



**LEGAL  
SERVICES  
VERMONT**

## Volunteer Orientation and Pro Bono FAQ

Thank you for your interest in volunteering with Legal Services Vermont! We are a nonprofit law firm based in Burlington and serve all of Vermont. We offer a wide range of civil legal services—from quick legal advice to full-scope representation—and community legal education for low-income Vermonters. We empower individuals and families by helping them develop the knowledge and skills to stand up for themselves.

We believe the legal system must be open to everyone, whether or not they have a lawyer, which is why all our services are completely free. We receive approximately 2,000 calls for help every month. On any given day, our lawyers and paralegals might help someone get heat back on in their apartment, help a senior reclaim their lost Social Security benefits, help a domestic violence survivor get protective orders from the court, or help a family navigate the eviction process.

Our Pro Bono Program is an important part of this work. We offer a variety of ways for volunteer attorneys to get involved, from taking individual cases to limited representation clinics, based on your interests and availability. LSV **pre-screens clients for financial eligibility and to ensure that their legal problems can be solved by a lawyer.** We also provide malpractice insurance, training, mentoring, and reimbursement for expenses like mileage, filing fees and copying. By offering your time to help, you can help us fight poverty and give power to Vermonters in need.

This packet will provide you with answers to frequently asked questions. Please feel free to reach out to us with any questions at any time by emailing [volunteer@legalservicesvt.org](mailto:volunteer@legalservicesvt.org).

## Frequently Asked Questions

1. What opportunities are available to volunteers?
2. What can I expect if I want to participate in a legal clinic?
3. What can I expect if I agree to take a case as a direct referral?
4. What expenses are eligible for reimbursement and how do I get reimbursed?
5. Does LSV offer malpractice insurance to pro bono attorneys?
6. What if I have a legal question about how to help my client?
7. What if I need training on a particular area of law? How can I suggest training ideas I have?
8. What do I do if I am having difficulty reaching or communicating with my client?
9. My client requires an interpreter, do you have a service I can use?
10. What if the client needs additional help after I handled the pro bono matter I agreed to work on?
11. What happens if I get an award of attorney's fees?
12. What if I am too busy to take a case right now but want to at a future time?

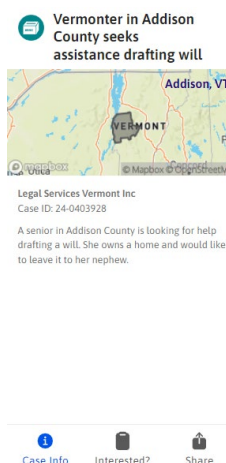


### FIND ANSWERS TO THESE COMMON QUESTIONS:

#### 1) WHAT OPPORTUNITIES ARE AVAILABLE TO VOLUNTEERS?

There are many opportunities available for pro bono through LSV. You can tell us more about your legal experience and volunteer interests by filling out our [Volunteer Inquiry Form](#).

Attorneys can take **individual cases** as a direct referral in several areas that LSV does not specifically cover like wills, probate, certain real estate transactions, and more. Available cases are posted on our website [here](#), and appear as cards like the example below.



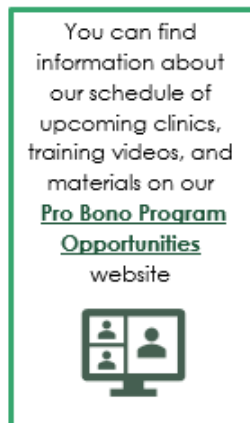
To express interest in a case, click the Interested button, enter your information and click Submit. This will notify us that you are interested and we will follow up with you. If you have questions about a case, you can always email us at [volunteer@legalservicesvt.org](mailto:volunteer@legalservicesvt.org).

We also host two different types of legal clinics. Our **Family Law Clinics** connect volunteers with pre-screened clients for limited counsel and advice on family law-related matters. These clinics are held remotely via phone or Microsoft Teams, so you can volunteer from the convenience of your home or office.

