



SCHOOL OF LAW

Pro Bono Program

STUDENT HANDBOOK

2025-2026

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I. WHAT IS PRO BONO?

Pro Bono is short for the Latin *pro bono publico*, meaning “for the public good.” Pro bono work uses professional skills to provide services to those who are unable to afford them.

Our award-winning, nationally recognized Pro Bono Program celebrates over two decades of Carolina Law students assisting attorneys to provide high quality, low-cost legal services to individuals in need, building skills for practice and developing a lifelong commitment to pro bono work. Since its creation in 1997, this extracurricular program has connected law students to hundreds of projects with supervising attorneys in public interest organizations, government agencies, and private practice.

II. WHAT COUNTS AS PRO BONO AT UNC SCHOOL OF LAW?

1. The following criteria must be met for a student's work to qualify as pro bono for the purposes of recognition by the UNC School of Law Pro Bono Program:¹
 - a. The law student must engage in law-related activities;
 - b. The law student's work must be supervised and/or approved by an attorney where supervision and/or approval includes, at a minimum, attorney review of student work product;
 - a. If a student is certified in a special area of law that allows them to perform law-related activities² then they need not be supervised by an attorney as long as their activity is within the scope of their certification³;
 - b. Students performing any presentation qualifying as Pro Bono (such as Know Your Rights presentations) must have an attorney present to supervise the presentation and answer any questions about the legal information provided
 - c. Receiving, or expecting to receive, class credit for law-related activities precludes these activities from qualifying for pro bono credit. Receiving monetary compensation for law-related activities precludes these activities from qualifying as pro bono credit (*See exception in Summer Hours policy.*);
 - d. The law-related services must be provided to the client for free or at a substantially reduced rate (whether reduced rate work will qualify as pro bono may depend on several factors, including the actual rate being charged the client, whether or not the attorney would bill for work performed by students, the economic factors preventing the client from obtaining full-rate services, and the population affected by the legal issues involved); AND
 - e. The law related activities must be on behalf of:
 - a. person(s) of limited financial means; OR
 - b. person(s) with limited access to legal representation; OR
 - c. nonprofit, civic, community, religious, or governmental organizations.

¹ Please note that the definition of pro bono differs for some State Bar admission requirements.

² An example of this would be those accredited to practice immigration law through recognized organizations under the U.S. Department of Justice's Recognition and Accreditation Program.

³ Please note that Student Practice Certifications generally fall out of the scope of pro bono work through the Pro Bono Program. Student Practice Certifications in North Carolina take significant time to acquire and the requests for them must be specific to the supervising attorney, the scope of the work supervised, and the time period of work to be done. The supervising attorney, law student, and the law school must all submit documentation to the North Carolina State Bar. Student Practice Certifications are **not** transferable and only apply to the specific work supervised by the supervising attorney.

2. The following activities are expressly excluded from qualifying for Pro Bono credit:
- a. Work done on law journals;
 - b. Work resulting in submission of writing into competition or other journals;
 - c. Work on law related symposiums, conferences, and panel discussions;
 - d. Work completed as a Research Assistant or Teaching Assistant;
 - a. Except that a student who works as a Research Assistant with a professor during the summer and whose work primarily involves providing legal services to qualifying clients may log up to 25 Pro Bono hours per the Summer Hours policy.
 - e. Work performed as a result of work required for enrollment in a clinic, externship, or other class for academic credit;
 - a. Except that a student who has successfully completed an externship or clinic and then elects to continue working with the externship employer or clinical professor may count the additional hours of work performed as Pro Bono credit so long as the work qualifies under 1(e). **Please note that “completing” an externship or clinic typically means that the course is no longer in session. There are very limited exceptions.** If a student believes certain work qualifies as pro bono work because it is outside the scope of their externship or clinic coursework, the student should talk to their professor to confirm.
 - f. Any and all fundraising activities;
 - g. Electioneering work performed for a partisan organization during a political campaign where the main objective of the work is to elect a specific candidate or candidates into office; AND
 - h. Education of children in grades K-12 about the law or the legal system through an organized program, the purpose of which is to introduce children to the law.

3. ON-CALL HOURS POLICY:

- a. Time spent on projects where volunteers are remotely on-call by phone or text should be logged at a rate of 50%, or 30 minutes per hour, for all time not spent doing substantive work (in addition to any time spent doing substantive work).
 - 1. The on-call hours logging policy was created to recognize the effort of students completing on-call projects while also ensuring equity with other pro bono opportunities.
 - 2. Time spent on call at off-campus, in-person clinics may be logged at 100%, regardless of whether the volunteer is actively working on a case or not.

