



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 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 2024 and beyond.

Each GLSP regional office is encouraged to craft a plan that meets local client legal needs and takes advantage of local attorneys’ skills and interests. GLSP’s 2024 priorities for the delivery of legal services are: Families, Health, Housing, and Income Maintenance and Education. Our 2024 PAI plan honors these priorities. We host statewide pro bono “signature projects,” respond to emerging local, regional and statewide legal needs that can be met by the use of volunteers and support our regional offices in their work to fashion local responses using volunteers.

Our 2024 pro bono team includes a mix of lawyers, law students, paralegals and other professionals. Our pro bono team is led by a Pro Bono Director (lawyer), Deputy Director (a lawyer assigned to large law firm and law school outreach), and 2 supervising attorneys- one in our Central office and one in our Savannah Regional Office. We have five additional attorney positions, one each in our regional offices in Augusta, Columbus, Gainesville/Athens, Macon, and Piedmont. In addition to the lawyer positions, we have 3 non-lawyer pro bono coordinators on the team in these offices: Central, Albany, Brunswick, and Dalton.

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 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. Our central administrative office is located in Atlanta and many of our

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

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, 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 in 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, our Pro Bono Director is housed 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 Pro Bono Team staff lawyers 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.

For many years, our pro bono engagement relied on active participation from solo and small-firm lawyers in small-city and rural Georgia. Staff coordinated cases through their local bar associations and relationships with the private bar among staff to cultivate a dedicated group of volunteer case handlers and advice-givers in small and under-resourced *ad hoc* clinics. We have always urged lawyers to think strategically about pro bono and to include pro bono in their annual business plans. We asked 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.

We have had in-house volunteer lawyers in our Central, Savannah, Augusta, and Brunswick offices who have consistently provide a high level of service to our clients. We will maintain that opportunity for retired or semi-retired lawyers-volunteers.

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.



Transformation

In 2019, GLSP initiated an expansive long-term effort to transform its pro bono program. We chose the overarching goal of fully integrating our pro bono program into GLSP's overall civil legal services delivery system. We chose to examine organizational structure, staffing, resources, methods and data.

In 2020, in furtherance of fully transforming our pro bono program we applied for and received (in the Fall of 2020) a large grant from the federal Legal Services Corporation. Activity around that three-year grant is focused on collaboration, external and internal communication, and case management systems improvements. In the first quarter of 2021 GLSP conducted an exhaustive assessment of its pro bono program.

In 2022, GLSP reorganized the staffing of its pro bono program into a statewide Pro Bono Team comprised of the part-time non-attorney staff within each field office, part-time project management, a total of seven full-time lawyer-coordinator positions, GLSP's pro bono director and administrative staff. We are conducting in 2024 a mid-transformation assessment of our pro bono program with staff, volunteers, judges, law schools, and others.

In the fall of 2022, GLSP received a special project grant from the Legal Services Corporation to increase the standardization of our pro bono practices and procedures and to implement cross-training for our pro bono team staff across the state. Much of this grant work will take place in 2024.

As before, regional offices continue local pro bono activities within their regions. Our current statewide signature project clinics are Disaster Legal Services, Records Restriction, and Wills & Estates. We also have a unique legal clinic partnership with Mercer University's law school centered on bankruptcy that we began in 2023 and which is continuing into 2024. With our increased attorney staffing we plan to develop additional signature projects in 2024. Each signature project is directed by one of GLSP's pro bono coordinator attorneys who provides subject matter expertise and support for volunteers, training development, clinic management and case placement. Each signature project provides pro bono opportunities for lawyers, law students, and law graduates.

These statewide signature projects work alone or with our regional offices to stage virtual, hybrid or in-person legal clinics and law-related events and are aimed squarely at connecting pro bono large firm and corporate counsel lawyers from metropolitan areas with our small-city and rural clients.

Our legal clinics are friendly to volunteer lawyers in metro-Atlanta who wish to participate virtually in our rural and small-city clinics...

For 2023 and beyond, the State Bar of Georgia contracted with Paladin ([Paladin](https://joinpaladin.com) (joinpaladin.com)) to support legal organizations in Georgia. The Bar-promoted website will



allow GLSP (and other programs) to post volunteer opportunities for Bar members. GLSP tested Paladin (<https://app.joinpaladin.com/gaprobono/>) in mid-2022 for the State Bar Access to Justice Committee.

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 new pro bono signature projects lean heavily toward providing lawyers with limited-scope service work that is respectful of time commitments and still provides valuable services to clients.

Regional Pro Bono Services

While we have added pro bono legal clinics to our service delivery model, we remain committed to matching one client to one volunteer lawyer in the traditional model of helping our clients. At the regional level we continue to ask volunteers to represent our clients in court and before administrative forums. Our regional offices have a coordinator who can assist the local office in identifying suitable cases for pro bono and matching the case to a volunteer. Attorneys can specify the types of cases they are willing to consider. Clients served have household incomes at or below 125% of the federally established poverty level with some limited factors that may allow representation up to 200% of the federal 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. We advertise all of our pro bono cases to lawyers across the state through the aforementioned Paladin platform (<https://app.joinpaladin.com/gaprobono/>).

