

2025

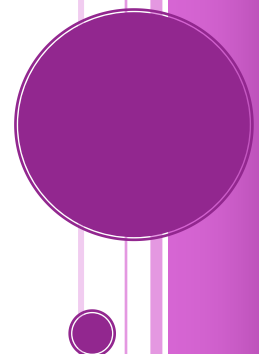
# FEDERAL GOVERNMENT PRO BONO PROGRAM

*Pro Bono Opportunities for Federal Government Attorneys*

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## LOS ANGELES

Compiled by the Los Angeles Federal Government Pro Bono Committee



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# INTRODUCTION: Pro Bono Guide for Federal Attorneys

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Congratulations and thank you for making the first step towards providing pro bono legal services in Los Angeles!

As a federal attorney, sometimes it may seem like pro bono opportunities are inaccessible--limited to your colleagues in the private and non-profit sectors. Although federal laws and regulations require federal government attorneys to be cautious about the types of pro bono legal service they provide and how to provide it, it is absolutely possible (and encouraged!) for federal attorneys to engage in pro bono legal work.

For detailed information about rules for government attorneys who would like to provide pro bono legal services, please refer to the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) section.

The Los Angeles Federal Government Pro Bono Committee has published this guidebook to help federal government attorneys understand the rules on pro bono service and to make local volunteer opportunities more accessible to them. The organizations and specific opportunities listed in this guidebook have been vetted by the Federal Government Pro Bono Program and met basic criteria, such as providing malpractice insurance coverage to volunteers. However, each federal agency may have different requirements and policies for pro bono legal work, so please check if your agency has a specific pro bono policy before volunteering.

For more information about the Los Angeles Chapter of the Federal Government Pro Bono Program, including volunteer opportunities, please contact Jessica Soley at [Jessica.L.Soley@uscis.dhs.gov](mailto:Jessica.L.Soley@uscis.dhs.gov) or Marta Rothwarf at [Marta.Rothwarf2@usdoj.gov](mailto:Marta.Rothwarf2@usdoj.gov). For more information about the Federal Government Pro Bono Program, please contact Laura Klein at [Laura.F.Klein@usdoj.gov](mailto:Laura.F.Klein@usdoj.gov) or Lara Eilhardt at [Lara.Eilhardt@usdoj.gov](mailto:Lara.Eilhardt@usdoj.gov).

Thank you,

The Los Angeles Federal Government Pro Bono Committee

# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

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## GOVERNMENT ATTORNEYS AND PRO BONO WORK

### I. Definitions and Limitations

#### What types of services may I provide?

Pro bono legal work and volunteer services may be broadly defined to include many different types of activities performed without compensation. Examples include, but are not limited to, services to persons of limited means or other disadvantaged persons; assistance to charitable, religious, civic, community, governmental, health, and educational organizations; services to individuals or groups seeking to protect civil rights, civil liberties or public rights; and activities seeking to improve the law or legal system.

#### What types of pro bono and volunteer services are prohibited?

Any service that would conflict with your official duties is prohibited. 5 C.F.R. § 2635.802. For example, federal employees, in most cases, are prohibited from representing parties before the federal government. 18 U.S.C. § 205. (See questions below on conflicts of interest.) In addition, each federal agency has its own regulatory standards of conduct which its employees must follow. For example, Department of Justice attorneys may not provide services that involve criminal or habeas corpus matters, whether federal, state, or local. 5 C.F.R. § 3801.106.

#### May I provide services to political organizations?

Yes, however, you must comply with the restrictions of the Hatch Act (5 U.S.C. § 7234) and your agency's policy concerning political activities by high-level and political appointees. It should be noted that the Office of Personnel Management has stated that it would be inappropriate to grant administrative leave to employees to engage in partisan political activities. Also, because partisan political activity is subject to more restrictive rules than other non-official activity, no partisan political activity may take place on government time or by using government property. See 5 C.F.R. Part 734.

#### May I represent someone in an action against the United States?

No. 18 U.S.C. § 205 prohibits you from representing another person before any court or agency of the United States in a matter in which the United States is a party or has a direct and substantial interest. There are limited exceptions for representing your immediate family (spouse, child, and parents), fellow

employees in personnel administration proceedings, and certain employee organizations in limited circumstances.

## May I assist persons seeking government benefits?

Yes, in limited ways. You may provide non-representational assistance, such as filling out forms for a person seeking government benefits. However, you should be mindful that you may not contact a federal agency, with the intent to influence, on behalf of another person except those persons permitted by 18 U.S.C. § 205(e). You may not represent a third party before any government agency.

## May I prepare income tax returns?

Yes, however, you are prohibited from representing another person before the IRS in connection with a tax return.

## May I assist family and friends?

Yes, provided the services you are providing fall within the definition of pro bono and/or volunteer services and you are not receiving compensation.

NOTE: There are some limited exceptions to this rule which may permit employees to represent family and friends in non-pro bono matters as long as the United States is not a party and the matter is not criminal in nature. You should contact your Deputy Designated Agency Ethics Official (DDAEO) if you would like to represent a family member or friend and the representation does not fall within the definition of pro bono or volunteer services.

## II. Use of Position and Agency Resources

### May I use my official position in connection with my pro bono and/or volunteer services?

No. You may not indicate or represent in any way that you are acting on behalf of your agency, or in your official capacity, when providing pro bono or volunteer services.

## May I use office letterhead or my business cards?

No. You may not use office letterhead, business cards, fax cover sheets, etc., or otherwise identify yourself as a federal government employee in any communication, correspondence, or pleading.

## May I use agency resources such as phone, email, internet, or other government property in connection with my pro bono services?

Each agency has its own policy on the use of its resources and property. Some agencies will allow for the personal use of government equipment and facilities provided there is only a negligible cost to the government (such as electricity, ink, small amounts of paper, and ordinary wear and tear). You should contact your supervisor or ethics officer to find out about your agency's policy.

## May I ask my secretary to assist me?

No. Pro bono and volunteer services are not official duties and may not be assigned to or required of support staff. The Federal Government Pro Bono Program has created a Support Staff Resource Pool for any support staff who wish to assist attorneys on pro bono matters. Interested support staff should contact Laura Klein at [Laura.F.Klein@usdoj.gov](mailto:Laura.F.Klein@usdoj.gov) or Lara Eilhardt at [Lara.Eilhardt@usdoj.gov](mailto:Lara.Eilhardt@usdoj.gov). When an attorney needs assistance on a pro bono matter, they can be matched with someone in the Resource Pool who has volunteered.

