



## 2024 Private Attorney Involvement Program Plan

### Pursuant to 45 CFR §1614.4

#### I. INTRODUCTION

Ohio State Legal Services Association (OSLSA) is committed to its mission ***to provide civil legal aid and advocacy to overcome unfairness and injustice to reduce poverty and increase opportunity***. OSLSA offers high quality legal services through Southeastern Ohio Legal Services (SEOLS) and the Legal Aid Society of Columbus (LASC)—its two direct service programs that serve 36 counties ranging from urban Columbus to the rural and Appalachian counties in the southeastern corner of Ohio.

Beyond continuing efforts from previous years, OSLSA's 2024 PAI Plan will focus on three initiatives: (a) expanding recruitment to firms and lawyers not previously engaged with Legal Aid; (b) continuing to expand pro bono programming in rural communities; and (c) expanding pro bono programming for immigration, housing, and reentry issues. In pursuit of these goals, the PAI Plan consists of three core strategies: **Recruitment, Recognition, and Retention**.

This PAI Plan incorporates input from all of the branch offices, the executive management, Boards of Directors, Pro Bono Coordinators, local judiciary and bar associations, and other stakeholders in the service area. In developing this Plan, the pro bono team also consulted with segments of the client community and private attorneys.

#### II. RECRUITMENT, RECOGNITION AND RETENTION

##### A. Recruitment

Understanding the unique strengths and resources in our community, OSLSA has continued to build upon its traditional recruitment efforts to meet its goals of increasing efficiency, expanding resources to rural communities, and developing a more creative program.

- **RECRUITMENT METHODS: COURT SUPPORT, ORGANIZED BAR ACTIVITY, AND TECHNOLOGY**

Court support remains an integral part of OSLSA's effort to provide greater resources, especially for its rural counties, and to expand its pool of volunteers.

OSLSA will reengage with the Ohio Supreme Court mentoring program to engage and inform mentor/mentees regarding pro bono opportunities. OSLSA will partner with multiple courts throughout its service area to offer Driver's License Reinstatement and Record Sealing Clinics—programs in which court support is essential. Lastly, as outlined below, OSLSA will continue its partnership with local courts to maintain the Franklin County Opportunity Port project while also expanding the platform into other service areas.

The **Ohio State Bar Association** Access to Justice and Young Attorney committees will continue to support the Driver's License Reinstatement clinic, on which OSLSA has partnered in Central Ohio and Southeastern Ohio. In her second year as chair of the Access to Justice committee, OSLSA's Pro Bono Director will also plan a statewide CLE focused on recruiting more lawyers for

legal aid programs around the state, including the projects hosted by OSLSA. OSLSA also plans to engage with the OSBA paralegal, probate, and family law committees to increase engagement throughout the service area.

In Franklin County, recruitment efforts benefit from collaboration with **Columbus Bar Association** committees. LASC has ongoing partnerships with specific bar sub-committees, including Bankruptcy, Probate, Estate Planning, while the CBA Pro Bono Committee will continue to support specific programming, including the annual pro bono reception. The CBA also permits use of its social media, publications, and web presence for promoting OSLSA pro bono project offerings and recognizing pro bono attorneys. OSLSA co-sponsors many of its brief advice clinics with other **local bar associations** throughout central and southeast Ohio, who provide support in the recruitment and training of our clinic volunteer attorneys. OSLSA also annually co-sponsors free CLE offerings with several rural bar associations, including Fairfield and Delaware in 2023.

OSLSA will continue to engage with the **Asian Pacific American Bar Association of Central Ohio** (APABA-CO), the **John Mercer Langston Bar Association** (JMLBA), the **Hispanic National Bar Association**, and the **American Immigration Lawyer Association** (AILA).

The increasing use of technology for recruitment serves OSLSA's goal of increasing its efficiencies and scope as well as its goal of bringing urban resources to our rural counties. The OSLSA pro bono team maintains a presence on social networking sites, such as Facebook, and LinkedIn, and also includes content in a monthly program e-newsletter.

