

**ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON NEW YORK STATE PRO BONO
BAR ADMISSION REQUIREMENTS**

MEMORANDUM TO LAW SCHOOL DEANS

September 19, 2012

The New York Court of Appeals has recently adopted a new rule affecting applicants for bar admission in New York. In his Law Day address in May, 2012, Chief Judge Jonathan Lippman emphasized the need for additional resources to help ease the serious lack of legal services for those unable to pay for legal representation. Thousands of litigants appear pro se each year in New York courts, placing these litigants at a severe disadvantage in the legal system and detrimentally affects the administration of justice. One of Chief Judge Lippman's proposals for addressing this gap in access to justice is directed at encouraging pro bono activities, both by law students and the practicing bar.

To improve the assistance available to unrepresented litigants and to ease the burden on legal services providers, Judge Lippman has spearheaded a new initiative that will require applicants for admission to the New York bar to demonstrate that they have performed 50 hours of qualifying pro bono work. Qualifying pro bono work must be law-related and conducted under the supervision of a law school faculty member, an attorney or a judge.

The new rule (22 NYCRR 520.16) will take effect on January 1, 2015 so the graduates of the class of 2013 who seek bar admission in New York before the effective date will not need to comply with the new requirement. However, first- and second-year law students interested in practicing law in New York should begin acquiring their pro bono hours since those students will most likely apply for bar admission after the rule takes effect. The 50 hours of pro bono work is not a prerequisite for qualifying to take the New York bar examination, but the 50 hours of qualifying service must be completed before application for admission to the New York bar.

To provide your law school with further information, attached is a copy of the Rule, the Report of the Advisory Committee and Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs). We hope these materials will provide sufficient details on the nature of qualifying work and the procedures for implementation of the requirement. As noted in the FAQs, the

New York court system has established a an email address and toll-free number for the receipt of further inquiries by law students.

The rule aims to instill in law students a greater appreciation of the fundamental responsibility of the legal profession to provide service to others, along with exposing law students to real-life legal issues. It is our hope that this rule will foster future members of the practicing bar who recognize the benefits of volunteering their legal services to the poor and disadvantaged.

Thank you for your assistance and cooperation in providing the necessary information to your students interested in practicing in New York State.

Attachments:

Rule 520.16

Advisory Committee Report

New York State Bar Admission: Pro Bono Requirement FAQs