## May I use Westlaw and other electronic computer databases?

Each agency has its own policy on this issue. Contact your supervisor or agency ethics officer to find out about your agency's policy.

## May I participate in pro bono and/or volunteer services on government time?

You are encouraged to seek pro bono and volunteer opportunities that can be accomplished outside of your scheduled working hours. However, activities may sometimes occur during the work day. You may be granted annual leave, leave without pay, or may be permitted to make up any time you are away from the office. Contact your supervisor or agency ethics officer to find out about your agency's policy.

## May I be given administrative leave?

Generally, it is inappropriate to pay an employee for time engaged in pro bono or volunteer services. However, in limited circumstances, it may be appropriate for an employee to seek administrative leave or an excused absence from duty for brief periods of time without loss of pay or charge of leave. Excused absence for volunteer service should be limited to those situations in which the employee's services meet one or more of the following criteria: is directly related to the agency's mission; is officially sponsored or sanctioned by the agency; or will enhance the professional development or skills of the employee in his or her current position. See OPM Guidance at [www.opm.gov/oqa/compmemo/2002/volunteerweek.htm](http://www.opm.gov/oqa/compmemo/2002/volunteerweek.htm). Supervisory approval is required.

Some agencies have issued policies specifically permitting the use of administrative leave for pro bono activities, such as the Department of Justice, the Department of Labor, the Department of Energy, the Department of Homeland Security, the Department of Housing and Urban Development, the National Labor Relations Board, the Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation, and others. Check with your agency pro bono representative or ethics officer to find out if your agency has such a policy.

## III. Conflicts of Interest

### Who should I talk to about any possible conflicts of interest?

Your Deputy Designated Agency Ethics Official (DDAEO).

### What constitutes a conflict of interest?

Any activity that would:

1. Violate any federal statute, rule, or regulation, including for example, 18 U.S.C. § 201 et seq. and the Standards of Conduct at 5 C.F.R. § 2635;
2. Interfere with the proper and effective performance of your official duties, including time availability;
3. Cause a reasonable person to question the integrity of your agency's programs or operations;
4. Require your recusal from significant aspects of your official duties;
5. Create an appearance that your official duties are being performed in a biased or less than impartial manner; or
6. Create an appearance of official sanction or endorsement.



## Must I get approval to provide pro bono services?

Each agency has its own policy regarding its employees' outside activities. An employee seeking to engage in any pro bono legal work or volunteer services must follow his or her agency's procedures for outside activities. You should consult with your agency pro bono contact or your ethics officer regarding approval requirements. A list of the Interagency Pro Bono Working Group Agency Contacts can be found at the following link: <https://www.probono.net/governmentprobono/contacts/>. The points of contact listed are available to assist federal government attorneys who have questions about volunteering. These points of contact DO NOT match attorneys directly with clients or provide legal advice to members of the public.

## IV. Miscellaneous

### What about malpractice insurance coverage?

The federal government does not provide malpractice insurance coverage. Generally, volunteer programs organized by the local bar or more established referral programs provide malpractice insurance coverage. You should ask the organization through which you will be providing pro bono services whether it will provide malpractice insurance coverage for you.

### May I participate if I am not a member of the state bar where I am located?

To do pro bono work in any state, you must be a member of that state's bar unless an exception is applicable under the bar rules. California does require attorneys to be members of the California Bar in order to provide legal advice. Currently, seven jurisdictions have such exceptions: the District of Columbia, Illinois, Colorado, Texas, Maryland, New Jersey and Arizona.

#### **DC Court of Appeals Rule 49(c)(9)(A).**

<https://www.dccourts.gov/sites/default/files/matters-docs/rule49.pdf>

#### **Illinois Rules Governing the Legal Profession and Judiciary - Rule 756(k).**

<https://casetext.com/rule/illinois-court-rules/illinois-supreme-court-rules/article-vii-rules-on-admission-discipline-of-attorneys/part-b-registration-and-discipline-of-attorneys/rule-756-registration-and-fees-effective-january-1-2022>

#### **Colorado Court Rules Governing Admission to the Bar Rule 204.6.**

<https://casetext.com/rule/colorado-court-rules/colorado-rules-of-civil-procedure/chapter-18-rules-governing-admission-to-the-bar/rule-2046-pro-bono-counsel-certification>.

**Maryland Rules of Procedure, Rules Governing Admission to the Bar of Maryland, Rule 19-218.**

[https://govt.westlaw.com/mdc/Document/N444A9B003C0211E6A91396A739D63AEE?viewType=FullText&originationContext=documenttoc&transitionType=CategoryPageItem&contextData=\(sc.Default\)](https://govt.westlaw.com/mdc/Document/N444A9B003C0211E6A91396A739D63AEE?viewType=FullText&originationContext=documenttoc&transitionType=CategoryPageItem&contextData=(sc.Default))

**Texas New Opportunities Volunteer Attorneys Pro Bono Program.**

[https://www.texasbar.com/AM/Template.cfm?Section=Legal\\_Access\\_Division&Template=/CM/HTMLDisplay.cfm&ContentID=42304](https://www.texasbar.com/AM/Template.cfm?Section=Legal_Access_Division&Template=/CM/HTMLDisplay.cfm&ContentID=42304).

**New Jersey - Rules Governing the Courts of the State of New Jersey, Rule 1:21-3(c).**

<https://njcourts.gov/attorneys/assets/rules/r1-21.pdf>

**Arizona Rules for Admission of Applicants to the Practice of Law Rule 38(e).**

[https://www.azcourts.gov/Portals/26/admis/2012/Miscellaneous/Rule\\_of\\_Admission.pdf](https://www.azcourts.gov/Portals/26/admis/2012/Miscellaneous/Rule_of_Admission.pdf).

