



The State of South Carolina
OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL

HENRY MCMASTER
ATTORNEY GENERAL

Pro Bono Program General Information

An original concept of Attorney General Henry McMaster, the Pro Bono program was designed around the idea that private attorneys might volunteer on a totally *pro bono* basis to prosecute cases of criminal domestic violence that are heard in Summary Court. Launched in January 2004, the program has handled more than 1600 cases and has a 73% average conviction rate. The program is active in Kershaw, Lee, York and Pickens counties and the cities of West Columbia, Orangeburg, Columbia, and Winnsboro. Expansion efforts plan to include the counties of Sumter, Anderson, Greenwood, Florence, Cherokee and Fairfield before the end of the 2006 calendar year. There have been more than 100 attorneys trained to participate in the program since its inception, and there are currently forty-nine (49) attorneys who actively prosecute cases for the program.

This is an extremely flexible program that keeps the interests of both the court and the attorney in mind; therefore, in no two counties and for no two attorneys does the Pro Bono program operate exactly the same. We work hand-in-hand with courts and attorneys to accommodate everyone's schedules while also moving forward with caseloads.

Because the program is not currently active in all counties, there are a couple of options available to attorneys, should they decide to participate. First, one may decide to prosecute cases in an already designated pro bono jurisdiction. In this instance, one would receive case assignments on a regular basis. The Pro Bono program would provide all pertinent case documents and support needed.

Second, one may wish to prosecute cases in jurisdictions that are not currently under the program. This option is particularly attractive to attorneys who reside in areas that are not easily accessible to pro bono jurisdictions. In this instance, one would only be assigned to cases for which the Solicitor's office or law enforcement agency requested assistance. Case assignments in those jurisdictions would be a much more irregular occurrence than in an established Pro Bono county.

In either situation, one would be in complete control of how many appointments the program assigns; some attorneys regularly try two cases a month for the program, while others that take one case every-other-month or less. One always has the opportunity to discuss caseloads with the Pro Bono program coordinator, and one has the option of declining a case appointment.

For each case appointment that an attorney accepts, s/he will receive Rule 608 credit through the Supreme Court. The Pro Bono program will notify the clerk of court for the attorney's county that the attorney has accepted a pro bono case from this office.

What is the first step? All attorneys who wish to participate in the Pro Bono program must attend a one-day training, sponsored by this office, regarding domestic violence. Each of these trainings is accredited for 6.25 hours through the Commission on CLE. Once that is completed, attorneys may begin accepting their case assignments.

A complete list of training dates and locations is available online at www.SCAttorneyGeneral.com/public/women.php.

Please contact the Pro Bono program with any questions or comments:

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