's Human Rights Program and also an attorney at Baker Daniels, pardon me, in Minneapolis. Welcome to all of you. Really excited to hear what all of you have to say.



Learning Objectives

JG: Here's what we're going to be covering in today's roundtable, three main topics. There's so much to say about building pro bono programs, and these are the topics we're really going to focus on today. First, just talking about how pro bono attorneys can be helpful to your immigration legal services program, how they can help increase your capacity, what kinds of cases are useful to give to pro bono attorneys. Then we'll talk about strategies. Once you've decided that you want to build or increase your pro bono program, we'll talk about strategies to use to recruit pro bono attorneys.

Finally, we'll talk about once you've recruited pro bono attorneys, you've figured out that you want to use them, how are you best going to train and engage them, and make sure that they have the tools to do the work efficiently and well? How are you going to sustainably provide training and mentorship to your pro bono attorneys? Those are the main things that we're going to be focused on.

1. How are Pro Bono Programs Useful?

JG: Wanted to start off by hearing from all of you. All of you are here today, I assume because you're interested and think that pro bono programs might be useful, and we're interested in hearing what you think pro bono programs might be useful for.

We're going to use an interactive tool called Slido throughout today's webinar. You can join today's Slido session in two different ways. Either you can scan that QR code on the screen with the camera from your mobile phone, or you can go to slido.com and enter the code that's right there on the screen, which is on this screen, it's #2104493. Again, that's 2104493 at slido.com. I'm seeing we're already having some folks type in thoughts here. Pro bono programs can be useful because of limited financial resources, filling gaps, increasing capacity, helping clients. Capacity is too much for staff to cover. Showing non-immigration folks how important immigration is. Cases can require attorney services. Need to expand capacity.

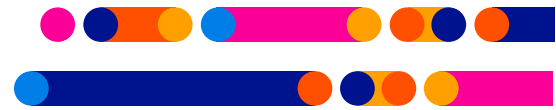
I see a lot of great thoughts here about building capacity, really, and bringing more people into the work who might not have known about this work. Right, increasing community engagement and awareness. There's both increasing the capacity of your organization to serve your clients, and also building community education about immigration issues and why they're important.

Nonprofits vs. Law Firms

JG: With all those amazing, great thoughts, I would love now to turn to our panelists to talk about how pro bono programs can be useful. We're going to start with a nonprofit perspective. Theresa, I would love to hear from you about how you find pro bono programs to be useful, and what is the value.

Theresa Dykoschak: Thank you, Jennie. Thank you for the opportunity to participate in the discussion today. I'm happy to be here. Pro bono programs are very useful. At The Advocates for Human Rights, we are a volunteer-based organization. We have been since our start more than 40 years ago. We engage volunteers in every aspect of our work. I know that we're focusing today on direct legal representation, but also want to flag, like don't forget about other volunteer contributions like interpretation and translation, legal research, non-legal research, report writing, fact-finding, observation.

Focusing specifically on direct legal representation, I think participants have identified the ways that pro bono programs are useful for us. It helps us increase our capacity. We have about 35 staff members, but working with pro bono volunteers allows us to represent so many more people. It also grows an understanding of human rights issues, and volunteers themselves then become advocates for the work and for the issues, and they share that information with their family and their friends, and their colleagues.



It also allows us to increase our network, and connecting with not just attorneys, but law firms and companies, and other organizations, bar associations, helps us share the information that we have and the work that we're doing. It also gives us access to expertise in a lot of different areas of law. Even though we may be working with non-immigration practitioners, the volunteers that we're working with are bringing such wonderful skills and different areas of legal expertise as well that might be helpful to the organization. Also, of course, it's beneficial to clients because they're receiving representation, which we all know is so important.

JG: Right. I want to turn now to the law firm perspective. That's really helpful to hear, Theresa. I'm actually going to turn to Jessica. Jessica, I know right now you're working in a nonprofit, but I know that you've been an associate yourself at some large law firms and engaged in pro bono work. Interested to hear from your perspective as somebody who was an associate at a big law firm, how pro bono was helpful to you and to your firm.

Jessica Oliff Daly: Great. Thanks, Jennie. I think there are so many ways that pro bono programs at big law firms and small law firms benefit the firm itself, individual associates, and the clients, of course. I think I started my first pro bono project when I was a summer associate, and I worked at the same law firm from 2008 until 2018. Over the course of that time, my pro bono practice both developed legal skills that I was then able to use on billable matters, everything from building my confidence when talking to clients, my ability to synthesize information and send it up the chain to partners and senior associates that I was working with, giving me an opportunity to display leadership characteristics and qualities that were then recognized by the senior associates and partners I was working with.