Our **Rent Escrow Clinics** assist unrepresented tenants at rent escrow hearings in Addison, Chittenden, Franklin, Rutland and Washington counties. These clinics offer limited representation to clients facing eviction under Vermont’s limited appearance rules and only require the commitment of a few hours. This is a great volunteer opportunity to have an immediate impact on an important issue and help prevent homelessness.

You can also sign up to provide brief advice on a variety of issues to callers who contact our asynchronous **legal advice helpline**, be on our **referral list for bankruptcy or Social Security**, or join our **probate panel** of volunteer attorneys who can help low-income heirs through the probate process.

## 2) WHAT CAN I EXPECT IF I WANT TO PARTICIPATE IN A LEGAL CLINIC?



Our Family Law Clinic is remote and our Rent Escrow Clinics are largely in-person with a hybrid option in most counties. We offer several CLEs for Rent Escrow Clinics and hope to be able to offer training in family law soon.

At the clinics, **LSV staff participate and are available to assist volunteers with their cases and consult as needed.** LSV will pre-screen clients, fill out necessary intake forms, and assist volunteers with court forms as applicable. LSV staff provides any necessary follow up legal services, so the volunteer’s commitment is entirely limited to the legal clinic.

In addition to finding these opportunities on our website, attorneys can contact us at [volunteer@legalservicesvt.org](mailto:volunteer@legalservicesvt.org).

## 3) WHAT CAN I EXPECT IF I AGREE TO TAKE A CASE AS A DIRECT REFERRAL?

Our Pro Bono Coordinator will work to match you with a client based on your interests and time commitment. When we have identified a volunteer opportunity, **we will provide you with a brief description of the case, along with sufficient information to conduct a conflict check.** If you accept the referral, we will send you a case description and intake notes, as well as all documents the client has provided to LSV. We can also offer you access to our case management system and web-based phone software.

We tell all client referrals that we cannot guarantee that volunteers will provide a certain or specific service. Like with any client, we recommend that you meet with your pro bono client as soon as practicable so that you can both establish expectations and results. Once you have accepted a referral, LSV will request a status update from you every sixty (60) days or so until the representation has ended.

At the conclusion of the case, you will send back to us a Case Closure Form, and if applicable, a **Reimbursement Form** (See Appendix A).

**4) WHAT EXPENSES ARE ELIGIBLE FOR REIMBURSEMENT AND HOW DO I GET REIMBURSED?**

LSV can reimburse pro bono attorneys for certain fees, such as mileage, copying and filing fees. Please check in with us if you are unsure whether something is reimbursable before incurring the expense. At the end of a case, a pro bono attorney can fill out the **Reimbursement Form** (Appendix A) and submit it, along with any relevant receipts. LSV will then review and send payment to the pro bono attorney for all eligible expenses.

**5) DOES LSV OFFER MALPRACTICE INSURANCE TO PRO BONO ATTORNEYS?**

Yes! LSV offers malpractice insurance for any case we refer to you. You do not need to do anything to sign up for the coverage. The LSV insurance retainer includes coverage for any volunteer who takes on a case, as long as you are the volunteer of record in our case management system. If you have your own insurance, our insurance can still serve as the primary coverage, or act as a secondary carrier.

**6) WHAT IF I HAVE A LEGAL QUESTION ABOUT HOW TO HELP MY CLIENT?**

Please let us know! The Pro Bono Manager is an attorney who will help talk out legal issues, connect you with another staff member or volunteer with knowledge in that area of law, or provide additional resources if you run into a problem or need help working out next steps in a pro bono case.

**7) WHAT IF I NEED TRAINING ON A PARTICULAR AREA OF LAW OR HAVE SUGGESTIONS FOR TRAINING?**

LSV is here to support you! If you are willing to work with pro bono clients in an area of law you are not familiar with, we have access to various resources in our training library. This includes recorded CLE videos, sample forms and pleadings, or other manuals.

