

2025 Private Attorney Involvement Plan

Updated April 22, 2025

The federal Legal Services Corporation (LSC), a funder of Georgia Legal Services Program, requires us to develop an annual plan for involving private attorneys in helping meet the civil legal needs of Georgians with low incomes. 45 CFR 1614.4.

The phrase “private attorney involvement” or “PAI” is used in the federal regulations that apply to GLSP’s use of grant funds from the federal Legal Services Corporation. Private attorney involvement refers to “pro bono” as that term is commonly recognized in the legal profession. It also encompasses legal services for which an attorney charges our program (for services to our client) a reduced fee or “low bono.” Private attorney involvement also encompasses volunteer engagement generally, extending to the use of law students, law graduates and allied professionals enlisted to support legal services delivery.

This plan presents an overview of GLSP’s current program, provides information about new and ongoing obstacles to meeting the legal needs and service gaps in our region, and previews solutions that we are working toward in 2025 and beyond.

GLSP’s 2025 priorities for the delivery of legal services are: Families, Health, Housing, and Income Maintenance and Education. Our 2025 PAI plan honors these priorities. GLSP regional offices collaborate with their community partners and colleagues to identify local client needs that can be addressed by volunteers based on skills and interests. We additionally maintain several substantive “signature projects” across all regions of the state.

Our 2025 Pro Bono Unit (PBU) includes a mix of 18 lawyers, paralegals, and other professionals. Leadership includes the PBU Director (lawyer); two PBU Deputy Directors (lawyers), one who oversees clinics and compliance and a second who oversees partnerships and collaborations; and a Supervising Attorney. Five PBU Staff Attorneys support our Augusta, Gainesville/Athens, Macon, Piedmont, and Savannah regional offices. An additional 4 PBU Coordinators (non-attorneys) support our Albany, Brunswick, Columbus, and Dalton offices. In our central Atlanta office, an additional 5 individuals provide partial or full-time assistance to the Unit, including the PBU Support Manager, IT Analyst, PBU Paralegal, Statewide Project Manager, and an additional Project Manager.

Current Program Overview

What We Do and Our Service Territory

The mission of Georgia Legal Services Program is to provide access to justice and opportunities out of poverty for Georgians with low incomes. Our lawyers, paralegals and volunteers provide the help that reflects your community’s values of fairness, equality, and responsibility to assist others in need.

We are a non-profit law firm serving rural and small-town Georgia—all of Georgia except the five-county metro Atlanta area. That is a service territory of 154 mostly rural counties. We have nine offices around the state to serve people where they live. We also have a significant presence in Atlanta, where our central administrative office is located along with many of our

partners, funders, and other supporters. Many of our volunteers are also Atlanta-based.

We offer free civil legal services to people who cannot afford to hire a lawyer. Our clients have “high stakes” problems such as domestic violence, eviction, probate issues, denial of hard-earned benefits such as unemployment, inability to get critically needed health care or food aid, and more.

We enlist private attorneys as volunteer lawyers to help provide civil legal services to the poor throughout our service territory. The work of our staff and volunteers assures that people with low incomes have access to justice and opportunities out of poverty. When problems occur, we help our clients secure the support they need to get back on their feet — with dignity. When rights are denied, we help our clients seek redress and have those rights assured.

Our Pro Bono Approach

GLSP’s pro bono programming and support is closely tied to the State Bar of Georgia in several capacities. Under a decades-old arrangement that recognizes the shortage of legal resources outside Atlanta, a PBU attorney maintains an office at the State Bar headquarters, providing support for Bar sections, committees, and Bar leadership. In the early 1980s, the State Bar recognized the paucity of legal resources to support pro bono and access to justice outside the city of Atlanta and provided a structure to support volunteerism by Bar members in rural and small-city Georgia.

Our PBU staff participate in State and local bar activities and engage with, or are members of, State Bar sections and committees. Such relationships provide us ample opportunity to highlight the need for support and participation in our pro bono program and allow us to draw attention to ways to address the justice gap and the legal deserts within the state.

Our multi-faceted approach to providing legal services in rural and small-city Georgia relies on active participation from solo and small-firm lawyers living in our 154-county service area. In recent years, we have amplified our impact by incorporating law students, large law firms, corporations, and other Atlanta-based attorneys remotely. Our staff coordinate with local and statewide partners to host clinic events and arrange one-on-one service delivery to clients in their area. These range from counsel and advice opportunities to representation in court. Our coordinators place a great deal of emphasis on a well-rounded volunteer experience, and that includes consideration of client need, matching volunteers to impactful services, and assuring training and support systems are encouraging success at every step of the way.