Then, developing those skills, my ability to delegate work to junior associates as I became more senior and to paralegals as I became more senior. Really like up and down the scale, I think, or up and down the chain within a law firm, I was able to develop techniques and skills that I was able to use both in my additional pro bono work and in my billable practice. I think it also sustained me emotionally and fed part of my psyche and my soul that maybe some of my billable clients didn't always feed. It kept me at the firm that I worked at for 10 years, and I loved the firm that I worked at for 10 years.

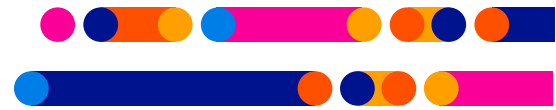
I think my pro bono practice there, in addition to my billable work, I loved having the opportunity to do all of that and not feel like I had to choose just one kind of practice or a different kind of practice. Then you just never know also where your pro bono practice is going to take you. It sharpened my brief writing skills, it sharpened my research skills, and then obviously introduced me to immigration law, which is where I practice now. I think it really has so much positive impact on the associates and on the practice. Then I think the last thing I would say is I think it's a recruitment tool for law firms.

I didn't know as much now as then, as I do now, about pro bono. I can't say that it was a big factor when I made my decision in what law firm to go to, but that was 2008, and now I think the world knows even more about pro bono. I think a lot of law students I know, both from when I was at the firm and also working with summer associates on projects now at HIAS Pennsylvania, it's something they do think about. It's something that the firms are really talking about. I think it's something that benefits the firm itself, also.

What Kinds of Cases are Best for Pro Bono Attorneys?

JG: Thank you so much. That then brings us really into the next question. There are a whole host of reasons for nonprofits and for law firms to engage in pro bono work. It's then really important, though, to think about what kinds of cases are best for pro bono attorneys. I think many pro bono attorneys come into this work with really no background or very little background in immigration. I know certainly at VECINA, where we support pro bonos ourselves, we very much design all of our materials with pro bonos who have no background in this in mind, because that's often the folks who are coming to do this work.

Unless you're only recruiting immigration attorneys to do pro bono work, you really do need to think about, "Okay, what kinds of cases are best suited for pro bono attorneys who do have the time to do this work and bring a lot of skills, but not necessarily the immigration law and procedure background knowledge and skills." I



would love to have a discussion now about, from a law firm perspective and from a nonprofit perspective, what kinds of immigration cases are really best suited for pro bono attorneys. I want to turn to Jayme to ask about, from a law firm's perspective, what are you looking for, what kinds of cases do you see as best suited for the attorneys at your firm?

Jayme Cassidy: Oh, yes. Thank you. I would like everyone to approach the case type from the client and the attorney perspective, almost like it's going to be a first date that you want to turn into multiple dates, maybe not a perfect love match, but multiple dates. From that perspective, the first thing you have to have for a case to be successful is that the client has to be engaged and an active participant. The client that, from your perspective, when you're vetting, is difficult to reach, maybe transitions more often than not, and I know in the immigration space, that's very difficult sometimes for clients, they may not be the best client for a pro bono placement.

I'm not saying that we can't help them in other spaces, but maybe not the best for pro bono placement. A case where substantive competency is present from the pro bono attorney perspective or can be easily acquired through training or mentorship, making sure, you want the parties to be able to have an active dynamic relationship in the space that they're in. Making sure that communication barriers are eliminated. A lot of times, from the pro bono placement perspective, the nonprofit perspective, they sometimes think that there is capacity within a firm or an attorney because they're taking an immigration case, say. That's not always the case.

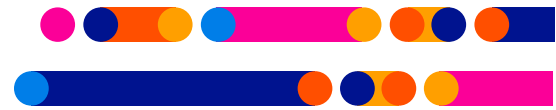
Being active and making sure that the firm or the pro bono attorney has capacity with interpreters and or translation services, if that's a necessary element for case success. The next thing is to make sure that before you pass the client over to the pro bono attorney, that there is reasonable expectations or there's a defined legal objective or ask. That's not always something that can be easily or black and white defined. To the best of your capability, having the client understand that there's no guarantee, perhaps, that they will get the green card, or there's no guarantee that the family member will not be subjected to litigation in a space. That way, there's reasonable expectations.

Think about it as, you know your friend wants to get married in a year, but the friend you're setting them up with has no intentions on ever getting married. That's not a good placement. There is no clearly defined objectives in that space. Just making sure that there's a defined ask of the pro bono attorney from the firm perspective. Making sure that the time constraints are understood from both sides. Sometimes clients don't understand how long the process will take. That's the same for the pro bono attorney sometimes, especially if they're new to this practice area or if the case has nuances that sometimes may not be time restrictive in other types of cases that the attorney may have handled for you.

This is a special case, and there might be some more time constraints placed upon the attorney or added time constraints placed upon the pro bono attorney. You want to make sure they're aware of that so that they are carving out or understanding that there's going to be extra time or what time this case will take them so that they can provide the client the competent legal time that the case needs to be handled ethically and under the rules of compliance and communication engagement. Lastly, I always say, again, what will this type of case leave with the pro bono attorney? Is it going to be a good taste in their mouth, is it going to be a lemon, or is it going to be something sweet, or is this going to be a good date, basically?

