

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 low-income persons. [45 CFR 1614.4]

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 2020.

This is developed in the same process as the annual GLSP Goals and Priorities development. Each GLSP field office is encouraged to craft a plan that meets local client legal needs and takes advantage of local attorneys' skills and interests. GLSP focuses on Domestic Violence, Benefits, Access to Health Care, Housing, Consumer, Education, Senior Citizens, Persons with Disabilities and Farmworkers.

Our PAI plan addresses these and also gaps in service that GLSP staff attorneys cannot handle and where lawyers in our service area have identified themselves as available to handle the cases, including a broader range of family law (divorce, child custody), Chapter 7 bankruptcies to save the home place, wills and powers of attorneys for the terminally ill, and senior citizens.

Current Program Overview

What We Do and Our Service Territory

The mission of the 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 5-county metro Atlanta area. That is a service territory of 154 mostly rural counties. We have 11 offices around the state to serve people where they live.

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

We enlist private attorneys as volunteer lawyers to help provide civil legal services to the poor in our service territory. The work of our staff and volunteers assures that low income people 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 in several capacities. Staff actively participate in programs such as the Law Practice Management Program, Transition into Law Practice Program (TILPP), Georgia's mandatory lawyer mentoring program, and more. Such relationships provide us ample opportunity to highlight the need for support and participation in pro bono programs and have allowed us to draw attention to the differences between rural/small-city populations (potential clients and volunteers) and those in living and working in metropolitan Atlanta.

The majority of our pro bono engagement relies on active participation from solo and small-firm



lawyers. Staff coordinate cases through their local bar associations and relationships with the private bar among staff to cultivate a dedicated group of volunteer case handlers and clinic participants. We now urge 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, they type of case, and how frequently we should send a case to them.

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.

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 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.

Regional Services

Each of our nine regional offices has a coordinator who can assist the local office in identifying suitable cases for pro bono and matching the case to a volunteer. While most the pro bono cases are in the family law area, cases are also available in housing, mortgage foreclosure, consumer matters and a wide range of other legal areas. Attorneys can specify the types of cases they are willing to consider. All clients served have household incomes below 200% of the federally established poverty level.

Staff contact attorneys by phone or email requesting assistance. Upon confirmation of the match, client information is sent to the attorney and the relevant coordinator continues to monitor the case through completion.

Difficult-to-place cases may also be issued through the Judicare Contract Program. Attorneys may provide legal services on a reduced fee basis. GLSP will pay the retainer contract attorney an hourly or flat fee for the representation. Judicare attorneys are generally located in places where the expense of travel for GLSP staff attorneys is the greatest.

Clinics

Many volunteers actively participate through our regular clinics and dedicate a few hours or a day to providing advice and/or brief services to clients. The type of clinics varies between regional offices, but these clinics are generally concentrated to a few areas of law, a small service area, and rarely result in prolonged services afterward.

For the public, we post our upcoming pro bono legal clinics online on the home page of [GeorgiaLegalAid](#). Volunteers may access the same site, but we also post these clinics for them on our [GeorgiaAdvocates](#) page. This same calendar is emailed monthly to all advocates registered with the advocate website.

State Bar Special Projects- Child Support Helpline



GLSP and the Pro Bono Committee of the State Bar of Georgia Family Law Section have launched a rural pro bono Child Support Worksheet Helpline.

Georgia's Child Support Worksheets provide the framework for determining the appropriate amount of child support under Georgia law. The child support calculator is used to enter the financial information of both parents to calculate the appropriate amount of child support according to Georgia's statutory Child Support Guidelines.

Volunteer lawyers from the State Bar of Georgia Family Law Section will assist callers with the calculator and preparing the required Child Support Worksheets. Un-represented litigants needing help with the child support calculator can call (404) 526- 8609. A volunteer lawyer will then work with the caller to prepare Child Support Worksheets for his or her case. The Child Support Worksheets will be emailed or mailed to the caller.

The Family Law Section of the State Bar of Georgia has over 1,500 members and seeks to educate its members through continuing education and monitoring and reporting on legislation. The Child Support Helpline is an opportunity for the Section members to give back to Georgians in need of legal services who cannot afford it. Georgia Legal Services Program, which serves 154 mostly rural counties outside metro Atlanta, is partnering with the Section to launch the pilot project. GLSP receives many calls daily from people looking for legal help in connection with child support. The legal aid program will refer many of those callers to the new Child Support Helpline. [Press release attached]

State Bar Special Projects- ABA Free Legal Answers

GLSP has entered into an agreement with Baker Donelson LLP and the ABA Center for Pro Bono to host the Georgia instance of ABAFreeLegalAnswers.org. The Georgia site (GeorgiaLegalAnswers.org) is currently being marketed only to large Atlanta law firm lawyers and to rural low-income households in the state. This strategy will help overcome the rural lawyer shortage in Georgia, matching lawyers with the rural poor who have legal problems. GLSP has developed a marketing plan to attract volunteer lawyers. Lawyers will sign up and create online profiles in our website, giving GLSP an additional pro bono panel. While these lawyers will be committed to providing advice services through the site, we will also market our usual LSC pro bono opportunities and training to them and recognize them so that they will be fully integrated volunteers. The Atlanta office of Alston & Bird LLP runs the daily activities of the site as one of its pro bono signature projects.