## Are there specific rules for California Bar members?

Yes. California Bar Rule 2.54 provides a waiver of the MCLE requirement to members who work for the federal government. CA Bar Rule 2.54(A). To use the waiver, the member cannot practice law outside of their federal employment. There is an exception for pro bono work. CA Bar Rule 2.54(B). The pro bono work must be done for an organization which is “a California qualified legal services project or a qualified support center.” This is defined as: “A nonprofit project incorporated and operated exclusively in California that provides as its primary purpose and function legal services without charge to indigent persons and that has quality control procedures approved by the State Bar of California.” California Business and Professions Code 6213. For members who want to volunteer for an organization which is outside of California, the organization must be one which accepts either IOLTA or LSC funding in order to qualify for the exception.

The Federal Government Pro Bono Program has screened the organizations in this Guide and they all qualify for the exception unless otherwise noted. If volunteers will not be providing legal advice (i.e. doing mentoring), the waiver will not be affected regardless of whether the organization qualifies for the exception.

## Are there activities I can do that do not involve client representation?

Absolutely! Government attorneys regularly staff the clinics. At these clinics, attorneys provide brief advice and referral for clients on a walk-in basis and do not take on the cases.

## What if I have never done any pro bono work before?

It is never too late to start doing pro bono work. There is a plethora of resources and support to help you get started! First, you can start by going to a training. Legal services organizations generally host trainings throughout the year on substantive areas of law that are designed for attorneys who are new to a variety of subject areas.

Second, legal services organizations generally assign mentors to government attorneys to help you with your work.

Third, California Pro Bono, [www.californiaprobono.org](http://www.californiaprobono.org), and local legal service providers have terrific manuals, sample forms, and a pleadings bank that you can use.

Many attorneys start by co-counseling their first pro bono case. Remember, you don't have to start by taking a case—you can attend a clinic, draft wills and powers of attorney, volunteer at an intake site, or do a range of other activities.

## Are there any free online resources and trainings for pro bono work?

Yes. There are free online trainings and CLEs available through the Pro Bono Training Institute: <https://pbtraining.org/>. Additional training opportunities and resources are available through many of the organizations described at the end of this Guide.

## Is there a committee that helps government agencies develop pro bono policies and programs?

Yes. The Interagency Pro Bono Working Group has been established to assist federal agencies in developing pro bono policies and programs. The Working Group also organizes events to encourage more government attorneys to participate in pro bono work. The Working Group is chaired by the Department of Justice Pro Bono Program Manager and includes representatives from both large agencies, such as the Department of Transportation, and smaller agencies, such as the Office of Government Ethics.

## How can I get my agency involved?

Contact the DOJ Pro Bono Program Manager, Laura Klein, at (202) 353-7529 or [laura.f.klein@usdoj.gov](mailto:laura.f.klein@usdoj.gov), or DOJ Pro Bono Program Counsel, Lara Eilhardt, at [lara.eilhardt@usdoj.gov](mailto:lara.eilhardt@usdoj.gov).

# VOLUNTEERING OPPORTUNITIES

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## Alliance for Children's Rights

The mission of Alliance for Children's Rights is to protect the rights of children in poverty and those overcoming abuse and neglect. By delivering free legal services, supportive programs that create pathways to education and jobs, advocacy, and systemic solutions, the Alliance levels the playing field and ensures that children who experience foster care are able to fulfill their potential.

**PLACE:** 3333 Wilshire Blvd., Suite 550, Los Angeles, CA 90010.

**BAR MEMBERSHIP:** California bar membership is required for some volunteer areas.

- Most pro bono opportunities are in four areas: (1) adoption, (2) probate legal guardianship cases, (3) applying for benefits, and (4) education advocacy.
- **CA bar membership REQUIRED in the following:**
  - Adoption Program cases (representation in children's court)
  - Probate legal guardianship cases (representation in probate court)
  - Assisting with applying for benefits (when state hearings are involved)
- **CA bar membership NOT required in the following:**
  - Education advocacy work
- For other areas of volunteer work, bar membership requirements will depend on the nature of the particular assignment and organizational needs.

**MALPRACTICE INSURANCE:** Alliance for Children's Rights offers malpractice insurance to volunteer attorneys.

### TRAINING/ORIENTATION/ASSISTANCE:

- In-person or virtual trainings on particular areas (like adoption)
- Detailed manuals with samples and templates
- In-house attorney that partners with pro bono attorney on each case
- Takes case from pro bono attorney if a conflict of interest arises

### OPPORTUNITIES:

Advocating on behalf of children and families involved in foster care: adoptions, guardianships, state and federal benefits, and education (IEP) advocacy.

- **Adoption:** The Adoption Program helps finalize nearly one-third of all adoptions out of foster care in Los Angeles County. Many cases are finalized on designated "Adoption Days." On these special days, the court devotes an entire afternoon to adoption hearings, with balloons, treats, and entertainment to celebrate the creation of forever families. The Adoption Day program was started by the Alliance to expedite the adoption process and is now a national model to promote foster care adoption.

Pro bono attorneys prepare documentation to finalize adoptions and represent adoptive parents at unopposed hearings. Typical time commitment is 10-15 hours over 2-3 months.

- **Probate Legal Guardianship:** Over 300,000 children in Los Angeles County live with non-parent caregivers. Guardianship gives caregivers legal authority over a child's educational and medical welfare. It also allows guardians access to financial support, while providing vital emotional and physical security to children who have experienced trauma.

Pro bono attorneys prepare the petition and represent caregivers at hearings in unopposed cases. Typical time commitment is 15 to 20 hours over 2-4 months.

- **Education Advocacy:** Due to abuse and neglect, children in foster care are more likely to have learning disabilities, emotional problems, and developmental delays. Frequent changes in home and school placements make it nearly impossible to obtain accurate records, current assessments, and adequate educational programs, without proper advocacy.

Pro bono attorneys negotiate with School Districts and Regional Centers to obtain Individualized Education Programs (IEP) or Individualized Family Service Plans (IFSP). Mediation is occasionally required. Typical time commitment is 30-50 hours over 3-6 months.

- **Services for Youth Transitioning Out of Foster Care:** More than 1,500 youth "age out" of the Los Angeles foster care system each year without any parental mentoring or family to support them in the transition. Of the many obstacles these youth face, untangling legal barriers to housing, education and employment is a vital first step.

Pro bono attorneys mentor and/or assist youth with identity theft, accessing public benefits, taxes, contracts, sealing juvenile records, and clearing tickets and warrants. They also develop and deliver life skills workshops to youth in related areas.

