

Kimberly A. Butler

KIMBERLY BUTLER GREW UP VOLUNTEERING, SO NO MATTER WHAT CAREER SHE CHOSE, SHE KNEW SHE WOULD MAKE TIME TO ASSIST THOSE IN NEED. NOW AS OWNER OF THE LAW OFFICE OF KIMBERLY BUTLER IN LEWISVILLE, SHE DOES THIS BY TAKING ON PRO BONO CASES RANGING FROM CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES MATTERS TO OTHER JUVENILE ISSUES.

INTERVIEW BY HANNAH KIDDOO



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Q. What got you started doing pro bono?

A. My first case was pro bono. I volunteered to participate in National Adoption Day while in law school. I assisted the assigned attorney, who let me do everything so I could learn from the experience. The family we helped had already adopted an older child and was now adopting the younger sibling who had come into state care. In the legal field, it is imperative that attorneys help facilitate access to justice for those who simply do not have financial means. It's a big responsibility to have the skills we have as lawyers. To whomever much is given, much will be required.

Q. Have you seen an increase or decrease in pro bono needs since you started practicing?

A. Definitely an increase. The number of family law cases filed statewide each year is on the rise, while at the same time, the economic recession during the past seven years has made it to where people don't have money for their daily needs let alone an attorney.

Q. What factors do you consider before taking a pro bono case?

A. The needs of the particular matter, the financial landscape of the client, and my current caseload constraints.

Q. Do you have any pro bono mentors?

A. I usually turn to one of my cohorts at Legal Aid of NorthWest Texas if I am in need of direction with finding resources for low- to no-income clients. I also look to Texas Access to Justice Commission resources and the Pro Bono College of the State Bar for guidance when I am stuck.

Q. What are some misconceptions about pro bono?

A. I have heard grumblings that it's not right that attorneys should be "expected" to do pro bono work because society doesn't "expect" any other profession to do pro bono, and it's not fair to expect us to work for free. Well, I don't look at it as working for free—I view pro bono work as reinvesting in the world what the world has invested in me.

Q. What would you say to someone who is considering a pro bono case?

A. You need to have a detailed structure for your attorney-client agreement. Define exactly what services you are providing and what you are *not* providing. Detail what sorts of things you simply cannot provide for free (i.e., other people's services, counselors, social study evaluators, expert witnesses, consultants) and make sure they understand that just because your services are being provided for free or low-cost, you must manage the case in an efficient and effective manner just as you do all of your cases.

You don't have to do a large number of pro bono cases, and they don't all have to be completely free. But when you take that one case and you help that one person who otherwise would have been trampled to pieces in the courtroom, when he thanks you and you see the truth of that deep in his soul, it's worth more than a million dollars. I promise you that. **TBJ**