

FINGER LAKES VOLUNTEER LAWYER SERVICE

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February 10, 2010

RE: Pro bono Volunteers Needed for the 2010 Pro-se Divorce Clinic Program

Dear Colleague:

In 2010 Legal Assistance of Western New York will continue to offer the clinic sessions that we started offering in 1996 to low-income Ontario County residents involved in pro se matrimonial actions. In consultation with the Chief Clerk of the Ontario County Supreme and County Courts, a schedule for clinic sessions, alternating between the LawNY office in Geneva and the courthouse in Canandaigua, has now been established.

I am writing in the hopes that you will consider volunteering a few hours of your time in 2010 to staff one or more clinic sessions. An experienced family law attorney on our staff will be available at all clinic sessions to provide any necessary technical assistance and back-up. If you are able to volunteer, be assured that you will incur no obligation whatsoever to provide actual representation to any clinic clients. Your commitment will be to provide counsel and advice on a one-time basis. Our office will assume responsibility for providing any follow-up information clients may need after the clinics.

The sessions offered each year since 1996 have gone smoothly and have helped to reduce the burden that pro se matrimonial matters place on the court system, particularly in the Supreme Court Clerk's office. If you can help, please complete and return the enclosed registration form at your earliest convenience. For those of you who practice in Yates County, please also consider volunteering for the Yates County clinics, as we have few Yates County attorneys available to serve that region.

For attorneys who have schedule conflicts or otherwise prefer to meet with divorce clinic clients in their own office, we can make arrangements to send a client's file and clinic materials directly to your office and to instruct clients to meet with you at your office on a date and time that you designate. If you prefer this type of arrangement, please let us know at least two weeks before the clinic date, which is when clients are matched up with volunteers. At that time, scheduling letters are sent to clients, with copies to the volunteers.

At the clinics, in one hour meetings, volunteer attorneys meet individually with low-income people who have filed or are considering filing a divorce without an attorney. The clinics also provide advice to pro-se Defendants, and can sometimes assist with drafting a Separation Agreement. Clients are pre-screened to confirm income eligibility, to gather information about their cases and to assess whether they are appropriate candidates for the clinic. Clients are also given information before the clinic regarding the grounds for divorce and custody, support, and visitation laws.

A selection of forms needed to either commence a divorce or to complete one following service of process is made available for the use of the client and attorney at the clinic session. Clients receive written instructions on how to file papers with the clerk and how to have a spouse served. Volunteer attorneys provide advice, answer questions and assist in drafting or filling out the necessary forms. Volunteer attorneys also complete a short form to let us know what was accomplished and any advice which should be stressed when we provide written confirmation to the client the week after the clinic. Volunteer attorneys assume no responsibility for any subsequent "follow-up" with clients.

The clinic program has also developed a training packet to assist volunteer attorneys who are not experienced in matrimonial law. Please let us know if you would like a copy of these materials.

Legal Assistance provides insurance coverage to attorneys for cases/clients which are referred by our office, and retired attorneys should be aware that Ethic Committee opinions have approved the participation of otherwise retired attorneys volunteering for pro-bono services. If you have any questions at all, please feel free to call. I hope to receive a registration form from you soon.

Very truly yours,

Elizabeth A. Hendy
Staff Attorney
Pro-bono Program Coordinator

**ONTARIO COUNTY
PRO-SE DIVORCE CLINIC ATTORNEY SIGN UP FORM**

___ YES, I will volunteer to staff a session of the matrimonial pro se clinics. I will be available to staff the clinic sessions marked below. Clinic sessions will run from 1:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. For each date selected, please indicate the block of time when you expect to be available.

The clinic sessions will be held at:

In Geneva:
Legal Assistance of Western New York
361 South Main Street
Geneva, NY 14456

In Canandaigua:
Ontario County Courthouse
27 North Main Street
Canandaigua, NY 14424

___ Canandaigua: Thursday, April 29, 2010;
I am available from ___ p.m. until ___ p.m.

___ Geneva: Thursday, June 24, 2010;
I am available from ___ p.m. until ___ p.m.

___ Canandaigua: Thursday, August 19, 2010;
I am available from ___ p.m. until ___ p.m.

___ Geneva: Thursday, October 21, 2010;
I am available from ___ p.m. until ___ p.m.

___ Canandaigua: Thursday, December 9, 2010;
I am available from ___ p.m. until ___ p.m.

OR:

___ I prefer to meet with clients at my office, on the following dates and times during the above clinic weeks: _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

Telephone: _____

Fax: _____

Email: _____

Please return to: Legal Assistance of Western New York
361 South Main Street
Geneva, New York 14456
Or Fax To: (315)781-2565

Questions: Call Keith McCafferty or Beth Hendy at Finger Lakes Volunteer Lawyer Service at (315)781-1465 or send email to Bhendy@LawNY.org.

YATES COUNTY
PRO-SE DIVORCE CLINIC ATTORNEY SIGN UP FORM

___ YES, I will volunteer to staff a session of the matrimonial pro se clinics. I will be available to staff the clinic sessions marked below. Clinic sessions will run from 1:00 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. For each date selected, please indicate the block of time when you expect to be available.

The clinic sessions will be held at the County Courthouse in **Penn Yan.**

___ Thursday, April 22, 2010;
I am available from ___ p.m. until ___ p.m.

___ Thursday, July 8, 2010;
I am available from ___ p.m. until ___ p.m.

___ Thursday, October 14, 2010;
I am available from ___ p.m. until ___ p.m.

___ Thursday, January 20, 2011;
I am available from ___ p.m. until ___ p.m.

OR:

___ I prefer to meet with clients at my office, on the following dates and times during the above clinic weeks:

Name: _____

Address: _____

Telephone: _____

Fax: _____

Email: _____

Please return to: Legal Assistance of Western New York
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 Geneva, New York 14456
 Or Fax To: (315) 781-2565

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