

**PRO BONO VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES WITH
LEGAL SERVICES OF NORTHERN VIRGINIA
AND
POTOMAC LEGAL AID SOCIETY**

What is Legal Services of Northern Virginia? LSNV is the local legal aid program. It was established in 1980 by consolidating several existing local legal aid organizations into a regional service program. LSNV is a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization, now funded primarily by local governments in Northern Virginia, the Legal Services Corporation of Virginia, foundations and donations, and the Potomac Legal Aid Society. The mission of Legal Services of Northern Virginia is to provide legal services to low-income, elderly or disabled individuals, who, without legal assistance, face the loss or deprivation of a critical human need - food, shelter, medical care, income, family stability, or personal safety. LSNV seeks to provide equal access to the civil justice system for those residents of the City of Alexandria, the Counties of Arlington, Fairfax, Loudoun and Prince William and the cities and towns adjacent to those counties, who are unable to afford private legal counsel. LSNV provides services in a variety of substantive civil legal areas, including: family law, housing law, elder law, public benefits claims, access to health care, child advocacy, employment and civil rights law, consumer law, AIDS/HIV issues and tax disputes. Staff and volunteers provide legal advice, brief service, and representation in administrative hearings and in court, as well as community legal education, and advocacy before local and state governmental entities, without charge to our clients. Pro bono volunteers are covered by LSNV's malpractice insurance coverage.

What is the Potomac Legal Aid Society? PLAS was established in 2001 as a legal hotline program. It is a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization funded by the federal Legal Services Corporation to assist low-income residents. LSNV contracts with PLAS to provide pro bono services from members of the private bar for those who qualify for services under the rules of the Legal Services Corporation.

Adoption

The Law Center for Children at LSNV needs pro bono attorneys with expertise in adoptions to assist with adoptions by low-income stepparents or other relatives. LSNV's staff will screen the cases and refer those where there is consent by the biological parents or where the parents' whereabouts are unknown and publication is needed.

Bankruptcy and Debtor's Rights Laws

LSNV eligible clients seeking help with debt problems are offered an opportunity to attend a monthly debtor's rights clinic, at which they are given advice on a wide variety of topics, including the possibility of filing for bankruptcy. The people who attend the clinic and believe they may have a need for bankruptcy relief are provided an opportunity for individual

consultations with LSNV staff attorneys, to discuss matters not appropriate to address in a group setting and to explore whether they may need to file for bankruptcy relief. LSNV utilizes a screening process to determine when resort to bankruptcy court is necessary. This analysis focuses on whether there are alternatives that may be sufficient, and whether the timing of a filing is appropriate—to protect income or property. Those clients for whom bankruptcy makes sense are given “homework” to complete. This “homework” is designed to assist the clients to gather the required information and documentation for a final assessment. Clients who appear to meet need criteria for bankruptcy are referred to members of a panel of private bankruptcy attorneys who have agreed to offer pro bono assistance. The pro bono volunteers make the final decision about need for bankruptcy relief. At present, the pro bono panel only offers help with Chapter 7 filings, not with Chapter 13 cases. Attorneys experienced in handling either Chapter 7 or Chapter 13 bankruptcy cases are needed, to handle cases and to assist with training of volunteers. Currently, no training is scheduled.

CONSUMER PROTECTION LAW

Alexandria Housing and Consumer Clinic

Attorneys are needed on Mondays between 10:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m. in LSNV’s Alexandria Office to meet with clients with housing and consumer problems. The assistance may be limited to offering advice or brief service, or full representation, at the option of the volunteer. Training is provided, and a housing and consumer law attorney on LSNV’s staff is on site to provide mentoring.

Fairfax Consumer Clinic

Attorneys are needed on Wednesday mornings in LSNV’s Fairfax Office to meet with clients with consumer problems. The assistance may be limited to offering advice or brief service, or full representation, at the option of the volunteer. Training is provided, and a consumer law attorney on LSNV’s staff is on site to provide mentoring. This project is co-sponsored by the Fairfax Bar Pro Bono Program.

Fairfax County Court Outreach

LSNV has a court outreach office at the Fairfax County Courthouse, 4110 Chain Bridge Road, Fairfax, VA 22030. The outreach office is at Room 203, and is open from 9:30 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. Monday through Friday. On Monday through Thursday LSNV provides legal assistance to walk-ins primarily in consumer matters. On Friday LSNV provides assistance on housing matters. We need volunteers to assist us in staffing this office.

Consumer Protection Cases

Attorneys are needed to provide representation to LSNV clients with Consumer Protection cases, who LSNV staff is unable to represent. Training and mentoring are available.

