

# Public Interest Initiative

**Recognition:** Your commitment to public interest work is valued. It provides an opportunity to gain hands-on legal experience while serving the public in accordance with your professional responsibility. The American Bar Association encourages every lawyer to perform *pro bono* legal services annually. *See* ABA Model Rule 6.1.

The Public Interest Initiative (PII) wants to recognize your *pro bono* service based upon the amount of time that you have contributed to public interest work while in law school. If you have volunteered sixty (60) hours in a public interest practice area while you are in law school, then you may be recognized at your commencement ceremony for *pro bono* distinction. Thirty (30) hours may come from an extension of an externship in an approved placement in one semester. The balance can be fulfilled in other qualifying placements.

**I**n order to be eligible for this recognition, your work must be *pro bono*, that is, you must receive neither money nor academic credit for the hours that you volunteer at “charitable, religious, civic community, governmental or educational organizations in matters which are designed to primarily address the needs of persons of limited means.” (ABA Model Rule 6.1). “Law-related public service activities include (i) helping groups or organizations seeking to secure or protect civil rights, civil liberties, or public rights; (ii) helping charitable, religious, civic, community, governmental, and educational organizations not able to afford legal representation; (iii) participating in activities providing information about justice, the law or the legal system to those who might not otherwise have such information; and (iv) engaging in activities to enhance the capacity of the law and legal institutions to do justice.” (ABA Interpretation Standard 303-4).

Volunteer hours at a private law firm or court are not eligible unless you are specifically working on a project that benefits people of limited means or an underserved population or one that helps improve the law, the legal system or the legal profession. Please contact Dean Teplitz if you are unsure whether your hours will count towards satisfying the Public Interest Initiative. You must submit this form no later than March15th of your graduating year (although earlier is preferred) in order to be recognized at commencement. If you cannot meet this deadline because you are still in the process of completing your hours, please contact Dean Teplitz.

To be eligible for *pro bono* recognition you must:

* Complete a minimum of 60 unpaid, non-credit bearing *pro bono* hours serving persons of limited means or an underserved population or working on a project that is helping to improve the law, the legal system or the legal profession;
* Upload the experience(s) to CORE and log all hours completed in CORE. This is done under the Experiential Learning tab in the database;
* Complete the Student Verification of Hours / Lessons Learned page for each pro bono experience; and upload this to CORE;
* Inform Dean Teplitz by March 15th of your graduating year that you are applying for the Pro Bono Certification at Commencement.

Student Verification of Hours

I certify that the information provided in CORE and below is true and correct to the best of my knowledge and that I havecompleted a total of \_\_\_\_\_\_ hours of *pro bono* service in accordance with ABA Model Rule 6.1(a)(2) with (organization or project) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

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Print Name

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Student Signature Date

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Supervisor Signature Date

Lessons Learned

Please briefly describe what you learned from your *pro bono* experience and how you will use this experience in your future legal career: