



Pennsylvania Continuing Legal Education Board Announces Formal Approval of CLE Credit for Pro Bono Service

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The Pennsylvania Continuing Legal Education Board has announced changes in rules and regulations that offer lawyers the option of completing a portion of their CLE requirement with credits earned through pro bono service.

By Supreme Court Order, Pa.R.C.L.E. Rule 108 (e) and related CLE Regulations have been updated to reflect this change.

The new amendments allow lawyers to earn one (1) CLE credit for every five (5) hours of pro bono service completed through an Accredited Provider of Pro Bono CLE. A maximum of three (3) credit hours earned in this manner may be applied towards the annual CLE requirement. Work is required to be completed through legal service providers accredited by the CLE Board and performed for a person of limited means or charitable organization. Organizations eligible for accreditation must be Pennsylvania based non-profits that receive funding for their pro bono programs from the Pennsylvania Interest on Lawyers Trust Accounts Board (IOLTA) or the Pennsylvania Legal Aid Network (PLAN). Organizations who do not receive funding from IOLTA or PLAN but maintain partnerships or referral relationship with IOLTA/PLAN grantees are also eligible for accreditation.

These amendments formalize rules and regulations for a model that was evaluated during a three-year pilot project from 2019-2021. During the trial period, twenty participating organizations coordinated with over 1,000 volunteers to report over 2,300 hours of CLE. These credits account for over 11,500 hours of pro bono service.

The CLE Board considers this initiative a successful blending of continuing education opportunities and efforts to serve Pennsylvanians in need. "The Board is quite pleased to administer our Supreme Court's vision of incorporating pro bono service into the continuing legal education mission," said Doug Ress, CLE Board Chair. "We look forward to maintaining and expanding our ongoing relationship with and support of PLAN, IOLTA and other accredited pro bono CLE providers for the mutual benefit of the Bar and the communities served."

The Pennsylvania Legal Aid Network endorses the CLE credit for pro bono initiative. "PLAN, Inc. and our statewide network of civil legal aid programs and projects are delighted that the Supreme Court has made this change permanent," said Max Laun, Interim Executive Director of PLAN. "Getting CLE credit for performing pro bono work is the best of both worlds: lawyers can meet their compliance obligations while doing good for underserved clients, and the clients and programs benefit as more lawyers take on this vital work."

The CLE Board is responsible for administering the rules pertaining to mandatory continuing education for attorneys. This responsibility includes monitoring attorney compliance with the CLE requirements and accrediting CLE providers and courses.

The Board's website offers online tools to help attorneys locate educational options and track their CLE compliance. To access these services and learn more about CLE for Pro Bono, please visit: www.pacle.org.

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