

## Resources

Since January 2000, the VSB (Public Service) Rules of Professional Conduct have recognized the pro bono publico contributions being made by appointed counsel, mediators and other lawyers who accept nominal fees or who operate under sliding fee scales. The generosity of members of the private bar who accept substantially undercompensated work helps legal aid and public defender offices meet the needs of under-served and vulnerable clients, such as the systemically unemployed, low-income elderly, the disabled and the criminally accused.

Many of the attorneys who accept such cases practice as solos or in small firms without extensive in-house support services. Now there are new programs that help rural and other practitioners in smaller firms reduce malpractice claims and ethics complaints. Two of the programs are described below.

Long-running programs, such as telephone-based consulting services from legal staff in the office of the VSB Ethics Counsel, have historically been—and will continue to be—available to discuss ethics and UPL issues with attorneys, members of the judiciary and paralegals. Questions to be answered by telephone may be posed anonymously and hypothetically. Another option is to submit questions in writing for a formal opinion from appropriate bar committees, such as the UPL or Ethics Committee. For more information, call the bar's Ethics Hotline at (804) 775-0564.

### Insurance Committee-Sponsored Law Practice Management Reviews

The Virginia State Bar Malpractice Insurance Committee offers confidential law practice management reviews to solos and small firms. Members of the bar, in firms of five and under, seeking information about effective practices and procedures may be able to secure a half-day review that can reduce exposure to both malpractice claims and ethics complaints for \$150 per attorney. The VSB's risk management program covers the remainder of the cost. The number of reviews each year is limited, however. Contact Janean S. Johnston, J.D., to request an application form at (703) 567-0088, or write to her at 250 South Reynolds Street, #710, Alexandria, VA 22304.

Ms. Johnston is an attorney who has conducted nationwide legal risk management reviews and ethics audits since 1987. She has been retained by the VSB Malpractice Insurance Committee to assist with its overall risk management efforts.

### Underwriter-sponsored Site Visits and Office Assessments

Attorneys Liability Protection Society (ALPS), a Risk Retention Group, is the bar's affiliated legal malpractice insurance provider. Lawyers insured by ALPS may arrange with the Eastern Region Risk Manager for a confidential comprehensive RISC (Reduce Insured's Susceptibility to Claims) visit. There is a nominal cost to cover travel expenses. The insured firm can receive a premium reduction if the firm agrees to share the report with

ALPS' underwriters and the firm provides a written response to the recommendations in the report.

A RISC visit includes time spent with attorneys, paralegal, and support staff. Under the voluntary RISC program, an ALPS claim attorney or risk manager will come to your office to conduct what is best described as an interactive educational visit, focused on risk management techniques. Examples of topics discussed include conflict systems, file documentation, calendar management, accounting procedures, client management, e-mail practices and computer security. Please visit [www.alpsnet.com](http://www.alpsnet.com) and click on FAQ for additional information about RISC visits or call ALPS at 1-800-367-2577.

## Public Service

The Virginia State Bar participates in the American Bar Association's Operation Enduring Lamp, a program to help provide more avenues of legal assistance for America's military personnel. Since the program was launched last fall, the VSB has supported the efforts of its members individually and collectively through bar associations, legal services programs, and law firms to better accommodate the needs of enlistees and their dependents.

The Virginia State Bar posts on its Web site, [www.vsb.org/probono](http://www.vsb.org/probono) (see "training opportunities") information about ABA CLE material that lawyers and groups such as bar associations may access for free. At least one major firm has used this type of pre-packaged CLE to educate its members about anticipated gaps in services. An article by two Hunton & Williams attorneys on the "Employment Rights of [Virginia] Military Reservists" appeared in the April 2002 *Virginia Lawyer* magazine. The Fairfax Bar Association joined with the VTLA to produce a well-attended CLE on pro bono representation of victims of the Pentagon and other 9/11 attacks. Another law firm tailors its nominal cost bi-monthly public education clinics to the domestic relations law needs of military dependents.

The VSB welcomes responses from firms and individual attorneys who would like to assist in these and similar efforts. We are especially interested in hearing from family law practitioners, licensed in Virginia, who are open to accepting low income client referrals on a substantially reduced fee, installment payment, or pro bono basis. Please email [petrini@vsb.org](mailto:petrini@vsb.org) or call the pro bono office at (804) 775-0522 for more information. Thank you.

Visit the Pro Bono page on the VSB Web site  
for **pro bono training and opportunities**  
listed at [www.vsb.org/probono/](http://www.vsb.org/probono/).