We have always urged lawyers to think strategically about pro bono and to include pro bono in their annual business plans. We ask lawyers to contact us and tell us exactly how many cases they would like to receive from us in the upcoming year, the type of case, and how frequently we should send a case to them.

There are several benefits to volunteering with GLSP. Our staff screen all clients, ensuring legal assistance is going to individuals who meet LSC eligibility guidelines 45 CFR § 1611

and §1626 with household incomes below 200% of the federal poverty level, with most falling below 125%. Pro bono volunteers are also covered by GLSP's malpractice insurance, have access to substantive support from GLSP's expert staff, and can receive training/assistance throughout their time working on a case.

Transformation

GLSP continues an expansive long-term effort to transform its pro bono program. Since beginning the overhaul of our Pro Bono programming in 2019, we have fully integrated pro bono services into GLSP's overall civil legal services delivery system and received grants to support largescale overhauls to our collaboration, communication, and case management systems (2020) and to standardize our service delivery processes and policies across all offices. The transformation of our Pro Bono programming involved comprehensive assessments, strategic improvements, and restructuring of our organizational and unit management systems.

Pro Bono Program Operations

Services Available

GLSP provides a wide variety of opportunities for volunteer engagement. This ability is greatly expanded and supported by Georgia Bar Rule 1.2, which allows attorneys to provide limited-scope service rather than full representation to every client. GLSP has embraced the option of limiting the scope of representation and encourages volunteer attorneys to do so when appropriate. Attorneys may accept referrals to draft divorce documents or other court forms, review client circumstances in depth, negotiate with adverse parties, and more. New volunteers and those considering opportunities outside of their expertise benefit greatly from this approach. Our current model leans heavily toward providing lawyers with limited-scope service work that is respectful of time commitments and still provides valuable services to clients.

GLSP staff post volunteer opportunities, including both one-on-one services and clinics, on its [Paladin site](#). GLSP tested the site in mid-2022 in partnership with the State Bar of Georgia's Access to Justice Committee. By 2023, the State Bar of Georgia contracted with Paladin (<https://app.joinpaladin.com/gaprobono/>) to support legal organizations and amplify pro bono opportunities available to Bar members.

Regional Pro Bono Services

While we have developed systems that allow Atlanta-based attorneys to support clients remotely, we remain committed to matching clients to local volunteers where possible. This is especially important where clients need representation in court or before administrative forums. Regional Coordinators or Staff Attorneys recruit and support volunteers in these cases, and can work with local attorneys, firms, and/or other legal professionals to identify suitable cases that meet the needs of our client community as well as the interests of our volunteers.

In addition to posting cases on [Paladin](#), PBU staff contact active volunteers and new sign-ups to place individual cases. Upon confirmation of the match, client information is sent to the attorney, and the relevant coordinator continues to monitor the case through completion.

Statewide Pro Bono Services

The PBU has developed a series of “signature projects”—substantive areas where clients in any GLSP region can receive assistance. Full scale projects are substantively led by one of the PBU’s attorney staff and encourage the development of direct service and/or clinic opportunities, especially where remote services can be leveraged. Currently, three signature projects are fully implemented: Disaster Legal Services, Record Restriction, and Wills & Estates.

Our PBU is also able to accommodate one-time “impact projects” in response to a sudden community need or volunteer interest that pertains to providing impactful civil legal services aligning with GLSP’s priorities. These are frequently small clinics in partnership with large firms and/or corporate counsel attorneys. We encourage innovation and are open to new opportunities to serve clients. Those interested in developing an impact project should contact the PBU Deputy Director of Partnerships and Collaborations (Cari King, cking@glsp.org) for more information.

We are also developing several small-scale pilot projects in hopes of expanding them within the near future. These include a Chapter 7 Bankruptcy project in partnership with Mercer Law School, a counsel and advice Probate project in Hall County, representation for survivors of violence in Protective Order hearings in Savannah, and a project to help unhoused individuals gain access to birth certificates and drivers licenses in Savannah. We anticipate the building and piloting of several new substantive projects in 2025.

Opportunities for Lawyers

In 2025, we plan to shift away from larger-scale, labor intensive clinics in favor of more frequent regional opportunities that allow for participation both by local and/or remote volunteers.

This shift in focus allows our staff increased time to build relationships with client services partners and ensure our PBU efforts continue to impactfully meet the needs of our local communities. These smaller clinics will continue to have access to our technology, expertise, and staffing support where needed to ensure event success. Larger-scale clinics will continue, though they will be more strategically designed.

