



Introductory Statement of Partner Roles and Responsibilities

The Pro Bono Collaborative mobilizes Rhode Island law firms, community organizations and law students to provide legal assistance within the community. The PBC brings together various segments of the RI community, including: RWU Law School, volunteer students, volunteer attorneys and their firms, community based organizations, and Rhode Island Legal Services (RILS). This cooperative effort has resulted in increased interaction between law students and the local bar, expanded hands-on experience for students, increased pro bono opportunities for attorneys, and most importantly, desperately needed relief for residents of Rhode Island communities.

The PBC Director and Project Coordinator

The PBC staff's role is to identify potential pro bono projects, by working with CBOs to evaluate their own and their clients' legal needs, pitching potential pro bono projects to law firms, recruiting law students, identifying consultants where appropriate, arranging for partner training when necessary and providing ongoing facilitative support to the partnership, once in place. The PBC does not accept individual case referrals.

Though attorneys, the PBC staff is **not** involved in any legal assistance provided as part of the individual projects and they are not authorized to provide any legal advice or counsel. The PBC staff has no role in the PBC's provision of legal services except to facilitate communication between the project partners, maintain records regarding the number of cases handled, refine the projects' protocols, and troubleshoot when challenges arise.

Once a project is launched, the law firm attorneys have sole responsibility for the quality of the legal services they provide.

Law Students

All 2L and 3L students are eligible to participate in the Pro Bono Collaborative Project. Students make a one year commitment. Student participants are assigned to a particular PBC project based on their stated preference. Law students assist the pro bono attorneys in whatever tasks those attorneys appropriately assign them.

Law Students' Responsibilities:

- Have a clear understanding of the PBC and its mission, as well as the particular Project;
- Attend all scheduled trainings;
- Review/read all materials provided;
- Maintain contact at least weekly with their attorney supervisors, through phone calls or e-mails;
- Create appropriate boundaries with clients, e.g., do not give out your home phone number, do not provide transportation, never give advice, legal or otherwise; and
- Keep a log of the time spent on the Project, including training, materials review, phone calls, etc.

Law Student Scheduling Conflicts:

- If a law student experiences a conflict and cannot be available on an assigned date, it is the student's responsibility to communicate with a fellow law student working on the Project who can assume the responsibilities.
- The student will also notify the Pro Bono Collaborative staff.
- In the event that a student misses a scheduled meeting or appointment with clients or PBC partners, without good cause, he/she will be counseled by the PBC director and given a warning.

Professional Responsibility of Law Students:

It is important for students to keep in mind that although their involvement in the PBC is voluntary, they will be expected to act in a responsible, professional manner at all times. Although the attorneys have ultimate legal responsibility for pro bono cases, the students accept responsibility for the work assigned by the attorneys and are held professionally accountable. In addition, students represent the RWU School of Law and, accordingly, students should always act in a way that reflects positively on the institution.

Attorneys

Attorneys are expected to provide close supervision and timely feedback to law students. Clients will be given the contact information of the Attorney of Record only and students are cautioned not to give their home phone number to clients. Attorneys and students should make sure that important information is communicated to clients both orally and in writing. *Remember*, although the Project involves students who can provide significant assistance in preparing cases, the ultimate responsibility for management of the case lies with the pro bono attorney.

Pro Bono attorneys involved in the PBC serve as the Attorney of Record on cases referred and supervise the work of law student volunteers. As Attorney of Record, each pro bono attorney has the ultimate responsibility for the case or project goals and will ensure that the law student volunteer is closely supervised so that the client's interests are not compromised.

Attorneys are encouraged to be in contact with the law students with whom they will be working on a regular basis, in any event at least weekly.

Attorneys' Responsibilities:

- Review the PBC's *Best Practices for Student Supervision*;
- Clarify student expectations;
- Coordinate meeting times and set case deadlines for student work;
- Review all student work and provide constructive feedback; and
- Maintain regular contact with the Project CBO staff-- whenever possible, the PBC Director should be copied on correspondence,

Community Based Organizations ("CBO")

Community based organizations partnering on the PBC may have two different roles; the client or, where individual representation is involved, the CBO may be responsible for providing support and facilitating communication between the individual client and the attorneys.

CBOs' Responsibilities:

- Work with the PBC staff to identify potential projects
- Inform CBO staff regarding the work of the PBC and/or provide a time when the PBC staff can make a presentation to CBO staff—staff should be informed that unlike Rhode Island Legal Services and/or the Volunteer Lawyers Project, the PBC does not take individual case referrals;
- Provide project partners with any rules or guidelines with which their clients/constituents will comply;
- Make every effort to stay in regular contact with the attorneys;
- Inform the project attorneys whenever there is new information relevant to the project and/or an individual client;
- Inform attorneys when clients have acted in violation of the rules contained in the attorneys' engagement letter;
- Complete the appropriate intake materials for individual case referrals;
- Thoroughly explain the PBC to clients; and
- Inform clients that the legal assistance they will receive is part of the PBC partnership.

All PBC Partners:

Status Updates. For accurate record keeping, it is very important that students and attorneys keep the Pro Bono Collaborative informed on the progress of their project.

Time Records. In order to document the pro bono hours contributed through the PBC it is important that attorneys and students keep careful track of the time they spend on PBC work.