- **Juvenile Records:** Some federal attorneys may assist with sealing juvenile records if the record does not involve a federal crime
  - **NOTE: Attorneys from the Department of Justice CANNOT assist under any circumstances even if only local or state crimes are involved.** These attorneys may also not assist with clearing tickets or warrants.
- **Public Benefits:** Federal attorneys may assist in applying for state or local public benefits but **CANNOT** assist in applying for federal benefits.

**CONTACT:** Cathy Yacoub, Esq., Pro Bono Director; Phone: (213) 368-6010 x127 Email: [cyacoub@alliancecr.org](mailto:cyacoub@alliancecr.org)  
<https://allianceforchildrensrights.org>

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## Asian Americans Advancing Justice Southern California

Asian Americans Advancing Justice Southern California (AJSOCAL) is a social justice organization that protects and strengthens the rights and dignity of Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) communities, especially those that are most disadvantaged. Volunteers are important members of the Asian Americans Advancing Justice Southern California family. Hundreds of individuals graciously donate thousands of hours to us every year, to help our staff fulfill our mission to advocate for civil rights, provide legal services and education, and build coalitions to improve the lives of our clients and empower our communities.

**PLACE:** 1145 Wilshire Blvd., Los Angeles, California 90017.

**BAR MEMBERSHIP:** California bar membership is required.

**LIMITS ON NUMBER OF LAWYERS:** No known limits on volunteer lawyers.

**MALPRACTICE INSURANCE:** Yes.

**TRAINING/ORIENTATION/ASSISTANCE:** AJSOCAL provides links to certain online resources and trainings at: <https://www.ajsocal.org>, including a 90-minute pre-recorded Hate incident training.

### OPPORTUNITIES:

- Primary recurring, limited-scope opportunities:
  - Clinics:
    - In-person clinics on first Friday of each month (usually staffed internally)
    - Monthly, In-person clinic (housing rights clinic encounters issues that may relate to hate incidents, discrimination) – partnering with APABA (virtual opportunity)
      - Reports submitted to Hate Incident tracker and hotline (NOTE: Issues involving criminal activity can be screened out for DOJ attorneys.)
      - Legal-adjacent work – community members need help understanding options
      - Orange County office: more in-person opportunities, such as housing clinics
    - Monterey Park Outreach (Current priority for AJSOCAL):
      - Estate planning help needed
  - As needed: litigation matters, housing rights, one-off matters

**CONTACT:** Christina Yang, Director of Pro Bono Programs: [cyang@ajsocal.org](mailto:cyang@ajsocal.org) or Nathan Vuong, at [nvuong@ajsocal.org](mailto:nvuong@ajsocal.org)

**WEBSITE:** <https://www.ajsocal.org>

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## Bet Tzedek

Bet Tzedek provides free expert legal advice and representation to Los Angeles County residents. Each year, Bet Tzedek works with over 1,000 pro bono attorneys and volunteers to assist more than 90,000 people.

**PLACE:** 3250 Wilshire Blvd., 13<sup>th</sup> Floor, Los Angeles, California 90010.

**BAR MEMBERSHIP:** California bar membership is required.

**LIMITS ON NUMBER OF LAWYERS:** No known limits on volunteer lawyers.

**MALPRACTICE INSURANCE:** Yes, provided through Bet Tzedek.

**TRAINING/ORIENTATION/ASSISTANCE:** Every case is assigned with a mentor attorney. Bet Tzedek also offers substantive training in a specific area of the law and provides training manuals with step-by-step guides. Bet Tzedek offers workstations for volunteer attorneys, as well as use of the office printers.

### **OPPORTUNITIES:**

- Clinics:
  - Advance Planning Clinic (prepare statutory wills and advance medical and healthcare directives)
  - Self-Help Conservatorship Clinic (family living with adults with developmental disabilities)
  - Employment Rights Clinic
  - Housing Rights Clinic
  - Small Claims Clinic
  - Elder Abuse Restraining Order Clinic
- Direct Services:
  - Guardianship
  - Elder Abuse Prevention
  - Eviction Defense
  - Employment Rights Cases
  - Small Business Transactional Legal Services
  - Estate Planning
  - Low-Income Tax Matters
- Larger Cases:
  - Real Estate Fraud

**CONTACT:** Sara Levine, Director of Pro Bono Programs: [slevine@bettzedek.org](mailto:slevine@bettzedek.org)

**WEBSITE:** [www.bettzedek.org](http://www.bettzedek.org)

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## Community Legal Aid SoCal

Community Legal Aid SoCal is dedicated to meeting the legal needs of the greatest number of low-income people throughout Orange and Los Angeles Counties. They deliver services in eight practice areas: Family, Housing, Health, Safety & Protection, Economic Opportunity, Domestic Violence, and Elder Abuse. Their attorneys and staff provide evaluation, advice, and counsel. They also offer opportunities for learning at their clinics, workshops, and Self-Help Centers; provide direct representation on a case-by-case basis; and engage in impact litigation and policy advocacy.

### **PLACE:**

- Main Office: 2101 North Tustin Avenue, Santa Ana, CA 92705
- Norwalk: 11834 Firestone Boulevard, Norwalk, CA 90650
- Anaheim: 250 East Center Street, Anaheim, CA 92805
- Compton: 725 West Rosecrans Avenue, Compton, CA 90222

**BAR MEMBERSHIP:** California bar membership is not required to volunteer. Any attorney not licensed in California will be supervised and have their work approved by a CLA staff attorney in compliance with state laws governing the practice of law in California.

**LIMITS ON NUMBER OF LAWYERS:** None.

**MALPRACTICE INSURANCE:** CLA SoCal's malpractice insurance covers volunteer attorneys.

**TRAINING/ORIENTATION/ASSISTANCE:** CLA SoCal offers training and ongoing supervision of and technical support for pro bono attorneys throughout the duration of the case. CLA SoCal provides the use of office space, training materials and sample pleadings, and reference materials. For certain long-term volunteers, CLA SoCal provides organizational accounts (email, online training subscription, organizational intranet, etc.). Reimbursement of expenses are determined on a case-by-case basis.

