

**NEW YORK STATE BAR ADMISSION: PRO BONO REQUIREMENT
FAQs (2018 rev.¹)**

[Open the bookmarks sidebar to link directly to a Q&A]

Purposes and Goals

- 1. What is the Pro Bono Requirement?**
- 2. When does the Pro Bono Requirement take effect for law students attending an American Bar Association-approved law school?**
- 3. When does the Pro Bono Requirement take effect for those who qualify to take the bar examination pursuant to Court of Appeals Rule 520.6 based on a qualifying foreign law degree or a foreign first degree in law together with a qualifying LL.M. degree from an American Bar Association-approved law school in the United States?**
- 4. If I am seeking to obtain an LL.M. degree at an American Bar Association-approved law school in the United States under Court of Appeals Rule 520.6, when can I perform my 50 hours of pro bono service?**
- 5. When does the Pro Bono Requirement take effect for those who qualify to take the bar examination pursuant to Court of Appeals Rule 520.5 based on graduation from a law school not approved by the American Bar Association?**
- 6. When does the Pro Bono Requirement take effect for those who qualify to take the bar examination pursuant to Court of Appeals Rule 520.4 based on successful completion of one year at an American Bar Association-approved law school and a clerkship at a New York law office?**
- 7. Who is required to fulfill the Pro Bono Requirement?**
- 8. When can I begin to fulfill the Requirement?**
- 9. When do my required hours of qualifying pro bono work need to be completed? When and where do I file the Form Affidavit of Compliance?**
- 10. Where can my pro bono work be performed?**

¹This revision to the FAQs (previously updated on September 17, 2014 to include a modification in the first paragraph of the “Purposes and Goals” section; amendments to FAQs 1, 2, 4, 7, 11, 12, 13, 19, and 20; insertion of new FAQs 25 and 26; renumbering of former FAQs 25 through 43, which are now 27 through 45; and additional revisions to renumbered FAQs 31 and 35), which were formerly 29 and 33). On March 11, 2015, FAQ 2(a) and 2(b) were amended with respect to the start date for qualifying pro bono work. In September 2015, FAQs 4, 11, and 13 were amended, and FAQs 42 through 44 were renumbered. FAQs 2 and 9 were updated in July of 2018.

11. Since I am a student not yet admitted to the bar, what types of work may I perform in furtherance of the objectives of the Pro Bono Requirement?
12. What types of projects will meet this Requirement?
13. To what extent is supervision necessary?
14. If I perform pro bono work in a country other than the United States, are there additional requirements?
15. Do all the hours that I spend working at a qualifying law school clinic count? If I receive academic credit for my participation in the clinic, does that disqualify my work?
16. If I receive a stipend or grant from my law school or a third party in connection with a law-school sponsored internship or externship, does that disqualify my work?
17. Does legal research for a law professor qualify?
18. If I participate in a survey project involving the questioning of litigants, will those hours satisfy the 50-hour Rule?
19. If I participate in a program that provides assistance in completing federal or state tax forms, will those hours qualify?
20. Will participation in a mediation program qualify?
21. If I act as an interpreter or provide translation services involving a person receiving pro bono services, can I count that time toward my 50-hours?
22. Will participation in a student-directed pro bono project count?
23. Will work on a pro bono project that is not sponsored by my law school qualify?
24. Will volunteer work on a political campaign, the collection or review of signatures on petitions, work as a poll inspector for elections or work on election litigation qualify? Will assisting with litigation involving an election or a candidate's qualification for nomination, election or office qualify? Will legal research for a political group qualify?
25. Will volunteer legal work for a labor union qualify?
26. Will volunteer legal work for a religious organization qualify?
27. If I am hired for a summer position or for a part-time position during the academic year at a law firm, a legal services provider or a government agency and I am paid a salary, will my work on pro bono matters qualify?
28. May I count qualifying work performed in a full-time salaried position with a law firm, government agency or legal services provider following law school graduation?
29. Does community service qualify?
30. Does participation as a mentor or organizer in a mock trial program for high school or college students qualify? Does organizing a moot court competition at my law school qualify?
31. May I work on more than one project to achieve my 50 hours?

