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WHY DOMESTIC VIOLENCE VICTIMS NEED LEGAL SUPPORT

Overwhelming Challenges Faced by Victims

- Fear of retaliation, financial dependence, emotional trauma, social isolation, legal barriers, concern for the children)
- The Critical Role of Legal Services in Ensuring Safety and Justice

- Securing protective orders, facilitating safe separation and divorce, custody and guardianship protection, legal advice
- The Connection between Legal Representation and Dignity Restoration – Empowerment by helping victims understand his/her legal rights and regaining control over his/her personal freedoms and decision making

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THE GUARDIANS OF LIFE AND DIGNITY

Legal representation
can save lives.

Legal representation
ensures dignity
through protection of
rights and legal
processes.

Attorneys provide
voice to the voiceless.

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ACCESS TO THE COURTS: THE LIFELINE FOR DOMESTIC VIOLENCE VICTIMS

- Legal Advice – helps the victim to navigate/understand the process of a complex legal system
- Litigation – helps the victims with resolving legal issues surrounding the domestic abuse

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TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

I. What is pro bono legal representation?

- A) Free legal representation provided to individuals who can't afford it
- B) Representation for businesses
- C) Legal services for high-income individuals
- D) Paid legal assistance at discounted rates



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2. What percentage of attorneys in Mississippi are encouraged to provide pro bono services each year?

- A) 10%
- B) 25%
- C) 50%
- D) 100%

3. How many hours of pro bono work are Mississippi attorneys encouraged to perform annually?

- A) 10 hours
- B) 20 hours
- C) 50 hours
- D) 100 hours

4. Which types of cases are most commonly handled through pro bono legal services in Mississippi?

- A) Corporate mergers
- B) Domestic violence and family law cases (divorce, custody, visitation)
- C) Real estate transactions
- D) Traffic violations

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5. True or False: Pro bono legal services in Mississippi are only available to people in major cities like Jackson or Gulfport.

6. What is the main goal of the pro bono services provided by attorneys in Mississippi?

- A) To gain experience in court
- B) To increase billable hours
- C) To provide legal assistance to those who cannot afford it and promote equal access to justice
- D) To network with other attorneys

7. True or False: Pro bono representation is primarily focused on criminal cases in Mississippi.

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Population: 2,939,690 Number in Poverty: 561,480

Median Household Income: Approximately \$52,000

19.1% of Mississippi residents had incomes below the poverty line
(Median income for families living in poverty
\$29,000 for a family of 4)

****Households earning less than \$10,000: 105,133 (9.30%)****

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Mississippi has two legal services programs established through the legal services corporation (LSC)

- LSC IS THE SINGLE LARGEST FUNDER OF CIVIL LEGAL AID FOR LOW-INCOME AMERICANS IN THE NATION. ESTABLISHED IN 1974, LSC OPERATES AS AN INDEPENDENT 501 (C)(3) NONPROFIT CORPORATION THAT PROMOTES EQUAL ACCESS TO JUSTICE AND PROVIDES GRANTS FOR HIGH-QUALITY CIVIL LEGAL ASSISTANCE TO LOW-INCOME AMERICANS.
- MISSISSIPPI HAS TWO LSC PROGRAMS THAT PROVIDE FREE CIVIL LEGAL AID – MISSISSIPPI CENTER FOR LEGAL SERVICES AND NORTH MISSISSIPPI RURAL LEGAL SERVICES
- BOTH PROGRAMS COMBINED STAFF UNDER 75 ATTORNEYS

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THE LAWYERS' CREED

- To consider the effect of my conduct on the image of our systems of justice including the social effect of advertising methods.
- To provide the pro bono representation that is necessary to make our system of justice available to all.
- To support organizations that provide pro bono representation to indigent clients.



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The Mississippi Volunteer Lawyers Project (MVLP) is a statewide, legal nonprofit organization dedicated to providing free legal services to low-income Mississippians. Since 1982, MVLP has relied on a large network of volunteer attorneys to represent our clients in various legal matters. Without volunteer attorneys and the generosity of donors, MVLP would cease to exist and hundreds of low-income Mississippians would not have access to the legal services that they deserve.

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Direct Representation (Full Representation)	Pro Se Legal Clinics (Brief Services)	Mississippi Free Legal Answers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Attorney registers as a volunteer on MVLP's website. Registration allows the attorney to access the database of MVLP pleadings and outlines related to each case priority. ➤ Attorney can assign a case to him/herself through the website. ➤ Attorney has access to all information related to the client's case that the client has provided to MVLP. ➤ Attorney meets with client for consultation, determines the best course of action, draft pleadings, files the cases in the appropriate court and attends the court hearing for final resolution. ➤ Attorney can get pro bono hours. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Attorney registers as a volunteer on MVLP's website. ➤ Attorney meets with client for consultation usually at a site designated by MVLP, determines the best course of action, draft pleadings, and provides information to the client on how to represent himself/herself in court. ➤ Attorney can get CLE credit. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Attorney signs up to use the site on ms.freelegalanswers.org. ➤ Attorney can respond to any question on the site. ➤ Attorney can get pro bono hours.

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MISSISSIPPI LEGAL AMBASSADORS

A Project of the Mississippi Volunteer Lawyers Project

What is Mississippi Legal Ambassadors?

Mississippi Legal Ambassadors is a volunteer-driven working group composed of highly-skilled attorneys who are interested in providing pro bono support to low income Mississippians living in legal deserts. Legal deserts are areas (primarily rural) in a state where there are no or a very limited number of attorneys causing citizens to drive long distances (if transportation is available) to seek legal representation. In many Mississippi counties, there are fewer than 10 attorneys, if any, practicing within the county leaving many Mississippians without access to legal representation and, thus, without access to justice. Mississippi Legal Ambassadors, who are selected to participate in this competitive program, will help alleviate this access issue. The ambassadors will receive extensive training on domestic violence laws and services in Mississippi, and on providing the proper advice for domestic violence victims. Finally, the training will provide cultural competence training for the Ambassadors as the Ambassadors will interact and provide support to individuals in rural, impoverished communities. This project will virtually assist individuals in Washington, Sunflower and Bolivar counties. Legal services for domestic violence victims are crucial in providing protection, justice and support. It offers victims the necessary tools to escape abusive situations, secure restraining orders, and navigate the complexities of the legal system. By providing expert guidance and representation, legal services help break the cycle of abuse and promote long-term recovery and empowerment for victims.

Who Should Apply?

Mississippi Bar members with a passion for justice and service are highly encouraged to apply. The selection process will be competitive based on submitted resumes and letters of reference. No more than 12 attorneys will be selected to participate in this program.

What is the Program Commitment?

This program will run September 13, 2024 through September 13, 2025 and will consist of weekly virtual legal advice clinics. Legal Ambassadors must agree to staff at least (4) virtual legal advice clinics during the program run. The clinics will be held via Zoom; thus, the attorney can staff the clinic from any location. The clinics will run from 9:00 AM to 12:00 Noon on every Friday beginning September 20, 2024 and continuing through September 12, 2025. Ambassadors will choose the Fridays to staff the clinic and may receive up to 12 hours of CLE credit and 4 Pro Bono Hours. Ambassadors will receive extensive pre-clinic training in the area of domestic violence through a mandatory training. Upon completion of the program, Ambassadors will be celebrated in a ceremony acknowledging their service.

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QUESTIONS?



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