

~Minutes~
Pro Bono Committee
Recognition Workgroup
December 30, 2015
10:00 a.m.
Teleconference
225 Spring Street, Conference Room 206
Wethersfield, CT

1. Chairperson Dwight Merriam called the meeting to order at 10:01a.m. with the following Workgroup members participating in the call: Attorney Peter Knight and Attorney Patricia Kaplan.
2. The Workgroup did not approve the draft February 4, 2015 minutes as Attorney Merriam was the only current Workgroup member who was at the February meeting. The Workgroup hopes to approve the minutes at its next meeting when Attorney Rutkowska is present as she was an original member of the Workgroup and was present for the February 2015 meeting.
3. Attorney Merriam provided a brief summary overview of the Workgroup's purpose and charge since both Attorney Kaplan and Attorney Knight are new Workgroup and Pro Bono Committee members. In short, Attorney Merriam explained that as part of the Judicial Branch's goal to increase awareness about the importance of pro bono service and to encourage a more representative cross-section of attorneys to perform pro bono work, the Recognition Workgroup has been tasked with developing a formal model to measure and recognize those attorneys who provide pro bono services for indigent persons and/or organizations serving indigent persons.

Attorney Merriam also explained that in the past, the Connecticut Law Tribune has recognized attorneys who have been identified by the Administrative Judges in each Judicial District for their outstanding pro bono contributions; however, there was some concern about asking judges to single out attorneys for recognition when these attorneys will likely appear in court before these same judges.

Instead, the Judicial Branch would like to implement a uniform, consistent recognition model that recognizes attorneys who distinguish themselves through their dedication to pro bono service. The Workgroup has developed a draft proposal which recommends a tiered approach to recognition commensurate with the number of hours performed. Attorneys who make

financial contributions to legal aid organizations, may “purchase” up to 25% of their pro bono hours for this purpose. Additionally, part of the Workgroup’s proposal contemplates the creation of a pro bono logo that includes the calendar year of the pro bono distinguished service award. The logo could be placed on the firm/attorney’s website and/or letterhead in order to publicize the recognition and achievement.

The Workgroup also discussed the possibility of having plaques in every Judicial District courthouse with the names of attorneys who have been recognized for their pro bono contributions. However, after further discussion, the Workgroup thought this suggestion might present some logistical issues if there are large numbers of names that need to be added to the plaques each year. Engraving costs could prove to be cost-prohibitive as well.

Similarly, the Workgroup discussed how best to publicize the pro bono recognition and the consensus was that the Connecticut Law Tribune could run a story or do individual attorney profiles, however, the Workgroup agreed that they would also like to see a publication with a wider, more diverse circulation also cover the recognition awards.

Attorney Kaplan suggested that the criteria for pro bono recognition under the Workgroup’s proposed model be different than the criteria for recipients of the Charles Parker Legal Services Award. In order to make a clear distinction, Attorney Kaplan suggested that only private attorneys (e.g. attorneys from firms, corporations, government attorneys, solo practitioners, etc) be eligible to receive pro bono recognition under the Workgroup’s model and not paid legal services attorneys.

The Workgroup also discussed how the attorneys will voluntarily self-report their pro bono contributions, however, the specific details about how and by whom the pro bono data will be compiled and reported has not yet been decided. Additionally, the workgroup discussed how the recognition model would be marketed so the attorneys were made aware of the measurement criteria.

Attorney Merriam asked the Workgroup members to review the summary of pro bono recognition in other states as well as the draft recognition proposal and submit any comments and suggested changes to him Friday, January 8th.

4. Attorney Merriam also asked the Workgroup staff person to send Attorneys Kaplan and Knight the minutes from the last 4 or 5 Pro Bono Committee meetings so they can familiarize themselves with the Committee’s endeavors.
5. The Workgroup meeting was adjourned at 10:40a.m.