32. Does time spent on administrative tasks incidental to the work, such as photocopying or transportation, qualify?
33. If my law school has a mandatory pro bono requirement for graduation, can the hours that I work to meet the school's requirement also be used toward the Pro Bono Requirement?
34. How do I demonstrate compliance with the Pro Bono Requirement?
35. What is the process for getting my Form Affidavit of Compliance notarized?
36. When should my supervisor sign my Affidavit of Compliance?
37. If I work at more than one program, do I need to complete more than one form affidavit?
38. If I work on more than one matter at a legal services provider or firm, do I need to supply an Affidavit of Compliance for each case or matter?
39. Can a photocopy or digital, electronic copy of my Affidavit of Compliance be filed with my admission application to the appropriate Appellate Division?
40. May I complete my form at the time I conclude a pro bono project, even if it is before I am applying for admission?
41. Where do I obtain the necessary form(s)?
42. What kind of records should I keep and for how long?
43. Will special hardship waivers be granted relieving persons from having to comply with the Pro Bono Requirement? Do I need to satisfy the Pro Bono Requirement if I'm enrolled in an evening course of law study and I have a full-time day job? Do I need to satisfy the Pro Bono Requirement if I am completing an LL.M. degree in order to qualify to take the New York bar examination?
44. If I have a question not addressed in these FAQs, where can I seek assistance?

Purposes and Goals

On Law Day, May 1, 2012, Chief Judge Jonathan Lippman announced a new initiative aimed at providing additional legal resources to expand access to justice for low-income New Yorkers. After describing his success in securing additional funding for civil legal services providers in the state and acknowledging other efforts to ensure equal access to justice, the Chief Judge explained that more was needed and, in the future, prospective attorneys would be required to spend 50 hours performing pro bono work as a requirement for admission to practice law in New York State.

As emphasized by Chief Judge Lippman, it has become increasingly difficult to provide equal justice for all New York citizens:

"We are facing a crisis in New York and around the country. At a time when we are still adjusting to the realities of shrinking state coffers and reduced budgets, more and more people find themselves turning to the courts. The courts are the emergency rooms of our society -- the most intractable social problems find their way to our doors in great and increasing numbers. And more and more of the people who come into our courts each day are forced to do so without a lawyer."

Millions of litigants each year in New York State are navigating the complexities of the court system unassisted by an attorney:

"The new pro bono service requirement for admission to the New York bar serves to address the state's urgent access to justice gap, at the same time helping prospective attorneys build valuable skills and imbuing in them the ideal of working toward the greater good. It is so important that the next generation of lawyers in New York embraces the core values of our profession that so fundamentally include pro bono legal assistance."

Lawyers have a professional responsibility to promote greater access to justice. "As far back as judges and lawyers have existed, the pursuit of equal justice for all, rich and poor alike, has been the hallmark of our profession," the Chief Judge explained. Each attorney has an obligation to foster the values of justice, equality, and the rule of law, and it is imperative that law students gain a recognition of this obligation as part of their legal training.

The pro bono requirement for bar admission is intended to have several beneficial outcomes. In addition to easing the gap in legal assistance, another goal is to provide instructive and meaningful experiences to law students that will expose them to the pressing needs of the less fortunate. This will instill a deeper understanding of the problems confronted by those segments of society that have little access to legal resources and institutions. These pro bono experiences hopefully will encourage law students to continue with volunteer pro bono services after they are admitted, and help prospective lawyers acquire hands-on skills under the supervision of committed members of the legal profession. Attorneys who engage in pro bono legal services derive considerable personal satisfaction from their volunteer efforts, and this initiative hopes to inculcate those same intrinsic rewards in lawyers-in-training.

The proposed Pro Bono Requirement rule was formulated by the Advisory Committee on Pro Bono Bar Admission Requirements (http://www.nycourts.gov/press/pr2012_03.shtml), which took into account the views and comments of law schools in New York and throughout the country, bar associations, attorneys, law students, providers of legal services to low-income individuals and other interested parties. The Administrative Board of the New York Courts reviewed and approved the Committee's recommendations, and the Court of Appeals adopted section 520.16 to Part 520 of the Rules of the Court of Appeals for the Admission of Attorneys and Counselors at Law, which sets forth the 50-hour requirement (see 22 NYCRR 520.16).

