



Pro Bono Legal Representation for Military Families Best Practices

Subject:

Service members and their families have access to military legal assistance attorneys to receive advice and assistance; however, they must generally obtain their own counsel to represent them in court. State government can assist by coordinating pro bono legal programs that can connect qualified attorneys with service members and their families.

Principles:

- State government can provide valuable assistance coordinating a pro bono program by establishing an office with paid staff to do the following:
 - Market the program to attorneys throughout the state and register volunteer attorneys
 - Coordinate activities with organizations within the state that also provide pro bono services
 - Liaise with legal assistance offices on military installations and the applicable office within the state National Guard headquarters
 - Assess and assign requests for pro bono services
- A pro bono program should ideally cover the representational needs of service members and families for topics such as consumer law, Servicemember Civil Relief Act issues, Uniformed Service Member Employment and Reemployment Rights Act, civil liability and portions of family law where providing legal representation would not create inequity among family members.

Best practices example — establishing a state program

Nevada governor signed Senate Bill 60, June 10, 2015, which allows the state attorney general to create the Office of Military Legal Assistance within the Office of the Attorney General.

- Nevada SB 60, Sections 10 and 11:
 - *Section 10: The Office of Military Legal Assistance is hereby created in the Office of the Attorney General.*
 - *Section 11.1: The Office of Military Legal Assistance may facilitate the delivery of legal assistance programs, pro bono services and self-help services to current and former military personnel in this state.*
 - *Section 11.2: The attorney general may apply for and accept grants, gifts, donations, bequests or devises on behalf of the Office of Military Legal Assistance, which must be used to carry out the functions of the Office of Military Legal Assistance.*