



Pro Bono Panel Membership

Legal Services for Children (LSC) was founded in 1975 as one of the first non-profit law firms in the country to provide free legal representation and social work services to children and youth. Our mission is to ensure that all children and youth in the Bay Area have an opportunity to be raised in a safe environment with equal access to a meaningful education and the services and supports they need to become healthy and productive young adults. LSC pioneered a unique interdisciplinary approach to legal services, employing teams of attorneys and social workers to comprehensively meet the needs of their clients. LSC's team advocacy approach enables us to provide a wide spectrum of services. LSC represents children and youth in cases that include legal guardianship, dependency, school discipline, immigration, and other proceedings.

Our Pro Bono Panel supports the work of in-house attorneys and social workers, providing over 4,000 hours per year of free legal assistance and advocacy to some of the most vulnerable Bay Area youth.

Pro Bono Panel Overview

As a LSC Pro Bono Panel member, you can make a major difference in a child's life. Whether you are experienced or just starting out in your career, no matter what your area of legal expertise, you have the skills to advocate for a child at a time of crisis. While every client is different, and every case brings its unique challenges, you will find the pro bono experience quite rewarding. We do everything possible to help you achieve the best result.

Training — Most first-time pro bono attorneys do not have a background in our core areas of practice. We provide in-person trainings and also have various web-based trainings, as well as practice manuals and many sample documents to assist you in handling school discipline, guardianship, and immigration cases. In-person trainings typically take 1.5 hours and can be scheduled for small groups right in your office.

Mentorship — When you accept a case, we will assign an experienced supervising attorney to answer your questions throughout the case. You will also have telephone access to our attorney-of-the-day for questions that need immediate responses.

Support — Many LSC pro bono cases involve close collaboration with LSC social workers, who are available to provide support to the clients throughout their case. Our social workers are an invaluable resource in working with young clients.

Time — We send out case announcements by email. You can accept a case whenever it fits your schedule. School discipline cases typically take only 20 hours, with guardianship cases and immigration cases requiring more time.

What Types of Cases are Available?

Representing Children in School Expulsion Proceedings:

In a school discipline case, pro bono attorneys represent children facing expulsion or other disciplinary action to ensure that their due process rights are upheld. All too often, these youth have been unfairly targeted by zero-tolerance policies in our public schools. Time and again, we see that children who are represented by counsel in school discipline matters achieve more positive results and life-changing second chances.

Representing Children in Legal Guardianship Proceedings:

Unfortunately, there are many situations in which a child or young person cannot live with his or her parents. A legal guardianship allows the minor to stay with a relative or another adult and gives that relationship legal protection. Guardianships can offer a great deal of stability for the minor. Volunteer attorneys represent minors or caretakers in petitioning the Probate Court for a legal guardianship. The process includes meeting with the child and caregiver, preparing legal documents, and appearing at a court hearing.

Representing Children in Immigration Matters:

Undocumented youth, who have been the victims of abuse, neglect or abandonment are eligible for a benefit called Special Immigrant Juvenile Status, which will allow them to seek legal residency in the U.S. rather than return to their home country, where they may have no safe place to live. Volunteer attorneys assist these youth by preparing the immigration application and supporting documents. Most of these cases also involve assisting youth in securing legal guardianships with caretakers here in the United States. Volunteer attorneys also assist youth in applications for asylum if they have a fear of return to their home country and in U visas, which are available to victims of crimes such as domestic violence, child abuse, rape, assault, and trafficking. For children who are in Immigration Court proceedings, volunteers also provide representation in immigration hearings before the Department of Justice's Immigration Court.

To find out more information about joining LSC's Pro Bono Panel contact us at (415) 863-3762 or probono@lsc-sf.org.