

Annual Law Firm Pro Bono Challenge® Report

Frequently Answered Questions

Q: What is the reporting period?

A: The reporting period is January 1, 2015 through December 31, 2015.

Q: What is this year's reporting deadline?

A: February 26.

Q: The survey was sent to the wrong person at my firm. Can you resend the link to the appropriate respondent?

A: Please contact [Tammy Taylor](#) with the contact information of the correct person.

Q: Can I preview all of the questions to see what information I need?

A: Yes; a PDF containing a preview of the questions was attached to the email with your firm's survey link.

Q: What if my firm's prior year data, as displayed, is inaccurate?

A: Please contact [Tammy Taylor](#) with what you believe is the correct information.

Q: What if I want to provide both values (pro bono percentage and total paying client billable hours) on Page Two?

A: Please fill in only one value. You may provide both values in the comments box at the end of the page. *Please do not use commas, percentage signs, or decimals when entering values.*

Q: Should I include the time spent by paralegals, summer associates, and non-U.S. attorneys in our pro bono hours?

A: It is your choice; if the firm includes the time spent by paralegals, summer associates, and non-U.S. attorneys in its computation of total pro bono hours, you must include their time in the computation of total paying client billable hours and headcounts.

Q: I forgot to save my information. Is my work lost?

A: The responses are automatically saved when you click the red "Back" or "Next" buttons on the page.

Q: What if I haven't hit the "Next" or "Back" buttons but just exited my browser? How do I get back to the questions?

A: A saved copy of the questions may be reached by re-using your original link.

Q: I lost the original link. How can I get a replacement link?

A: Please contact [Tammy Taylor](#) for another link.

Q: I submitted my responses but found a mistake. How can I go back and make edits?

A: Please send changes to [Tammy Taylor](#).

Reporting Pro Bono for those of Limited Means

As a Signatory to the Law Firm Pro Bono Challenge®, your firm has made an institutional commitment to abide by the principles of the Challenge, which include devoting “a majority” of your firm’s pro bono hours to persons of limited means or to “charitable, religious, civic, community, governmental, and educational organizations in matters which are designed primarily to address the needs of persons of limited means.” We know that Challenge Signatories are doing significant pro bono work for low-income individuals, but the information we have received over the past few years has been incomplete and unrepresentative of the overall work that firms are doing. While the question about pro bono for those of limited means has always been mandatory, this information is particularly meaningful and compelling at a time when poverty in the U.S. remains high and resources for legal aid assistance have been diminished.

Why is this information critical? Advocates for increased funding for legal services organizations rely on this information to effectively make their case. According to Jim Sandman, president of the Legal Services Corporation, “we need to be able to demonstrate that the legal profession supports us in our work for low-income Americans, that we are maximizing pro bono assistance for the clients we serve, and that we are leveraging federal dollars with significant in-kind private contributions.” Conversely, an inability to collect and report comprehensive information from Challenge Signatories about their pro bono work for persons of limited means contributes to the perception that large firms are not supporting legal aid programs as much as they could and that they should do more before other funding streams, especially public ones, be made available.

In the ideal world, your pro bono timekeeping system would have a separate designation for categorizing pro bono time spent on matters for those of limited means or organizations serving them. This would provide the most accurate means of gathering data. Not all firms have this capability at this time. There are several other methods by which you can still report these hours, recognizing that at best, each method is an approximation. We would rather have your best estimate of the time spent than have your firm report a zero – we know a zero is inaccurate.

For those of you who do not currently have a separate reporting number for pro bono work dedicated to those of limited means, here are some suggested methods for developing an approximation:

- By case type: You know certain types of cases are most likely only serving those of limited means. Only count hours spent on those types of cases.

- By source of referral: Just as you know certain types of cases can generally be classified as serving primarily those of limited means, you also know that certain referral organizations only refer or serve clients of limited means. Only count hours spent on those referrals.
- By sampling and extrapolating: This is likely not as accurate a means of estimating hours, but again, we would rather have an approximation of hours than no data at all. Take a representative sample of your firm's pro bono work – look at 10 percent of all work done. Of that 10 percent, how much can be classified as work for those of limited means or for organizations serving them? For instance, say 33 percent of that 10 percent was devoted to work for those of limited means. Take that 33 percent and extrapolate to all your pro bono hours. Again for example, say the firm spends 25,000 hours on pro bono over the past reporting year; through extrapolation, you have estimated that 33 percent of that time, or 8,250 hours, could reasonably be said to have been performed for individuals of limited means or organizations serving them. This is the number you would report for Question 2.

In order to meaningfully tackle the access to justice crisis, we need a detailed picture of the sources and nature of pro bono services provided annually by Challenge Signatories. This data will enable us to better work with you and the public interest community to identify and address challenges and emerging trends. We need your help on this front and encourage Challenge Signatories to be in touch with the [Law Firm Pro Bono Project](#) if you need assistance in maintaining and reporting accurate information regarding your pro bono performance, including service to persons of limited means.

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