

Washington State Bar Association Pro Bono and Legal Aid Committee

Priority Setting Meeting October 18, 2010

In attendance: *Andrea Axel, Emily Cooper Pura, Mike Cressey, Regan Dunn, Rebecca Glasgow, Alison Holcomb, Steve Larsen, Joan Otero, Diana Singleton, Gail Smith, Dan Young, Joe Marshall, Brian Flock, Michael Kleps, Randy Winn, and Sharlene Steele.*

Introductions/Background

After committee members introduced themselves, Andrea gave an overview of how the recession is causing a crisis in our state: there is sharply increased need for legal help as more people fall into poverty and greatly diminished funding for legal aid. Steve described the Washington State Bar Association's new priority to encourage a culture of service in the legal profession. He encouraged the committee to work closely with the WSBA Board of Governors to take advantage of this unique opportunity to help shape how that goal will be accomplished. And Dan described PBLAC's past successes and ongoing initiatives.

Brainstorming

The group then spent an hour coming up with ideas to increase pro bono work. Those ideas ranged from creating a centralized clearinghouse for pro bono opportunities, to encouraging pro bono from other professions that support legal work, to rebranding pro bono efforts, to public recognition for law firms with a high level of pro bono service. For a more complete list, see attached sheet.

Establishing Priorities

During a break committee members voted for the ideas they believed were key priorities. The group then discussed the ideas receiving the most votes (starred on the attached list), assessing which would be most effective and feasible for PBLAC to implement as a bar committee. For example, one idea that received several votes was the creation of a centralized portal for pro bono information and opportunities. While the committee agreed that the creation of such a resource center would be invaluable, it recognized that the limits of time and budget prevented the committee from effectively implementing the idea. The committee will stay engaged in promoting the creation of such a clearinghouse with WSBA and the ATJ community.

The following ideas emerged as the priorities for PBLAC to work on in its 2010-2011 cycle.

1. Develop a pilot project to match urban attorneys with rural clients, using a peer-to-peer recruiting model. We will work with WSBA, the ATJ Board and local pro bono programs to develop a geographic and legal issue focus for this targeted effort.
2. Launch a campaign to publicize pro bono successes and showcase opportunities for service in our state. Using the Bar News as a vehicle, and dovetailing with the ABA Year

of Pro Bono, we can rebrand pro bono as Legal Corps (or something else catchy) and generate renewed interest among bar members.

Although not necessarily an action item, the committee recognized that we should be in better contact with the pro bono programs that are currently providing client services and solicit input from those organizations as we develop our workplan.

We also recognized that several ongoing initiatives from last year require follow up, including the review of RPC 6.1 requested by WSBA, the adoption and implementation of GR34 and the development of a Supreme Court honor role. We will tackle assignment for those tasks and for our new goals at the first "regular" PBLAC meeting of the year, November 4.

Onward!

10/18/2010 Brainstorming List

- Develop a network for peer to peer recruiting of volunteer attorneys *
- Develop a centralized resource center for volunteer opportunities and information*
- Take advantage of CLE sessions to advertise and recruit new volunteers
- Provide a system of matching mentors with volunteers
- Public recognition (outside legal community) for law firms with high levels of pro bono
- Work with companies and governmental entities to include pro bono service into requirements for contracting with law firms
- Work with courts appointing counsel under GR33 for people with disabilities
- Outreach to new attorneys
- Limited bar license for nonprofit work for our of state attorneys
- Publicize malpractice insurance availability
- Coordinate with WSBA for training opportunities
- Connect urban attorneys with low income clients in rural Washington
- Recruit pro bono services from other professions, such as paralegals, court reporters, interpreters, mediators, doctors, court call-in services *
- Rebrand pro bono to “Legal Corps” and publicize successes, showcase opportunities (2011- ABA Year of Pro Bono) *
- Add pro bono service as part of the online lawyer rating trend
- Work closer with pro bono programs (QLSP’s) to be informed bout client need and existing resources*