

# Global Pro Bono Guide 2026

## Pro Bono Practices and Opportunities in Panama

### Introduction

The importance of pro bono legal services continues to grow in Panama. The legal community recognizes the value of pro bono work and the significant impact it can have, not only on those represented but on the system as a whole, by promoting democratic values and the fair administration of justice. Several major Panamanian law firms make pro bono work a central tenet of their mission and are signatories to the Vance Center's Pro Bono Declaration for the Americas, which commits members to undertake an average of at least 20 hours of pro bono per attorney.

### At a glance

Minimum pro bono hours requirement for lawyers?	Specific pro bono licence required?	May foreign lawyers practice pro bono?	Insurance required for law firm pro bono?	Insurance required for in-house pro bono?	Rules to limit advertising pro bono work?	Does pro bono work count to CLE credit?	Limitations for in-house lawyers to do pro bono?
No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No

### The landscape

Professional regulation	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Describe the laws or rules that regulate the provision of legal services, including any licensing required to provide legal services. Please highlight any differences for lawyers working as in-house counsel.</li> </ol>	<p>Practicing lawyers, whether or not they are members of the National Bar, are regulated by the Law of Advocacy (<i>Ley de la Abogacía, Ley No. 350 de 21 de Diciembre de 2022</i>)<sup>1</sup> and by the Code of Ethics and Professional Responsibility of the National Bar of Panama (<i>Código de Ética del Colegio Nacional de Abogados</i>).<sup>2</sup></p> <p>In addition, attorneys who are members of the National Bar are also governed by the regulations promulgated by the National Bar (<i>Estatuto del</i></p>

<sup>1</sup> “Ley de la Abogacía, Ley No. 350 (de 21 de Diciembre de 2022) por la cual se regula el ejercicio de la Abogacía. (Deroga la Ley No. 9 de 18 de Abril de 1984).” See <https://panamacna.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/LEY-DE-LA-ABOGACIA-EN-PANAMA.pdf> [(last visited on 28 January 2025)].

<sup>2</sup> See Article 17 of Law No. 350 of 2022. For the Code of Ethics of the National Bar, see “Código de Ética y Responsabilidad Profesional del Abogado”, [https://www.organojudicial.gob.pa/uploads/blogs\\_dir/1/2019/01/406/codigo-de-etica-y-responsabilidad-profesional-del-abogado.pdf](https://www.organojudicial.gob.pa/uploads/blogs_dir/1/2019/01/406/codigo-de-etica-y-responsabilidad-profesional-del-abogado.pdf) (last visited on 28 January 2025).

	<p><i>Colegio Nacional de Abogados</i>).<sup>3</sup></p> <p>The only requirement to practice law in Panama is possession of a certificate of accreditation issued by the Supreme Court of Justice.</p> <p>In order to receive this accreditation, an applicant must (i) be a Panamanian national; (ii) obtain a bachelor's degree in law or a bachelor's degree in law and political science issued by an official university or a duly authorized private university to operate within the territory of the Republic of Panama, to which degrees the law recognizes official value; (iii) obtain a bachelor's degree in law or a bachelor's degree in law and political science issued by a university abroad, which must be previously revalidated at the University of Panama, except in the case of international agreements that, in exact and precise terms, exempt the individual from the obligation to revalidate their professional degree; and (iv) pass the professional examination for access to the practice of law, which is primarily based on ethical and practical knowledge in the legal profession.<sup>4</sup></p>
<h3>Regulatory landscape for pro bono</h3>	
<p>2. Describe the laws or rules that regulate the provision of pro bono legal services.</p>	<p>In general, the National Bar's Code of Ethics and Professional Responsibility prohibits the levying of charges for legal services that are lower than the minimum established by the Fee Schedule promulgated by the National Bar, when the purpose of such an action is unfair competition.<sup>5</sup> However, under the Minimum Professional Fee Schedule, legal representation for the protection of the poor or for those who qualify for pro bono legal sponsorship is excepted from this rule.<sup>6</sup></p> <p>The Office of the Attorney General of Panama (<i>Procuraduría General de la Nación</i>) protects the fundamental right to justice and the guarantee of</p>

<sup>3</sup> "Estatuto del Colegio Nacional de Abogados de Panamá", at <https://panamacna.com/estatuto-2/> (last visited on 28 January 2025)

<sup>4</sup> See Article 2 of Law No. 350 of 2022 and, for other administrative requirements, <https://panamacna.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/LEY-DE-LA-ABOGACIA-EN-PANAMA.pdf> (last visited on 28 January 2025).

