

The Professional Obligation to Render Public Interest and Pro Bono Legal Service

From the New York Lawyer's Code of Professional Responsibility

A lawyer has a professional obligation to render interest and pro bono legal service.

EC 2-34 (formerly 2-25) Each lawyer should aspire to provide at least 20 hours of pro bono services annually by providing legal services at no fee and without expectation of fee to: (1) persons of limited financial means, or (2) not for profit, governmental or public service organizations, where legal services are designed primarily to address the legal and other basic needs of persons of limited financial means, or (3) organizations specifically designed to increase the availability of legal services to persons of limited financial means.

Each lawyer also should provide financial support for such organizations to assist in providing legal services to persons of limited financial means.

In addition to meeting the aspirational goals set forth above, a lawyer also should render public interest and pro bono legal service:

(1) where the payment of standard legal fees would significantly deplete the recipient's economic resources or would be otherwise inappropriate, by providing legal services at no fee or substantially reduced fees to individuals, organizations seeking to secure or protect civil rights, civil liberties or public rights, or to not for profit, government or public service organizations in matters in furtherance of their organization purposes; or

(2) by providing legal services at a substantially reduced fee to person of limited financial means; or

(3) by participating without compensation in activities for improving the law, the legal system or the profession; or

(4) by providing legal services without compensation or at a substantially reduced compensation in aid or support of the judicial system (including services as an arbitrator, mediator or neutral in court-annexed alternative dispute resolution).