Not everything will always be perfect, but you want to make sure that the cases that you're placing have all these reasonable objectives or goals that have been articulated so that you want the pro bono attorney to, even if the case is not a success legally on the legal perspective, you want to make sure that the pro bono attorney wants to come back for more, is going to say good things about the project or your program so that— I think one of my colleagues said, you're building a foundation of attorneys who can assist you moving forward.

JG: Thank you so much. I have a quick follow-up question, Jayme, based on—you talked about a number of different factors, one of them time. I know certainly at VECINA, we've sometimes heard from pro bono law firm partners that law firms might prefer cases that don't stretch on for years, and that that can be challenging.



What's your thought on that?

JC: Yes. I think cases that go on are best placed with pro bono partnerships and relationships, and firms that you have developed over time. It is true that cases that last less than a year, unless it's a litigation case, tend to be a little bit burdensome sometimes because the ebb and flow of revenue-generating time constraints, also, quite frankly, turnover. In the beginning, I would say if you're training up a team of pro bono people, you may want to have those cases that are 12 months or less.

If you have cases that are six months or less, you want to build layers, you want to build that foundation of layers. I know that there are attorneys and firms who they're there, they've been around forever, they know the ins and outs and the dynamics of the process. Those might be the attorneys that you go to for cases that may extend beyond the 12-month time period.

JG: Great. Thank you so much. Now I'd love to turn to the nonprofit perspective and ask Kristin, what kinds of cases does your organization, what have you found to be best for pro bono placement?

Kristin Clarens: Hi, everybody. Echoing what Jayme has just shared with us, some of the cases that we find the most fruitful and easiest to place are cases that have a known timing quantity, a start and end, and the estimable time of hours that it'll take an attorney to accomplish and that play to the attorney's areas of expertise, have limited perspective conflicts. I practiced at a firm for a long time, and we were able to take a lot of immigration cases because the likelihood of these types of clients coming onto a large firm's client conflict database was limited, and that's really useful.

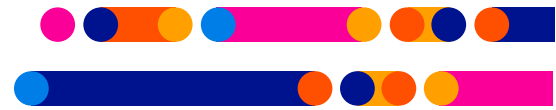
I should also say my pro bono program spans lots of topics, not just immigration. Sometimes when we're talking about zoning or real estate or something like that, we can get into some tricky perspective conflict issues, or firms or partners might not want to wade into that, and it's generally an easier conversation in the immigration context. The same goes with political exposure. Sometimes there are certain types of immigration cases that are really great for law firms or solo practitioners that are looking to do something discreet, knowable in terms of its quantity, and then also knowable in terms of any potential repercussions that could come.

For us, we're in a small region of a state where everybody knows each other, and so those relationships and the involvements that people decide to commit to are pretty critical in our context. Then the flip side of that is allowing pro bono attorneys to really rise to occasions that are sometimes really important. Thinking specifically, we're in an interesting political moment right now that I'm sure has sparked a lot of people's interest in being part of this roundtable today. There's an increased need for support in the immigration context, but this isn't the first time that's happened.

Years ago, in our small community, when the US left Afghanistan, we had a lot of people here who were affected individually in our community by that, but we had a very large lack of resources. We don't have that many immigration attorneys in our region of Virginia. You would have thought, "Oh, that's a really tough problem to solve by a pro bono court of attorneys," but instead we had a lot of interest, a lot of commitment to helping to close those gaps in our community.

We were able to find people who wanted to rise to the occasion, develop, I think Jessica's point of not pigeonholing your practice in a certain area and expanding your reach, keeping us— We're curious, interested in committed people, so serving up programs in a way that allow attorneys to expand their scope, deepen their practice, diversify their practice, fill their souls back up by supporting their community. We've had a really great track record of asking attorneys to do important, meaningful, and life-changing high-impact work for our community and having them respond favorably.

That's, I think, not the typical work that I was given necessarily in my law firm, of sometimes really heroic gestures that are time-consuming and life-changing for both the clients and the attorneys. Especially in our region right now, we're seeing an overlap in practice areas. We have attorneys here who've developed some



immigration expertise, and we're now needing some constitutional or criminal expertise. Knowing our community, knowing their interest areas, knowing what keeps them up at night, either personally, politically, spiritually, all of these different things, and being able to make those connections, I think those are what make the most powerful pro bono placements in our particular circumstances here in Virginia.

JG: Thank you so much, Kristin. That's really helpful. I'm wondering if I could ask you a follow-up of would you be able to share specifically some of the kinds of immigration matters that you place with pro bono attorneys?