Our recorded trainings cover housing, consumer issues, and simple wills. We can provide links to these training videos on request. If you would like access, please email us at [volunteer@legalservicesvt.org](mailto:volunteer@legalservicesvt.org).

If you have an idea or would take a pro bono case if you had the right training, please talk to us about it and we will see if it is something we can coordinate.

**AVAILABLE  
SUPPORTS FOR  
PRO BONO  
ATTORNEYS**

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Malpractice  
Insurance



Legal Questions  
& Answers



Training &  
Resources



### 8) **WHAT DO I DO IF I AM HAVING DIFFICULTY REACHING OR COMMUNICATING WITH MY CLIENT?**

Sometimes you may agree to help a client and find you cannot reach them. If you can't reach the client on the first attempt, we advise sending them a text and then calling again a short time later. We will provide you with sample texts and web-based phone software for calling and texting clients. If a client does not respond after several attempts, please let us

know. We will help you try to contact the client and can also help you close out the case if the attempts to reach the client are unsuccessful.

If you are experiencing problems communicating with your client, please discuss this with us. **We would be glad to help troubleshoot** and talk out possible solutions. If continuing to work with a particular client is not possible, we can help you wrap up services and try to find a different referral for the client. We are here to help work out any client-related issues should they arise, so please discuss with us if you face a client-related problem.

### 9) **MY CLIENT REQUIRES AN INTERPRETER, DO YOU HAVE A SERVICE I CAN USE?**

We do! Our office uses **Language Line** as our interpreter service. If you require an interpreter to speak with your client, please let us know and we can provide access to our Language Line account. If you require in person interpretation, including ASL, please let us know and we can discuss arranging that with you.

### 10) **WHAT IF THE CLIENT NEEDS ADDITIONAL HELP AFTER I HANDLED THE PRO BONO MATTER I AGREED TO WORK ON?**

If your pro bono service has ended but your client has identified a new legal issue or needs further assistance beyond the scope of your representation, you should let us know. We can point the client to other resources or potentially assist them on our help line. You may also re-direct new legal issues to our intake line at 800-889-2047.

### 11) **WHAT HAPPENS IF I GET AN AWARD OF ATTORNEY'S FEES?**

If you have a case in which the court permits an award of attorney's fees, you or your firm may retain those fees. This arrangement should be clearly set forth in your retainer letter to avoid any confusion at the conclusion of the matter. If attorney's fees are recovered the case is no longer considered a pro bono referral. That means moving forward in the case, it would not be covered under our malpractice insurance and you would have to discuss a fee arrangement with your client.

**AVAILABLE  
CLIENTS  
SUPPORTS**

*just call*



*or email!*



**12) WHAT IF I AM TOO BUSY TO TAKE A CASE RIGHT NOW BUT WANT TO AT A FUTURE TIME?**

If you are interested in pro bono opportunities, but too busy to take a case or participate in a clinic right now, we can keep your name on our attorney list and check back periodically to see if you are available.



## Pro Bono Case Reimbursement Request Form

Attorney Name:

Date:

Client:

LSV Case No. (internal only):

Funding Code (internal only):

Were attorney's fees awarded:  Yes  No

Total Amount Requesting: \$

Purpose of Request:

- Filing Fee: \$
- Interpreter: \$
- Subpoena: \$
- Deposition: \$
- Copying: \$
- Mileage: 0.67 (2024 rate) x \_\_\_\_\_ miles = \$
- Other (explain): \_\_\_\_\_

Make Check(s) Payable to:

Mail Check to (if same, write "same"):

Advocate Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date:

(Please attach supporting documentation and receipts as appropriate)

Internal Use Only	
For Expenses Over \$100.00:	
Approved By:	Approval Date:

Please return to: Legal Services Vermont 274 North Winooski Ave Burlington, VT 05401 or email to [volunteer@legalservicesvt.org](mailto:volunteer@legalservicesvt.org).