* * *

The following frequently asked questions (**FAQs**) address key inquiries about who must comply with the Pro Bono Requirement for admission to the bar in New York, what types of work qualify, when

the qualifying pro bono work is to be performed, what documentation is necessary and when an applicant for admission must file the required documentation. These FAQs are intended to provide general guidance. In the event of any conflict between the information contained in these FAQs and the text of section 520.16, the latter controls.

NEW YORK'S PRO BONO REQUIREMENT FOR ADMISSION TO THE BAR

1. What is the Pro Bono Requirement?

Pursuant to Rule 520.16 of the Rules of the Court of Appeals, applicants who successfully pass the bar examination in New York State must demonstrate that they have performed 50 hours of qualifying pro bono service before applying for admission to practice. The full text of Rule 520.16 is available at <http://www.nycourts.gov/ctapps>.

2. When does the Pro Bono Requirement take effect for law students attending an American Bar Association-approved law school?

If you were enrolled at an ABA-approved law school and you are seeking admission to practice in New York on examination, you will need to complete 50 hours of qualifying pro bono work before you apply for admission to the New York bar. Only eligible pro bono work performed on or after May 1, 2012 will satisfy the Rule. The Requirement need not be fulfilled before a law student applies to take the New York bar examination; rather, the 50 hours must be completed before filing an application for admission.

3. When does the Pro Bono Requirement take effect for those who qualify to take the bar examination pursuant to Court of Appeals Rule 520.6 based on a qualifying foreign law degree or a foreign first degree in law together with a qualifying LL.M. degree from an American Bar Association-approved law school in the United States?

Applicants who qualify for the bar examination under Rule 520.6 are required to satisfy the Pro Bono Requirement if they plan to be admitted to practice law in New York State after January 1, 2015. You may complete your 50 hours of qualifying work in another state or country. However, for those seeking to take the bar examination based on a qualifying foreign law degree, only eligible pro bono work performed on or after May 1, 2012 (the date the Requirement was announced), will satisfy the rule. For those seeking to take the bar examination based on a foreign first degree in law with a qualifying LL.M. degree from an American Bar Association-approved law school in the United States, please see FAQ 4.

4. If I am seeking to obtain an LL.M. degree at an American Bar Association-approved law school in the United States under Court of Appeals Rule 520.6, when can I perform my 50 hours of pro bono service?

Foreign-educated candidates planning to acquire an LL.M. degree from an American Bar Association-approved law school in the United States for the purpose of qualifying to take the New York bar examination under Court of Appeals Rule 520.6 may engage in their 50 hours of qualifying pro bono service up to one year before the commencement of the LL.M. course of study. Of course, such LL.M. candidates may perform some or all of their 50 hours of qualifying work in the United States, either during or after an LL.M. course of study. You may wish to wait until you have passed the New York bar examination before you engage in qualifying pro bono work, but the 50-hour Requirement must be completed before applying for bar admission.

Even if a foreign-educated applicant is admitted to practice in a foreign jurisdiction, the 50 hours of pro bono work must be law-related, and an attorney admitted to practice in a jurisdiction must complete the supervisor certification on the Affidavit of Compliance that must be filed with the applicant's admission application. Additionally, the supervisory work must not violate any statute, regulation or code regarding the unauthorized practice of law.

5. When does the Pro Bono Requirement take effect for those who qualify to take the bar examination pursuant to Court of Appeals Rule 520.5 based on graduation from a law school not approved by the American Bar Association?

Applicants who qualify for the bar examination under Rule 520.5 are required to satisfy the Pro Bono Requirement if they plan to be admitted to practice law in New York State after January 1, 2015. However, only qualifying pro bono work performed on or after May 1, 2012, will be eligible to satisfy the Rule.

6. When does the Pro Bono Requirement take effect for those who qualify to take the bar examination pursuant to Court of Appeals Rule 520.4 based on successful completion of one year at an American Bar Association-approved law school and a clerkship at a New York law office?

