

Civil Pro Bono Panel
United States District Court for the District of Connecticut

1. Introduction

The District of Connecticut has a Pro Bono Panel to fulfill the Court's needs when our judges appoint counsel in civil cases (except for Habeas Corpus). The Staff Attorneys' Office administers the Court's Pro Bono Panel program. The Staff Attorneys' Office is located at the United States District Court for the District of Connecticut, 915 Lafayette Boulevard, Bridgeport, Connecticut 06604.

Any attorney or firm interested in participating in the Civil Pro Bono Program may either fill out the attached Pro Bono Questionnaire and return it to Staff Attorney Cynthia Earle at the United States District Court for the District of Connecticut, 915 Lafayette Boulevard, Bridgeport, Connecticut 06604 or may contact Attorney Earle by telephone at (203) 579-5861.

2. Appointment Procedures

Each month the Staff Attorneys' Office will prepare a list containing the summaries for pending cases in which a District Judge or Magistrate Judge has determined that the appointment of pro bono counsel is warranted. The list of case summaries will be e-mailed¹ each month to panel members asking them to select a case or cases to review. If a panel member seeks to review a particular file or files, he or she should contact Attorney Earle by phone at (203) 579-5861. Copies of the pleadings, any rulings on dispositive motions, status reports or any other documents that might be relevant to counsel's review will be sent to the panel member. The case documents may be kept for one month while counsel is deciding whether or not to take the case. If counsel requires more information, the Court advises counsel to contact the litigant for whom pro bono counsel is sought to arrange for a preliminary meeting. While counsel is reviewing a case, however, the court will not disclose counsel's name to any litigants involved in the matter.

The panel member is responsible for returning the case documents to Attorney Earle before the end of one month. If after one month, counsel reviewing the case file is earnestly investigating the case, has contacted the litigant and has arranged for a meeting, counsel will be afforded additional time to make a determination regarding representation.

If several attorneys are interested in the same case, a wait list will be established. Generally, cases will be made available for review by the panel members on a first-come first-serve basis. When a wait list is established for a particular case, the Staff Attorneys' Office will keep strict account of the time the case has been out for review. Since another panel member is interested in reviewing the case, the Staff Attorneys' Office will contact the first attorney prior to

¹ For those very small firms or solo practitioners who may not have an e-mail address, the court will send a copy of the case summary list via regular mail.

the regular deadline to prompt an expedited decision. If the attorney declines to take the case, the case file should be returned to Attorney Earle immediately.

When a panel member agrees to represent a litigant from a case on the summary list, counsel should notify Attorney Earle by phone at (203) 579-5861. The Staff Attorneys' Office will then draft an order of appointment on behalf of the Chief Clerk to be docketed in the case and request that the Clerk's Office make a courtesy copy of any documents in the case file requested by appointed counsel and mail those documents to counsel. The Staff Attorneys' Office will also send a copy of the order of appointment and a pro bono appearance form to counsel to be filed in the case.

Panel Members should consult D. Conn. L. Civ. R. 83.10 for information concerning the responsibilities of the appointed attorney, relief from appointment, discharge of the appointed attorney, expenses of litigation, compensation for services and duration of representation.