Statewide Pro Bono Services

GLSP's Pro Bono Signature Projects (Disaster Law, Records Restriction, and Wills) allow us to reach into lawyer-rich metro Atlanta and throughout the state and provide volunteer opportunities across our 154-county service territory. We will host virtual, hybrid and in-person legal clinics for each of the signature projects, host special and small "impat" legal clinics with large law firm and corporate counsel partners and market the clinics to potential clients in our regions and to potential volunteers.

Opportunities for Lawyers

In 2024, we are continuing to implement new approaches to offer metro-Atlanta lawyers the

opportunity to provide pro bono services in rural Georgia. We have experience using technology to provide remote legal assistance through services such as Zoom and our hybrid and virtual legal clinic models.

One of our Pro Bono Team lawyers serves as a liaison with large law firms and corporate counsel programs in Atlanta and other areas of the state to connect their lawyers with pro bono opportunities in rural Georgia. We connect these lawyers to our limited scope pro bono signature projects (Records Restriction, Wills and Disaster Law) and our special “impact” legal clinics and to pro bono clients in our regional offices.

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 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. In 2024 GLSP will host alternative spring break activities focusing on service delivery for the law schools of Emory, the University of Georgia and Georgia State University as well as with other law schools that may contact us.

GLSP’s Pro Bono team 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 (ICLE) intend to launch 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. GLSP will monitor the progress of this proposed rule and implement a response that will support its volunteers under the rule.

As part of the transformation of our pro bono programming initiated in 2019, GLSP incorporated a structured law school outreach project. Each of our pro bono signature projects is required to offer pro bono opportunities to law students and law graduates. Importantly, we have designated one of our Pro Bono Team attorneys to serve as our liaison with law schools. This Team attorney will development law student opportunities from within GLSP, serve as our main point of contact with law schools, and track law student engagement.



Paralegals

Our Savannah office works regularly with students from local technical programs, colleges, and universities who are 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 under the supervision of a licensed attorney.

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.glsps.org/home/signup.php> .

GLSP also hosts periodic webinars – most Georgia CLE-accredited—as well as podcasts and local bar presentations on pro bono and substantive law for volunteer lawyers. We will continue this practice into 2024.

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 members of our Pro Bono Team. 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, 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 2024, we are launching a new volunteer recognition program which will be a mix of state-level and local recognition. Each of our regional offices will host local pro bono awards at local bar-sponsored events or at events sponsored by GLSP. These awards will become an annual event for each of the regional offices that we believe will increase awareness of pro bono opportunities at the local level and which will strengthen our connections in local communities.



Currently our lawyer volunteers are recognized through regional office and local bar partnerships, 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.

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 student Access to Justice Awards.

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 statewide pro bono clinic or to a regional office for case placement.

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.

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

Probono Attorney Name	Outreaches	Office	Subjects	Counties	Languages	# of Open Cases	Organization	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	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	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	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	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	Assign	N/A	0 Attempt Call

Figure 1 Screen Shot of Referral Recommendations in Legal Server

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.

Clients served by statewide clinics are invited first to a client education seminar targeting one of our signature project topics. The educational program helps us identify LSC-eligible clients who can most benefit from help in a clinic setting. Intake is held in conjunction with the educational seminar and afterwards we match our clinic clients with volunteer lawyers and provide the volunteers with client packets. The follow-up legal clinic is the final setting for the delivery of the legal services.

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. We use our monthly pro bono newsletter, *Pro Bono Insights*, to maintain contact with our volunteers over time and to keep other stakeholders informed about our programming.

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 problem code type, clinic interest and more.

Online

We use Paladin- <https://app.joinpaladin.com/gaprobono/> - 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 2024, GLSP will work to host several clinics with diversity and local bar 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 2024, GLSP will participate with the State Bar of Georgia in receiving the national and Georgia data from the 2023 ABA Pro Bono and Public Service National/State Pro Bono Survey. GLSP will review the volunteer 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.
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.


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

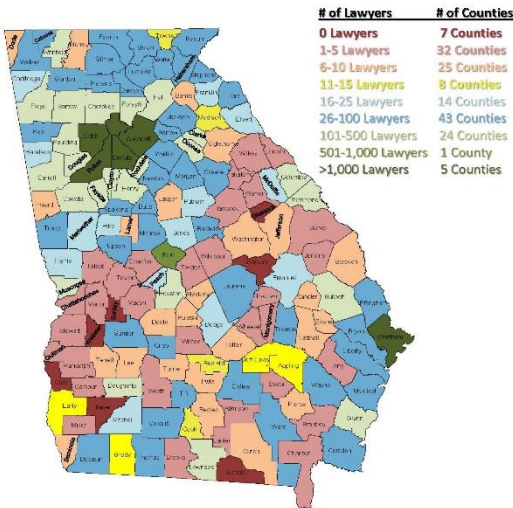
Lawyer-less Counties

There are seven Georgia counties that count no lawyer and an additional 65-plus counties with 15 or fewer lawyers.

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 seven 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.


Georgia Active Lawyers by County
November - 2023



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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 is currently seeks comments on this plan throughout the year. 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 krisher@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.