KC: Yes. I mentioned a perfect example is the Afghanistan Legal Support Program that we started here. We saw a need there and we developed a training program to help people who had recently evacuated and arrived in our country, or were trying to evacuate their families who were still affected. We placed lots of those cases, and we had a really positive impact on our community. Then, over the course of time, the needs of those community members have changed. One of the things about immigration law generally is the cases evolve as people's lives evolve.

Sometimes, the immigration law is not the only need that some of these community members have had. They've had questions about education and other access to public benefits, family law, things like that. We've been able to provide lots of different supports, adjacent supports. We've also gotten the community hooked. We are really good at providing support for this community. As the needs have changed, we've been able to take both affirmative and defensive asylum cases and have had clients, unfortunately, who've had issues with detention.

We've even had people step up and take cases representing people who are detained. A full suite and developed a thematic approach to that work. We're expanding that now to a pretty robust Special Immigrant Juvenile Program, which has some of the similar criteria and ingredients, high impact, big need, and allowing lawyers to really tap into the highest ability to make change in their community. We have found that to be very compelling in our program.

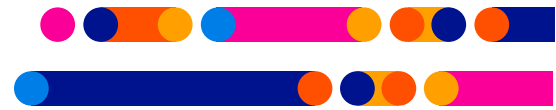
Case Scenario: Anna

JG: Thank you so much. It's really helpful. On the next slide, we're going to see that we have a case scenario that brings together some of the questions that Kristin and Jayme have been talking about. Anna is an attorney at a small nonprofit organization in a medium-sized city. Her nonprofit offers immigration legal services to asylees and refugees. The organization has only sporadically used pro bono volunteers, but now sees a real need for additional legal help. Anna has been tasked with building a pro bono program for the organization.

She's trying to figure out how best to find attorneys who might be able to take on pro bono work. She's creating a plan for who to approach and how to approach them. This is what we're going to talk about in a moment. Before we get to that, the first task she's identified is determining what types of cases might be good to place with pro bono attorneys. On our next slide, we'll see that we have a Slido that actually lets you weigh in based on what you just heard in the discussion here and your own experiences about what you think about which case types Anna might want to consider for pro bono placement. Again, you can use the QR code or join us at slido.com using the code 2104493.

I'm seeing several people weighing in. People are saying cases with clear deadlines that that's a really important thing. Some people are saying that one day clinics on specific topics might be a really great type of case to place with pro bono attorneys. I'm seeing zero votes for cases with complex legal issues or complicated criminal histories. I think based on what Jayme and Kristin were saying, those can certainly be much more difficult to place, but I will note that both Jayme, Kristin, and I think Theresa and Jessica also touched on that there can be.

I think this is what we're seeing here. Cases with clear deadlines, very specific topics are really the easiest thing to place with a wide range of pro bonos. You definitely may have pro bonos who either develop a more extensive immigration experience or bring in experience from other areas of the law, where you may be able to



place more complex cases with a much smaller group of pro bono attorneys. Doing that, building a robust pro bono program can really help you develop those relationships and be able to find the people who may be able to help you out and take on those more complicated matters.

2. Pro Bono Recruitment Strategies

JG: With that, we're going to move on to our next slide. We've already started the Slido here. Thank you, everybody who's been jumping in. We're going to talk now about, okay, you figured out pro bono is a good idea. We have an idea about what kind of cases we even want to place with pro bonos. How do you go about finding pro bono attorneys? There are a number of different types of pro bono attorneys that you might engage attorneys from a number of different settings. You might be recruiting individual attorneys or solo or small firm practitioners, local law firms, large national firms, in-house counsel at companies.

There are a lot of different types of lawyers out there. Interesting to see that of those who are answering the Slido here, the largest number are recruiting individual attorneys or solo or small firm practitioners. The next biggest vote goes to local law firms, large national firms, and in-house counsel at companies come in at about 25%.

Nonprofits vs. Law Firms

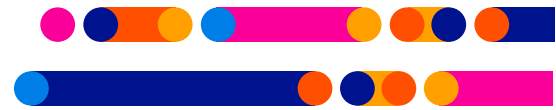
JG: Let's actually now dive in and talk about how you would go about doing this and building a recruitment strategy to bring in pro bono attorneys to support your program. With that, I'm actually going to turn back to Kristin to talk about the nonprofit perspective. How do you go about recruiting pro bono attorneys?

KC: Hi, again. Our program here is really relationship-based. We're in a community with known contours. We built this program five years ago, and the entire recruiting strategy was based on local visibility and relationship building, which I know is not unique to us, but it wouldn't work for some other organizations. We attend pretty much every local event where attorneys will be present, even if the attorneys are gathering on totally unrelated topics. Things like trust and estates or something, where we feel like, "Oh, the odds might be low," we are still there as much as we can be to build these relationships, get to know people where their interests might lie and also just spark some curiosity about the work that we do through our pro bono program.