Military Legal Assistance Program

We continue to explore the best ways to provide targeted legal services to service members and Veterans. We will continue to maintain our statewide support website for volunteers who are helping veterans and active military personnel. We regularly provide volunteer lawyers at VA benefits fairs and "stand down" events.

In July of 2020, MLAP was brought fully under the GLSP umbrella and will provide more targeted assistance to low-income veterans while expanding services available through improved connections to other staff and pro bono initiatives.

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 use law student interns to support volunteer lawyers on a limited basis, usually in the development and referral of PAI cases and for supporting pro bono legal clinics. We also offer law students the opportunity to develop PAI volunteer support materials and PAI-themed social media outreach opportunities. Our law students also participate in the development and staging of PAI recognition and training events.

GLSP pro bono coordinators and managing attorneys will work to exploit Georgia's [Law Student Practice Rule](#). The Georgia Office of Bar Admissions' 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.

Once graduated from law school, GLSP often works with these volunteers on a case-by-case basis through the local field offices under the guidance of a supervising attorney.

Paralegals

Our Savannah office also works regularly with students from local technical programs, colleges, and universities seeking degrees in paralegal studies or who are considering attending law school. These volunteers may support screenings, client communication, or provide other assistance to their team.

Court Reporters

GLSP has a decades-old Pro Bono Court Reporters Project that provides free take-down and print copies for pro bono depositions and some hearing work in our larger cities.

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. Our main hub for volunteer training and support is our statewide advocate support site, www.GeorgiaAdvocates.org. We remain fully committed to this site and practice areas will continue adding and updating training and support content on this site and make it available to all our volunteer types. GLSP has been working with ProBono.net, our website vendor, to update and relaunch our volunteer support template.

GLSP also hosts periodic webinars – many CLE-accredited—as well as podcasts and local bar presentations on pro bono and substantive law for volunteer lawyers. Most of this content is added to GeorgiaAdvocates.org and made available to volunteers on a 24/7 basis.

GLSP employs several specialist attorneys in the areas of family law, housing, public benefits and health law. These attorneys are available to our volunteers and connected to them as needed by our local pro bono coordinators. Staff attorneys in our local field offices also help support volunteers in our PAI 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 our local offices and assists with CLE programming, local bar presentations, online [volunteer pledge forms](#) and 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 both celebrate achievements, reward our team, and encourage future pro bono participation. GLSP does this in several ways.

Our lawyer volunteers are recognized through the [State Bar of Georgia 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. Several regional offices host local award and recognition events in tandem with their bar associations and with staff support.

Non-attorneys are included in presentations, nominations for state and local awards, and other events as available. One example is GLSP's State Bar Pro Bono Resource Center championing the State Bar of Georgia law school Access to Justice Awards.

Case Management

Intake and Eligibility

GLSP allows potential applicants to apply by 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. To be eligible for pro bono services, the applicant must have household income at or below 125 percent of the Federal Poverty level.

In addition, GLSP Board of Directors has determined, by legal problem type, the matters that can qualify for representation by GLSP. The limited resources available to meet the needs of low-income Georgians make this type of prioritization necessary. Some types of legal problems can only be accepted if a pro bono attorney is willing to accept the case.

Referrals

After an applicant has been determined to be eligible for GLSP services, the case is reviewed in the local office covering the applicant’s county. The applicant is contacted and more information about their situation and their legal need is obtained.

Information about upcoming court deadlines, etc. are key to determining if a case is appropriate for pro bono referral. The length of time it takes to place a case with a volunteer attorney eliminates cases with rapidly approaching deadlines. The applicant’s access to reliable transportation is another factor considered. With knowledge of all relevant factors, the managing attorney of the office makes the decision that a case is appropriate for placement with a volunteer attorney.

Once a case has been designated for placement with a volunteer attorney, the list of volunteer attorneys is reviewed. In making determinations about which lawyers to contact, the various staff making contacts with attorneys take into consideration the geographic location, substantive areas of the law and when the attorney last took a pro bono case. Attempts to place cases are made by telephone and email contact.

Follow Up

Following referral of a case, GLSP staff regularly follow-up on the case to determine the status of representation. The follow-up is done 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.

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.