Opportunities for Non-Lawyers

GLSP pro bono and direct services staff engage with a variety of non-attorney volunteers to find innovative ways to improve our outreach and services abilities.

Law Students and Recent Graduates

Local GLSP offices host law student interns to support volunteer lawyers on a limited basis, usually in the development and referral of pro bono cases and for supporting pro bono legal clinics. We also offer law students the opportunity to develop pro bono volunteer support materials and pro bono-themed social media outreach opportunities. Our law students also participate in the development and staging of pro bono recognition and training events. In 2025 GLSP hosted alternative spring break activities focusing on service delivery for the Georgia State College of Law.

GLSP's PBU will work to use Georgia's [Law Student Practice Rule](#). The Bar rule authorizes student practice that is co-extensive with all the work that a licensed attorney can do. A law student "when under the supervision of a member of the State Bar of Georgia, may, as if admitted and licensed to practice law in Georgia, advise, prepare legal instruments, appear before courts and administrative agencies and otherwise "take action on behalf of" persons unable to pay for legal services.

The Supreme Court of Georgia and the Georgia Commission on Continuing Legal Competency) are developing a new "CLE for Pro Bono" rule that will encourage lawyers to engage in pro bono legal services by providing the volunteer lawyers with a reduction in required CLE hours based on hours of pro bono service provided. GLSP will monitor the progress of this proposed rule and implement a response that will support its volunteers under the rule.

Paralegals

Paralegal opportunities primarily involve preparation of documents or the collection of client information ahead of a clinic event. Among regional offices, paralegals or other non-attorney legal professionals may also be able to support screenings, client communication, or provide other assistance to GLSP staff or other pro bono volunteers team under the supervision of a licensed attorney. Please contact the PBU Deputy Director of Partnerships and Collaborations (Cari King, cking@glsp.org) for more information.

Volunteer Training and Supports

GLSP takes seriously the LSC requirement to provide training and other supports to its volunteers and accomplishes this through several outlets. We have an online learning management system that houses our volunteer training and support materials: <https://learning.glsp.org/home/signup.php>.

GLSP also hosts periodic webinars – most Georgia CLE-accredited—and local bar presentations on pro bono and substantive law for volunteer lawyers. We will continue this practice into 2025.

PBU staff attorneys maintain substantive knowledge in our most popular project areas, but our team can additionally support volunteers through the expanded substantive expertise of our GLSP staff. Our Program employs several specialist attorneys in the areas of family law, housing, public benefits, elder, and health law. These attorneys are available to our volunteers and connected to them as needed by members of our PBU. Attorneys in our local field offices also help support volunteers in our pro bono program through training, on-site legal clinic support, development of manuals, presentation of PowerPoint trainings, and the creation of other forms of legal content to support volunteer development.

Our partnership with the State Bar of Georgia will continue. GLSP and the State Bar partner to support the State Bar of Georgia Pro Bono Resource Center, an effort that is decades old. The Pro Bono Resource Center works closely with GLSP's local offices and assists with CLE programming, local bar presentations, lawyer demographic data, marketing, social

media, training materials development and more.

Through networking events, such as the annual open house, we are also able to educate local lawyers about the legal needs of our clients, volunteer opportunities, and strengthen relationships between the coordinators and the private bar.

Volunteer Recognition

Recognition of our volunteers allows us to celebrate achievements, reward our team, and encourage future pro bono participation. GLSP does this in several ways.

In 2025, we will continue to host both local and state-level recognition events. Locally, each regional office is encouraged to partner with their bar associations and/or other community leaders to present Champion, Advocate, and Catalyst awards—recognizing, respectfully, the individuals who accepted the greatest number of cases, performed outstanding service for a pro bono client, and made the greatest effort to support pro bono engagement in their region. Similarly, the state-level awards recognize those who most impacted PBU efforts across GLSP's 154-county service area.

Currently our lawyer volunteers are recognized through regional office and local bar partnerships, the State Bar of Georgia [Pro Bono Honor Roll](#), and the State Bar of Georgia Pro Bono Resource Center CLE Voucher Rewards Program, which provide certificates, highlight volunteer stories and local press releases, and award free CLE credits to participants.

Case Management

Intake and Eligibility

GLSP allows potential applicants to apply by walk-in, phone, and online. Staff dedicated to screening applicants for financial eligibility take calls from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Monday through Friday.