**OPPORTUNITIES:** CLA SoCal deliver services in seven practice areas relevant for Federal attorneys: Family, Housing, Health, Safety & Protection, Economic Opportunity, Domestic Violence and Elder Abuse. CLA SoCal offers pro bono attorney opportunities in Legal Clinics, Complex Litigation, and Case Referrals for full pro bono representation. Opportunities vary, but may include eviction defense, parental dissolution or custody matters, and filing for restraining orders for elder or domestic abuse.

**Remote/Virtual Eviction Defense Clinic (Note: This opportunity takes place during business hours and may require volunteers to take leave.)**

- Purpose: Pro bono attorneys help individuals defend against eviction. Assist low-income tenants facing eviction during the pandemic by helping to prepare answers to Unlawful Detainer complaints in this remote clinic that takes place every week.
- Timing / Commitment: during business hours, every Tuesday and Thursday, all virtually. An attorney chooses a time slot, calls their client, and helps them fill out an answer or defense to a notice of

eviction. A case can take a maximum of three hours (but is rarely that long) and will include (1) meeting with a CLA SoCal attorney to discuss the case and get guidance on next steps, (2) the call with the client, and (3) finalizing paperwork for SoCal to file. There is no in-court experience, and SoCal takes the case forward after an attorney assists with paperwork, making this is a low-level commitment. Volunteers may elect to continue pro bono representation of the client in demurrer hearings, motions for summary judgment, and even trial—though there is no obligation to do so beyond the clinic. CA Bar membership is not required, as a CA Barred CLA SoCal attorney will be supervising and reviewing all documents.

- **Training:** One-hour training out of business hours that can be taken online/remotely, as well as a handbook. In addition, mentorship is built into the clinic. When volunteers and clients “meet” via a conference call, housing staff attorneys are available to provide real-time assistance in a video conference room for the duration of the clinic.

### **Expungement Pro Bono Opportunity (outside of business hours)**

CLA SoCal seeks volunteers to help individuals with expunging certain qualifying felonies if those individuals have not served prison time, have completed probation, and lived law-abiding life. **NOTE: Attorneys from the Department of Justice are prohibited from participating in expungement matters.** Attorneys from other agencies *may* be permitted to assist with expungements for state or local crimes *only*.

If a conflict emerges during the representation, Community Legal Aid SoCal will remove the federal government attorney from the case.

**CONTACT:** Pro Bono Director, Monica Mar: [mmar@clsocal.org](mailto:mmar@clsocal.org)

**WEBSITE:** <https://www.communitylegalsocal.org/>

Updated: February 2025

## Inner City Law Center

Inner City Law Center (ICLC) works in several areas with pro bono partners to help keep the most vulnerable residents of Los Angeles in their homes and off of the streets. Pro bono attorneys help prevent homelessness by defending low-income tenants who are facing eviction from their home. Unlawful detainer (eviction) cases move on an expedited schedule and often include meaningful opportunities for discovery, motion-practice, settlement negotiations, and trial – all within a limited period of time.

**PLACE:** 1309 East Seventh Street, Los Angeles, CA 90021.

**BAR MEMBERSHIP:** California bar membership is required for most pro bono opportunities.

**MALPRACTICE INSURANCE:** Yes.

### **TRAINING/ORIENTATION/ASSISTANCE:**

Training in the form of recorded webinars is available for eviction, veterans, and expungement (subject matter specific) cases. **NOTE: Attorneys from the Department of Justice are prohibited from participating in expungement matters.** Attorneys from other agencies *may* be permitted to assist with expungements for state or local crimes *only*.

Subject matter experts will be available for representations. For any clinics, there will be training for trauma-informed practices, how to do intake, etc.

Volunteers are responsible to cover the costs of their own legal research or any other minor expenses.

### **OPPORTUNITIES:**

#### **Housing Matters:**

- Assist pro se clients facing unsafe living conditions and landlord harassment by guiding them through the small claims court process.
- Participate in housing clinics designed to help low-income tenants defend themselves against evictions.

#### **Miscellaneous:**

- General research impacting low-income tenants and veterans, not tied to a client; knowledge-based
- Help create templates and litigation documents for use in future state court matters.

**CONTACT:** Director of Pro Bono, Vidhya Ragunathan: (213) 891-3212 (direct); (213) 891-2880 (main)

**WEBSITE:** [www.innercitylaw.org](http://www.innercitylaw.org)

Updated: February 2025

# Legal Aid Foundation of Los Angeles

Legal Aid Foundation of Los Angeles is a nonprofit law firm that protects and advances the rights of the most underserved – leveling the playing field and ensuring that everyone can have access to the justice system.

Every year, LAFLA provides free, high-quality legal services to more than 100,000 people living in poverty across Greater Los Angeles. Our unique combination of neighborhood [offices](#), [self-help centers](#) at courthouses, and [domestic violence clinics](#) puts LAFLA on the front lines in vulnerable communities and at the forefront of change.

**PLACE:** Ron Olson Justice Center, 1550 W. 8<sup>th</sup> St., Los Angeles, California 90017.

**BAR MEMBERSHIP:** CA bar membership is required for some projects, but not all.

**LIMIT ON NUMBER OF LAWYERS:** No limits on volunteer lawyers, depending on project.

**MALPRACTICE INSURANCE:** LAFLA provides professional liability insurance coverage for its volunteers.

**TRAINING/ORIENTATION/ASSISTANCE:** Free online on-demand CLE trainings on a variety of substantive legal topics are available at [pbtraining.org](http://pbtraining.org). Also, every case is assigned with a mentor attorney.

## **PRO BONO OPPORTUNITIES:**

Volunteers may choose from short-term, limited volunteer opportunities to taking on full scope cases on a variety of legal issues: DV restraining orders, evictions, transactional, and many others. LAFLA cases and projects are carefully screened and ready for conflicts check. LAFLA supports all pro bono cases and projects by providing a LAFLA attorney mentor to ensure that volunteers have adequate training, sample pleadings, consultation on strategy and procedure, and other resources unique to the needs of LAFLA's clients.