Outreach and Social Media

Pledge

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

The screenshot shows the 'Recommended / Other Users' section of the Legal Server. It contains a table with the following data:

Referral Attempts	Attorney	User	Date	Contact Method	Outcome	Notes	Actions
	Wille XNelson	Michael L. Monahan	09/21/2011	Phone	Accept	N/A	Edit Delete
	Wille XNelson	Michael L. Monahan	09/21/2011	Phone	Accept	N/A	Edit Delete

Below this is the 'Probono Users' section, which displays a table of 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
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
Tangela King	N/A	MACON (8)	Problem Code Match	County Match	N/A	0	Bibb	1 (1)	N/A	06/30/2004	Buaf and Associates	Assign	N/A	0
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 & SPRIVEY, LLP	Assign	N/A	0
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

Figure 1 Screen Shot of Referral Recommendations in Legal Server



Social Media

GLSP and its State Bar of Georgia Pro Bono Resource Center employ [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#) to publicize pro bono events like clinics and volunteer trainings, highlight volunteer efforts and educate the public and volunteers about pro bono and access to justice issues. Our main website, [GLSP.org](#), also is used for these purposes. We have web pages devoted to [Private Attorney Involvement](#) (PAI) at and on our State Bar of Georgia [Pro Bono Resource Center](#) page.

Information, Obstacles, and Challenges

Volunteer Perspectives on Client Need

We posted online in mid-2018 a survey for Georgia lawyers that asked their thoughts about critical legal needs of the poor in their community. We also asked lawyers for information they might have on local legal resources, their thoughts on ways they might participate in pro bono with us, and how their local bar associations might be helpful.

The survey tells us that you and your fellow lawyers believe the most critical legal needs of the poor in your community (and our service territory) are:

1. A range of family law matters, including family violence, divorce, and child support;
2. Consumer law, including debt collection and bankruptcy;
3. Landlord-tenant matters, including evictions, repairs, and security deposits; and
4. Senior citizen (elder) law.

These case types are representative of the kinds of cases handled by GLSP staff attorney. These are also the kinds of cases we would like to place with volunteer lawyers.

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.

We include here for simplicity's sake this summary report excerpt.

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.
8. 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.

-- Legal Needs Survey Presented to the
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 65-plus counties with 15 or fewer lawyers. See “Too Few Lawyers in Areas of Poverty” Map.

We have additional information on lawyers in our service territory who are 65 years of age and older—“Baby Boom” lawyers who, if they have not yet retired, are likely winding down their practices or will not be available to us as volunteers within 3-5 years. Georgia’s *emeritus* practice rule has a high age 70 threshold for *emeritus* status. When the 65-plus data is added into the access to justice equation, the six counties without a lawyer increases to 11 counties. The 29 counties with 5 or fewer lawyers increases to 41 counties with 5 or fewer lawyers. And remember, for purposes of this count, “lawyer” also includes judges, prosecutors, public defenders—lawyers not available to provide free civil legal services to the poor.

It is imperative that our local GLSP field offices recruit and support volunteers in those areas of the map **shaded in grey and darker blue** to support the needs of our clients located in the **lighter blue and yellow** areas. Our past models have accomplished this by:

1. Placing court and administrative cases with volunteer lawyers on a one-on-one basis in our priority areas:
 - a. Family law (with family violence as a priority, as volunteers available otherwise);
 - b. Consumer law (collections cases, Chapter 7s to save the home place, improper garnishments);
 - c. Housing (Foreclosure prevention, Public housing, Landlord/Tenant);
 - d. School tribunal cases (School-to-Prison Pipeline); and
 - e. Wills and Estates, Powers of Attorney.
2. Hosting Advice and Brief Services (limited scope work) Clinics on:

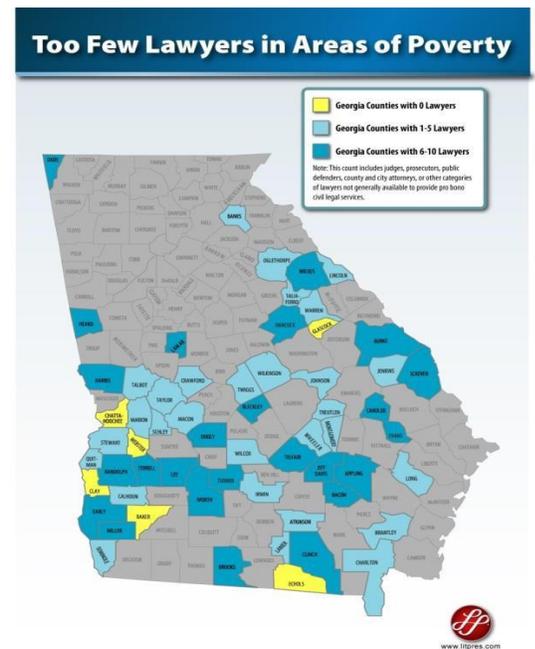


Figure 2 Too Few Lawyers in Areas of Poverty Map



- a. General legal advice topics;
- b. Family Law;
- c. Wills and Estates;
- d. Education Law; and
- e. Landlord/Tenant Law.