When we're not able to attend enough local events to get a good return, we develop local events. We developed our own annual pro bono week, which has become quite a thing. We've become famous in that sense. We offer a few CLEs, a couple of lunches, and also just some community gathering, which has been really critical to the program's success, is being part of a thing. That if you're starting from scratch and you're in a community where you might be able to generate that momentum or that buzz, I really encourage it because it has made people want to connect with us and be part of what we've got going on. We built it, and then they came.

There's the tried and true way of doing CLEs, offering credit both to the presenters and to the attendees. That's been really useful. It's not been our only tool. It's also important to understand the timing needs of credits for different people in your organization. For us, it's pretty consistent. Most of our folks are Virginia-barred, and so we have a schedule throughout the year that works for them. That's something to look into if you're in a different circumstance. We develop relationships with local firms and local individual companies that have in-house counsel, but that's not a really big part of our recruitment strategy here.

The biggest and my favorite is that we are huge proponents of celebrating our attorneys, really giving them the credit that they deserve for the awesome, awesome, truly life-saving work that they do. We do that in a lot of different ways. We have periodic shout-outs at these events. Sometimes I'll just try to make some buzz, and I always ask people beforehand because, as I said, some people are very sensitive about getting publicity or not about the pro bono work that they do for a variety of personal reasons. Shouting out both in-person events and in newsletters, trying to hit that delicate balance of not flooding people's inboxes with unnecessary newsletters.



We always do a shout-out with an ask or an invitation. Then the other thing is just we try to do a couple of just pure parties every year where we buy you a beer or a glass of wine or a coffee for contributing so wonderfully to our community through legal skills. That celebration component is pretty core to our program's success.

JG: Thank you so much, Kristin. I'm going to turn now to Jayme to talk about the law firm perspective of what's helpful to you when nonprofits approach you. I also know that you were on the other side of the coin, recruiting pro bonos yourself. If you also want to bring in that perspective, that would be incredibly helpful.

JC: I think Kristin said the magic word, and that's relationships. Developing a contact within the firm, that's your go-to to build relationships. Then, also maintaining relationships with the attorneys who take cases with you, with some of the things that Kristin also spoke about. I think the best way to put your foot in the door, and Kristin mentioned this, is to host some lunch and learns with CLE. Offering the substantive as well as cultural nuances and ethical components is very attractive to law firm attorneys and pro bono volunteers for two reasons.

One, sometimes the cultural and ethics components can vary by state and be specialized, and they don't always have access to that. Two, it also helps them become a better attorney. Making sure that there's training and mentorship either on your end or within the firm, or through a bar association, is also very attractive for attorneys to take on pro bono cases. Then, following up, I think training and mentorship are great, but adequate supervision, which I think people sometimes confuse mentorship with supervision, but making sure the pro bono attorney has adequate supervision if necessary.

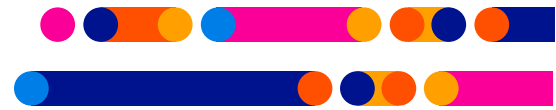
A lot of times, you have eager associates that sign up for a case. It's very attractive to them if you can say to them, "Gee, is there a partner or a senior associate in your case that would love to do this with you?" You might have someone who's already in your pro bono data bank that's helped in the past that you can connect them with. Making sure that there are resources if it's appropriate. Are there templates that you can give the attorney? Are there already fillable documents that the attorney can use? Making sure that they understand that that's a resource that will be available to them, so that it's not as daunting if it's perhaps the first or second time that they're taking on a case for you.

Marketing. Making sure that your ask, the blurb about the client, about the case, is heartfelt, it's genuine, it's not standard legalese. Helping the pro bono recruitee understand that this is not just a case, it's an individual or a family, perhaps, that they're going to help is also very persuasive. Helping law firms identify and associates and partners identify the professional development component to doing pro bono work. Perhaps someone has never had a client interview and this will be the first time and they'll be able to develop those professional skills. I've had people say that they've never been to court before so they're going to take on a case for the first time and they're a partner now. It's very exciting for them and the team of associates that they're going to have help them.

Making sure that the attorney understands that at the end of the case, whether there is genuine legal success, that there's going to be a feel good component. I think someone mentioned this, that just overall that they feel good about helping someone. A lot of times clients have said to me, "I know the attorney wasn't able to obtain XYZ for me or get this done, but they made me feel visible. They made me feel like I meant something. They made me feel like a human being," and the attorney will feel that as well.

Making sure that the attorney understands that they will be touching someone's life, they will be making an impact on someone's life, whether or not there's success on the case. Also recruitment comes, and a lot of my colleagues mentioned this and you put it in your prompts, there's a variety of cases that attorneys can choose from. Whether it's a solo individual case, whether it's a clinic, a group, or a team building project that the firm can do is important and helps you with recruitment strategies. Sometimes that one-off clinic can develop into repeats who want to take individual cases and vice versa.

