



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS: MANDATORY PRO BONO HOURS REPORTING

Beginning with the 2026 licensing fee cycle, attorneys are required to report their pro bono and reduced fee legal services hours. For example, for the 2026 licensing fee cycle, licensees must report pro bono and reduced fee legal services hours completed from January 1, 2025, to December 31, 2025, in My State Bar Profile. The deadline to report is March 30, which is also the deadline for other mandatory reporting requirements and to pay attorney licensing fees.

These FAQs are subject to revision and will be supplemented and updated as needed. For additional information on pro bono legal services, including where to find [pro bono opportunities](#), visit the State Bar's [Pro Bono webpage](#). For additional questions, please email programdevelopment@calbar.ca.gov.

1. Why am I required to report my pro bono hours to the State Bar?

The State Bar collects information on attorneys' pro bono and reduced fee hours to better understand how these services are being provided across the profession. The data will be analyzed to identify trends, support efforts to expand access to legal services, and help address the justice gap. All reported data will be aggregated and not linked to individual attorneys.

2. What is required?

The State Bar encourages, but does not require, active California licensees to provide pro bono legal services each year. While providing pro bono or reduced legal fee services is not mandatory, licensees are required by Business and Professions Code section [6073.2](#) to annually report the amount of these services performed each year. Licensees will report either their hours in ranges (e.g., less than 1 hour, 1-5 hours, 6-10 hours, 11-19 hours, etc.), that they did not track their pro bono or reduced fee legal services hours, that they did not complete any pro bono or reduced fee legal services hours, or that they decline to answer.

3. What are pro bono legal services?

Under Business and Professions Code section [6073.1\(c\)](#), pro bono legal services means "providing or enabling the direct delivery of legal services without expectation of compensation from the client other than reimbursement of expenses to any of the following:

- An indigent person, as defined in subdivision (d) of section 6213.
- A charitable, religious, civil, community, governmental, or educational organization in matters that are designed primarily to address the needs of persons of limited means.
- A charitable, religious, civil, community, governmental, or educational organization in matters in furtherance of its organizational purposes."

Generally, pro bono work performed through any [State Bar legal aid grantee organization](#) or through "a nonprofit organization that provides civil legal services for the poor without charge" qualifies as pro bono legal services and should be reported. See Business and Professions Code section [6159.51](#).

Attorneys are asked to use their best good-faith judgment when determining what qualifies.

4. What are reduced fee legal services?

In addition to reporting pro bono legal services, Business and Professions Code section [6073.2\(b\)\(2\)](#) requires attorneys to report the amount of reduced fee legal services hours performed for low-income individuals, nonprofit organizations, or public law libraries established under section [6360](#). Some examples of reduced fee legal services might include offering affordable help through programs like bar association reduced fee panels or legal clinics that provide services on a sliding scale.

Per Business and Professions Code section [6073.1\(d\)](#), reduced fee legal services means “providing or enabling direct delivery of legal services at a substantially reduced rate affordable to persons of limited means to either a person of limited means or a person or organization identified in subparagraph (A), (B), or (C) of paragraph (1) in subdivision (c) of section 6073.1.”

5. Does work performed outside of California count?

Yes. There is no restriction in the statute regarding where the pro bono work is performed or where the clients are located. Pro bono services provided outside California should therefore be included in what licensees report.

6. What is the minimum number of pro bono hours an attorney should provide each year?

While there is no requirement to provide pro bono hours, the State Bar encourages attorneys to provide at least 50 hours of pro bono legal services annually. However, any amount will have a positive impact on the individuals and groups served.

Attorneys are also encouraged to contribute financial support to nonprofit organizations that provide pro bono legal services, especially those attorneys who are unable to directly render services. Options include making a contribution directly to a legal aid organization or donating to the [Greg E. Knoll Justice Gap Fund](#) through your annual fee statement, or at any other time in [Agency Billing](#) or [My State Bar Profile](#). See the [Pro Bono Resolution](#) on the State Bar’s website.