<sup>5</sup> See Articles 15 and 31 of the Code of Ethics and Professional Responsibility, <https://www.organojudicial.gob.pa/uploads/blogs.dir/1/2019/01/406/codigo-de-etica-y-responsabilidad-profesional-del-abogado.pdf> (last visited on 28 January 2025).

<sup>6</sup> See Article 1 of the Minimum Professional Fee Schedule, [https://www.gacetaoficial.gob.pa/pdfTemp/29309\\_B/GacetaNo\\_29309b\\_20210616.pdf](https://www.gacetaoficial.gob.pa/pdfTemp/29309_B/GacetaNo_29309b_20210616.pdf) (last visited on 28 January 2025).

	<p>equal treatment under the law for all, including and especially for those who are members of the most vulnerable parts of Panamanian society.<sup>7</sup> This policy of access to justice, and to the knowledge and protection of civil rights, is laid out in the Bill of Rights of Individuals before Justice (<i>Carta de Derechos de las Personas ante la Justicia en el Ministerio Público de la República de Panamá</i>).<sup>8</sup></p>
3. Do lawyers need a license to provide pro bono legal services (beyond usual local qualification to practice law)?	Panamanian attorneys do not require an additional license to provide pro bono legal services, but, as detailed above, would still require a certificate of accreditation issued by the Supreme Court in order to practice law.
4. Do foreign-qualified lawyers need any additional license to provide pro bono services (beyond their foreign qualification to practice law)?	Although accredited lawyers in Panama would not require an additional license to provide pro bono legal services, one of the requirements to practice law in Panama is Panamanian citizenship (see section II.(a)(1) above). Since the provision of pro bono legal services would be considered the practice of law, it is likely unlawful for a foreign attorney to provide pro bono legal services in Panama.
5. Are lawyers required by such rules to work a minimum number of pro bono hours? If so, how many?	No.
6. Are aspiring lawyers required to complete a minimum number of hours of pro bono legal services to become licensed lawyers?	Aspiring lawyers in Panama are not required to complete a minimum number of hours of pro bono legal services in order to become a licensed attorney.
7. Aside from mandatory targets (if any), are there aspirational pro bono hours targets for lawyers set by the local bar association, regulatory body or other body?	In Panama, there are no mandatory pro bono hour targets set for lawyers by the local bar association or regulatory bodies. However, the National Bar Association's Code of Ethics and Professional Responsibility encourages attorneys to provide pro bono legal services as part of their professional responsibility to ensure access to justice.
8. Do lawyers receive any "Continuing Legal	Lawyers in Panama do not receive "Continuing

<sup>7</sup> See <https://ministeriopublico.gob.pa/secretaria-derechos-humanos/acceso-la-justicia/> (last visited on 28 January 2025).

<sup>8</sup> See <https://ministeriopublico.gob.pa/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Carta-de-Derechos-de-las-Personas-ante-la-Justicia-en-el-MP.pdf> (last visited on 28 January 2025).

Education” (CLE) or equivalent credit for pro bono hours worked?	Legal Education” or equivalent credit for pro bono hours worked.
<b>Insurance and advertising</b>	
<p>9. Do lawyers need professional indemnity legal insurance cover for pro bono legal services they provide? Does the requirement differ for in-house lawyers?</p> <p>If insurance is required, can lawyers meet the requirement by working under the cover of another pro bono provider, e.g. in partnership with a private law firm or organization working on the same pro bono project?</p>	There is no regulation or legal requirement that practicing attorneys be covered by professional indemnity legal insurance.
<p>10. Are there any rules that limit or prohibit advertising of pro bono successes or soliciting new pro bono clients?</p>	There are no rules regarding attorney publicity that apply specifically to the advertising of pro bono successes or the solicitation of new pro bono clients. The rules governing attorney publicity generally are part of the National Bar Association’s Code of Ethics and Professional Responsibility. However, these rules do impose certain restrictions: attorneys should avoid commenting on ongoing or future litigation, must maintain professional dignity in any publicity, provide only accurate information about their qualifications and experience, and refrain from soliciting publicity about themselves or their cases. <sup>9</sup>
<b>Pro bono practice and culture</b>	
<p>11. What are the main areas of law which require or present opportunities for pro bono? What are the major unmet legal needs?</p>	Panama has many areas of unmet legal needs as well as other areas of law which present opportunities for pro bono legal service. These include: the representation of indigent clients and members of vulnerable groups, partnerships with NGOs focused on community and development, and projects for the drafting of laws that promote social and cultural progress in the country.
<p>12. Who are the main providers of pro bono</p>	<b>Government:</b> The Legal Orientation Service

<sup>9</sup> See Chapter 6 of the Code of Ethics and Professional Responsibility, <https://www.organojudicial.gob.pa/uploads/blogs.dir/1/2019/01/406/codigo-de-etica-y-responsabilidad-profesional-del-abogado.pdf> (last visited on October 3, 2025).