Applicants who qualify for the bar examination under Rule 520.4 are required to satisfy the Pro Bono Requirement if they plan to be admitted to practice law in New York State after January 1, 2015. However, only qualifying pro bono work performed on or after May 1, 2012, will be eligible to satisfy the Rule.

7. Who is required to fulfill the Pro Bono Requirement?

- a. With the exception of persons covered by subsection (b) of this FAQ, all individuals who are admitted to the New York bar after January 1, 2015 must demonstrate that they have completed 50 hours of qualifying pro bono work.

- b. The Pro Bono Requirement does not apply to attorneys who seek admission to the New York bar on motion under Rule 520.10 or those who are admitted pro hac vice under Rule 520.11.

8. When can I begin to fulfill the Requirement?

If you are currently a law student at an American Bar Association-approved law school, eligible pro bono work performed at any time after you commenced your legal education will qualify to meet the Requirement, as long as the work does not violate any of your law school's regulations or policies about student employment or volunteer activities.

9. When do my required hours of qualifying pro bono work need to be completed? When and where do I file the Form Affidavit of Compliance?

Your qualifying pro bono work must be completed before you submit your Application for Admission to the appropriate Appellate Division of the New York Supreme Court. In the First Department, your application may be filed after you have received your bar examination results and your certification of bar passage has been issued. In the Second, Third and Fourth Departments, your application may be filed after you have taken the bar examination, regardless whether your examination results have been announced. Be advised that the application and any further materials required by the Appellate Division and its Committee on Character and Fitness must be filed within three years from the date when the applicant sits for the second day of the Uniform Bar Examination, whether taken in New York or in another jurisdiction (see 22 NYCRR 520.12(d)). For applicants who took the New York State bar prior to July 2016, the application for admission to the bar must be filed within three years from the date of the letter sent by the New York State Board of Law Examiners notifying the applicant that the applicant has passed the bar examination. The three-year period will not be extended if an applicant has delayed satisfying the Pro Bono Requirement. After three years your bar examination score will be deemed stale and you must retake the bar examination. Pro bono hours and pro bono affidavits do not “expire,” as long as the affidavit is filed within the proper time frame.

Since compliance must be demonstrated as part of your application for admission, you will file the Form Affidavit of Compliance with your admission packet at the appropriate Appellate Division of the New York Supreme Court. The current Multi-Department Admission Packet can be viewed at the website of the New York State Board of Law Examiners:

<http://www.nybarexam.org/Admission/Admission.htm>.

Note that the application and any further materials required by the Appellate Division and its Committee on Character and Fitness must be filed within three years from the date that you are notified by the New York State Board of Law Examiners that you have passed the New York bar examination.

10. Where can my pro bono work be performed?

Your 50 hours of pro bono work may be performed anywhere that is convenient for you, so long as the work complies with all other aspects of the Pro Bono Requirement. You may satisfy all or some of the 50 hours in another state or a foreign country, provided the nature and supervision of your service complies with the Pro Bono Requirement.

11. Since I am a student not yet admitted to the bar, what types of work may I perform in furtherance of the objectives of the Pro Bono Requirement?

a. First, your work tasks must be law-related. In other words, the work must involve the use of legal skills and law-related activities that are appropriate for lawyers-in-training not yet admitted to practice, and you must avoid the unauthorized practice of law. With adequate training and supervision, some examples of eligible activities include: helping a low-income person complete court forms; assisting an attorney with trial preparation; helping litigants prepare for court appearances; engaging in witness interviewing and investigation; drafting court or transactional documents; or engaging in legal research directly related to client representation. You may also perform law-related assignments or make court appearances that are authorized under student practice orders issued by the Appellate Division of the New York Supreme Court for the specific program in which you are performing pro bono work.

Keep in mind that the primary purpose of the Pro Bono Requirement is to enhance the provision of legal resources available to persons who would otherwise not be able to access or afford legal assistance. Toward this objective, you should seek pro bono work with programs or entities that aim to improve access to justice, are engaged in the representation of low-income or disadvantaged individuals or provide government services in furtherance of these objectives.