- **RECRUITMENT AUDIENCES:**

- **MID SIZED AND SMALLER FIRMS** – An untapped Central Ohio market for pro bono recruitment has been smaller and mid-sized firms. OSLSA hopes to form a working group that will specifically strategize ways in which we can better connect with these firms.
- **NEW LAWYERS** –New lawyers are an excellent resource for OSLSA's pro bono program, as new lawyers are often able to serve as in-house volunteers, are eager to build skills by accepting pro bono cases, and bring energy and enthusiasm to their volunteer participation.
- **RETIRED LAWYERS AND PARALEGALS** – Retired lawyers and paralegals bring a wealth of knowledge and experience, greater flexibility with scheduling and availability, and an influence with their peers that enables them to serve as ambassadors for the pro bono program. The Rural Eviction Prevention Project engages members of this group and focuses its efforts on our rural service area, which faces an ever-reducing population of legal professionals. Replenishing this core group of volunteers as many of the original cohort have stopped volunteering is underway and will be a priority for 2024.
- **SPECIALIZED PRACTITIONERS** – Pro bono case referrals are inevitably more efficient when legal aid programs are able to capitalize on the existing skills and substantive expertise of private attorneys who practice in areas that overlap with poverty law, including those who practice in probate and estate planning, consumer bankruptcy, employment, immigration, real estate, reentry, and family law. Through engaging with affinity bars, such as the Central Ohio Association for Justice (plaintiff-side litigators) and the American Immigration Lawyers Association, OSLSA hopes to further build up our volunteer pools in some of the more specialized areas.

- **CORPORATE LAWYERS** – The centralized structure of corporate legal departments allows OSLSA to more efficiently and seamlessly recruit and train for specific programming. OSLSA has continued its relationship with several legal departments but hopes to resume programming with other groups that have stepped back from participating during the pandemic. OSLSA will continue its partnership with Nationwide Children's Hospital and its Lawyers for Kids Project to train and recruit Nationwide Insurance lawyers for a guardianship and special education project. With support from the Corporate Pro Bono and Pro Bono Institute, OSLSA also hopes to expand on its affiliation with the Central Ohio Association of Corporate Counsel and Nationwide Insurance to connect nonprofits and small entrepreneurs with pro bono transactional legal help. JP Morgan Chase continues to sponsor and staff specific reentry and driver's license reinstatement clinics in Central Ohio, and AEP will be joining OSLSA with a day of service in the Spring.
- **LAW STUDENTS & UNDERGRADUATES** – Law students remain a key part of service delivery. OSLSA benefits from its proximity to two law schools that offer clinic resources, host (virtual) recruitment events, communicate opportunities via their social media, and co-sponsor pro bono clinics, including an annual TAP clinic during Capital Law's Spring Break. Undergraduate students have become an important pool of volunteers as well. To reach this group, OSLSA staff attend student events and use social media. Students with ties to the rural communities or attending universities, such as Ohio University, Denison, Kenyon, The Ohio State University Marion and Newark Branches, Franciscan University, and Ohio Wesleyan, will be recruited to assist the local offices. OSLSA is now in its sixth year of its official collaboration with Ohio University to use "Access to Justice" interns for housing interviews at the SEOLS Athens office. OSLSA has also begun working with other law schools on specific volunteer opportunities, including the University of Virginia Law School Winter Break Pro Bono Program.

### **B. Recognition:**

Recognition is a vital component of OSLSA's pro bono program, as it serves to encourage participation in otherwise untapped areas and increase the participation of current volunteers.

- **VOLUNTEER PROFILES** - OSLSA recognizes current volunteer involvement through e-newsletters, which are routinely republished on Facebook, and LinkedIn profiles, and in the bar association media outlets.
- **ANNUAL REPORT** – OSLSA will use the LASC and SEOLS 2024 Annual Reports as an additional means of recognizing volunteers.
- **OCTOBER PRO BONO CELEBRATION** – OSLSA will again use its social media outlets to feature volunteer programming and individual volunteers during the annual ABA Pro Bono Celebration month. OSLSA will partner with the Columbus Bar Association for its annual reception and will explore other means by which rural practitioners can receive recognition for their work. OSLSA will also issue press releases to local papers to both recognize and recruit rural volunteers.
- **COORDINATION WITH DEVELOPMENT** –OSLSA Pro Bono will work closely with the OSLSA Development department to identify and recognize volunteers who also support the program through monetary donations.