4. SUMMER HOURS POLICY:

- a. With respect to Summer Break, limiting credit for Pro Bono work is consistent with the concept that Pro Bono work is legal work often performed in addition to

- one's regular employment. However, the Pro Bono Board still wishes to recognize the substantial efforts of students who perform public interest legal work during their summer internships at no cost or at low wages.
- b. Students may receive Pro Bono credit for work during the summer break if the work qualifies under the definitions in Section II and the student is paid (in salary, stipend, or grant) less than 1.5 times the minimum wage of the jurisdiction where the work is being done.
 - a. For the purposes of determining minimum wage, "jurisdiction" means state or U.S. territory. If the work is performed in another country, then a student can earn Pro Bono credit if the student earns less than one and a half times the minimum wage of North Carolina.
 - c. Maximum Number of Hours: Students will receive no more than twenty-five hours of credit for working during the summer. Students may exceed the twenty-five hour limit *only if* (1) service is work completed as a continuation of work done in the academic year and unconnected to summer employment, or (2) service is in addition to and unconnected to the student's current employer. This specifically excludes split summers (e.g., the student may not log 25 hours for each employer).

5. FACILITATOR HOURS POLICY:

- a. The Pro Bono Board wishes to recognize the efforts of students who work towards facilitating Pro Bono opportunities for their peers with the understanding that facilitator work may not be legal in nature.
- b. Students, including but not limited to Pro Bono Board members, student organization Pro Bono Coordinators, and outstanding student participants, may receive credit for up to ten hours each semester for their work facilitating Pro Bono work for other students. These "nominal hours" may include, but are not limited to, coordination with supervising attorneys and administrative work that furthers the Pro Bono work of students.

6. TRAVEL TIME POLICY:

- a. The Pro Bono Board wishes to recognize that in-person pro bono projects require additional time and expense related to travel.
- b. Volunteers may log travel time for a pro bono project if the project has an in-person component.

III. HOW DO I GET INVOLVED?

1. ATTORNEY PROJECTS

The Pro Bono Board actively solicits pro bono projects from attorneys and organizations interested in student assistance. Sign-ups for these projects can typically be found in the Pro Bono Boards's weekly Class Coordinator emails. Projects will vary in the type of work to be completed, the time commitment expected, and the location where work should be completed. Students will be able to find this information, as well as a brief description of each project, on the project's sign-up link. Projects are open to all students unless specifically noting particular experience or skills required. Projects are assigned first come, first served. Once students have committed to a project, the Attorney Projects Coordinator will email them with contact information for their supervising attorney.

2. BREAK PROJECTS

Winter Break projects allow students to work individually with attorneys during their longest break in the academic year. The Pro Bono Board works to find projects in a variety of different substantive areas and throughout the state and nation. On a sign-up day in November, students select their projects on a first come, first served basis. Every year, over 100 UNC law students complete pro bono work during Winter Break. Spring Break project opportunities vary.

3. SPECIAL TRIPS

The Pro Bono Program organizes Special Trips for students during fall, winter, and spring breaks. The goal of trips is to address the specific legal needs of communities within North Carolina, especially in rural areas and for the benefit of underserved communities. Past trips have included the opportunity to draft wills and advance directives for senior citizens; the opportunity to assist in editing and analyzing Complaints for Domestic Violence Protective Orders for survivors of domestic violence; and the opportunity to assist with expunction petitions for eligible community members. Interest meetings are held for each trip and the trip is generally limited to 8-12 students. Trip participants are required to attend necessary trainings and to follow the rules set out by the trip coordinators. Major expenses related to the trip (such as accommodations, food, and group transportation) are covered by the Pro Bono Program.

4. STUDENT GROUP PROJECTS

Student group projects are supported and created by student organizations. These projects offer opportunities for students to interact and engage in pro bono projects related to their specific interest areas. Students work with attorneys and organizations to create and support pro bono opportunities on issues ranging from criminal law to environmental law. Student organizations work with the Pro Bono Board's Student Group Projects Coordinator to ensure that projects comply with State Bar regulations. *See Section IV, Student Organization Projects.*

5. SPECIAL PROJECTS

The Pro Bono Program manages ongoing projects and one-time projects throughout the year. Examples of special projects have included pop-up pro bono opportunities through Free Legal Answers and name change clinics. Information about projects and sign-ups is shared regularly in weekly emails from Class Coordinators.

