

MICHIGAN LAW'S PRO BONO PLEDGE

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"There's nothing better than helping hungry people get money for food." 1L, Food Stamp Advocacy Project

"I am really glad that I had the opportunity to interact with and represent the clients. Representing a client at a hearing was a very exciting and rare first-hand experience, especially as a 1L." 1L, Michigan Unemployment Insurance Project

"I felt like I was doing real work, to help a woman who wouldn't have had easy access to legal services if it weren't for us." 1L, Family Law Project

What is the Pro Bono Pledge?

Michigan's [Pro Bono Pledge](#) asks students to **perform 50 hours or more of "qualifying" pro bono work** over their three years in law school. To qualify for the Pledge, students' work must be: (1) law related; (2) supervised or approved by an attorney; (3) provided to the client free of charge or at a substantially reduced rate; (4) not for credit and uncompensated; (5) at least 10 of the 50 hours must be completed while classes are in session; and (6) provided to underrepresented persons, interests, or communities on behalf of a non-profit or government organization approved by the Pro Bono Program.

Is There a Smaller Pledge Goal for LLMs?

Yes, LLMs must complete 25 hours to satisfy the Pledge.

How do you recognize those who complete the pledge?

Graduating students performing at least 50 hours of pro bono work will receive a Certificate of Pro Bono Service from the Dean, recognition at an annual pro bono banquet, and acknowledgment during the Honors Convocation.

Can 1Ls do pro bono work?

Yes, of course! Many 1Ls have done so quite successfully, reporting that pro bono work kept them grounded in the midst of the fairly theoretical first-year courses. However, please note that some 1Ls find that pro bono work is too much to take on while they are also trying to navigate classes and a new environment, especially during the first semester. Please think about your own personality and study needs/habits before committing to help an organization.

How do I get started?

1. [Take the Pledge](#) and get added to our Pro Bono Listserv for announcements.
2. Visit the [Pro Bono Project Listings](#) to find a project that suits your interests. If there is nothing there that interests you now, please check back, as new projects are added regularly.

3. To get started on your project, find the "interest contact" within the project listing and email him or her to introduce yourself (i.e. *My name is Amy Sankaran, and I am a 2L at Michigan Law School who is very interested in x project*) and provide your contact information (phone and email). You and the organization will work out the exact details of your assignment, timing, etc.

We are happy to counsel you about the types of projects that might best suit your interests. To make an appointment with Amy Sankaran, see below.

If I take the Pledge, am I required to complete 50 hours of pro bono work?

No! While we encourage every student to take and complete the pledge, if you are unable to complete your hours during your time at the law school, we understand and there will be no negative consequences. Please take the Pledge even if you don't think you will complete it; that way, you will receive updates and news about pro bono projects that might interest you.

Can you provide some examples of work students have done?

Sure, while this list is not exhaustive by any means, students have worked with inmates at nearby prisons to educate them about their rights, helped investigate crime lab errors under the supervision of a public defender, coached a mock trial team at a local high school, worked with student organizations to assist indigent clients with all kinds of legal issues such as voting rights, food stamps, family law issues, unemployment benefits. For a complete list, check out the [current](#) and [past](#) pro bono project listings.

What type of work does NOT qualify under the Pledge?

Examples of non-qualifying work include, but are not limited to: clerking for a judge; assisting in political campaign efforts; fundraising; work done for a law journal or similar organization; and work that receives academic credit or compensation. Also training and travel time do NOT count. If you have any questions about whether a particular activity qualifies, please contact us at lawprobono@umich.edu.

Can I create my own pro bono project?

Definitely! You are welcome to contact an organization on your own to pursue a pro bono opportunity that is not listed. If you would like guidance, please set up an appointment with Amy Sankaran, Director of Externship and Pro Bono Programs, by [scheduling online](#) or emailing or calling [Mark Gebhart](#) at 734.615.0019.

What do I do to ensure my hours count toward the Pledge?

Enter your hours in the [Student Hours Tracking Database](#) (if your project does not appear in the drop down menu, email lawprobono@umich.edu). Also, we'd love to have a [Student Evaluation](#) at the end of your project to get your feedback.

Where do I go with questions?

If you have any questions, we'd love to hear from you. You can email us at lawprobono@umich.edu or call Amy Sankaran, Director of Externship and Pro Bono Programs, at 734.764.7787. To make an appointment with Amy, please [schedule online](#) or email or call [Mark Gebhart](#) at 734.615.0019.

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