

## What Others Are Saying

“Initially I began volunteering with LSEM to gain relevant experience in my practice area. I continue to be a volunteer attorney because I see the profound impact that I can have on families and individuals who otherwise would not have access to legal counsel. The work I do with LSEM clients remind me of why I became an attorney in the first place and make me feel truly part of the community.”

*Misty Watson, Principal, Danna McKittrick, PC*

“As an attorney, I realize that it is my ethical responsibility to serve those less fortunate by providing pro-bono legal services. But that’s not really why I do it. I do it because I love people, I love the law, and it’s simply just the right thing to do.”

*Debbie S. Champion, Partner, Rynearson Suess Schnurbusch & Champion, LLC*

“The biggest difference between fee paying work and pro bono is that I do the former because I have to in order to make a living. I do the latter because it’s my choice to use my skills to make a real difference in someone’s life. Looking back on almost four decades of practice, I suspect I might have burned out years ago but for the challenges and rewards that doing pro bono work brought to my law practice.”

*Stuart Berkowitz, Principal, Law Offices of Stuart Berkowitz, LLC*

## An Investment in Our Community

The holistic and comprehensive services that LSEM provides assist client-families to achieve safety and create economic and family stability, which in turn strengthens the community.

Our Tagline reads “Pursuing Justice, Strengthening Lives”, and with your help, we do just that. It is through our pursuit of justice that we continue to strengthen the lives of those we serve, empowering them to reach further and ultimately, live better. A contribution to LSEM is an investment in the region’s infrastructure, which will pay rich dividends in the future.

While our work is focused on solving long-term problems for individuals and families, the impact ripples outward to benefit the entire community.

For information on how to help by making a donation, please call the Development Office at 314-256-8742.

### Contact Information

*For help, please call:*

**Main Office**  
4232 Forest Park Ave.  
St. Louis, MO 63108  
314-534-4200  
1-800-444-0514

**Union Outreach Office**  
20 South Church St., Ste. C  
Union, MO 63084  
636-583-7877  
1-866-583-7877

**Hannibal Branch Office**  
801 Broadway  
Hannibal, MO 63401  
573-248-1111  
1-800-767-2018



For a listing of the 21 counties served by LSEM, and other information about the services we provide, please visit our website at [www.lsem.org](http://www.lsem.org). Please also visit the statewide website at [www.lsmo.org](http://www.lsmo.org) for additional resources.

The mission of LSEM is to provide high quality civil legal assistance and equal access to justice for low-income people in Eastern Missouri.



The Volunteer Lawyers Program



## Legal Services of Eastern Missouri

[lsem.org](http://lsem.org)



*Serving 21 counties in eastern Missouri*

# Overview

**Since 1982, the Volunteer Lawyers Program has provided pro bono civil legal assistance to thousands of low-income and elderly individuals in our region in critical need of legal help.**

The Volunteer Lawyers Program (VLP) is the pro bono component of Legal Services of Eastern Missouri's (LSEM) mission of providing free civil legal assistance to low-income people in our community.

Unfortunately, as the number of people needing LSEM's assistance rises every year, LSEM staff cannot meet the increased demand for assistance alone. The availability of legal assistance to people in need is, therefore, increasingly dependent on the involvement of private volunteer attorneys.

The VLP is dedicated to pairing LSEM clients who cannot afford legal counsel with volunteer attorneys who can help them navigate the legal system and safeguard their most basic rights as a step toward achieving economic self-sufficiency for themselves and their families.

Please consider getting involved in this important work and making a difference in the lives of others in our community.



## Pro Bono Opportunities

All VLP cases and projects relate to civil legal matters and most commonly involve the following legal issues:

### ■ *Landlord Tenant Disputes*

### ■ *Family Law*

Primarily representing survivors of domestic violence

- Orders of Protection (Adult and Child)
- Paternity
- Custody
- Child Support
- Dissolution

### ■ *Petitions for Guardianships* (Adult and child)

### ■ *Immigration Matters*

### ■ *Consumer Disputes*

### ■ *Simple Estate Planning* (Usually for elderly clients)

### ■ *Unemployment Compensation Hearings*



Lawyers unable to undertake direct representation of a client can still help by staffing legal information clinics, providing legal presentations to different groups, serving as a mentor to younger volunteers or simply urging friends and colleagues to get involved in pro bono work with LSEM.

## Assistance For Volunteer Attorneys

LSEM has designed the VLP not only to benefit clients, but also to fully support the participating volunteer attorneys. Most importantly, the VLP will:

- Pre-Screen clients for LSEM income eligibility for services
- Draft case summaries and gather initial relevant documentation and evidence related to each case
- Offer free training where appropriate, often with CLE credit
- Offer its legal research and form pleadings, administrative assistance and office resources whenever possible
- Reimburse some expenses (ask VLP staff for specifics)
- Provide certification of inability to pay court costs when appropriate
- Offer consultation and collaboration with experienced legal services staff and other volunteer attorneys

## How To Get Started

- Lawyers interested in engaging in meaningful pro bono work can join the VLP's Volunteer Panel by completing a short application (available online at [www.lsem.org](http://www.lsem.org)).
- The application allows volunteers to indicate what types of work they are interested in, when they are available for volunteer service and how they can contribute.
- Once a lawyer has joined the Volunteer Panel, VLP staff will contact the volunteer with offers to get involved on a specific case or project.
- Each individual volunteer determines how they wish to be contacted, what type of cases they will consider and whether they will accept any specific case or project.
- Many law firms also choose to designate a central pro bono liaison to be LSEM's primary point of contact with all volunteer attorneys at their firm.