This was mentioned and listen, attorneys are hams in their own way. They like recognition. They like to be seen and heard. Not everybody signs up to do a pro bono case for recognition, but if you can recognize firms or solos



that take cases in your social media, on your pro bono newsletters or your nonprofit newsletters that you send out. There's certainly pro bono month. Some firm pro bono organizations do things on a monthly basis where they recognize people. I love the idea of a glass of wine or beer also helps with building those relationships and making connections.

Case Scenario: Anna (cont'd)

JG: Thank you so much. Many great ideas that are going to feed into our next case scenario and then our final slide. Anna, just to return back to Anna, our fictional attorney who's designing a pro bono program. Anna has determined which cases she might place with pro bono attorneys. Now she needs an outreach strategy, which is what we were just hearing wonderful thoughts about from Jayme and Kristin.

Anna's considering reaching out to a small local law firm, but not sure of the best approach. She's also thinking about contacting the local office of a national law firm and wondering if her approach there should be different. She's brainstorming ways to interest her state's bar association in her organization's work. I think we heard great ideas about all of these things from our speakers and this final Slido on this topic will allow you all to weigh in on some of the recruitment avenues that you might want to pursue. Interested to hear what everyone thinks.

Again, you can join the Slido via the QR code or online at slido.com using 2104493. Everybody is excited about the idea of hosting a free CLE. I know we just heard about how helpful that can be with cultivating connections with law firms or companies, and then reaching out to pro bono council, folks like Jayme at the national law firms or local law firms, if they might have a pro bono council specifically on staff. There are a variety of different ways. Anna may decide to pursue all of these things.

That's also going to depend on your organization's—the scope of the pro bono you want to provide and your staff ability, but there are a number of really different excellent avenues here that Anna might choose to pursue.

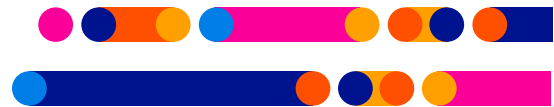
3. Supporting Pro Bono Attorneys

JG: That really brings us then to our final topic. This is something that Kristin and Jayme were already teeing up for us, is once you have recruited folks, and even as part of the recruitment process to be able to explain to law firms, what support you're going to be providing because again, many times you're going to be recruiting folks who have little or no experience in the immigration law arena.

They're going to want to have training and mentorship in place, and you're going to want that as well to make sure that they can competently handle their cases. Of course there are a variety of different ways to provide support, mentorship training support to pro bono attorneys. Those can include in-person or live trainings, which has so far gotten the most votes about nonprofits that do provide support to pro bonos.

A slightly smaller number provide individual or one-on-one mentorship. Pre-recorded trainings, 50% of respondents use those, and group mentorship, which is actually a model that we use at VECINA, including using office hours to maximize our staff time. Also, honestly, we've found that can be a really helpful way for pro bonos to learn from each other and to learn answers to questions they didn't even know they had until someone else asked. There are a variety of different ways to provide supports and your organization might decide to provide all, some, or none of those.

Now I want to turn again back to our panelists to talk about both from the nonprofit perspective and from the law firm perspective, what kind of supports pro bono attorneys need? Jessica, I'm going to come back to you as somebody who herself was an associate at a large law firm, did a lot of pro bono work. What kind of support do you think that pro bono attorneys need? Really focusing, I think, on pro bono attorneys with little or no immigration experience.



JD: I would say 99% of our pro bono attorneys have no immigration experience, other than their pro bono experience. Immigration practitioners don't come to HIAS Pennsylvania for pro bono, they do it on their own. All of our pro bono attorneys don't have immigration experience. I would say that most of them, including myself when I was a pro bono attorney practicing at a big law firm, most of them want one-on-one individual conversations. That's just, I think, the nature of all of us. We want to have our specific question answered when we have it.

Realistically, that's not possible. If you think about the idea of pro bono as building on economies of scale, if every single conversation has to be with me or with the program manager of our removal defense team, for example, then there is no economies of scale because we could just do the work ourselves. I'm exaggerating a little bit because obviously once I explain it, then there's still the work to be done, but you can't create a bottleneck by trying to provide the individual conversation for every single case.

I think a lot of my experience as the pro bono coordinator over the last five years has been figuring out what needs to be an individual conversation, what can be an email using a template that I've already written because the same person has had this question many, many times. I keep a running Google doc, to be honest with you, of stock answers to certain questions that are just that straightforward and that common. Also, of course, if you have anybody else that you work with in your team, I have a part-time paralegal, so she can answer some questions and making sure she knows the answers to the questions.