### C. Retention

- **Overlap with Recognition Efforts** – OSLSA will continue to spotlight pro bono achievements by nominating volunteers for awards, featuring articles on outstanding pro bono work on our program websites, submitting pro bono stories to local bar publications, sending personal thank-you cards, and sharing positive client satisfaction surveys. OSLSA has recruited volunteers to work specifically on developing content for recognition articles and will continue to explore the use of marketing and communications volunteers in its pro bono work. With available baseline data, OSLSA also hopes to implement a means of publicly recognizing long-term volunteers each year and survey those who scale back volunteer participation, particularly during the pandemic.
- **Training, Mentoring and Support** – OSLSA recognizes that training is critical to retaining high quality volunteers. Training events—now virtual—allow attorneys to earn free CLE credits by committing to volunteer. OSLSA regularly records its pro bono CLEs and makes them available on the LASC and SEOLS websites and is in the process of being approved for self-study CLE credit. OSLSA will review and expand its extensive list of support services, which includes sample pleadings/forms, malpractice insurance, reimbursement of extraordinary litigation expenses, law clerk research support, office space, and access to secretarial support. Staff attorneys serve as substantive law mentors and trainers at pro bono CLEs. OSLSA has also benefited from the use of pro bono attorney mentors, who are matched with less experienced volunteer attorneys in the areas of unemployment compensation, bankruptcy, and naturalization.

### III. DELIVERY MODELS

OSLSA will use a variety of delivery models to meet the needs of its client population. All of the programs listed below rely heavily on volunteers, including attorneys, paralegals, and students.

#### A. Referral Projects

All OSLSA referral projects engage both staff and volunteers who handle client intake, evaluate cases, and make referrals to our attorney panels when appropriate.

- **Consumer Project** – Clients who are being sued for credit card debt by debt buyer plaintiffs are matched with volunteer attorneys.
- **Unemployment Compensation Appeal Project** – OSLSA matches volunteer attorneys with clients who seek representation in their appeal hearings, which are typically handled telephonically. Columbus volunteers can provide remote representation to rural clients.
- **Record-sealing and CQE Referrals** – Through a pilot program in Columbus that focuses on online access to record-sealing application assistance (Opportunity Port) LASC will be utilizing pro bono attorneys to assist with limited-scope forms preparation. Rural clients and those seeking help with CQEs will also be matched 1:1 for a “remote clean slate” referral.
- **Low Income Taxpayer Clinic** – OSLSA maintains a roster of attorneys willing to accept tax cases pro bono through our LASC and SEOLS Low Income Taxpayer Clinics.

Attorneys provide representation to low-income taxpayers involved in tax controversies with the Internal Revenue Service, the State of Ohio or local tax authorities.

- **Chapter 7 Pro Bono Bankruptcy Project and Reduced Fee Referrals** – OSLSA has a roster of volunteer attorneys who accept Chapter 7 case referrals for very low-income individuals residing in the Southern District of Ohio, Eastern Division. OSLSA also operates a reduced fee bankruptcy program, which requires all participants to accept at least two pro bono referrals per year.
- **Rural Office Direct Referrals** – Pro bono counsel assist with certain probate, real estate, and employment law matters facing rural clients.
- **Seniors Referrals Project** – Wills and advance directives for seniors and veterans are referred to law students, paralegals, and attorneys, who interview clients, and draft and review forms. These services will continue in 2024, with expansion into more rural counties in the OSLSA service area.
- **Nonprofit Organization and Transactional Business Referrals** – In conjunction with the Neighborhood and Rural Stabilization Projects, OSLSA will continue to refer requests for help from nonprofit organizations and low-income entrepreneurs in underserved neighborhoods and communities to corporate attorneys and paralegals. This project has also sought to focus on Black-owned entities and other clients disproportionately impacted by the pandemic.
- **Veterans Pro Bono Project Referrals** – OSLSA will revive its efforts to engage pro bono attorneys in both full representation and limited-scope assistance in veteran-focused matters including VA benefits and discharge upgrade applications.
- **Impact Referrals** – OSLSA also aims to engage the private bar in more of its impact litigation, which will align with the overall program efforts to increase affirmative impact litigation.
- **Naturalization Referrals** – Because of a lower turnout at in-person clinics, OSLSA has pivoted to offering Naturalization assistance via 1:1 referral to local immigration lawyers willing to prepare N-400 applications for clients.

