

Focus on Access to Justice



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The Players: A Brief Introduction

State Bar of Texas

- The Legal Services Subcommittee of the State Bar Board of Directors
- Texas Lawyers Care
- Legal Services to the Poor in Civil Matters Standing Committee
- Legal Services to the Poor in Criminal Matters Standing Committee

Texas Lawyers Care

- State Bar department – Founded in 1982
- Assists legal aid/pro bono programs statewide
 - Consultation
 - Training
 - Support
- Encourages private attorneys to provide pro bono legal services
 - Presentations
 - Pro Bono College
 - Leverage Resources

Texas Access to Justice Foundation

- Created by the Supreme Court in 1984
- Administers funds from three sources
 - IOLTA
 - Basic Civil Legal Services Fund
 - Crime Victims Civil Legal Services Fund
- Grants funds to non-profit organizations that provide civil legal services to low-income Texans
- Administers Student Loan Repayment Assistance Program

Texas Access to Justice Commission

- Created by Supreme Court in 2001
- Staffed & Funded by the State Bar
- 19 Members
 - 9 appointed by the Supreme Court
 - 7 appointed by the State Bar President
 - 3 ex-officio
- Representative of policy makers, legal aid providers, private attorneys, corporate counsel, etc.
- Concerned with long-term, big picture solutions

New Initiatives of the
Access to Justice Commission

The Update Newsletter

- Increase awareness of the Commission and its work
- Published 4 times a year
- Distributed to all Texas attorneys
- Funded by grant from M.D. Anderson Foundation

Videos

- "Pro Bono: The Difference Is You"
- "A Corporate Effort"
- "Justice For All Texans"
- All joint projects of the Commission and the Texas Access to Justice Foundation

Corporate Outreach

- Comprised of corporate counsel from top Texas corporations
- Corporate Counsel Committee continues to encourage corporate counsel departments of all sizes to engage in pro bono work:
 - www.TexasLawyersHelp.org
 - New brochure
 - "A Corporate Effort" (video)

Communication Strategies

- Communications Committee
- The Commission and TAJF commissioned the development of an economic impact study.
- The study will demonstrate the positive impact that the provision of legal services to the poor produces for Texas and its communities.

Summer Internships

- All 9 Texas Law Schools have opportunities to participate each summer.
- Law students placed with legal services providers in areas without nearby law school
- Texas Legal Protection Plan's \$50,000 donation and State Bar's Corporate Counsel Section's \$7,500 donation

New Awards

- Law Student Pro Bono Award & Law School Commitment to Service Award
- Nominations have been received
- Inaugural awards will be presented at the November swearing-in ceremony for new lawyers

New Awards

- Magna Stella Pro Bono Award for general counsel or managing counsel of a corporation (partnership with Texas General Counsel Forum)
- Corporate Counsel Pro Bono Award (partnership with State Bar's Corporate Counsel Section)

2008 Trial Academy

- 3rd comprehensive trial advocacy training program
- Partnership with the Texas Fellows of the American College of Trial Lawyers
- Top-quality training for 30 legal aid lawyers
- Funded by MD Anderson's generous grant

Technology

- Technology Committee – comprised of top IT and CIO's from large law firms
- TAJF funded a one-time bulk purchase of IT equipment and software for legal services TAJF-funded grantees – to establish a baseline technology level
- 2nd year of software training sessions for legal aid staff

Supreme Court Task Force to Expand Legal Services Delivery

- \$3,000 grant from Texas Bar Foundation to sponsor "pro bono competition"
- \$1,000 awards to small, medium and large sections for outstanding pro bono projects
- Inaugural winners recognized at Council of Chairs meeting
- \$\$ to be reinvested in pro bono projects

Student Loan Repayment Assistance

- Commission project administered by TAJF (formerly by TBF)
- Helps pay law school loans of legal services attorneys
- For the first time ever, ALL eligible legal services attorneys in Texas who apply will receive funding!

Public Service Initiative for Law Students

- Commission and the State Bar’s Law Student Division partnership
- Presentations to inform students about the critical need for access to the justice in Texas and ways they can get involved
- Presentations will occur at all of the nine Texas law schools

Get Involved!

Consider Pro Bono Volunteer Programs

- There are options or “levels” of programs
- Examples:
 - Clinics (e.g., Wills clinics)
 - Referral list of attorneys willing to provide pro bono or reduced fee services
- Call Texas Lawyers Care for more information (800.204.2222, ext. 1855)

Encourage Donations

- Encourage your members to donate to access to justice efforts

- Voluntary donation with Bar dues

How the Commission & Texas Lawyers Care Can Help

- Call Texas Lawyers Care for more information on these services:
- Malpractice Insurance
 - For TAJF funded programs
 - Covers your pro bono volunteers
- Talks & trainings at local bar functions
- Free copies of pro bono videos


