

## Shore Legal Access Judicare Family Law Program

Description: In response to the critical need to assure the administration of justice for low-income litigants so that they have appropriate representation in divorce, custody, visitation and other contested family law matters, the Maryland Legal Services Corporation (MLSC) in partnership with the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) provides funds to MLSC grantees, such as Shore Legal Access (SLA), to administer the Judicare program, which uses private lawyers who are paid reduced fees to serve low-income persons who could not otherwise obtain civil legal services.

Client Eligibility: SLA screens clients to ensure they qualify for pro bono legal services, using the MLSC client income eligibility guidelines. Clients are required to complete an application and submit financial documentation. Clients may also be required to pay a one-time \$25 fee to SLA to receive a referral for representation unless the fee poses undue hardship for the client and is waived by SLA. For the most updated MLSC client income eligibility guidelines, please reach out to your SLA contact.

Funding: The MLSC Judicare Project has established the maximum of **\$4,200 per case**. The attorney case time rate is **\$120/hour**.

Attorney Qualifications: Attorneys should be licensed and have a minimum of two years of family law experience. Less experienced attorneys may participate in the program only if more experienced family law attorneys are available for mentoring. Shore Legal Access provides malpractice insurance coverage for volunteer attorneys handling Shore Legal Access cases. Attorneys interested in accepting cases from SLA must complete the volunteer attorney registration form. For a copy of the volunteer attorney registration form, please reach out to your Shore Legal Access contact.

- Benefits: Guaranteed compensation up to the cap; malpractice insurance coverage; training and mentoring support; support of litigation expenses; networking opportunities.
- Responsibilities: Commitment to case if it continues beyond the cap, but not obligated to represent the client in other matters (i.e., modifications, contempt, etc.); for every 2 Judicare cases accepted, we ask the attorney to accept 1 pro bono case; submit monthly invoices and closed cases forms at the completion of every case.

Case Referrals: Pending Judicare and pro bono cases are posted weekly in Shore Legal Access's volunteer attorney newsletter sent via email. To accept a case, please review the pending case list in the newsletter and inform your Shore Legal Access contact which case you wish to accept. Shore Legal Access will then provide you with a case referral packet, which includes additional information about the case, client contact information, and a thank you letter that can be filed with the Court to waive certain filing fees. To join Shore Legal Access's newsletter listserv, please contact SLA Legal Director, Laura L. Chafey, Esq. at [LChafey@midshoreprobono.org](mailto:LChafey@midshoreprobono.org).

Case Closure and Reporting: When a case is closed, attorneys must complete and submit the closed case form back to Shore Legal Access to report the outcome of the case. For a copy of the closed case form, please reach out to your Shore Legal Access contact.

Billing and Payment: Attorneys must submit invoices for Judicare cases to Shore Legal Access monthly and at the completion of the case for any outstanding payments. Invoices must be submitted by the last day of the month to be paid on/about the 15th of the following month. Payment will be made via direct deposit. Attorneys must complete the Direct Deposit Authorization for Vendors and a W-9 Form, Request for Taxpayer Identification Number and Certification and return to Shore Legal Access prior to receiving payment. For copies of these forms, please reach out to your Shore Legal Access contact.

Training and Mentoring: SLA provides training and support to all volunteer attorneys. Please see the weekly volunteer attorney newsletter for upcoming training opportunities.

Other Resources:

- The Litigation Fund, an annual grant funded by the Maryland Legal Services Corporation (MLSC), reimburses volunteer lawyers for many types of litigation expenses incurred during pro bono work such as process server fees, mileage, and postage and copying costs. Please visit at <https://probonomd.org/volunteers/litigation-fund/> for more information and how to submit a Litigation Fund Request.
- For additional training resources, please visit the Pro Bono Resource Center (PBRC) of Maryland at <https://probonomd.org/volunteers/training/> or the Maryland Judiciary at <https://www.courts.state.md.us/courthelp/lawtopics>.