## **REMOTE AND IN-PERSON SHORT-TERM OPPORTUNITIES**

**Security Deposit Small Claims Clinic (Remote)** The Security Deposit Small Claims Clinic assists tenants with completing small claims court documents for return of their security deposit. State law requires landlords to return a tenant's security deposit within 21 days after the tenant moves out. Landlords may retain a tenant's deposit to cover unpaid rental obligations or to pay to repair any damages to the property caused by the tenant. However, many landlords fail to comply with this law and tenants face difficulties navigating the small claims court process to sue for return of their security deposit. Low-income tenants especially rely on timely return of their security deposit to afford the security deposit and move-in costs in their next home. The Security Deposit Small Claims Clinic is held once per month on the last Thursday of the month from 4pm – 7pm. Pro bono attorneys will advise a client on security deposit law, assist the client with drafting small claims case initiation documents, and provide advice on the small claims filing procedure under the supervision of a LAFLA attorney. LAFLA can take on 4-6 volunteers at each clinic.

### **Tenant Empowerment Anti-Harassment (TEAP) Clinic (in-person)**

LAFLA and community partners operate monthly Tenant Empowerment and Anti-Harassment Project (TEAP) legal clinics, which provide anti-harassment assistance to residents of South Los Angeles and the downtown area. The project leverages the City of Los Angeles' June 2021 Tenant Anti-Harassment Ordinance (TAHO) to help the most vulnerable tenants with issues related to eviction, homelessness, and displacement through the City's TAHO complaint and investigation process. Volunteer assistance is requested to identify and assess tenant's legal issues, review evidence, provide brief information and advice, and help draft TAHO complaints. A LAFLA Supervisor is present at all clinics to provide substantive support and assist volunteers. Volunteers can access an on-demand training to prepare them issues to spot, understand basic landlord tenant laws, and assess cases for referral and possible representation by LAFLA. LAFLA can take on 10-12 volunteers at each clinic. The clinic runs from 3:00-6:00 pm at our community partner location near USC on the last Wednesdays of each month.

### **Expungement Clinic: Help Individuals Clear Their Criminal Records**

A record expungement allows individuals who have completed their sentence(s) to dismiss misdemeanor criminal convictions, allowing them to move on with their lives and seek jobs and other opportunities that would otherwise not be available. Though the expungement process is fairly simple for trained attorneys, many individuals eligible for expungements are not familiar with the process and are unable to adequately petition alone. For this reason, there is a high demand for expungement services in California. LAFLA operates a monthly expungement clinic on the second Tuesday of each month from 4:30 pm to 7:00 pm. The clinic will now be held remotely via videoconference. **NOTE: Attorneys from the Department of Justice are prohibited from participating in expungement matters.** Attorneys from other agencies *may* be permitted to assist with expungements for state or local crimes *only*.

### **DV Restraining Order Clinic: Help Domestic Violence Survivors Petition for Restraining Orders**

LAFLA operates three court-based domestic violence clinics to provide domestic violence survivors assistance with restraining orders. However, given the closure of the courts, LAFLA has received increasing calls to its domestic violence hotline from victims seeking protection. In a remote clinic setting, pro bono assistance is requested to help survivors complete the domestic violence restraining order (DVRO) forms, declarations, and fee waivers (in pro per) under the supervision of a LAFLA attorney. Pro bono assistance is also requested, if possible, to help clients fax file the petition and serve their abusers.

**CONTACT:** Interested parties can email Phong Wong, Pro Bono Director, [probono@lafla.org](mailto:probono@lafla.org)

**WEBSITE:** [www.lafla.org](http://www.lafla.org)

Updated: February 2025

# Los Angeles Center for Law and Justice

Los Angeles Center for Law and Justice (LACLJ) secures justice for survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault and empowers them to create their own future.

**PLACE:** 5301 Whittier Blvd. (Floor 4) Los Angeles, CA 90022.

**BAR MEMBERSHIP:** California bar membership is required.

**LIMITS ON NUMBER OF LAWYERS:** None.

**MALPRACTICE INSURANCE:** Yes.

**TRAINING:** LACLJ provides access to online training, which includes instructional videos and practice manuals. LACLJ attorneys will also provide mentorship in all assigned cases as needed. LACLJ can also provide an office space, if needed.

**OPPORTUNITIES:** LACLJ offers opportunities to represent victims of domestic violence and sexual assaults in court. There are also opportunities in family law, which include divorce, custody, visitation, and restraining orders.

There are limited opportunities available outside of business hours. If a conflict of interest arises or may arise during a representation, federal attorneys may opt in for a limited scope representation or may discuss a withdrawal from the case with LACLJ.

Because the underlying claims in domestic violence cases often involve criminal activity, Department of Justice attorneys should ensure that there are no pending criminal charges involved.

**PRO BONO CONTACT:** Pro Bono Manager, Amanda Jancu, [ajancu@lajl.org](mailto:ajancu@lajl.org) or [probono@LACLJ.org](mailto:probono@LACLJ.org)

**GENERAL CONTACT:** Tel: (323) 980-3500; Fax: (323) 980-3510

**WEBSITE:** [www.lajl.org](http://www.lajl.org)

Updated: February 2025

# Los Angeles County Bar Association (LACBA) High School Mentoring Program

The LACBA High School Mentoring Program is designed to motivate students to continue their studies and learn more about the legal profession. During its meetings, the program connects high school students with mentors who are judges, lawyers, and paralegals. A guest speaker (usually a judge or someone notable from the legal profession) will speak to the students for about 30 minutes. Then, during 30-minute, informal break-out sessions in small groups, students are paired with mentor-volunteers who discuss their academic and professional career paths and answer students' questions about applying to and attending college and law school and careers in the legal profession generally. Since the Covid-19 pandemic, the mentorship meetings are held remotely over Zoom.

**BAR MEMBERSHIP:** None required. Volunteers are eligible if they work in the legal profession (judge, attorney, or paralegal) and are enthusiastic about speaking to teenagers about academics and the legal field.

**LIMIT ON NUMBER OF LAWYERS:** None.

**MALPRACTICE INSURANCE:** Not applicable.

**TRAINING/ORIENTATION/ASSISTANCE:** Ann Park is available by e-mail for questions or concerns.

## **OPPORTUNITIES:**

Before the pandemic, meetings occurred in person. Since the pandemic, the program takes place virtually over Zoom. The next opportunities to participate will be in the Fall 2023 semester.

To participate, please e-mail Ann Park ([apark@foleymansfield.com](mailto:apark@foleymansfield.com)) in advance so she can register you for the event and send you the Zoom meeting access information.

