

# **Pro Bono Volunteer Law Program**

## **Volunteer Law Program**

Rhode Island Legal Services encourages and supports the efforts of Rhode Island attorneys to provide pro bono assistance to low income and elderly Rhode Islanders through the Volunteer Lawyer Program, an effort funded by Rhode Island Legal Services, Inc. and the RI Bar Foundation. The Volunteer Lawyer Project staff may be contacted at (401) 421-7758.

PHONE:

1-401-421-7758

1-800-339-7758

Monday - Friday, 9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.

## **What is the Volunteer Lawyer Program?**

The Volunteer Lawyer Program (VLP) is a public service program of the Rhode Island Bar Association designed to help people who have low-incomes obtain legal help when they need it. Its purpose is to provide legal assistance to those who cannot obtain legal representation either on their own or through other existing agencies.

## **Who is Eligible?**

To be eligible for assistance through the Volunteer Lawyer Program, your income must qualify under federally-determined guidelines. In addition, your legal problem must fall within certain areas of law.

## **How Does the VLP Work?**

When you have a legal problem, call the Volunteer Lawyer Program at 421-7758 or 1-800-339-7758. You will speak with a staff member who will ask you some questions about your legal problem and your financial status. Any information you give will be held in strictest confidence. The program coordinator is fluent in both

English and Spanish.

After your initial interview, the VLP staff will determine whether you are eligible to receive assistance through the program. A staff member will then contact an attorney who has expertise in handling cases such as yours. If your case is accepted, and certain requirements are fulfilled, you will be given the attorney's name and telephone number and instructed to call his/her office to arrange your first appointment.

If you are found to be eligible for VLP assistance, all services provided to you by the attorney will be free of charge. You may be required to pay court fees or other minor litigation costs. These can be discussed with your attorney.

## **What kind of Legal Help is Available?**

The Volunteer Lawyer Program handles non-criminal civil cases, including the following areas:

- Consumer -Housing/Landlord/ Tenant
- Benefits -Collections
- Bankruptcy -Guardianship
- Special Education -Employment
- License Registry -Family Law
- Tort Defenses -Wills

Cases in which you are suing for a monetary award are not eligible for VLP assistance.

## **Who Are the VLP Attorneys?**

Approximately 1,000 private attorneys located throughout the state and practicing in all areas of law belong to the VLP referral panel. The panel includes members who are fluent in several languages, and who have interests in many specialty areas. All the panel attorneys donate their time to help people in need through the Volunteer Lawyer Program.

The Volunteer Lawyer Program is funded by Rhode Island Legal Services, Inc. and the RI Bar Foundation and is offered as a public service by the Rhode Island Bar Association.

# The Pro Bono Collaborative

The Pro Bono Collaborative mobilizes Rhode Island law firms, law students, and community organizations to provide legal assistance within the community.

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