#### **B. Brief Advice and Service Clinics**

- **Virtual Advice Clinics** – OSLSA offers weekly virtual advice clinics focused specifically on offering family law advice to rural clients.
- **In-Person Rural Brief Advice Clinics** – Clinics are staffed with local private attorneys and take place at libraries, churches, courts, legal aid offices, and other accessible locations.
- **Columbus Brief Advice Clinics** – OSLSA is continuing to resume in-person advice clinics in Columbus. In-person sites include Jewish Family Services, four homeless shelters, a VA healthcare facility and the Bhutanese Community of Central Ohio. OSLSA expects to reestablish clinics at Mt. Olivet and New Salem Missionary Baptist Church in 2024, and to



reimagine its First English Lutheran Clinic to a more conducive space at the Central Community House just one block from the original clinic site.

- **Wills Clinics**—OSLSA expects to continue offering wills clinics in Central Ohio in partnership with the Paralegal Association of Central Ohio (PACO), engaging both volunteer lawyers and paralegals. OSLSA will also continue offering a number of wills clinics in rural counties in partnership with the Ohio Justice Bus and the Ohio State Bar Association.
- **Record Sealing & Expungement Clinics** – OSLSA expects to offer at least three in-person record-sealing and expungement events in 2024, with at least two being in the Columbus service area.
- **Asylum Clinics** – While Naturalization services have not been received as well in a clinic format in recent years, OSLSA has expanded into offering limited scope asylum clinics for low-income immigrants generally and also for the Mauritanian immigrant population specifically. Clinics will be offered at least quarterly in 2024.
- **Tenant Advocacy Project (TAP)** – OSLSA will continue its daily eviction defense clinic in Franklin County, attended by both staff and pro bono attorneys who provide limited-scope representation to tenants, and non-lawyer volunteers who assist with client intake. While volunteer recruitment has been less successful in the rural county TAP clinics, OSLSA will continue to explore whether local resources are available to help support staff running those eviction clinics.
- **Neighborhood Based Specialty Clinics** – With LASC’s Neighborhood Stabilization Project, the OSLSA pro bono team expects to develop specialized neighborhood-based PAI clinics addressing estate planning (including Transfer on Death affidavits) and nonprofit/small business guidance.
- **Driver’s License Reinstatement Clinics** – OSLSA expects to offer at least one driver’s license reinstatement clinic in Columbus and one in the OSLSA service area in 2024.
- **Specialized Medical Legal Partnerships**

*General Advice*—OSLSA partners with Lawyers for Kids, a program embedded at Nationwide Children’s Hospital, for a special virtual advice clinic in partnership with a local firm, Thompson Hine. OSLSA expects to continue this partnership through 2024.

*Education Advocacy and Guardianship Work*—OSLSA also partners with LFK to refer cases to Vorys Sater Seymour & Peas and Nationwide Insurance for families and youth navigating the IEP process and those seeking guardianship for adult children with disabilities.

- **Annual Events**

- a. Homeless Veterans Stand Down Legal Clinics** –OSLSA expects to yet again recruit pro bono attorneys and non-attorney volunteers to participate in brief advice clinics at the Central Ohio Homeless Veterans Stand Down and the Chillicothe Stand Down.
- b. Tax Court Calendar Call** - When the U.S. Tax Court travels to Columbus, OSLSA operates a small, limited-scope pro bono clinic on the day of the court's calendar call. Volunteers primarily advise litigants on the merits of their case and the mechanics of presenting their case pro se.