

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In its 2007 Statement Regarding the Provision of Pro Bono Legal Services by Ohio Lawyers, the Supreme Court of Ohio announced it would, in conjunction with the Ohio Legal Assistance Foundation (OLAF), “develop a means by which Ohio lawyers may report voluntarily and anonymously their pro bono activities and financial support for legal aid programs.”

In early January, 2010, the Court delivered by email to all attorneys maintaining an active registration in Ohio, and who provided to the Court’s Attorney Services Division an email address, an invitation to report, voluntarily and anonymously, pro bono activities for calendar year 2009. The email included a link to an external website designed and maintained by OLAF, where attorneys choosing to participate entered information about pro bono service, financial support for organizations providing legal services to persons of limited means, and limited demographic information.

Seven percent of the attorneys who received the Court’s electronic invitation chose to report information about pro bono service and financial support of legal aid programs, a drop of five percent from one year ago. Improvements to the construction and content of the reporting website eliminated a significant amount of reporting about pro bono service performed outside the state of Ohio which was collected inadvertently last year. The data collected for 2009, although smaller, more reliably reflects pro bono legal services within the state of Ohio. Among the attorneys choosing to report, 66.1% reported pro bono service, an increase over 2008, when 61.3 % reported pro bono service. Ohio attorneys voluntarily reported 96,508 hours of pro bono service, for an average of 56.6 hours per attorney. The average represents an increase over the 2008 average of 49.3 hours per attorney. Using an hourly rate of \$135.00, Ohio attorneys who chose to report hours of pro bono service for 2009 contributed \$13,028,580.00 in legal services to Ohio’s low income population.

Attorneys who participated in the process reported financial contributions totaling \$250,000.00, a drop from the contributions reported for calendar year 2008, which totaled \$694,000.00. The average contribution for 2009 was \$464.00, also less than the average contribution for 2008, which was \$775.00. Contributions reported for 2009 ranged from \$1.00 to \$15,000.00.

The largest percentage of attorneys taking part in voluntary, anonymous pro bono reporting indicated they lived in central Ohio (24.1%); northeast (23.4%) and Southwest (21.5%) Ohio were a close second and third. In 2008, northeast Ohio led geographic areas of the state in voluntary reporting, with 29.4% of those choosing to report.