- b. Second, your work must be performed under the supervision of:
- i. an attorney who is a member of the law school faculty, an adjunct faculty member or an instructor employed by a law school; or
 - ii. an attorney admitted to practice and in good standing with the appropriate licensing authority in a jurisdiction, provided that the supervisory work does not violate any statute, regulation or code regarding the unauthorized practice of law; or
 - iii. in the case of a clerkship or externship in a court system, by a judge or an attorney employed by the court system.

Your supervisor will need to certify the hours that you spent on pro bono work when you complete your Form Affidavit of Compliance with the Pro Bono Requirement as part of your admission application to the Appellate Division of the New York Supreme Court.

12. What types of projects will meet this Requirement?

In general, qualifying pro bono work should be performed in the service of low-income or disadvantaged individuals who cannot afford counsel and whose unmet legal needs prevent their access to justice; involves the use of legal skills for an organization that qualifies as tax-exempt under Internal Revenue Code § 501(c)(3); or involves the use of legal skills for the court system or federal, state or local government agencies or legislative bodies.

The following are examples of the type of work that will qualify:

- a. Law school-sponsored clinics that provide legal assistance to those who cannot afford representation, such as clinics that:
 - i. assist individuals or families in matters involving the essentials of life -- housing, access to health care or educational services or the receipt of social services or other government assistance;
 - ii. represent the victims of domestic violence or elder abuse;
 - iii. represent persons with mental illness or disabilities;
 - iv. assist low-income persons with the preparation of tax returns if legal issues are involved;
 - v. represent incarcerated persons or pursue prisoner rights litigation;
 - vi. advocate for victims of alleged human rights violations or the protection of civil liberties;
 - vii. litigate on behalf of classes of individuals who could not otherwise afford representation;
 - viii. represent applicants at public assistance hearings, such as eligibility reviews or hearings for food stamp assistance; or
 - ix. assist individuals with the drafting and completion of their petitions in Family or Housing Courts.

- b. Externships or internship placements with a
 - i. not-for-profit provider of legal services for the poor and low-income individuals;
 - ii. law firm, only if the work is performed for a pro bono matter being handled by that firm and the pro bono client is not paying a fee;
 - iii. not-for-profit organization described in FAQ 12(d) below, only if the work is related to a legal matter for which no fee is being paid;
 - iv. judge or a court system;
 - v. Legal Aid, a civil or criminal legal services organization that serves low-income clients, a Public Defender, a Conflict Defender, a U.S. Attorney, a District Attorney or a State Attorney General; or
 - vi. federal, state or local government agency or a legislative body.

- c. Law school-sponsored projects or programs that serve the poor or disadvantaged, provided the work is law-related and supervised in compliance with the Pro Bono Requirement.
- d. Law-related work for a not-for-profit organization qualifying as tax exempt under Internal Revenue Code § 501(c)(3) (for religious organizations refer to FAQ 26) or for an organization
 - i. providing free civil legal services for low-income individuals;
 - ii. providing criminal legal services for the indigent; or
 - iii. serving the poor or disadvantaged or otherwise promoting access to justice.
- e. Law-related work in connection with a pro bono matter undertaken by a member of a law school faculty, including adjunct faculty, or an instructor employed by a law school.
- f. Legal services provided in accordance with the provisions of a student practice order issued by a judicial department of the Appellate Division.
- g. Law-related work or legal research for an international not-for-profit organization or foreign government in connection with economic development objectives that assist the poor.

13. To what extent is supervision necessary?

As required by the Affidavit of Compliance that must be filed with an applicant's admission packet, the applicant's supervisor must certify that the applicant has accurately described the circumstances, timing and nature of the pro bono work described by the applicant on the form. Therefore, supervision of the applicant's work must be sufficient to supply an adequate basis for the certification.

Constant, physical presence of a supervisor during the performance of pro bono work may not be necessary, but supervision must be reasonable to the extent that adequate training, guidance, instruction and evaluation will be provided to assure that appropriate services are being performed. For instance, if law students are answering a hotline or performing in-take services for a legal services provider, a supervisor should be accessible to answer students' questions that may arise in the course of the performance of their work. Such supervisory assistance may not necessitate the physical presence of the supervisor -- supervision could be available through video or telephone accessibility, so long as the means of supervision is adequate to assure that appropriate information and services are being performed.