Applications received through the online intake system are routed through GLSP's case management system. Questions about family size, current and potential income and assets, citizenship status and other eligibility factors are used in determining initial eligibility. Before cases are referred to a potential volunteer attorney, a Pro Bono Unit staff member evaluates each case for merit and confirms the applicant's financial eligibility.

Referrals

Eligible clients can be routed to a regional office or, in some cases, directly to the PBU for case placement. In 2025, we will begin efforts to allow direct placement of clients in upcoming PBU clinics.

After an applicant has been determined to be eligible for GLSP services, they are contacted for more information about their situation, their legal needs, and to determine if they are a good fit for in-person or remote volunteer placement. Key factors in this determination are case/court-related deadlines, the length of time an attorney would have to prepare, the complexity of the case, the client's access to transportation and capacity to communicate remotely, etc.

Once a case has been designated for volunteer placement, the list of volunteer attorneys is reviewed. Staff contact potential attorneys by phone or email and/or place the case on [Paladin](#) as a new opportunity.

Figure 1: Screen Shot of Referral Recommendations in Legal Server

Georgia Legal Services Program

[Clinics](#)
[Home](#)
[Cases](#)
[Calendar](#)
[Contacts](#)
[Timekeeping](#)
[Organizations](#)
[Users](#)
[Funding Codes](#)
[Reports](#)
[Other Matters](#)
[Help](#)
[Admin](#)

[Support Request](#)
[My Assignments](#)
[Michael L. Monahan: Logout](#)

[Home](#)
[Cases](#)
[Delete Zdelete \(06-0339022\)](#)
[Recommended /Other Users](#)

[Conflict Search](#)
[Timer](#)
[Preferences](#)
[Hide Taskbar](#)

Recommended /Other Users

Click on "assign" to set up an assignment for a specific user

Referral Attempts

both results

Attorney	User	Date	Contact Method	Outcome	Notes	Reset
Willie Xvelson	Michael L. Monahan	09/21/2011	Phone	Accept	N/A	Edit Delete
Willie Xvelson	Michael L. Monahan	09/21/2011	Phone	Accept	N/A	Edit Delete

No Other Pages

Probono Users

all 7 results

Probono Attorney Name	Outreaches	Office	Subjects	Counties	Languages	# of Open Cases	Organization County	Total Number of Cases	Recommend Pro Bono Attorney Notes	Start Date of Last Assignment	Organization	Actions	Is Interested	Referral Attempts
Gregory Dobson	N/A	MACON (8)	Problem Code Match	County Match	N/A	0	N/A	0 (0)	N/A	N/A	N/A	Assign	N/A	0 Attempt Call
Gregory Dobson	N/A	MACON (8)	Problem Code Match	County Match	N/A	0	N/A	1 (0)	N/A	03/06/2003	N/A	Assign	N/A	0 Attempt Call
Tangela King	N/A	MACON (8)	Problem Code Match	County Match	N/A	0	Bibb	1 (1)	N/A	06/30/2004	Buafu and Associates	Assign	N/A	0 Attempt Call
Scott Spivey	N/A	MACON (8)	Problem Code Match	County Match	N/A	0	Bibb	1 (1)	N/A	07/26/2004	JAMES, BATES, POPE & SPIVEY, LLP	Assign	N/A	0 Attempt Call
James Wootan	N/A	MACON (8)	Problem Code Match	County Match	N/A	0	Bibb	3 (1)	N/A	04/24/2007	O'Neal, Brown, Sizemore, PC	Assign	N/A	0 Attempt Call

In terms of clinics hosted by the PBU, clients are typically required to pre-register. This can be done over the phone. In some cases, GLSP will arrange in-person registration events coupled with a client education seminar on the topic of the clinic. Ideally, all relevant legal work on clinic cases is completed on the day of the event. This requires more extensive engagement with the clients in some substantive areas than it does in others. Some clinic models, such as our counsel and advice clinics, allow for same-day intake registration but make no guarantee of services until intake has been completed.

GLSP is aware that some volunteer attorneys are not regularly referred a case, despite their willingness to accept cases. The match between case type and the location of the volunteer attorney sometimes makes a match difficult. GLSP continues to work to utilize all volunteer attorneys to meet the needs of eligible clients. We use our quarterly pro bono newsletter, *Pro Bono Insights*, and monthly opportunities updates to maintain contact with our volunteers over time and to keep other stakeholders informed about our programming.

Follow Up

GLSP staff regularly follow-up on their placed cases to determine the status of representation. The follow-up is done no less than quarterly until the pro bono attorney notifies GLSP that the case is concluded. Assistance can be provided to the pro bono attorney throughout the case by GLSP staff unless the case referred represents a conflict of interest for GLSP.

