



Exemption from Court-Appointed Mandatory Pro Bono Assignments In New Jersey Through Pro Bono Partnership

What is the Mandatory Pro Bono Requirement in New Jersey?

Assignment and municipal judges in New Jersey have the authority to assign pro bono cases to attorneys who primarily practice in their county. The assigned cases tend to be family law matters, such as termination of parental rights, or motor vehicle violations, such as DWI cases. However, some assigned cases are more involved civil or criminal matters. The authority of judges to assign pro bono cases was challenged in [Madden v. Delran](#), 126 NJ 591 (1992). The New Jersey Supreme Court determined that such assignments are appropriate. The [Madden](#) case is the source of the “mandatory pro bono” requirement in New Jersey.

Note that in-house lawyers in New Jersey who have a plenary New Jersey license are subject to court-appointed assignments.

How Does An Attorney Qualify for Exemption from a Court-Appointed Mandatory Assignment?

The New Jersey Supreme Court issues an annual listing of the [Madden](#) exemption categories. Among other specified exemptions, Category #88 provides an exemption for attorneys who certify during the annual online attorney registration process “that they have performed at least twenty-five (25) hours of qualifying pro bono services in New Jersey for a certified pro bono organization” during the prior calendar year. Pro Bono Partnership is a certified pro bono organization.

How Does Participation in the Pro Bono Partnership’s Program Qualify an Attorney for the Exemption?

When a New Jersey licensed attorney provides 25 or more hours of volunteer legal service in New Jersey for one or more of Pro Bono Partnership’s clients in a single calendar year, the following year the attorney will be able to certify during the annual attorney registration process that the attorney is “exempt” from court-appointed mandatory pro bono assignments.