<p>legal services?</p>	<p> (“<b>SOL</b>”) (<i>Servicio de Orientación Legal</i>), of the National Bar has as one of its objectives the “provision of pro bono professional legal services, through the Commission of the Legal Orientation Service, to those who do not have the means to procure these services.”<sup>10</sup> Since 1981, the SOL provides access to professional attention, information and legal guidance, free of charge, for those of limited resources whose individual or societal rights are being violated.</p> <p><b>Law Firms:</b> The National Bar of Panama and many major Panamanian law firms are signatories to the Pro Bono Declaration of the Americas, spearheaded by the Vance Center for International Justice in New York. By doing so, they are committing to the principle that it is the duty of the legal profession to provide a fair and equitable legal system and agree to provide a minimum of 20 hours of annual pro bono work per practicing attorney. Among others, Morgan &amp; Morgan, ARIFA, and Galindo, Arias &amp; López, are signatories and have been recognized for their pro bono work. They maintain active practices and partnerships with individual clients, NGOs and other pro bono organizations.<sup>11</sup></p>
<p>13. Are there any noteworthy examples of how innovative technology or artificial intelligence is being used to enable access to pro bono or otherwise as part of pro bono cases or matters?</p>	<p>In Panama, there are some innovative initiatives that leverage technology to enhance access to pro bono legal services. One example is the use of online platforms for legal aid and advice, which helps connect individuals with pro bono attorneys<sup>12</sup>.</p>
<p><b>Sources of Pro Bono Opportunities and Key Contacts</b></p>	
<p>14. Describe notable sources of pro bono matters or resources in your jurisdiction.</p>	<p>The State provides free legal services through the Public Defender’s Office (<i>Instituto de Defensa Pública</i>, previously known as the <i>Instituto de Defensoría de Oficio</i>).<sup>13</sup> This organization, in recognition of international conventions of</p>

<sup>10</sup> See [https://panamacna.com/servicio-de-orientacion-legal-sol/?utm\\_source=chatgpt.com](https://panamacna.com/servicio-de-orientacion-legal-sol/?utm_source=chatgpt.com) (last visited on 28 January 2025).

<sup>11</sup> See <https://morimor.com/es/pro-bono/>, <https://www.arifa.com/esp/la-firma/probono-y-csr/pro-bono.html> and <https://gala.com.pa/> (last visited on January 28, 2025), for their respective pro bono websites.

<sup>12</sup> For more information, see <https://umecit.edu.pa/consultorio-juridico/> or <https://kraemerlaw.com/es/pro-bono-es/> (last visited on October 3, 2025).

<sup>13</sup> For more information, see <https://www.organojudicial.gob.pa/administrativos/instituto-de-defensorde-oficio#> (last visited on 28 January 2025).

	<p>human rights and Panama's Constitution, guarantees the right to legal representation in judicial processes involving criminal law, criminal law for minors, agrarian law, family law and civil law.</p> <p>See also Section II.(d)(2) above regarding the Legal Orientation Service.</p>
<p>15. Is there any public or private organization with which a local or foreign lawyer can register to be made aware of pro bono opportunities?</p>	<p>As noted above, it is unlikely that a foreign attorney would be able to provide pro bono legal services in Panama. For local attorneys, a few options are contacting one of the firms listed in Section II.(d)(2), the National Bar of Panama<sup>14</sup> or the Public Defender's Office<sup>15</sup>.</p>
<p>16. Are there any awards, lists or rankings related to pro bono work?</p>	<p>Several prestigious rankings, such as Chambers and Partners, Legal 500, Latin Lawyer, and the Cyrus R. Vance Center for International Justice, provide various recognitions for Panamanian law firms that offer pro bono legal services. These rankings help highlight firms that demonstrate a strong commitment to social responsibility and access to justice, recognizing their efforts in contributing to the public good and supporting vulnerable communities.<sup>16</sup></p>

## Acknowledgements

**Name of Local Counsel:** Galindo, Arias & López

**Name of Individual at Local Counsel:** Diego Herrera

## Learn more

[Navigate the full Global Pro Bono Guide](#) to explore the global landscape and pro bono practices and opportunities across 100+ jurisdictions.

<sup>14</sup> See <https://panamacna.com/> (last visited on October 3, 2025).

<sup>15</sup> See <https://ministeriopublico.gob.pa/> (last visited on October 3, 2025).

<sup>16</sup> For more information, see <https://morimor.com/morgan-morgan-is-recognized-as-pro-bono-leading-lights-2024/> (last visited on 28 January 2025).