6. DEVELOP YOUR OWN PROJECT

If students cannot find an existing project that suits them, or if they discover an unmet legal need that a new pro bono project could address, the Pro Bono Program encourages them to start their own project. These projects are typically individual or smaller-scale projects. To begin this process, students must fill out the **DIY Pro Bono Project Form** (available [here](#)) and contact their Class Coordinator or the Director of Pro Bono Initiatives.

Student volunteers must partner with attorney supervisors on all pro bono projects. Partner organizations and attorneys must be responsible for any client files, ongoing representation, and malpractice coverage. Students must follow all State Bar regulations and must not engage in unauthorized practice of law.

IV. STUDENT ORGANIZATION PROJECTS

Student organizations work closely with the Pro Bono Board's Student Group Projects Coordinator to ensure that projects comply with State Bar regulations. Student organization projects must partner with attorney supervisors. Student organizations (and the Pro Bono Program) may not take on cases for direct representation, and partner organizations and attorneys must be responsible for any client files, ongoing representation, and malpractice coverage.

Prior to a student organization conducting a pro bono project, student organization leaders must submit a project proposal form and a faculty advisor approval form. The Student Group Projects Coordinator will arrange a meeting with the Director of Pro Bono Initiatives, student organization leaders, and the faculty advisor (if available). Project information will also be confirmed with the attorney supervisor for the project. Following approval, the project will be entered into the MyCarolinaLaw system so pro bono hours may be logged for the project.

Each April, one student organization project is honored as the Student Group Project of the Year at the Pro Bono Publico Awards ceremony.

V. WHO TO CONTACT

If you have questions or concerns about a project or opportunity, we encourage you to reach out to a member of the Pro Bono Board.



Student Director
Miranda Papes
(she/her)



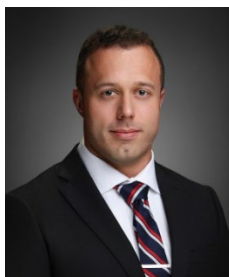
3L Class Coordinator
Emma Santizo
(she/her)



2L Class Coordinator
Kimberly Harris
(she/her)



1L Class Coordinator
Megan Schleiniger
(she/her)



Alumni Outreach Coordinator
Tysen Moy
(he/him)



Attorney Projects Coordinator
Madeline Pool
(she/her)



**Community Services
Co-Coordinator**
Dex Dexter
(they/them)



**Community Services
Co-Coordinator**
Natalie Frazier
(she/her)



Public Relations Coordinator
Griffin Lamb
(he/him)



Special Trips Co-Coordinator
Gabby Griffonetti
(she/her)



Special Trips Co-Coordinator
Rachel Vinarcik
(she/her)



**Student Group Projects
Coordinator**
Olivia McAuliffe
(she/her)



Break Projects Coordinator
Casey Buttke
(she/her)

Contact Information	
Student Director Miranda Papes	probonostudentdir@unc.edu
3L Class Coordinator Emma Santizo	3Lclasscoordinator@unc.edu
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Break Projects Coordinator Casey Buttke	winterSBprojcoord@unc.edu

VI. LOGGING PRO BONO HOURS

1. HOW TO LOG YOUR HOURS:

Log hours online on My Carolina Law. Detailed instructions can be found [here](#). If you are still having trouble, contact your Class Coordinator.

2. WHAT YOU SHOULD LOG:

- a. Substantive work on the project
- b. Training (only upon participation in the project; training alone cannot be logged)
- c. Travel time to the site of the project (if the project has an in-person component)
- d. Correspondence with supervising attorney

NOTE: Projects will sometimes have an estimated time when you sign up. Log the time that you actually spend on the project, not the estimated time.

