



NEW YORK WOMEN'S BAR ASSOCIATION – Matrimonial Pro Bono Project

funded by NEW YORK WOMEN'S BAR ASSOCIATION FOUNDATION, INC.

In November 2011, the New York Women's Bar Association (NYWBA) relaunched the *New York Women's Bar Association Matrimonial Pro Bono Project* with a cocktail reception held at the New York Law School Diane Abbey Center. The reception was co-hosted by the project's founders, Judith White of Garr & White, P.C. and Patricia Ann Fersch of Fersch Petitti LLC. Hon. Laura E. Drager, Acting Justice of the New York Supreme Court for New York County, served as master of ceremonies.

The Project is managed by a Project Manager assigned by the New York Court and is funded through a grant from the New York Women's Bar Association Foundation, Inc., a 501(c)(3) charity dedicated to eliminating gender bias and other forms of discrimination from the legal system and legal profession and promoting the social and economic equality, safety and well being of women and children.

The *NYWBA Matrimonial Pro Bono Project* provides judges with an option to refer indigent litigants in contested matrimonial cases that are before the court to the Project Manager for assigned counsel. After receiving a referral from the Court, the Project Manager randomly selects a volunteer attorney to handle the case on behalf of the litigant. The lawyers who volunteer to serve as assigned counsel are matrimonial attorneys with a minimum of five years' experience who have agreed to devote up to twenty-five hours of their time to help a needy litigant in a contested matrimonial action in New York County.

The Project is extremely popular with the matrimonial judges and the attorneys who give their time to volunteer, and the NYWBA and NYWBA Foundation are proud to support this program.

NOTE

Litigants cannot directly contact the Project Manager, volunteer attorneys, NYWBA or NYWBA Foundation to have their matters assigned to pro bono counsel. Applications for assigned counsel can only be made during a scheduled Court appearance, and it is within the judge's discretion whether appointment of assigned counsel is warranted and appropriate under the circumstances of the case. In addition, volunteer attorneys represent litigants *only* concerning the (a) financial and (b) grounds for divorce issues in the case.