

CT Free Legal Answers: Pro Bono That Works for You

I DON'T HAVE
THE KNOWLEDGE
OR EXPERIENCE TO
PROVIDE COMPETENT
ADVICE.

MY LAW FIRM
OR EMPLOYER
WON'T
APPROVE IT.

I CANNOT COMMIT
TO BEING OFFSITE,
MISSING A DAY OF WORK,
OR UNPREDICTABLE
SCHEDULING
DEMANDS.

I DON'T
HAVE
ENOUGH
TIME.

I GENUINELY
WANT TO HELP
INDIVIDUALS WITH
LOW OR NO
INCOME, BUT ...

CT Free Legal Answers Works with Your Schedule

This may come as a shock to exactly no one—attorneys tend to be extremely busy. No matter how much some attorneys want to make a difference and do work that is meaningful, they may feel like they simply don't have enough time in the day. CT Free Legal Answers enables attorneys to do pro bono work if they have as little as 15-20 minutes free per month, which is the time it typically takes to answer one question. Volunteers can answer as few or as many questions as they want on CT Free Legal Answers. Through CT Free Legal Answers, volunteer attorneys can answer questions from home, the office, or anywhere they have a computer or mobile device. Because answers are posted online rather than provided in real time, volunteers can do their pro bono work any time that is convenient for them, whether that is

during the workday or off-hours. Some of the volunteers answer a question while waiting for a meeting to get started, a case to be called in court, or even their dinner to finish cooking or kids to wake from a nap.

CT Free Legal Answers Works with Your Knowledge and Experience

One of the biggest obstacles to doing pro bono work can be a lack of relevant knowledge or experience. An attorney that has spent their career working on, for example, real estate acquisitions may not be competent to litigate an immigration case. Newer attorneys may feel they need more experience before they are able to help others. At the other end of the career spectrum, retired attorneys may be concerned their skills or knowledge are outdated or rusty. CT Free Legal Answers eliminates or reduces these obstacles. Attorneys do not need to answer questions in real time or know all the answers already. Instead, they can do some legal research or Googling before

Sound familiar? CT Free Legal Answers, a partnership of the American Bar Association (ABA) and Connecticut Bar Association (CBA), may be the pro bono opportunity for you. CT Free Legal Answers is an online question and answer website where individuals with low income can post their civil legal questions. Volunteer attorneys provide confidential written responses on the website. Individuals are eligible to post questions if their household income is less than 250 percent of the federal poverty guidelines. Since the CBA began administering CT Free Legal Answers in 2016, volunteer attorneys have answered over 1,300 questions for income-eligible Connecticut individuals.

writing a response. And, attorneys have the option to preview questions or filter questions by legal area before selecting a question to answer. This enables attorneys to choose only questions that they are able to answer or that relate to the attorney's area of practice.

CT Free Legal Answers Will Work with Your Law Firm or Employer

Attorneys are not always entirely free to follow their heart's desire and help anyone they want to help. Attorneys at law firms, in house, or government offices often must, for good reasons, comply with employer rules and policies before engaging in any pro bono work. Law firms or employers may have concerns about pro bono work that increases their exposure to liability risk or whether an attorney's pro bono work might be seen as inconsistent with the goals or priorities of some paying clients. CT Free Legal Answers has taken steps to mitigate and address these concerns. The ABA's professional liability insurance covers volunteers' participation in the site, which reduces the risk of employer or personal liability. When an attorney posts a response on CT Free Legal Answers, the attorney's name and employer are not visible to clients. The client only sees that the response came from, for example, "Volunteer Attorney 2,468," which reduces the risk of unfavorable optics or publicity. In addition, CBA staff and the Free Legal Answers team are available to work with law firms, corporations, and other employers to discuss and address any concerns, questions, or approval processes.

Some law firms and corporations not only permit their employees to participate in CT Free Legal Answers; they schedule team-building events and encourage participation. A new trend in the pro bono realm is employer-organized events where attorneys work together to develop responses to client questions on CT Free Legal Answers. This can be done at in-person or remote team answering events. CBA staff and the CT Free Legal Answers team can work with law firms, corporations, and other employers or groups to coordinate custom team-building events.

To learn more about the program, schedule a team-building event, or volunteer, visit CT.FreeLegalAnswers.org or send an email to ctfreelegalanswers@ctbar.org. ■



CBA Free Legal Advice Clinic: Volunteers Needed

Tuesday, October 24, 2023
10:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m.

Wednesday, October 25, 2023
10:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m.



If you have 30 minutes free, you can volunteer. Volunteer attorneys will answer legal questions in their area of practice during a 30-minute remote session with a client.

Volunteers are needed in the following areas:

- Fraudulent Business/Debt Collection
- Employee Rights/Unemployment
- Immigration Law
- Landlord/Tenant
- Family Law
- Tax Law
- Bankruptcy
- Pardons
- Wills and Estates
- Torts

Volunteer opportunities are available for paralegals and law students as well. Visit ctbar.org/FreeLegalAdviceClinics to learn more and register.