3. WHY LOG YOUR HOURS:

a. It Helps You

ABA Model Rule 6.1 encourages all lawyers to commit at least 50 hours per year to pro bono work. When you do pro bono work as a lawyer, you will have to keep track of those hours – start practicing now while you are a student! Some states, including New York, also require pro bono hours for admission to the bar. Additionally, the UNC Law Pro Bono Program recognizes students with a transcript notation if they have logged 50, 75, or 100 hours. Other forms of recognition also take into consideration the number of pro bono hours a student logs.

b. It Helps the Community

There is a great need for free legal services in the North Carolina community and beyond. Knowing how students are consistently participating in pro bono work allows attorneys and organizations to confidently offer more pro bono projects.

c. It Helps the Pro Bono Program

Having an accurate record of student involvement lets the UNC Law Pro Bono Program better evaluate student opportunities for involvement, enabling us to provide even more meaningful student pro bono experiences in the future.

d. It Helps UNC School of Law

Being able to point to an accurate record of student participation lets UNC Law better communicate with attorneys and alumni, which in turn provides more opportunities for student networking and professional development.

Additionally, a strong showing of pro bono hours helps the school continue to encourage qualified, compassionate students to apply and fulfills the law school's mission "to instill lifelong ethical values, dedication to the cause of justice and a lasting commitment to pro bono and public service."

VII. RECOGNITION

1. TRANSCRIPT NOTATIONS (50/75/100+ Hours)

Transcript notations are awarded to students who have logged 50, 75, and 100 hours. Transcript notations are “upgraded” if students log the next level of hours (whether 75 or 100 hours). Transcript notations are added or upgraded over the summer.

2. PRO BONO TO PRACTICE DINNER (75+ Hours)

Graduating students who have logged 75 or more hours prior to graduation will be invited to the annual Pro Bono to Practice Dinner. Alumni, faculty, staff, and invited students attend the dinner every May to celebrate the pro bono achievements of the graduating class. Deadlines for logging hours will be communicated to graduating students by the 3L Class Coordinator.

3. RECOGNITION AT GRADUATION (100+ Hours)

Graduating students who have logged 100 or more hours prior to graduation will be recognized at graduation. Deadlines for logging hours will be communicated to graduating students by the 3L Class Coordinator but are typically 2 weeks or more prior to graduation.

4. COLLEGE CUP

The 1L college earning the most points through participation in pro bono, hours logged, and attendance at Pro Bono Program events will be awarded the College Cup and a celebration for that college will be held in April. Additionally, the three students from each college who logged the most pro bono hours will be recognized as “MVPs.” Information about the College Cup and College Cup standings will be communicated via the 1L Class Coordinator.

5. PRO BONO PUBLICO AWARDS

Each April, the Pro Bono Program presents Pro Bono Publico Awards to the 1L, 2L, 3L, Student Group, Faculty Member, Alum, and Partner of the Year, in addition to the Sylvia K. Novinsky Award recognizing a graduating student. Graduating students who completed 75 or more pro bono hours are also recognized and receive an honorary certificate and a pin to wear at graduation. Nomination information and other deadlines will be communicated by the Class Coordinators.

VIII. GUIDELINES FOR PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT

1. STUDENT CONTRACT

All students who have signed up for an Attorney Projects opportunity, a Winter Break project, a Pro Bono Trip, or other similar projects that students may undertake through the Pro Bono Program have agreed to comply with the terms of the **Pro Bono Contract** (found [here](#)).

2. PROFESSIONAL EXPECTATIONS

The guidelines listed below are intended to remind you of some of the basic standards of professional behavior expected from students working on pro bono projects. This list, however, is by no means exhaustive. If you encounter a problem or an ethical dilemma, please do not hesitate to contact the Pro Bono Board's Student Director. Failure to meet professional expectations may result in a meeting with the Director of Pro Bono Initiatives.

- a. Keep in mind that while you are doing legal work, you are not an attorney. Your work must be approved by supervising attorneys, and you must inform clients that you are a law student acting under the supervision of a licensed attorney.
- b. Any case information must be kept confidential. You may only discuss cases with the supervising attorney and other student volunteers also working on the project.
- c. Stay in consistent touch with the appropriate Pro Bono Board member and with your supervising attorney. For example, if you will be late meeting with the supervising attorney or if you have a problem that you need to discuss with the supervising attorney, you should call or email the supervising attorney to let them know about it. If you have difficulty reaching the supervising attorney on an Attorney Projects opportunity, you should reach out to the Attorney Projects Coordinator.
- d. Take deadlines seriously. If you cannot meet a deadline, communicate this information to the supervising attorney and the appropriate Pro Bono Board member.
- e. If you sign up for a project, you must complete the project unless there is an emergency situation preventing you from doing so. If you cannot complete the project, you must contact the supervising attorney and the appropriate Pro Bono Board member immediately.