7. Are any attorneys exempt from reporting pro bono hours?

Yes. Some categories of attorneys are exempt from reporting pro bono hours. However, even licensees who are exempt from reporting their pro bono hours must declare their exemption status in My State Bar Profile. The reporting requirement applies to all active licensees, including participants in the State Bar’s Pro Bono Practice Program. The reporting requirement does not apply to:

- Licensees employed by an organization primarily engaged in the provision of pro bono legal services, including qualified legal services projects and qualified support centers, legal aid organizations, and nonprofit public benefit corporations.
- Full-time employees, officers, or elected officials of the State of California, political subdivisions, or the federal government. This includes city and county employees (such as public defenders), trial court attorneys employed by the judicial branch, and employees of

tribal governments and the University of California. Attorneys working for state governments outside California are not included in this exemption.

- Licensees whose current employer prohibits them from performing pro bono legal services (if declared on their My State Bar Profile by selecting the corresponding checkbox under this option).

For more information see Business and Professions Code section [6073.2](#).

8. Are appellate counsel appointed to indigent defendants exempt from reporting?

No. Appellate counsel appointed to represent indigent defendants are not included in any of the categories of attorneys who are exempt from reporting pro bono or reduced fee hours under Business and Professions Code section [6073.2\(d\)](#). Although work performed by appointed appellate counsel does not meet the definition of pro bono services under Business and Professions Code 6073.1(c), this work may qualify as reduced fee or “low bono” legal services. Under Business and Professions Code section [6073.1\(d\)](#), reduced fee legal services means providing or enabling the direct delivery of legal services at a substantially reduced rate that is affordable to persons of limited means to either a person of limited means or a person or an organization identified in subparagraph (A), (B), or (C) of paragraph (1) in subdivision (c) of section 6073.1.” Attorneys are encouraged to use their best good-faith judgment when making these determinations.

9. What are the consequences for attorneys not reporting their pro bono hours?

Attorneys are asked to provide their best, good faith effort at reporting the amount of pro bono and/or reduced fee legal services hours provided to low-income individuals, nonprofit organizations, or public law libraries during the past year to meet the requirement of Business and Professions Code section 6073.2. Per section 6073.2(g), failure to comply with any of the provisions of this section is not grounds for disciplinary or administrative recourse.

10. I was an active licensee for only part of the reporting period. Do I still need to report?

Yes. Any licensee who was active for any part of the reporting period and who did not meet one of the exemptions in Business and Professions Code section 6073.2(d) for the entire reporting period is required to report the amount of pro bono service hours provided in the past year. Even licensees who are exempt from reporting their pro bono hours must declare their exemption status in My State Bar Profile.

11. I changed jobs this year. For the first part of the year, I was at a government agency and exempt from reporting. I’m now working at a law firm. Do I need to report?

Yes. An active licensee who met one of the exemptions in Business and Professions Code section 6073.2(d) for part of the year, but at any point in the year does not meet that exemption, is still required to report the amount of pro bono service hours provided in the past year. Even licensees who are exempt from reporting their pro bono hours must declare their exemption status in My State Bar Profile.

12. I work part time at a government agency. Do I need to report?

Yes. Business and Professions Code section 6073.2(d)(2) only applies to full-time employees or officers or elected officials of the State of California, or political subdivision thereof, or the federal government. Part-time employees are required to report either the amount of pro bono service hours provided in the past year, that they did not track their pro bono or reduced fee legal services hours, that they did not complete any pro bono or reduced fee legal services hours, or that they decline to answer.

13. What is the guidance on pro bono and reduced fee hours reporting for pro bono professionals, law school professors, and attorneys employed at law schools?

Any active licensee who does not meet one of the exemptions in Business and Professions Code section 6073.2(d) is required to report the amount of pro bono service hours provided in the past year, including pro bono professionals, law school professors, and attorneys employed at law schools. Attorneys are asked to provide their best, good faith effort at reporting the amount of pro bono and/or reduced fee legal services hours provided to low-income individuals, nonprofit organizations, or public law libraries during the past year to meet the requirement of Business and Professions Code section 6073.2. Even licensees who are exempt from reporting their pro bono hours must declare their exemption status in My State Bar Profile.