Meeting the Needs in 2020

Under the leadership of a new Executive Director in 2019, the pro bono program began efforts to transform the program by centralizing the team of coordinators, expanding our volunteer opportunities, and finding creative ways to engage with Atlanta-based members of the State Bar. These efforts are allowing us to resolve some of the long-standing obstacles to a more successful program.

In 2020, GLSP will still be undergoing the planning and development of many of these pro bono initiatives.

Addressing Statewide Client Need through Remote Services

GLSP heavily invested in the hire of several, full-time attorneys to the pro bono program, each to act as a project leader in a statewide legal area: consumer, housing, military benefits, and record restriction. Though the projects themselves are in various stages of development, each is tasked with identifying actionable, impactful legal services that can be completed entirely remotely and can connect client needs with members of the private bar wherever either is located.

To further our 2020 theme of statewide services, GLSP is also encouraging all coordinators to find creative approaches to clinic and outreach services. Conducting events remotely not only increases the ability of our team to widen their reach to clients and volunteers, it also improves the professional development and collaborative opportunities of our staff, who rarely see and work together to achieve goals.

Finally, we also plan to increase recruitment to the 70% of Georgia lawyers who live and work in the Atlanta metro-region. As GLSP's 154-county area does not serve clients in Atlanta, our involvement with local bar associations, law firms, and other attorney organizations has been minimal here. To this end, we applied for 2020 Pro Bono Innovation Grant funding and were fortunate to receive an award to conduct a more in-depth review of the program and use our findings to successfully establish a project targeting such groups.

Bringing Lawyers to Lawyer-less Counties

For the 6 counties shaded in yellow in the "Too Few Lawyers in Areas of Poverty" Map, we will recruit volunteer lawyers in other areas of the state and provide access to these volunteer lawyers via:

1. Local Legal Advice Clinics in neighboring counties;
2. Virtual Legal Clinics;
3. The Georgia Child Support Calculator Helpline that is a partnership between the State Bar of Georgia Family Law Section and GLSP;
4. Georgia.FreeLegalAnswers.org (launched in 2017); and
5. Distance services provided by volunteer lawyers from our structured pro bono program housed in the Georgia Lawyers for Equal Justice "incubator."

For the public, we post our upcoming pro bono legal clinics online on the home page of [GeorgiaLegalAid](#). Volunteers may access the same site, but we also post these clinics for them on our [GeorgiaAdvocates](#) page. This same calendar is emailed monthly to all advocates registered with the



advocate website.

Starting in 2019, the GLSP Pro Bono Project began exploring the possibility of statewide, remote delivery of legal services to further these efforts and full implementation of this plan is ongoing in 2020.

Learning More about Lawyers in Georgia to Improve Pro Bono Participation

In December 2016, our Savannah Regional Office conducted a Pro Bono Climate Survey the results of which are found [here](#). The survey was shared with approximately 600 members of the Savannah Bar Association. Sixty lawyers – about 10% of the bar membership—responded. Those who responded were largely members of the Baby Boomer generation, from solo and small firm backgrounds, all of whom provided some level of pro bono services in the preceding 12 months. The survey respondents indicated the top four issues discouraging them from providing pro bono services are: time limitations, scheduling conflicts, (client meeting) travel expectations and solo/small firm economics. Respondents also indicated that they did not have a pro bono plan in place for their practice.

GLSP partners with the State Bar of Georgia and the State Bar of Georgia Young Lawyers Division in the provision of disaster legal services, the disaster legal services hotline, disaster law volunteer lawyer recruitment and in help clinics and on individual cases.

GLSP has created a Senior Lawyer/Baby Boomer Pro Bono Project in its Piedmont region to reach out to lawyers who are retiring or nearing retirement. The project entails creating “in-house” volunteer positions for retiring lawyers to provide help with intake, brief services and advice and web resources navigation. Our Savannah Regional Office has taken advantage of retired lawyers to provide legal assistance for over 20 years.

GLSP has partnered with the State Bar of Georgia in its Due Justice pro bono message campaign. In 2020, GLSP will continue to adopt the Due Justice marketing approach and material. GLSP pro bono coordinators will accept volunteer lawyers recruited through the Bar under the campaign.

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 low-income persons.⁴⁵ C.F.R. Sec. 1614.4. GLSP is currently seeking comments on this proposed plan. Please provide comments to Mike Monahan, GLSP Pro Bono Director, 104 Marietta St. NW, Suite 250, Atlanta, GA 30303. You can also contact us by email at mmonahan@glsp.org or reach out to Lisa Krisher, Senior Director of Litigation, at lkrisher@glsp.org.

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