**CONTACT:** Committee Vice Chair Ann Park, [apark@foleymansfield.com](mailto:apark@foleymansfield.com)

**WEBSITE:** <https://lacba.org/?pg=high-school-mentoring-program>

Updated: February 2025

# Neighborhood Legal Services of Los Angeles County

Each year, Neighborhood Legal Services of Los Angeles County (NLSLA) provides free assistance to more than 100,000 individuals and families through innovative projects that expand access to justice and address the most critical needs of Los Angeles' impoverished communities.

Founded in 1965 as part of the nation's War on Poverty, NLSLA is now one of the largest and most prominent public interest law offices in California. NLSLA attorneys, based in offices, courthouses, and clinics throughout Los Angeles County, specialize in areas of the law that disproportionately impact the poor—including housing, public benefits, and healthcare.

Their advocates work with doctors to improve individual and community health; help families maintain income security during tough economic times; save homes and protect our neighborhoods; help survivors of domestic violence and victims of special crimes; and engage in high-impact legal advocacy that leads to systemic change.

Through a combination of direct representation, policy advocacy, and impact litigation, NLSLA attorneys work to reduce the effects of poverty in Los Angeles' low-income communities, support the development of opportunities for individuals and families to move themselves out of poverty, and protect and enforce the legal rights of poor people by ensuring access to our justice system.

**PLACE:** 13327 Van Nuys Boulevard, Pacoima, CA 91331.

**BAR MEMBERSHIP:** California bar membership is required.

**LIMITS ON NUMBER OF LAWYERS:** None.

**MALPRACTICE INSURANCE:** Yes.

**TRAINING:** NLSLA provides online and in-person training, depending on the pro bono opportunity, and volunteers may be required to complete training modules before participating in a clinic. Additionally, if there is a sufficiently large group of federal attorneys, NLSLA may be able to provide trainings at your agency. NLSLA attorneys are available to answer questions that may arise during a representation.

**OPPORTUNITIES:** NLSLA provides legal services in a wide variety of areas, such as disaster assistance, consumer education, family law, housing, expungement and re-entry, and workers' rights. NLSLA has a number of clinic-based opportunities and self-help centers in the community focused on housing, workers' rights, family law and other topics: [NLSLA Clinics and Centers](#). To view the broader array of volunteer opportunities with NLSLA, please visit: [Pro Bono / Volunteer - NLSLA](#). **NOTE: Attorneys from the Department of Justice are prohibited from participating in expungement matters.** Attorneys from other agencies *may* be permitted to assist with expungements for state or local crimes *only*.



Pro bono attorneys may represent a client as the main counsel or a co-counsel to a NLSLA attorney.

**PRO BONO CONTACT:** Director of Pro Bono, Skip Koenig, [skipkoenig@nlsla.org](mailto:skipkoenig@nlsla.org) or (818) 834-7572

**GENERAL CONTACT:** (800) 433-6251

**WEBSITE:** [www.nlsla.org](http://www.nlsla.org)

Updated: February 2025

## Public Counsel

Public Counsel is the largest pro bono law firm in the nation. Public Counsel works with major law firms and corporations to change people's futures. Through a pro bono model that leverages the talents and dedication of thousands of attorney and law student volunteers, Public Counsel annually assists more than 30,000 families, children, immigrants, veterans, and nonprofit organizations--addressing systemic poverty and civil rights issues through impact litigation and policy advocacy. Its staff of 71 attorneys and 50 support staff--including five social workers--along with over 5,000 volunteer lawyers, law students, and legal professionals assists over 30,000 children, youth, families, and community organizations every year.

Founded in 1970, Public Counsel is the public interest law firm of the Los Angeles County and Beverly Hills Bar Associations as well as the Southern California affiliate of the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law. Public Counsel strives to protect the legal rights of disadvantaged children and foster economic justice by providing individuals and institutions in underserved communities with access to quality legal representation.

**NOTE: Federal government attorneys cannot represent clients on matters involving immigration issues.**

Public Counsel's activities are far-ranging and impact a wide spectrum of people who live at or below the poverty level. Volunteer attorneys have the opportunity to work on a variety of different projects--large and small, litigation and transactional matters.

**PLACE:** 610 South Ardmore Avenue, Los Angeles, CA 90005.

**BAR MEMBERSHIP:** California Bar membership is required to provide direct representation; non-California attorneys may be able to assist with some weekend walk-in clinic activities and research projects. Paralegals and individuals with language skills may also be able to volunteer their services whether for research or language interpretation.

**LIMITS ON NUMBER OF LAWYERS:** None.

**MALPRACTICE INSURANCE:** Comprehensive Malpractice coverage; Public Counsel serves as the primary policy for volunteers (large policy).

**TRAINING/ORIENTATION/ASSISTANCE:** The clinics have supervising attorneys who provide mentoring and training; have extensive reference materials; extensive training available for substantive cases, while more basic training for Clinics due to on-site supervising attorneys. Staff provides training, model pleadings and forms, and consultations to volunteers.

Public Counsel provides meeting space, computers, copiers, telephones, and access to LexisNexis for pro bono volunteers at their main office. Public Counsel does not cover travel expenses and filing fees, which is usually fee waived.

There is typically no formal process for withdrawal assistance in the event conflicts arise--volunteer attorneys need to include in the client agreement how they will handle conflicts and withdrawal if necessary--Public Counsel will try to assist.

### **OPPORTUNITIES:**

There are several clinics held outside of business hours (Pasadena Clinic (Saturdays) homeless, housing, consumer, family law), others are not, as they are based either in courthouses or at other public locations.

There are also satellite clinics at several different locations: federal *pro se* civil cases, 2nd Appellate District (state cases), Pasadena, and So. Los Angeles in a library. Projects may involve advisory needs especially for community development and non-profit organizations that provide medical, housing, employment, early child education and childcare services. Their needs often include leasing and licensing issues.

Research opportunities often include research of issues and drafting memoranda relating to the research conducted. Opportunities include Children and Youth issues that may include guardianship (may involve 1 - 2 court appearances) issues.

**Current Volunteer Opportunities:** 2023 opportunities for attorneys and non-attorneys, including all current clinics, are available on the following webpage: <https://publiccounsel.org/join-us/practicing-attorneys/> by clicking on the “Current Opportunities” button on that page. The opportunities are updated regularly – so be sure to revisit and refresh it regularly.