14. What are some examples of pro bono legal services?

Pro bono opportunities vary depending on the needs of the client community. Examples of pro bono legal services to indigent clients may include, but are not limited to:

- Representation (full or limited scope)
- Negotiation and settlement
- Screening and intake
- Brief service by phone or in-person
- Legal information or “Know Your Rights” workshops
- Document preparation and review
- Legal research and writing
- Litigation support
- Legislative research and legal analysis

15. Does serving on the board of a legal aid organization count as pro bono legal services?

For purposes of this reporting requirement, board service for a legal aid nonprofit would qualify because all board work with such an organization is enabling the delivery of legal services to the indigent (since these organizations primarily serve indigent Californians). Please note that some legal aid providers and other nonprofits for which attorneys provide pro bono legal services may also ask attorneys to report pro bono hours, but the definition for pro bono legal services may vary for their purposes. Attorneys should confirm definitions with the entity before reporting pro bono hours to the entity.

16. Does uncompensated work by volunteer attorneys at a legal aid organization or law school, or as a court mediator, count as pro bono legal services?

Yes. Uncompensated work by volunteer attorneys that enables the delivery of legal services at a charitable, religious, civic, community, governmental, or education organization in matters in furtherance of its organizational purposes would qualify as bono hours as defined under Business and Professions Code section [6073.1\(c\)\(1\)\(C\)](#). This includes volunteer teaching at a law school as well as volunteer mediation or arbitration services provided through a court, even when the parties are not indigent.

17. Does volunteering with an LRS oversight panel count as pro bono legal services?

Possibly. Uncompensated work with an LRS oversight panel may count toward the pro bono hours requirement if it enables the delivery of legal services at a charitable, religious, civic, community, governmental, or education organization in matters in furtherance of its organizational purposes as defined under Business and Professions Code section [6073.1\(c\)\(1\)\(C\)](#). Licensees should use their best judgment when determining whether the work performed, particularly non-legal tasks, enables the direct provision of legal work to the indigent or other nonprofit organizations.

18. Does serving on the board of a local or affinity bar association count as pro bono legal services?

It depends. Service to a local or affinity bar association counts toward the pro bono hours requirement if it is legal in nature (i.e., providing legal services to the nonprofit directly pursuant to Business and Professions Code section 6073.1(c)(1)(B) or 6073.1(c)(1)(C)). General board service qualifies only to the extent that the work enables the delivery of legal services to the indigent, to another “charitable, religious, civic, community, governmental, or educational organization in matters that are designed primarily to address the needs of persons of limited means,” or to another “charitable, religious, civic, community, governmental, or educational organization in matters in furtherance of its organizational purposes.” Licensees should use their best good-faith judgment in determining whether their non-legal board activities enable the direct provision of legal work to the indigent or other nonprofits.

19. How do I track and report my pro bono or reduced fee legal services hours?

Attorneys are expected to track their own hours for the purposes of this reporting requirement. Some law firms require their attorneys to track this time already. A nonprofit with whom the attorney provides pro bono legal services may assist in tracking hours.

Attorneys are asked to report pro bono and reduced fee hours as a range (e.g., 1-5 hours, 6-10 hours, 11-19 hours, etc.). Attorneys will also be able to select zero hours or less than one hour of pro bono or reduced fee legal services hours or select the checkbox if you did not track your hours or you prefer not to answer.

Here is a resource that walks you through reporting pro bono hours on My State Bar Profile:

<https://info.calbar.ca.gov/knowledge/en/report-pro-bono-hours>

20. Does the State Bar have a program for attorneys that only want to do pro bono work?

The State Bar's Pro Bono Practice Program (PBPP) allows attorneys who would otherwise be inactive to maintain an active license, free of fees, to exclusively provide pro bono legal services in partnership with a pro bono legal services provider. To qualify for the PBPP, an attorney must maintain an active license, submit an application annually for the program, be certified as a pro bono practice attorney, and exclusively provide pro bono legal services through an approved or qualified pro bono services provider. For more information, see the [PBPP webpage](#).

21. How do I make changes to the response I submitted?

Prior to the March 30, 2026, deadline, you can make changes to your pro bono hours reporting by returning to your My State Bar Profile, navigating to the Summary tab (located on the top navigation bar), and selecting "Edit your Pro Bono Hours" from the Pro Bono Hours tile (located about three quarters of the way down the page).

Updates

This FAQ was updated and renumbered on June 16, 2026.