



Tip of the Month May 2021

New Uniform Pro Bono Reporting Requirements

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Starting in 2022, attorneys licensed in Minnesota are required to report their pro bono service and financial contributions to legal services organizations when they renew their attorney license. This tip will provide information about the rule and what you can do now to plan for next year.

The New Reporting Requirement

[Rule 6.1 of the Minnesota Rules of Professional Conduct](#) establishes aspirational goals for attorneys to perform pro bono public service and financially contribute to organizations that provide financial contributions to persons of limited means. [In February 2021, the Minnesota Supreme Court amended the Rules of the Supreme Court on Lawyer Registration](#) to require that attorneys report the approximate number of hours of pro bono service provided as defined by Rule 6.1 of the Minnesota Rules of Professional Conduct and whether the attorney has made any financial contributions to organizations that provide free legal services to persons of limited means.

How Will the Information Be Collected?

Beginning in 2022, pro bono reporting and contribution information for the previous calendar year will be collected by the Lawyers Registration Office as part of the annual attorney registration process. Starting in 2023, failure to report pro bono hours or financial contributions could result in license suspension or discipline.

The Lawyers Registration Board will add [three questions to the attorney registration form](#) to collect the required information about the preceding calendar year:

1. The approximate number of services provided under Rules 6.1 (a) (providing legal help to persons of limited means or organizations helping persons of limited means), 6.1(b)(1) (), and 6.1(b)(2) (providing legal help to persons of limited means at a reduced fee)
2. The approximate hours provided under 6.1(b)(3) (participation in activities to improve the law, the legal system or the profession)
3. Whether the lawyer contributed financial support to organizations that provide legal services to persons of limited means.

Volunteer work through Volunteer Lawyers Network qualifies under Rule 6.1(a).

It is important to keep in mind that the rules address reporting pro bono services and financial contributions. The rule does not require that an attorney perform any hours of pro bono or make any financial contributions. Attorneys that did not perform any pro bono services can simply report “0” hours.¹ Attorneys that did not make a financial contribution to an organization serving people of limited means can check the “No” box. Also, the rule requires that attorneys report approximate, not exact hours.

Preparing for Uniform Reporting

Per the order, attorneys will begin reporting their 2021 pro bono work beginning next year. Here are some steps you can take to prepare for reporting:

- 1) Track your pro bono hours! Tracking the time and activities spent on a pro bono case will not only help you report your hours, it is also a best practice.
- 2) Report your hours to VLN! VLN records volunteer time for each case that you work on. Volunteers can ask VLN for a summary of their total time spent volunteering; however, we can only report hours that we know about. So be sure to return those case closing forms and phone advice report emails so that we can help you with this new requirement.
- 3) Start thinking about the time you spend promoting the profession. If you’re like me, you do not keep a log of all the time you spend at bar association meetings, serving on committees, and similar activities. Now is the time to start, as this time spent qualifies under Rule 6.1(b)(3).

Resources

The Minnesota State Bar Association, the Lawyers Registration Office, and the courts are partnering to educate attorneys on the new rules. [The MSBA created section on their website](#) with information about the new reporting requirements. In addition, the MSBA is developing an FAQ about uniform reporting. Based on FAQs in other states with reporting requirements, the FAQ will address common questions about the reporting requirements.

Finally, VLN is here to help. Please do not hesitate to contact VLN if you have any questions. Thank you for all you do to support VLN and pro bono!

¹ While performing pro bono is not required, VLN strongly encourages you to get involved. Your support makes a huge difference in our profession and community! Go to vlnmn.org for more information about volunteering.