

## New York 50-Hour Rule:

Law School Pro Bono Program distributes these FAQs as a quick-reference guide only. You should not rely on them as an authoritative interpretation of the Court rules. Additional information may be found online. 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 to the New York Bar is submitted. Additional questions may be sent to [ProBonoRule@nycourts.gov](mailto:ProBonoRule@nycourts.gov).

**Why is pro bono work important?** Pro bono work refers to legal work provided for free or at a reduced cost to those in need of legal assistance. In recent years' providers of low-cost or free legal services have had to turn away increasing numbers of otherwise eligible clients because of the overwhelming need for legal assistance. The inability of so many low-income people to obtain legal advice and access to the court system threatens guarantees of basic rights and security of fundamental needs.

**What is the pro bono requirement?** To encourage law students to provide assistance to those in need, court rules require that applicants seeking to be admitted to the New York State bar will need to demonstrate that they have completed 50 hours of qualifying pro bono work prior to submitting their applications for admission. Completing this requirement is the responsibility of the student, but the Law School offers some assistance in locating placements.

**Does this apply to me?** You must fulfill this pro bono requirement if you are applying for admission to the New York State bar.

**What work qualifies?** Work must be: Legal work (not non-legal community service), Supervised by an attorney, generally speaking, on behalf of low-income people who cannot otherwise afford representation, OR work at a government agency or court

**I received a public interest fellowship from the school. Does my work still count?** If your public interest work otherwise counts, receipt of a grant or stipend from the school does not disqualify the work.

**Does a judicial externship satisfy the requirement?** Yes.

**I did some pro bono work at my firm last summer. Does that count?** Possibly. Pro bono work may count if the firm did not pay you a *bonus or separate compensation* for the work, and the work otherwise met the requirements listed above (e.g., supervised by an attorney, for low-income individuals, etc.).

**I'm doing research for a professor. Does that count?** Only if it is legal research for low-income individuals on a pro bono project by the professor. (If it was part of an academic research project that did not service clients, it most likely will not count.)

**When and where do I have to complete the requirement?** Work must be completed: After you started law school *but* before you apply for admission to the bar

**I did volunteer work before law school. Does that count?** No. You can only count hours completed *after* you began law school.

**Do I have to complete the requirement before I graduate?** No. You can complete the requirement after you graduate, so long as you complete it before applying for admission to the bar. However, we strongly encourage you to complete your hours while in law school, as it can be more challenging to find available projects immediately after the bar exam.

**Do I have to complete the work in New York?** No. Work in other states or even foreign countries may satisfy the requirement, so long as it meets the other requirements (e.g., serves low-income individuals) and is supervised by an attorney.

**I worked at two different places. Can I combine the hours to satisfy the requirement?** Yes. So long as the work at each location would count toward the requirement, you can combine the hours, BUT you must submit a separate affidavit for each place you have worked that you are counting toward the requirement.

**Where can I find opportunities to do pro bono work?** Review the opportunities in this guide and reach out directly to organizations to sign up as a volunteer. Each organization listed below will have specific requirements and a formalized way to sign up. Many of the organizations below have projects specifically designed for students and graduates wanting to complete their 50 hours of service. Additionally, most clinical opportunities and internships/externships with non-profit legal services providers, government agencies and courts will qualify for pro bono work if they are legal work supervised by an attorney.

**I have reached out to numerous organizations to volunteer and have not heard back. What should I do now?** Reach out to **Susan Feathers** ([sjf151@law.rutgers.edu](mailto:sjf151@law.rutgers.edu) - *Assistant Dean of Pro Bono and Public Interest programs*) to discuss your interests and availability. She can follow up with organizations to find opportunities if you have not heard back from any organization.

**How can I better my chances of finding an opportunity?** When you reach out to any organization, make sure to include your resume, a description of your interests, and your availability. Flexibility is important, as it is often a challenge for organizations to place volunteers who have very limited availability. They also want volunteers who are eager to work with their clients and attorneys, so showing enthusiasm for the work is very helpful. Also, don't wait until the last minute to seek out an opportunity! The earlier in your law school career that you seek out an opportunity, the better.

**I'm done with my hours. Now how and where do I report all this?** You demonstrate compliance with the requirement by: *1) Submitting affidavits for your work 2) Signed by the attorney who supervised you 3) For a total of 50 hours*

**What records do I keep?** With your application for admission to the bar, which you will submit to the appropriate Appellate Division of the New York State Supreme Court, you must include an "Affidavit of Compliance" for each institution at which you performed qualifying pro bono work.

**Where do I get this form?** The Affidavit of Compliance is available here:  
<http://www.nycourts.gov/attorneys/probono/baradmissionreqs.shtml>

**Do I turn this in at the law school?** No. This is a requirement of the New York State courts, not a requirement of New York Law School, so New York Law School does not collect or maintain this documentation. You must submit your documentation along with your application for admission.

**I am filling out my affidavit and was wondering if I should have the current lawyer at the office where I worked sign it, or the lawyer that was there when I interned.** *The form affidavit provides for the attorney who supervised the work to sign the affidavit.*

**I still have questions. Where do I get more information?** The rule itself can be accessed [here](#). The Court has also posted an extensive set of FAQs, and they can be found [here](#).