



Nonprofit legal aid organization turns to live chat to deliver personalized online help to visitors who lack legal knowledge or technology skills to conduct research and gain access to justice

Pro Bono Net Overview

Founded in 1998, Pro Bono Net (www.probono.net) is a national nonprofit organization dedicated to increasing access to justice through innovative uses of technology and increased volunteer lawyer participation. With a broad base of support from foundations, law firms, corporate sponsors and nonprofit partners, Pro Bono Net has been able to build Web platforms that offer powerful and sophisticated tools to pro bono and legal aid advocates, and provide critical legal information and assistance directly to the public. Pro Bono Net's platforms have been adopted in 30 states and regions, reaching approximately two-thirds of the poverty population and lawyers in the United States.

LawHelp.org helps low and moderate income people find online legal information and resources, locate free legal aid programs in their communities, and obtain answers to questions about their legal rights. Probono.net makes it easier for pro bono attorneys and legal aid advocates to assist people in need by connecting them with volunteer opportunities, training events, mentors, and searchable libraries of practice resources they won't find anywhere else.

Pro Bono Net offers national guidance and support to state-based legal aid organizations, which use their regional LawHelp and probono.net sites to serve their local communities.

The Challenge

Pro Bono Net and its local partners had long observed that some visitors to LawHelp.org sites are overwhelmed by the resources available to them. Still others lack the legal knowledge or technology skills to conduct research on their own. As a result, some low and moderate income visitors abandoned their searches before they found relevant or useful information to help

them pursue their legal rights and obtain access to justice. Pro Bono Net realized that certain visitors need personalized assistance to lead them to the resources and information that directly relates to their legal situation.

The LivePerson Solution

In 2004, Montana Legal Services Association, Iowa Legal Aid, and Pro Bono Net received a grant from the federal Legal Services Corporation (LSC) to launch the LiveHelp Pilot Project, a service that enables site visitors to ask remotely-located Specialists for help in finding online legal information and resources.

LiveHelp was launched in June 2006 on MontanaLawHelp.org and IowaLegalAid.org using LivePerson Pro, LivePerson's award-winning live chat service. The LiveHelp feature allows visitors to click a button, connect with a Specialist, and ask for information about a legal problem. The Specialists provide visitors with links to relevant information or, using the collaborative features of LivePerson Pro, "escort" visitors to needed online resources,

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I'm often amazed at how quickly and easily this service can empower people to solve their own problems. ”

-- Jordan Bergsten
AmeriCorp*VISTA volunteer
with Pro Bono Net



including information on how to find a free legal aid lawyer, court information and materials for people who are going to court without a lawyer.

If a Specialist is unavailable, the visitor can choose to leave a message and receive the information via email. Specialists help people find legal information and do not provide legal advice. In situations where legal advice may be needed, the Specialist will inform the visitor how they can apply for legal services or contact a lawyer referral service.

In October 2007, Louisiana became the third state to implement LiveHelp, though LawHelp.org/LA. And in December 2007, with support from LSC, Pro Bono Net and Georgia Legal Services launched a statewide LiveHelp initiative to mentor attorneys handling pro bono cases and help them find the information they need on GeorgiaAdvocates.org to assist their clients quickly and efficiently. Most recently, LiveHelp was launched on Arkansaslegalservices.org, Arkansas' statewide guide to free and low cost legal help.

High Praise for LiveHelp

A formal evaluation of the pilot by an assessment specialist found that LiveHelp is a highly valuable addition to the access to justice delivery system. The service receives high praise from both Specialists and visitors, and is ideally suited for a broad range of legal aid, court, volunteer and access-to-justice contexts. In fact, Pro Bono Net believes that, deployed nationally, LiveHelp will mean access to justice for significantly greater numbers of people.

"The LiveHelp feature makes using the Internet less intimidating and frustrating for visitors to LawHelp, and may encourage people to be more assertive about seeking the information they need," said Lisa Stansky, website coordinator with New Orleans Legal Assistance Corporation, an office of Southeast Louisiana Legal Services. "LiveHelp puts a human face on our LawHelp."

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- GLSP Staff Area

National PRACTICE AREAS

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Chat Window:

- ▶ Please wait for a site specialist to respond
- ▶ You are now chatting with 'Liz K.'
- Liz K.: Welcome to GeorgiaAdvocates.org. How can I help you?
- Liz K.: I am an attorney interested in doing some probono. Can I sign up through this site?
- Liz K.: Yes, you can sign up to take pro bono cases, and we provide you with support. Here is a link to our Pro Bono FAQ
- Liz K.: <http://www.georgiaadvocates.org/link.cfm?8170>

powered by **LIVEPERSON**

Welcome to GeorgiaAdvocates.org!
 GeorgiaAdvocates.org is Georgia's online poverty law resource for anyone advising low-income or disadvantaged clients.

