



2023

MID-SHORE PRO BONO COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT

From the Annual Mid-Shore Regional
Pro Bono Committee Meeting
May 3, 2023

www.midshoreprobono.org



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About Mid-Shore Pro Bono

Mid-Shore Pro Bono, Inc. (MSPB) is a nonprofit organization that connects people with limited resources to legal representation for civil matters. Our mission is to connect individuals and families in need of civil legal help with volunteer attorneys and community resources. Our vision is that all people are empowered to resolve civil legal issues. MSPB connects over 3,000 clients on the Eastern Shore of Maryland with legal representation every year. MSPB is based in Easton, Maryland and has a satellite office located in Salisbury.

MSPB serves eight counties on the Eastern Shore of Maryland (Kent, Queen Anne's, Talbot, Caroline, Dorchester, Wicomico, Worcester, and Somerset). The areas of law practiced through MSPB include family law, landlord/tenant, life planning, and economic stability, such as foreclosure, bankruptcy, consumer debt, and criminal record expungement.

MSPB clients must meet income eligibility guidelines provided by the Maryland Legal Service Corporation (MLSC).

Maryland Rule 19 requires the establishment of a local pro bono committee and creation of a local pro bono action plan for each county. The Mid-Shore counties (Caroline, Dorchester, Kent, Queen Anne's, and Talbot) have coordinated their efforts since 2005 through Mid-Shore Pro Bono, Inc. In 2019, each county bar association and administrative judge entered into agreements designating Mid-Shore Pro Bono, Inc. as the convening entity for the Mid-Shore Regional Pro Bono Committee.

In September 2020, Mid-Shore Pro Bono held the first annual meeting of the Mid-Shore Regional Pro Bono Committee virtually. In May 2022, the Mid-Shore Pro Bono Committee convened in Easton, and the group decided to rotate the meetings location each year to engage a variety of local stakeholders. This year, the meeting was held in Dorchester County, hosted by the Honorable Judge William H. Jones of the Dorchester County Circuit Court.

This meeting is a perfect forum to discuss opportunities for pro bono service to meet emerging legal needs in the community, particularly considering the many ongoing legal challenges faced by people with limited means resulting from the pandemic. Through the Mid-Shore Regional Pro Bono Committee, both bench and bar can craft a plan to meet the need, working with the various legal services providers that serve our counties such as Mid Shore Pro Bono, Inc., Maryland Legal Aid, Mid Shore Council on Family Violence, and Maryland Volunteer Lawyers Service.



2023 Annual Meeting

The Mid-Shore Regional Pro Bono Committee met at the The Harry & Jeanette Weinberg Intergenerational Center in Cambridge, Maryland on May 3, 2023.

Objectives:

- 1. Identify the legal needs of the community**
- 2. Develop a priority action plan**

Questions to facilitate discussion included:

- What are your community's urgent and unmet legal needs for people with limited financial means?
- What are the current barriers to delivering legal and other services to targeted populations?
- What are the obstacles that prevent attorneys from engaging in pro bono work to help fill those legal needs?
- Of the legal needs addressed, select 3 as the top priority needs to address in this year.
- What are short term actions that you and others can take to address the top priority legal needs of people with limited financial means in our community?
- What are the long term actions?



Outcomes:

The legal needs of the community were identified as:

- 1. Need for regional coordination of resource providers**
- 2. Need for community education and awareness**
- 3. Need for volunteer attorney engagement**

2023 Annual Meeting

Priority Action Plan:

1. Need for regional coordination of resource providers

- Need for agencies to coordinate services and know how to help people access legal services (LT)
- Wraparound care – connecting and referring clients to related services and resources (LT)
- Public defenders could help with some of the wraparound care/related issues (LT)
- Transportation is a big need – voucher system could help (LT)
- More mental health support is needed (LT)
- Explore mental health intervention options with local police departments (LT)
- Grant funds for housing assistance is needed (LT)
- Judiciary should continue to rotate location of the pro bono committee meeting to engage different groups – Caroline will host in 2024 (ST)

ST = Short term actions

LT = Long term actions

2. Need for community education and awareness

- Social media could be used to disseminate public and community information more broadly (ST)
- Court produced videos could be promoted by legal services and community groups (ST)
- Youth education, moot court clubs, disseminate information through PTAs (LT)
- Legal information hubs at local libraries (LT)

3. Need for volunteer attorney engagement

- Training for attorneys to help them to be equipped to assist people in crisis and experiencing trauma (ST)
- Engage attorneys in working with youth (Law Day events in partnership with schools, moot court clubs) (LT)

****Judge Heather Price of the Caroline County Circuit Court volunteers to host the 2024 meeting in Caroline County.****

Thank you, attendees!

Judge William H. Jones*
Dorchester County Circuit Court

Judge Karen Jensen
Caroline County Circuit Court

Judge Stephen Kehoe
Talbot County Circuit Court

Judge Melvin Jews
Dorchester County District Court

Judge Karen Kettermann
Talbot County District Court

Magistrate Mary O'Donnell
Dorchester County Circuit Court

Holland Brownley, Esq.
Office of the Public Defender
MSPB Board of Directors

Tatiana Rendell, Esq.
Dorchester County Bar
Association President

Anthony, Rodriguez, Esq.
MSPB Volunteer Attorney
MSPB Board of Directors

Rachel Wolpert, Esq.
Maryland Legal Aid

Meredith Girard, Esq.
MSPB Executive Director

Laura L. Chafey, Esq.
MSPB Legal Director

John Hardt, Esq.
Maryland Volunteer
Lawyers Service

Heather Heiman, Esq.
Maryland Volunteer
Lawyers Service

Jenifer Goolie, Esq.
Somerset County
Department of Social Services

Mayor Steven Rideout
Mayor of Cambridge, Maryland


Councilman Lenny Pfeffer
Dorchester County Council

Ashley Nunes
One Mission Cambridge

Wendy Schneider
District Court of Maryland
Regional Alternative Dispute
Resolution Programs Manager

Rachel Lapp
Student

****Special thanks to Judge William H. Jones for
hosting the 2023 meeting and to the Standing
Committee on Pro Bono Legal Service.****

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