In large measure, the means and extent of required supervision are dependent on the nature of the pro bono services. Keep in mind that one goal of the Pro Bono Requirement is to expose law students to meaningful pro bono service, and successful outcomes require adequate training, oversight and evaluation by knowledgeable supervisors admitted to practice in a jurisdiction, provided that the supervisory work does not violate any statute, regulation or code regarding the unauthorized practice of law.

14. If I perform pro bono work in a country other than the United States, are there additional requirements?

Yes. If your pro bono work is performed, in whole or in part, outside the United States, you will be required to explain in detail the nature and circumstances of your work as part of your application for admission.

15. Do all the hours that I spend working at a qualifying law school clinic count? If I receive academic credit for my participation in the clinic, does that disqualify my work?

All hours spent working at the qualifying law school clinic will qualify, but the hours you spent on instructional training should not exceed the time that you actually spend using legal skills. Also, travel or commuting time does not count. Your receipt of academic credit does not disqualify the work.

16. If I receive a stipend or grant from my law school or a third party in connection with a law-school sponsored internship or externship, does that disqualify my work?

No. Your receipt of a stipend or grant does not disqualify the work.

17. Does legal research for a law professor qualify?

Only legal research in connection with a professor's pro bono legal services will qualify. Legal research related to scholarship, a law journal article or other publication does not qualify.

18. If I participate in a survey project involving the questioning of litigants, will those hours satisfy the 50-hour Rule?

It depends. The first eligibility factor is whether the project is law-related, meaning that the questions posed must have a purpose involving court proceedings, legal procedures or legal issues. But merely asking questions of litigants is not considered the provision of pro bono services. In order to qualify as pro bono work, a survey project should involve an educational/training component so that student participants acquire useful substantive and procedural knowledge and information. There must also be a pro bono purpose to a survey project, such as the eventual recommendation of reforms pertaining to legal issues affecting the poor or the preparation and issuance of a report with recommendations that will ameliorate particular legal issues confronting the poor or underserved populations. And, adequate supervision must be provided so that the requisite supervisory certification required by the Affidavit of Compliance can be issued.

19. If I participate in a program that provides assistance in completing federal or state tax forms, will those hours qualify?

If the program is designed to assist low-income individuals and there are legal taxation issues to be addressed, then it is probable that such services will qualify, provided that there is adequate supervision, training and evaluation to assure that appropriate tax information is being dispensed. If the tax-related assistance is of the type that can be performed by someone with only tax training and without legal training, it will not qualify.

20. Will participation in a mediation program qualify?

The eligibility of hours spent as a mediator requires consideration of whether the mediation services are being provided to poor or low-income clientele. Since mediation services can be performed by nonlawyers, qualifying mediation services must involve legal training and the issues involved must be law-related -- the mediation of non-legal disputes will not qualify. Qualifying mediation work also requires appropriate legal training in the subject matter of the mediation, adequate attorney supervision to assure that the services are properly performed and evaluation of the work performed.

21. If I act as an interpreter or provide translation services involving a person receiving pro bono services, can I count that time toward my 50-hours?

Providing interpretive or translation services does not fulfill the Pro Bono Requirement even if it is provided in the context of a fact-finding interview of a poor client receiving pro bono legal services. However, if the interpretive or translation services are ancillary to the qualifying pro bono legal work that you are engaged in with the client, then the fact that you are supplying interpretive services or translation will not disqualify the otherwise qualifying work hours. Only the legal services hours will be eligible to satisfy the Requirement.

22. Will participation in a student-directed pro bono project count?

No. Student-directed pro bono projects that are not supervised as discussed in FAQ 13 do not qualify.

23. Will work on a pro bono project that is not sponsored by my law school qualify?

You may work on an otherwise qualifying project that is not sponsored by your law school so long as the other conditions of the Pro Bono Requirement are met.

24. Will volunteer work on a political campaign, the collection or review of signatures on petitions, work as a poll inspector for elections or work on election litigation qualify? Will assisting with litigation involving an election or a candidate's qualification for nomination, election or office qualify? Will legal research for a political group qualify?