Figuring out also, and I should have said this maybe at the beginning because the first place that I really want pro bono attorneys to go to when they have questions is to the resources that I've spent a lot of time creating or borrowing from somebody else. VECINA obviously has amazing resources that I direct people to all the time. There's so much expertise out there in the immigration world, and I find the whole immigration bar to be so much more collegial than any other bar I've ever practiced in that there's no reason not to borrow from other organizations when they share their materials.

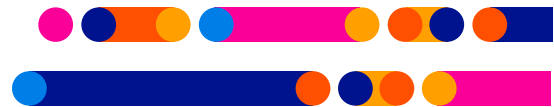
That being said, so much of immigration work is very client-specific that there's never going to be like a one-size-plug-and-play answer to every question. It's always going to be fact-specific. It's always going to be individualized, but you can start with a really good template from someone and then pull out the details and say, "This isn't applicable," or, "You have to also consider this for this client," but at least there's places to start.

I, to be really specific and nitty-gritty here, I maintain for each of the areas that we do pro bono work in, which is about three large buckets, I maintain what I call a resource document, which is a online Google doc that has live links to all the materials that I've pulled together, and then it's organized and curated by me and updated constantly. It's not perfect, but it's a really user-friendly way to make sure that pro bono attorneys can get the information and answers that they want, and it's live. It's I think, the 21st century version of what a lot of nonprofits used to create, which was like a binder.

When I was a pro bono attorney and I took my first asylum case, I got a binder from the organization that referred it to me, but binders are static and only as good as the moment, whereas a resource document that's live online can be edited in the moment, and of course we all know this world changes so much and so fast, it's nice to have something that's constantly updated with links. That's my toolkit in the first place.

I've also created a lot of, as VECINA has and as other organizations do, a lot of explainers, and tip sheets, and checklists. I think all pro bono attorneys want a guide that they can use. I also have to put a lot of disclaimers on them. This is not to be copied. This is not to be PDFed and edited. people will do what they'll do, but you have to remind people, I think, to do the individualized work that they need to do.

JG: Thank you so much, Jessica. I just want to—we're getting close to the end, but I just wanted to ask you really quickly, if you don't mind remembering back to when you were a new associate at a big law firm, how did it feel taking on a pro bono case? What support did you feel you needed psychologically? Our experience at VECINA has been that you need to give people the information, but you also want to make sure that people psychologically feel equipped to do the work.



JD: I think another thing that can be really helpful—obviously I was scared. I think there's a lot that can be said when you're recruiting people around why it's valuable to have pro bono attorneys do it. I really like to talk to people about why lawyers have a lot of skills that are valuable to pro bono attorneys that we don't necessarily think of as our skill set because we don't know the substance of the law, but you do have experience with an administrative legal system. You've done forms, you pay your own taxes.

There's lots of reasons I like to remind very junior and new people, not necessarily junior, because I have a lot of retirees that do this work, they've just never done this work before. They have so many skills that they're bringing to the table that they don't even think of as skills. I like to talk to them about that, but also knowing that—when I first took my first cases, knowing that there was somebody I could email, or call. Not having people feel in any way they are an island and that they're taking this case and they never can look back. I hope that I'm able to be that sign of link to the organization at HIAS Pennsylvania now that I'm on the other side of the desk.

JG: Thank you so much. I'm going to turn finally to Theresa, just to talk about at your organization, what kind of support you provide to pro bono attorneys and what have you discovered over the years pro bonos really need in order to be able to do this work and to feel like they can do the work?

TD: There are a lot of different ways, a lot of different resources that we make available to our pro bono volunteers. One thing I will note too, is that developing these resources, it can take a lot of time. It can take a lot of investment on the organization's behalf, but it's worth it investing that time in order to provide these sources, provide the support to volunteer attorneys.

The other thing, it's also been very helpful— Every staff member at the Advocates for Human Rights, we're all committed to working with volunteers. That is so helpful because there's a lot to do and a lot of things that we can be collecting and preparing. We provide on-demand CLEs, we provide live CLEs, we have recorded trainings because we know people's schedules are very busy. We have templates and we have redacted samples.

One of the things that we hear over and over again is what does this look like? What are all the components of this particular type of case? What's an annotated example of why you completed things a particular way? Is there a G28? What's the form look like? How about a template cover letter? All of the things that are going to help someone feel more confident in taking on a case. What are the typical issues that come up?

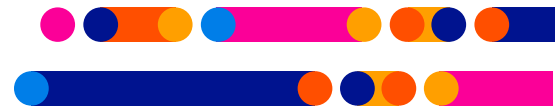
Remembering that when you've been in immigration law for a while, the things that we take just as day-to-day occurrences might be different and new to volunteers that haven't practiced in immigration law previously. Like filing in immigration court is very different than it might be filing in state court or in federal court. We also provide mentor attorneys and we have particular staff or assigned attorneys in particular areas.