EMPLOYMENT LAW

Fairfax Employment Clinic

Attorneys are needed on alternate Thursday afternoons in LSNV's Fairfax office to meet with clients with employment problems. The volunteers are not committed to provide more than counsel or brief service, although representation—when warranted—is encouraged. Only the consultation is pro bono; if a merited fee-generating case is identified, the volunteers are encouraged to offer assistance if they choose to, on a compensated basis. Merited, non fee-generating cases are referred to staff, are co-counseled with staff or may be handled on a pro bono basis. Training is provided, and a staff attorney is on site to provide mentoring and to accept referrals for staff representation. This project is co-sponsored by the Fairfax Bar Pro Bono Program.

Employment Cases

Attorneys are needed to conduct screening interviews for LSNV clients who have employment law problems in Washington, D.C. or who live in the City of Alexandria, and the counties of Arlington, Loudoun and Prince William. Attorneys who are willing to provide representation on either a compensated or pro bono basis (depending upon the matter) are also needed to consider/review referral of screened, potentially merited legal problems that have been identified by staff and pro bono volunteers. LSNV staff does not generally offer representation with legally-merited fee-generating cases, unless private counsel is unavailable for reasons other than insufficient merit. All types of employment cases (except worker's compensation claims) are handled by staff, as are some employment-related issues (expungement of criminal records, assistance with identity theft, restoration of driving privileges, etc.). Training and training materials are provided.

FAMILY LAW

Civil Protection Orders for Victims of Domestic Violence

Attorneys are needed to represent low-income victims of domestic violence at hearings before Northern Virginia Juvenile and Domestic Relations District Courts. These cases usually will have been scheduled for a date and time certain before the client comes to LSNV seeking assistance. A minimal time commitment is involved, usually including one brief court appearance. Training and mentoring are available. Attorneys new to the process would shadow an experienced attorney

prior to being asked to handle a case alone. Advance notice before the court date is often quite limited.

Contested Child Custody or Visitation, Child Support, and Divorce Cases

LSNV's limited funding means that LSNV staff can meet only a fraction of the needs of clients for representation in contested child custody, visitation, child support, and divorce cases. PLAS is interested in training attorneys without experience in the field of child custody, and mentoring them in handling contested child custody and visitation cases. Periodic training is provided in the area of child support to attorneys without expertise in that area. Beyond that, LSNV is always interested in experienced attorneys willing to volunteer to accept pro bono cases in contested child custody, visitation and/or contested divorce cases. LSNV and PLAS are committed to evaluate clients seeking pro bono representation in contested child custody or visitation cases and/or contested divorce cases, to select those clients whose cases are most meritorious.

Hotline Phone Consultations for Family and Housing Law Issues

Attorneys are needed on Tuesday and Thursday Afternoons in the Falls Church Office to call clients scheduled for telephone consultations on non-emergency family law and housing law problems. Training is available. Calls can be made from the attorney's home or office, if desired. This project is co-sponsored by the Young Lawyers Division of the Virginia Bar Association.

Uncontested Divorces

Attorneys are needed to file Uncontested Divorce cases on behalf of low-income clients. These cases have been pre-screened to ensure that all potentially contested issues, such as custody, support and property disputes have been resolved before being referred to an attorney. These cases can be completed on the attorney's own time, as fits their schedule. A minimal time commitment is involved, usually including one brief court appearance. Training and forms are available.

Alexandria Uncontested Divorce Clinic

Paralegals are needed in LSNV's Alexandria Office on Saturday mornings of alternate months to interview applicants for participation in LSNV's Pro Bono Uncontested Divorce Project, including reviewing the information and documents the clients are to provide. Training is provided, and new participants will shadow an experienced paralegal before being asked to interview a client alone. This project is co-sponsored by the Alexandria Bar Association.

Fairfax Uncontested Divorce Clinic

Paralegals are needed in LSNV's Fairfax Office on the fourth Saturday mornings of most months to interview applicants for participation in LSNV's Pro Bono Uncontested Divorce Project, including reviewing the information and documents the clients are to provide. Training is provided, and new participants will shadow an experienced paralegal before being asked to interview a client alone. This project is co-sponsored by the Fairfax Bar Pro Bono Program and National Capital Area Paralegals Association (NCAPA).

Loudoun Uncontested Divorce Clinic

Paralegals are needed in LSNV's Loudoun Office to interview applicants for participation in LSNV's Pro Bono Uncontested Divorce Project, including reviewing the information and documents the clients are to provide. Training is provided, and new participants will shadow an experienced paralegal before being asked to interview a client alone. This project is co-sponsored by the Loudoun County Bar Association.

