



## **PFIZER INC. BEST PRACTICES IN PRO BONO**

*December 2011*

### **Program Background**

Pfizer Inc.'s (Pfizer) pro bono program has been in existence for more than 15 years, making it one of the oldest in-house programs in the country. The legal department is comprised of 268 lawyers and 327 non-lawyer staff located in six offices across the country.

Jessica Benson, Pfizer's Pro Bono Committee Co-Chair, says that the easiest part of sustaining a pro bono program for nearly two decades has been the unwavering support of General Counsel Amy Schulman and other department management. The greatest challenge has been continuously offering new and interesting pro bono opportunities that keep members of the department excited about doing pro bono.

### **Program Infrastructure**

Pfizer adopted an official pro bono policy in 2008, which:

- defines pro bono and volunteer work,
- makes clear that pro bono is encouraged but voluntary,
- provides instruction for pro bono work that is not sponsored by the legal department,
- asks that volunteers track their pro bono time,
- addresses conflicts of interest, malpractice insurance, and utilizing support staff and other resources for pro bono.

The legal department's pro bono committee is comprised of six members, and both lawyers and non-lawyers serve on the committee. There are no term limits on service. The committee's primary functions include identifying pro bono projects, addressing budget issues, and generating participation in the program. Pfizer's pro bono committee informs legal department staff of pro bono opportunities via an intranet site and departmental newsletters.

### **Pro Bono Projects**

#### *Pfizer/Connecticut Legal Services Pro Bono Program*

Pfizer partnered with Connecticut Legal Services (CLS) to establish the Pfizer/CLS Pro Bono Program. Launched in February 2011 at Pfizer's Groton Laboratories, the program offers Pfizer attorneys the opportunity to provide legal assistance to some of the region's neediest people. The program pairs Pfizer attorneys and staff with staff from CLS. The teams work to support CLS's Consumer Law Project for Elders — a program that counsels elderly, low-income clients on how to respond to consumer law issues and deal with abusive debt-collection practices.

### *Pro Bono Alliance for Health*

Members of the legal department in New York participate in the Pro Bono Alliance for Health program. Attorneys from Pfizer partner with attorneys from a group of law firms including DLA Piper LLP, Ropes & Gray LLP, Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom LLP, and Sidley Austin LLP. Teams of lawyers work with LegalHealth, a division of the New York Legal Assistance Group, to partner with medical professionals to address the non-medical needs of low-income people with serious health problems. Lawyers staff a monthly clinic held at the New York University Cancer Institute to assist low-income individuals by providing legal advice with regard to medical powers of attorney, health care proxies, and simple wills as well as Article 17-A guardianship and Article 81 guardianship proceedings.

### *Advising Nonprofit Organizations*

The Pfizer legal department, in partnership with law firms and legal service providers, conducts a regular seminar series, Strategic Legal Thinking for Not-for-Profit Executives, which addresses corporate governance, advocacy, employment, and other legal issues faced by nonprofits. Pfizer has been presenting the Strategic Legal Thinking for Not-for-Profit Executives seminars across the country since 2001.

### **Lessons Learned**

- General Counsel support is key. Maintaining the support of the General Counsel and practice group leaders or other senior managers over time and throughout changes in leadership is important to the ongoing success of a pro bono program.
- Utilize non-lawyers. Non-lawyers can assist with both the administration of the pro bono program and serve as volunteers alongside attorneys.
- Partner for greater impact. Partnering with legal services organizations is a great way to generate clients and offer training to volunteers. Likewise, Pfizer's ability to partner with outside law firms through its Pfizer Legal Alliance program adds tremendous capacity, offers in-house attorneys coverage, and has greatly enhanced Pfizer's pro bono program.

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