- f. Be professional in all communications with your supervising attorney and Pro Bono Board members. All e-mails should be formal and free of spelling and grammatical errors.

3. AI POLICY

All students who are planning to use or considering the use of AI on a pro bono project must receive express permission from the supervising attorney of the pro bono project before using AI. Students must confirm what AI platform or system the supervising attorney and/or sponsoring organization, firm, or agency will allow the student to use and what information can and cannot be entered into the AI platform or system. Please note that client information should never be entered into a public AI platform (such as ChatGPT). Students and supervising attorneys should engage in ongoing conversations about the use of AI if allowed. Students found to have violated the AI Policy may be asked to meet with the Director of Pro Bono Initiatives.

IX. JOINING THE PRO BONO BOARD

1. 1L Class Coordinator:

In September, the Pro Bono Board selects a 1L Class Coordinator from the 1L class. The 1L Class Coordinator is responsible for educating classmates about pro bono opportunities and recruiting students for projects. The 1L Class Coordinator maintains contact with the students as they work on projects, verifies that work hours submitted by students qualify as pro bono work, and manages the College Cup competition.

The selection process consists of a written application and interview by the Pro Bono Board. An interest meeting will be held in late August or early September, and any questions should be directed to the Student Director of the Pro Bono Board.

2. Pro Bono Board Positions for 2Ls and 3Ls

Each spring, the Pro Bono Board advertises and solicits applications for open positions on the board within the UNC School of Law student body. Board terms are based on the academic year.

Prior to open board selection in the spring, the Pro Bono Board's Student Director is selected from the pool of students who have previously served on the Pro Bono Board. Current Pro Bono Board members may also apply to remain on the board through an internal selection process. Remaining board positions are advertised in Class Coordinator emails and at an interest meeting in the spring. The selection process consists of a written application and interview by the Pro Bono Board. Any questions should be directed to the Student Director of the Pro Bono Board.

X. NEW YORK BAR PRO BONO REQUIREMENT

Admission to the New York Bar requires 50 hours of pro bono service for admission. Information about the NY Pro Bono Requirement may be found on this [website](#). The [Frequently Asked Questions](#) page is quite extensive and will likely answer most questions. Applicants for admission to the New York Bar must review and comply with all New York Bar regulations and requirements, which are subject to change.

The website also contains the [Form Affidavit of Compliance](#) that you will need to have completed by the supervising attorney for your pro bono hours. Note that this form must be completed by your supervising attorney, **not** UNC School of Law.

It is important to understand that the New York Bar's definition of pro bono is different from the UNC School of Law Pro Bono Program's definition of pro bono. Some notable differences include:

- Most clinic and externship experiences done for credit do count as pro bono for New York Bar admission. This is often the best choice, as you will only have to complete one form.
- Travel time to/from projects do not count for New York Bar admission.

XI. FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

- 1. I worked a summer job at a North Carolina legal services organization. I worked 40 hours a week for 10 weeks and I was paid a stipend of \$2,000. Can I count this work as pro bono?**

You may count up to a maximum of 25 hours of your summer job as pro bono work if (1) the work you did qualifies under Section II(1) of this Handbook and (2) you were paid 1.5 times or less of the minimum wage of the jurisdiction where the work was done. In North Carolina, the minimum wage is currently \$7.25. \$7.25 per hour x 40 hours per week x 10 weeks is \$2,900. Therefore, the stipend provided in this question meets the financial criteria.

- 2. I volunteered for a 3-hour shift of the remote Domestic Violence Protective Order Complaint Review Project. I actively worked on a case for 1 hour and I was “on call” for the remaining 2 hours. How many hours can I log?**

You may log a total of 2 hours. For remote shift-based projects with an on-call component, all substantive work may be logged and 50% of purely on-call time can be logged. In this question 1 hour of substantive work + 50% of 2 hours of on-call time (1 hour) is 2 hours.

- 3. I am externing at a non-profit. My externship requires 125 hours of work to complete the academic requirements. I have completed 150 hours. Can I count any of these hours as pro bono?**

You may not count any hours of your externship that are required for academic credit. If your externship involves work that qualifies under Section II(1) of this Handbook, you may count hours completed in addition to the required hours as pro bono work. In this question, the student may log 25 hours of pro bono work, as those hours are beyond the hours required for academic credit.