Please note: the individual volunteer opportunities listed through the foregoing link include the contact information for the specific Public Counsel Staff attorney who handles that particular volunteer opportunity. Additionally, if you are not certain how best to volunteer, you can use the following link to complete Public Counsel’s Pro Bono Volunteer Application form: [Don’t Know Where to Start – Public Counsel](#).

**PRO BONO CONTACT:** Public Counsel Pro Bono Director, Mr. David Daniels, [ddaniels@publiccounsel.org](mailto:ddaniels@publiccounsel.org).

**GENERAL CONTACT:** Tel: (213) 385-2977; Fax: (213) 385-9089

**WEBSITE:** <https://publiccounsel.org/>

Updated: February 2025

## Public Law Center

The Public Law Center (PLC), Orange County's pro bono law firm, is committed to providing access to justice for low-income and vulnerable residents. Founded in 1981, PLC's 60+ staff members work with over 1,600 Orange County lawyers, paralegals, law students, and other volunteers annually to provide free civil legal services, including: counseling, individual representation, community education, and strategic litigation and advocacy to challenge societal injustices. In each of the past few years, PLC staff and volunteers provided 65,000 hours of free legal services in handling 4,500 cases annually. The estimated value of this work is roughly \$60 million in just the past three years. PLC serves a wide range of clients, including minorities, veterans, seniors, children, and low-income residents of Orange County. The issues range from **domestic violence, guardianship, housing, health, family law, consumer fraud, discrimination, and advocacy**. PLC's services range from training seminars to individual legal advice to full representation. PLC also provides extensive legal support to Orange County nonprofit 501(c)(3) organizations so they can better meet their legal obligations, protect themselves from unnecessary litigation, and focus on delivering critical services to Orange County residents. PLC's cases cover a wide range of issues. Interested attorneys can learn more about them here: [www.publiclawcenter.org/services](http://www.publiclawcenter.org/services).

**NOTE: Federal government attorneys cannot represent clients on matters involving immigration issues.**

**PLACE:** 601 Civic Center Drive West, Santa Ana, CA 92701-4002.

**BAR MEMBERSHIP:** California bar membership is required to provide direct representation; non-California attorneys may be able to assist with some walk-in clinic activities. Paralegals and individuals with language skills may also be able to volunteer their services.

**LIMITS ON NUMBER OF LAWYERS:** None.

**MALPRACTICE INSURANCE:** PLC provides malpractice insurance for all volunteers while volunteering with PLC, whether at a clinic, taking on a case, or otherwise.

**TRAINING/ORIENTATION/ASSISTANCE:** PLC offers a variety of trainings throughout the year, including trainings on domestic violence restraining orders, guardianships, and more. For each, PLC develops a comprehensive manual and a variety of additional support materials. Some of the trainings are recorded. However, PLC but also refers volunteers to PLI and PBTI for free trainings relevant to the cases its volunteers work on.

PLC has a number of manuals and sample forms/pleadings/paperwork they can provide volunteers. There is always an assigned PLC attorney available to provide assistance, whether at a clinic or with respect to a placed case. Depending on the volunteer and the case, that assistance can be brainstorming, "checking math," reviewing pleadings, whatever is needed. PLC has a case placement manual that outlines the process of taking a case from PLC, including things such as tracking hours, malpractice insurance and sample pro bono engagement letters. Currently, PLC is a hybrid office. However, volunteers that do not have an office or cannot meet in-person elsewhere or virtually with a client, may meet with clients at PLC's office, though notice is required.

PLC has an online tool called LawYaw that provides all of the judicial council forms. They can also grant volunteers access to their particular client's file. PLC does not typically reimburse expenses but can sometimes help find low- or no-cost resources, as needed.

For attorneys not admitted to practice in California, there are still opportunities at PLC's various clinics. To take on state court cases, the volunteer will need to have an active California license, unless PLC co-counsels on the case and the PLC attorney handles the case and the volunteer provides support, e.g. writing the brief/motion or conducting research. PLC will work with individuals who want to volunteer but are not admitted to practice in California.

**OPPORTUNITIES:** PLC offers a wide variety of opportunities, from clinics to limited scope and full scope representation. PLC also has opportunities to research, create treatises/manuals, and presentations at CLEs. PLC opportunities also include local/state law issues, as well as some remote research/investigation projects that it can place with volunteers in a variety of areas of law.

Cases are available for pro bono representation on the [PLC Case List](#), which is distributed monthly by email. The Case List offers a wide range of litigation and transactional opportunities, as well as cases including: conservatorships, debt collection defense, unlawful detainers and other landlord/tenant disputes, and dissolution/divorce. PLC assigns a technical assistance attorney on each case to support the volunteer, answer any questions, and review their work product. PLC also has a large number of state court litigation matters, many in housing, that do not make it onto the case list, though are still in need of representation.

PLC has 5+ courthouse-based clinics including: Domestic Violence Restraining Orders, Guardianships, and De Facto Parent and Pre-Adoption (Other clinics handle issues which pose conflicts for federal government attorneys). Some of our clinics are virtual via Zoom, and some are in-person at courthouses. Pre-case screening is limited for the courthouse-based clinics. PLC typically focuses on procedural guidance at these clinics. For the community-based intake clinics, PLC screens based on income and substantive legal issues, although the clinic may also provide guidance on some substantive legal issues that PLC may not otherwise handle.

If a conflict arises during a clinic, PLC will remove the volunteer from the consultation and replace them with a PLC staff person or a different volunteer. For a case placement, PLC runs a conflict check ahead of time. If a conflict arises after placement, the case will be returned to PLC so they can try to find another volunteer for the case. Information regarding PLC's volunteer program and training opportunities is available at <https://www.publiclawcenter.org/volunteer/>.

**PRO BONO CONTACT:** Pro Bono Coordinator, Angela Mestre, [amestre@publiclawcenter.org](mailto:amestre@publiclawcenter.org)

**GENERAL CONTACT:** Tel: (714) 541-1010; Fax: (714) 541-5157; [info@publiclawcenter.org](mailto:info@publiclawcenter.org)

**WEBSITE:** [www.publiclawcenter.org](http://www.publiclawcenter.org)

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