Volunteer Outreach

Pledge

Our [volunteer pledge](#) form is found online on several websites. The online pledge form recruits volunteer lawyers to handle specific case types and invites them to participate in legal clinics. We add all our volunteers to our case management system, Legal Server. Our Pro Bono Team members can search for a potential volunteer by county and LSC legal problem code type, clinic interest and more.

Online

We use [Paladin](#) to advertise our available pro bono cases.

Local, Specialty and Diversity Bars

Pro Bono Team members and other GLSP attorneys attend bar association meetings and events to recruit volunteers and other supporters. In 2025, GLSP will work to host several clinics with legal/specialty bar associations and local partners.

Information, Obstacles, and Challenges

Volunteer Needs

Pro Bono Attorney Survey

In 2009, the Supreme Court of Georgia Committee on Civil Justice published the results of a statewide Legal Needs Study and an accompanying Pro Bono Attorney Survey. Neither the Georgia courts nor the State Bar has plans to update this 2009 study.

In 2025, GLSP will participate with the State Bar of Georgia in developing a statewide pro bono survey of members of the State Bar of Georgia. GLSP will review the volunteer survey data and develop a plan to exploit the findings.

We include here for simplicity's sake this summary report excerpt from the 2009 Civil Justice Committee survey.

There were a few surprises from the attorneys' surveys, and some conclusions that were expected are worthy of note here:

1. The response rates were surprising. Attorneys responded to the survey at a much higher rate than expected. This was perhaps because the cover letter from the CCJ alerted them to the importance of the research. Attorneys called in for appointments to complete their surveys, made return calls and stayed on the line to finish calls. We oversampled as a result, making our results more representative than we had hoped for at the outset.
 2. The size of the law firm influences whether the attorney has time to engage in pro bono services. Larger firms seem more able to sustain the time and effort.
 3. Although there are a variety of areas of law in which pro bono attorneys practice, family law is one area in which there are significantly different proportions of attorneys practicing pro bono law.
 4. Attorneys avoid pro bono work due to concerns about lack of expertise, and concerns about malpractice insurance. There are some concerns about screening for client need, as attorneys' comments suggest that some who apply for pro bono appear to be able to afford to pay for services.
 5. There is some support for doing shorter term pro bono work, if it could be identified, but attorneys appear to be wary of taking on larger projects.
 6. Attorneys express support for referral systems for pro bono work.
 7. Attorneys who take on pro bono work are motivated by personal responsibility and needs of the poor; attorneys who do not are concerned about time limitations and family obligations.
- Overall, support for pro bono is high, even among those who do not engage in it. In many cases, those who do not are looking for opportunities and want to have referral, access to information, training, or short-term commitments to contribute. They do want to be sure that the persons who receive pro bono legal services are screened, and truly eligible for services.

- *Committee on Civil Justice by the A.L. Burruss Institute of Public Service and Research Kennesaw State University.*

Lawyer-less Counties

There are six Georgia counties that count no lawyer and an additional 60 counties with 15 or fewer lawyers. For purposes of this count, “lawyer” also includes judges, prosecutors, public defenders—lawyers not available to provide free civil legal services to the poor. As displayed on the map, many of these counties are in the southern portion of the state.

The PBU 2024 survey of current volunteers (those who have accepted a case within the past year) suggested that we are distancing ourselves from an overreliance on volunteers near retirement but continue to rely on seasoned attorneys who are early and mid-career. In 2025, GLSP will continue to efforts to make volunteer opportunities accessible to new Georgia lawyers through increased CLE programming, additional substantive support, and increased partnership with the Younger Lawyers Division of the State Bar of Georgia.

Feedback on this Plan

The federal Legal Services Corporation, a funder of Georgia Legal Services Program, requires us to develop an annual plan for involving private attorneys in helping meet the civil legal needs of persons with low-income. 45 C.F.R. Sec. 1614.4. GLSP seeks comments on this plan throughout the year. Please provide comments to Sarah J. Anderson, GLSP Pro Bono Unit Deputy Director/Clinics & Compliance, 104 Marietta St. NW, Suite 250, Atlanta, GA 30303. You can also contact us by email at sjanderson@glsp.org or reach out to Lisa Krisher, Senior Director of Litigation and Advocacy, at lkrisher@glsp.org.

A copy of this plan is posted annually on a [State Bar of Georgia website page](#) and provided to local GLSP offices for sharing with local bar associations.

