New York Bar Pro Bono Requirement: How to Describe Your Work on the Affidavit of Compliance

1. The NY Bar Rule, Pro Bono service defined: Read the full rule (Rule 520.16) and explanation of the requirement on the NY Courts website.

   For purposes of this section, pro bono service is supervised pre-admission law-related work that:

   (1) assists in the provision of legal services without charge for
       (i) persons of limited means;
       (ii) not-for-profit organizations; or
       (iii) individuals, groups or organizations seeking to secure or promote access to justice, including, but not limited to, the protection of civil rights, civil liberties or public rights;

   (2) assists in the provision of legal assistance in public service for a judicial, legislative, executive or other governmental entity; or

   (3) provides legal services pursuant to subdivisions two and three of section 484 of the Judiciary Law, or pursuant to equivalent legal authority in the jurisdiction where the services are performed.

2. The description of the nature of the pro bono work completed.
   - If you are working with a student pro bono project, please ask your student leader for a description of your assignment. If you are working on a self-initiated placement or on a TPIC external opportunity, you should draft a description with the following in mind.
     - You must identify when and where the work was performed, provide a description of your work and identify your supervisor. Please see FAQ #11, 12, 34
     - You must provide sufficient detail, making it clear how your work meets the NY bar’s definition of pro bono.
     - Remember to connect the work you engaged in with the client need and the objective of the service.
     - Remember this formula
       o Who (organization and/or student project), supervisor, specific tasks, what was the purpose (overall task/client needs).

1 This document was created as of October 2016, following the November 2015 NY Bar Pro Bono admission requirements revisions. As the New York Bar may update and revise their policies periodically, it is strongly recommended that you visit the NY Bar page for the most up to date information.
• Helpful tips:
  o Take a close look at the Rule and utilize the vocabulary it offers you to describe your service.
  o Keep in mind the overall goal of the pro bono requirement as you complete your form. Be brief. A short paragraph of a few sentences should suffice.

3. Examples of description language- Do’s and Don’t's!
   a. Client based work:
      • **What NOT to do!**
        o Program is eligible as the work is “law-related,” and it “serves the poor or disadvantaged,” low income teenagers. I provided clients under the age of 18 with assistance in their access to justice. I assisted client with complicated legal paperwork and informed them of their rights in relation to accessing a judicial bypass. **What is wrong with this description?**
          o No organization, no supervisor
          o No client
          o No purpose
          o Not descriptive enough
        o I conducted workshops informing women in bad situations about her rights and referring them to organizations and institutions in order to achieve her goals or get legal help.
          o You can engage in community education/know your rights (**see FAQ 18**), but this example does not include the organization and is not descriptive enough.
Revised example: Working with __________ and under the supervision of __________, I interviewed victims of domestic violence to identify their legal issues, conducted workshops to inform these women of their legal rights and provided referrals to local organizations and legal services to meet their wide-ranging needs.

**What to do!**
- The Military Assistance Project, a 501(c)(3), provides students with the opportunity to work with a military veteran facing financial difficulty. Under the supervision of Jane Smith, I interviewed clients and helped clients identify and gather the necessary financial documents (credit reports, bank statements, etc.) in support of their petitions for bankruptcy. After meeting with clients to review the petitions and make sure all necessary information has been provided, I prepared final petitions to be filed with the Bankruptcy Court.
- As a student volunteer of the Penn Law Homeless Advocacy Project, in partnership with the Homeless Advocacy Project of Philadelphia (HAP), a 501(c)(3), and under supervision of attorney Jane Smith, I provided civil legal services to clients experiencing homelessness or who were at risk of homelessness. I represented clients by completing intake services and assisting them with birth certificate applications, SSI/SSD applications, landlord/tenant disputes, issues related to public benefits and other civil legal issues. Additionally, I provided general information and referral resources to clients. My work helped indigent and low-income clients access fundamental resources including identification, housing, employment, and public benefits.

**b. Research-based projects**
- Research projects typically fall into two tracks:
  - I contributed to litigation by engaging in legal research, brief writing, and petitions that assisted clients filing appeals to unemployment compensation denials.
  - I contributed to community education presentations to make complex health matters more understandable and accessible to low-income communities, so that community members could access the rights and benefits to which they are entitled.

**What NOT to do!**
- I conducted legal research and drafted a brief for the Civil Rights Law Project.
  - No organization, no client, not specific and no tie in of direct relation to your work and the overall task.

**What to do!**
- In partnership with ________ and under the supervision of ________, I conducted legal and policy research and drafted memos and policy briefs on various issues related to juvenile justice (BE SPECIFIC) in an effort to change the legal framework through which juvenile offenders are tried and sentenced.
In partnership with the Pennsylvania Health Law Project, a 501(c)(3) legal service organization, and supervised by their attorneys, I researched statutes, practices and case precedent; then summarized and presented information for community education to individuals with disabilities, low-income families, and the elderly who are struggling to obtain health care services or coverage. This analysis and guidance helped individuals and families more efficiently access health care and other benefits.

c. Judicial Externship, see Rule 510.16(b)(2), FAQ 12.
   - I served as a judicial extern for the Honorable Jane Smith, Philadelphia Court of Common Pleas, Criminal Law Division. I conducted research and drafted memoranda that assisted the Court in its decision-making process.

d. Clinics
   - It recommended that at the beginning of the semester you speak with your clinic professor regarding your intent to satisfy the NY Pro Bono requirement with this experience, see FAQ #15.
   - Entrepreneurship Clinic: During the (dates of service), I performed qualifying pro-bono transactional legal work through the University of Pennsylvania Law School’s clinical program including the supervised representation of persons of limited means, 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organizations, or individuals, groups, or organizations seeking to secure or promote access to justice including community economic development. The time spent on legal work exceeded the time spent on incidental administrative work and instructional training.
   - Civil Practice Clinic, Child Advocacy Clinic, Criminal Defense Clinic, and Transnational Legal Clinic: During the (dates of service), I performed qualifying pro-bono legal assistance through the University of Pennsylvania Law School’s clinical program on behalf of low-income or disadvantaged individuals who cannot afford counsel and whose unmet legal needs prevent their access to justice. The time spent on legal work exceeded the time spent on incidental administrative work and instructional training.
   - Legislative Clinic: During the (dates of service), I performed qualifying pro-bono legal work through the University of Pennsylvania Law School’s clinical program by using my legal skills for a legislative body. The time spent on legal work exceeded the time spent on incidental administrative work and instructional training.