START HERE! Join the GEORGIA ONLINE JUSTICE COMMUNITY... then **join other Georgia or National**

the public **Participating Organization**

State Bar of Georgia Pro Bono Project

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Innovative Staffing Models

A broad range of Specialists provide direct, one-on-one help to visitors in need. In Montana and Iowa, LiveHelp is staffed by AmeriCorps*VISTA volunteers, paralegals, interns, attorneys, and other willing staff members. In Georgia, LiveHelp assistance is provided by pro bono coordinators from the State Bar of Georgia Pro Bono Project and the Georgia Legal Services Program. LiveHelp Louisiana has used law students from Louisiana State University and Southern University Law Center in Baton Rouge who work in conjunction with the Louisiana Civil Justice Center's hotline.

To Jordan Bergsten, an AmeriCorps*VISTA volunteer with Pro Bono Net who spends several hours a week serving as a LiveHelp Specialist, it's one of the more rewarding parts of the job. "It's a chance for me to serve the public directly. Even without a law degree I can use LiveHelp to lead people to the resources they need. I'm often amazed at how quickly and easily this service can empower people to solve their own problems."

Staffing LiveHelp is valuable for reasons that go beyond the satisfaction of assisting those in need, explained Ms. Stansky. "LiveHelp also provides a great experience for Specialists on the helping end, because they learn more about those the site is designed to serve," she said.

Tangible Results

Since launch, the sites that offer LiveHelp report rapid growth in the number of chats and requests for help. And satisfaction levels, as measured by exit chat surveys, are extremely high, with users consistently awarding the service a high score.

But statistics only tell part of the story. Behind each request for help is an individual with limited resources, facing an urgent situation.

The LiveHelp feature allows visitors to click a button, connect with a Specialist, and ask for information about a legal problem.

With LiveHelp, critical assistance is always just a click away.



Some real-life examples include:

Guardianship of a Brother - An Iowa man was unsure how to best help his brother, who had been in the hospital for two years. The hospital began to press the man to serve as his brother's guardian and conservator. Unsure of what that entailed or if he could handle the legal and financial obligations, the man visited the Iowa Legal Aid LawHelp website. A LiveHelp Specialist directed him to the page containing Information on Guardianship, which included discussion on determining the necessity for, and alternatives to guardianship and conservatorship.

Motion for continuance - Joe, a Montanan, was looking for legal information on how to file a continuance in a parenting plan action. Joe had hired an attorney through a pre-paid legal services program, but would not be able to talk to a lawyer until after his deadline had passed. Joe found www.MontanaLawHelp.org and used its LiveHelp feature. The LiveHelp Specialist provided Joe with a packet of the legal forms he needed to file for his continuance.

Bad Used Car - Thirty minutes after a single mother in Iowa purchased a used car, it stopped running. The seller refused to send a tow truck, to repair the car, or to refund her money. The woman called her sister, who logged on to the Iowa Legal Aid site and chatted with a LiveHelp Specialist. Not permitted to provide legal advice personally, the Specialist directed the sister to her local Iowa Legal Aid office, as well as articles on the site that discussed the purchase of pre-owned vehicles.

Looking Forward

The measurable success of LiveHelp has encouraged Pro Bono Net and its partners to look at rolling the feature out in more states, and expanding it to more advocate and pro bono support sites. Liz Keith, Pro Bono Net's LiveHelp project manager, can envision the day when pro bono attorneys answer requests from low income users of LawHelp.org sites. "LiveHelp offers an innovative avenue for pro bono work by a corporation or law firm.

Many pro bono attorneys want time-limited engagements. Others need to limit their assistance to certain hours or certain practice areas. LiveHelp Specialists can be located anywhere and provide LiveHelp assistance at times convenient to them. The system can also route queries to attorneys based on substantive area, language proficiency, location or other criteria. Pro bono involvement in LiveHelp may be a good match for both pro bono attorneys and users, and help expand the assistance offered."

About LivePerson

More than 6,000 small and mid-size business (SMB) customers use LivePerson's award-winning live chat and contact center solutions to improve customer service, increase online sales, and manage interactions across all channels: chat, email, and self-service knowledgebase.

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