



STATE BAR of TEXAS LAW STUDENT PRO BONO COLLEGE

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. What is the timeframe for applying for the Law Student Pro Bono College?

Students must complete 50 or more hours of qualifying pro bono between September 1 and August 31 (essentially a school year, plus summer). Applications for the previous years' hours must be submitted by October 1 to the Pro Bono Department of the State Bar of Texas. Students may apply with qualifying hours from their 1L, 2L, and 3L years.

2. If a student does pro bono work as part of a clinic or externship, will those pro bono hours qualify?

No, pro bono work performed as part of a course or other activity for which the student received any academic credit does not qualify. If a class or school requires pro bono as a graduation requirement outside of a course itself, those hours will count.

3. What if the student engages in more hours than what is required for credit?

Example: A student in clinic is required to devote 15 hours/week (225 hours total) to legal services. They worked 25 hours/week twice and worked the required 15 hours/week for the rest of the semester for a total of 245 hours. Are the extra 20 hours eligible for pro bono credit?

No, hours performed in conjunction with a course, even hours done above and beyond the clinic requirements, do not qualify.

4. If a clinic student stays on to finish a case and spends an additional 30 hours after the end of the semester, are those hours eligible?

Yes, because the student is no longer doing the work in conjunction with a class or for credit.

5. **Clinic students are required to go on a trip to do outreach (for example, to the border). Afterwards, they decide to go on 3 additional trips. The additional trips are not required and they do not get any class credit for them. Are those hours eligible?**

Yes, because the student is no longer doing the work in conjunction with a class or for credit. And this truly is in the spirit of pro bono – they were moved to do it again.

6. **Does the travel time for students who choose to go into rural areas or to underserved areas to do pro bono count?**

No, only the hours worked for those trips qualify. Purely travel time will not count towards the total qualifying hours.

7. **What if some of the travel time is spent in training the students? Would this time count?**

While travel time will not count, any time spent training the students would qualify.

8. **A student has an unpaid internship with a legal aid office. Will those hours count? What about hours spent in a judicial clerkship?**

Hours spent working/volunteering with legal aid offices or public defender offices as part of an unpaid internship definitely qualify. The judicial clerkship will not qualify.

9. **Who qualifies as “indigent” under the federal poverty guidelines?**

The State Bar of Texas’s pro bono policy does not specifically define “poor”. That decision is left to the individual program or attorneys. Many programs, such as those funded by the Legal Services Corporation or the Texas Equal Access to Justice Foundation (IOLTA), define “poor” to be 125% of federal poverty guidelines. However, the guidelines for public benefits or other federally means tested programs vary. Clients referred by an organized pro bono project generally have been screened for income eligibility according to the local guidelines. If a student is doing pro bono through a legal services organization, they can assume it qualifies.