No. Campaign work, activities of a political nature or for a political organization, or legal research for a political organization will not qualify.

25. Will volunteer legal work for a labor union qualify?

No, work related to the delivery of services by a labor union does not qualify.

26. Will volunteer legal work for a religious organization qualify?

If the work you engage in is aimed at providing services to the poor or low-income groups, it should qualify.

27. If I am hired for a summer position or for a part-time position during the academic year at a law firm, a legal services provider or a government agency and I am paid a salary, will my work on pro bono matters qualify?

Yes, if such work would otherwise comply with the definition of qualifying pro bono work. However, you cannot receive a bonus, additional compensation or other reward from your employer because you performed pro bono work.

28. May I count qualifying work performed in a full-time salaried position with a law firm, government agency or legal services provider following law school graduation?

Work performed during full-time legal employment prior to admission to the bar will satisfy the 50-hour Requirement if such activities otherwise comply with the definition of qualifying pro bono work. For instance, if you commence employment at a law firm after taking the bar examination and you are assigned to work with an attorney at the firm who is handling a pro bono case, your work on that pro bono litigation will qualify, provided that the client is not paying for the legal services.

29. Does community service qualify?

No, unless your work is law-related and involves the use of legal skills. For example, assisting in the provision of legal services to a homeless shelter would qualify, but assisting at a fund-raising event, serving food or doing repairs at the shelter would not qualify. As a further illustration, if you volunteer to help Habitat for Humanity build a home, that work would not qualify. On the other hand, if under the supervision of an attorney, you assist in preparing the documents necessary to obtain a building permit

or zoning variance for the construction of the home, that work would count. Volunteering for community service projects is commendable, but the purpose of the Pro Bono Requirement is to provide law-related assistance so general community service projects will not qualify.

30. Does participation as a mentor or organizer in a mock trial program for high school or college students qualify? Does organizing a moot court competition at my law school qualify?

No. Although such activities are beneficial, they do not serve the intent and purpose of the Pro Bono Requirement.

31. May I work on more than one project to achieve my 50 hours?

Yes, but it is recommended that you complete the 50 hours in one program so that you gain more consistent experience.

32. Does time spent on administrative tasks incidental to the work, such as photocopying or transportation, qualify?

Time spent on administrative duties that are incidental to your pro bono work will qualify, but should be minimal compared to your law-related tasks. Travel or commuting time does not qualify.

33. If my law school has a mandatory pro bono requirement for graduation, can the hours that I work to meet the school's requirement also be used toward the Pro Bono Requirement?

Yes, if the work otherwise complies with the requirements of the pro bono Rule (see 22 NYCRR 520.16).

34. How do I demonstrate compliance with the Pro Bono Requirement?

As part of your Application for Admission, you will be required to complete a Form Affidavit of Compliance with the Pro Bono Requirement wherein you will explain your pro bono work. You will be required to identify when and where the work was performed, provide a description of your work or project and identify your supervisor. You must provide sufficient detail to permit the Character and Fitness Committee to evaluate compliance with all aspects of the Requirement. The form will also contain a certification to be completed by your supervising attorney, judge or legal officer attesting to the hours you worked. You will also be required to attest under penalty of perjury to the truth of the information that you have supplied in the Form Affidavit of Compliance.

35. What is the process for getting my Form Affidavit of Compliance notarized?

Once you have completed all of the information required on the first page of the affidavit, the form should be taken to a notary public for execution. In the presence of the notary, you will affirm that you provided the information that appears on the form and you will place your signature on page 2. The notary will then sign the form and affix a seal or stamp. Do not sign your name on page 2 prior to appearing before the notary.

If the affidavit is completed outside of the United States, its commonwealths, territories or possessions, and you are unable to use a notary public, you may have an equivalent attesting officer before whom you can affirm and acknowledge your signature and sign your affidavit. However, you must attach to your affidavit a certificate of the attesting officer's authority. If your country does not have a notary equivalent, you will need to use a notary from the American embassy or consulate. Furthermore, any Affidavit of Compliance that contains information completed in a foreign language must be accompanied by a certified English translation.