Prince William Uncontested Divorce Clinic

Paralegals are needed monthly in LSNV's Prince William Office to interview applicants for participation in LSNV's Pro Bono Uncontested Divorce Project, including reviewing the information and documents the clients are to provide. The clinics are generally held the third Monday of each month, from 4:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. This project is co-sponsored by the Prince William County Bar Association and the Association of legal Professionals.

HOUSING LAW

Alexandria Housing and Consumer Clinic

Attorneys are needed on Mondays between 10:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m. in LSNV's Alexandria Office to meet with clients with housing and consumer problems. The assistance may be limited to offering advice or brief service, or full representation, at the option of the volunteer. Training is provided, and a housing and consumer law attorney on LSNV's staff is on site to provide mentoring.

Fairfax County Court Outreach (See Consumer above)

Fairfax Housing Clinic

Attorneys are needed on Wednesday afternoons in LSNV's Fairfax Office to meet with clients with housing problems, including eviction, substandard housing concerns, landlord abuses, and government-sponsored housing assistance terminations. The assistance may be limited to offering advice or brief service, or full representation, at the option of the volunteer. Training is provided, and a housing law attorney on LSNV's staff is on site to provide mentoring. This project is co-sponsored by the Fairfax Bar Pro Bono Program.

Hotline Phone Consultations for Family and Housing Law Issues

Attorneys are needed on Tuesday and Thursday Afternoons in the Falls Church Office to call clients scheduled for telephone consultations on non-emergency family law and housing law problems. The assistance may be limited to offering advice or brief service, or full representation, at the option of the volunteer. Training is available. Calls can be made from the attorney's home or office, if desired. This project is co-sponsored by the Young Lawyers Division of the Virginia Bar Association.

Landlord-Tenant Cases

Attorneys are needed to provide representation to LSNV clients with Landlord-Tenant cases, who LSNV staff is unable to represent. Training and mentoring are available.

IMMIGRATION

In conjunction with the Arlington County Bar Association, LSNV is considering a pilot program of providing representation to clients needing representation concerning immigration issues. Currently, no training is available.

MEDIATION/ARBITRATION

Attorneys and others with competence in mediation and arbitration are needed to assist LSNV clients and their adverse parties attempt to mediate or arbitrate their disputes without the need to seek judicial resolution of their issues. Currently, no training is available.

SOCIAL SECURITY LAW

Attorneys are needed to provide representation to LSNV clients with Social Security and SSI cases, who LSNV staff is unable to represent. Training and mentoring are available.

COMPUTER TECHNICAL SUPPORT

LSNV is in need of technical assistance in building and maintaining our Public Forms Web Site <http://www.lsnv.org/publicforms.htm>. We continually seek to improve the accessibility and usability of this site. Some questions that have occurred to us are: What do we need to do to make the site more accessible and what are the best evaluation tools to monitor the site? For instance, should we be using the html format for the Subject-Matter and Alphabetical Indices rather than PDF? What are some of the means to drive people to the site and what can we do to make it more user friendly? How do you get feed-back and how important is it?

LEGAL ARTICLES

We have recently added comprehensive reference materials (including forms) in particular areas of the law. For example, LSNV's web site currently features materials on expungement http://lsnv.org/Information_Expungement.pdf. Updated driver's license restoration information will soon be posted. Future articles include financial aid for hospital bills and buying a used car. We seek suggestions for future articles and assistance in writing those articles.

Wills and Health Care Durable Powers of Attorney

Attorneys are needed to provide representation to LSNV clients with Simple Wills, Durable Powers of Attorney for Health Care who LSNV staff is unable to represent. Currently, no training is available.

Complementary use of Geronimo Virginia CaseFinder

Geronimo Development Corporation has recently offered to provide, free of charge, its CaseFinder service for Virginia to all attorneys who handle pro bono cases on referral from LSNV, for the duration of their service to the LSNV client. This free use of Geronimo is restricted to the rendering of pro bono services. If you are interested in having the use of the Geronimo Virginia CaseFinder, send me an email with your contact information, so that I can forward it to Geronimo. Geronimo will contact you directly about setting up the service.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

Contact Q. Russell Hatchl, Pro Bono Coordinator, Legal Services of Northern Virginia, 4080 Chain Bridge Road, Fairfax, VA 22030, (703) 246-4379, FAX (703) 273-6476, rhatchl@lsnv.org.