If someone is working on an affirmative asylum case, they contact one particular staff member. If it's a removal proceeding, another one. If it's a T visa, if it's working with an unaccompanied kid, we have designated experts on our staff that our volunteers can reach out to when they need to have those one-on-one conversations. We also have office hours and informal discussions and updates like just coffee meetings on Friday mornings that people can pop into.

Then newsletters with ongoing updates of what is the latest news that is happening in particular areas. Of course, listening to volunteers about what they need and what would be helpful for them to receive that would help them take on cases. A lot of different things.

Case Scenario: Anna (cont'd)

JG: Thank you so much. That brings us to the end of our case scenario on our final Slido. Now that Anna's figured out who she might reach out to, she needs to determine what types of support her pro bono volunteers will need as they embark on their work. She has a small staff and needs to figure out how best to deploy them to support her new pro bono volunteers. She wants to meet her volunteers needs while ensuring that her staff



still have time to handle their own cases. I think we heard a lot of great ideas from Jessica and Theresa about the kind of supports that you might be able to provide in a situation like this.

On our final Slido, here's where you all get to weigh in on the kinds of support that you might want to provide to pro bono attorneys, or that you're already providing at your organization. You can join the Slido again through the QR code or online at slido.com. I see one person offering a thought here. Everyone is free to weigh in. We will have time for just one or two questions, I think, with our panelists. Interested to hear what support people might want to provide.

As we live resource docs, office hours, templates, guidance, live mentorship. Yes, these are all different components. There's the training that you do in advance, the training that you do while people are working on their cases, and the mentorship and practice supports that you offer along the way. Our panelists had a lot of great ideas about different ways to do that. These are all great ideas as well. Group strategy sessions, mentorship, CLEs. That's terrific.

Q&A Panel

JG: We are going to now move to a quick Q&A with our amazing panelists, Jayme Cassidy, Kristin Clarens, Jessica Daly, and Theresa Dykoschak. We had a few questions that were submitted through the Q&A. I want to ask all of you, any one of you to weigh in on—

[How would you recommend adequately preparing attorneys who are not accustomed to immigration work for addressing the vicarious or secondary trauma they may experience as part of this work?](#)

JC: Yes, I'll jump in on that. I think I spoke about like the CLE process and having nuanced CLEs both with the substantive competency, but I think preparing people for trauma-informed advocacy is a great ethics CLE or specialized CLE that some states have. Having, again, the mentorship and support component to that for the pro bono attorney who may not have experienced this type of caseload before, but certainly preparing them upfront, I think, with a group dynamic CLE so people can bring their different experiences to the table and share as much as possible ahead of time.

JG: Thank you so much. Did any of the other panelists want to weigh in on that?

TD: Yes, one of our introductory trainings that's available on demand is working with clients that have experienced trauma. It's just so important from the beginning for new volunteers to understand where your client's coming from and then also what your experience might be like.

JG: Thank you so much. Finally, we have a question, and this really is—I think we'll be able to quickly touch on this because this is a bigger topic, but:

[Who signs the G28? Can pro bonos assist in a pro se capacity? Do you generally have pro bonos sign G28s?](#)

JD: I can just jump in quickly and say, I think it really depends on what cases you're referring out. We do large refugee green card application clinics. Sometimes in those cases, one attorney is the G28 attorney for a lot of attorneys who are participating, and that works really well. If you're talking about an individual asylum representation where the attorney is going to represent the client for could be 1, 2, 10 years, then I think it makes sense to have the attorney enter their G28.

I think another thing that's important to talk to pro bonos about in advance is if you were talking about working with a team of attorneys, who's going to be the G28 attorney, maybe it doesn't make sense for it to be the



really junior associate on the team who might not be at the firm a year later, but instead make sure it's the senior partner who's going to be there. If it is the senior partner, making sure that they understand about checking the mail and making sure things come to their attention. Lots of things to think about in that, but I do think it's really dependent on the case you're talking about.

Conclusion

JG: Thank you so much, Jessica. I just want to thank all of the panelists so much for being here today. A huge thanks to Switchboard for hosting and making today's panel possible.

Reviewing Learning Objectives

JG: Here again are the topics that we covered today. Talking about how pro bono attorneys can increase the capacity of immigration legal service programs. We talked about some amazing strategies to recruit law firms and attorneys to handle pro bono immigration cases. Finally, we talked about strategies to use to sustainably provide training and mentorship to support the pro bono attorneys. Again, thank you so much to all of you for sharing all of your wonderful insights today.

KC: Thanks, everyone.

JD: Thank you.

TD: Thank you.

JC: Thanks.

Recommended Resources

JG: Thank you much to all of our speakers today. On the screen, you see a QR code for our satisfaction survey. It is also located at a link in the chat. Please take this time now to complete that survey. Next, please find the link to our recommended resources for this event.

Stay Connected

JG: Stay connected with Switchboard at switchboard@rescue.org or on social media at SwitchboardTA.

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