36. When should my supervisor sign my Affidavit of Compliance?

After you have completed page 2 and secured the notarization of your signature on page 2, you can request that your supervisor complete the supervisor certification section of the affidavit.

37. If I work at more than one program, do I need to complete more than one form affidavit?

Yes, a separate Form Affidavit of Compliance will be required for each law firm, service provider, clinic, government agency or program where you acquired your pro bono hours.

38. If I work on more than one matter at a legal services provider or firm, do I need to supply an Affidavit of Compliance for each case or matter?

No, so long as all projects were supervised by the same attorney. If your various projects involved more than one supervisor, you may need multiple Affidavits of Compliance since a certification by a supervising attorney familiar with your 50 hours of work will be required. For instance, if you work on housing court cases for six different clients of a Legal Aid Society office, and one supervisor provided oversight of your work, you need not complete six affidavits.

39. Can a photocopy or digital, electronic copy of my Affidavit of Compliance be filed with my admission application to the appropriate Appellate Division?

No, each of the four Appellate Divisions requires that all documents pertaining to an admission application must be filed as original, hard copies. The Appellate Divisions do not currently accept photocopies or electronic filings of admission materials. It is your responsibility to maintain the

original(s) of your affidavit(s) until such time as you apply for admission to practice. It may be helpful to keep a copy of your completed affidavit(s) in the event that you lose the original form and must prepare a new one – the copy will be a useful reference for you and your supervisor.

40. May I complete my form at the time I conclude a pro bono project, even if it is before I am applying for admission?

Yes. It is your responsibility to secure and maintain the necessary documentation that you will need for your Form Affidavit of Compliance. You may complete the Form Affidavit prior to your application for admission, but you will need to keep the form(s) until submission of your application packet. Do not rely on your pro bono supervisor or the program where you worked to retain all your necessary information.

41. Where do I obtain the necessary form(s)?

The Affidavit of Compliance is available at

<http://www.nycourts.gov/attorneys/probono/baradmissionreqs.shtml>

and at the websites of the four Appellate Divisions:

<http://www.nycourts.gov/courts/appellatedivisions.shtml>

42. What kind of records should I keep and for how long?

You should retain a record of the necessary information related to your qualifying pro bono work until you submit your application packet to the Appellate Division. If you and your supervisor completed a Form Affidavit of Compliance at some earlier point, it's your responsibility to retain the form for inclusion in your application of admission packet. Also, be prepared to discuss your pro bono work during your Character and Fitness interview.

43. Will special hardship waivers be granted relieving persons from having to comply with the Pro Bono Requirement? Do I need to satisfy the Pro Bono Requirement if I'm enrolled in an evening course of law study and I have a full-time day job? Do I need to satisfy the Pro Bono Requirement if I am completing an LL.M. degree in order to qualify to take the New York bar examination?

Only applicants with exceptional circumstances will be considered for a hardship waiver under Court of Appeals Rule 520.14. Part-time law studies, full-time employment, status as an LL.M. student, family obligations or other responsibilities, out-of-state or foreign residence and other commonly experienced situations will not qualify for a hardship waiver. You will be expected to complete the 50-hour Requirement either during your course of legal education or after you have taken the bar examination and before admission. Your admission will be delayed if you have not complied with the

Requirement so it is strongly recommended that you do not unnecessarily postpone completing the required pro bono hours.

44. If I have a question not addressed in these FAQs, where can I seek assistance?

You may visit <http://www.nycourts.gov/attorneys/probono/baradmissionreqs.shtml> for further information and updates.

If you have additional questions, the best way to communicate them is by email to ProBonoRule@nycourts.gov. Include specific information about the pro bono project that is the subject of your inquiry.

Please be aware that the ultimate decision about whether the Pro Bono Requirement is satisfied will be made by the Character and Fitness Committee of the Appellate Division Department to which your application for admission to the New York Bar is submitted. The FAQs and any responses to inquiries sent to the email address ProBonoRule@nycourts.gov represent the interpretations of the Requirement made by Advisory Committee on New York State Pro Bono Bar Admission Requirements appointed by the Chief Judge to assist in implementing the program.