



## MCB VLP Volunteer Spotlight



**Robert J. Hahn**

**Robert J. Hahn** began incorporating pro bono work into his law career in his early days in law school and continues more than 25 years after graduation. His management of Supplemental Security Income appeals through Legal Services of Southern Piedmont (LSSP) is an example of how an attorney's commitment and interest to one need can reach many in the community. He has facilitated the creation of a model program within his firm to reach LSSP clients effectively and efficiently.

**MCB VLP: Current Employer / number of years with current employer?**

RH: Hunton & Williams, LLP / 7½ years

**MCB VLP: Area of Practice / Expertise?**

RH: Structured Finance

**MCB VLP: Law School / Law School Graduation Year?**

RH: St. John's University School of Law / 1984

**MCB VLP: How did you get involved with pro bono work?**

RH: Hunton & Williams has a strong tradition of pro bono service. We are a charter signatory to the Pro Bono Institute's Pro Bono Challenge and we've exceeded the challenge each year.

During law school I worked for 2 semesters and a summer in a clinical where we provided various legal services to indigent persons, including Medicare and SSI appeals. I particularly enjoyed those matters and have continued to handle them on a pro bono basis after admission to the bar.

Initially I contacted LSSP to see if they needed any assistance with Medicare or SSI appeals. Doug Sea, at LSSP, then contacted me to see if we could set up an on-going referral process where Hunton & Williams lawyers would handle Medicaid appeals that were referred by LSSP. We've now been working with LSSP for about a year with the Medicaid appeals.

**MCB VLP: What is a typical case like?**

RH: A typical Medicaid appeal involves the denial of a person's claim for Medicaid coverage where the denial is due to a determination that the person is not disabled. When that claim is denied, if the person appeals and contacts LSSP, LSSP will screen the matter for eligibility. If LSSP determines

there is merit to the claim and that the person is eligible for LSSP assistance, then the matter is referred to us.

**MCB VLP: How many of these types of pro bono cases do you typically handle at one time?**

RH: There have been times when I've handled 2 or 3 at one time, but typically it is one at a time. I find I spend between 12 and 15 hours on a matter, including the hearing.

**MCB VLP: How do you prepare for handling such cases?**

RH: Preparation includes reading the materials that LSSP sends outlining the matter, and then having a personal interview with my client to discuss employment history, educational background, medical conditions and any other relevant matters. Following the interview, I review the Social Security Administration rules and regulations that relate to establishing the existence of a disability to determine where to best fit my client's medical conditions, educational background and employment history. I also review my client's medical record to determine how it best supports a disability determination, and I may request additional medical records if necessary.

**MCB VLP: Did you participate in any particular training so that you could handle these cases?**

RH: Doug Sea conducted a training session for a couple of hours for me and some of our Hunton & Williams attorneys before we took our first Medicaid appeal. Doug has also provided many helpful forms and analyses of applicable laws, rules, regulations and cases. LSSP and Doug have been exceedingly helpful to me and our attorneys in getting us training and training materials.

**MCB VLP: What is the best advice you've received during your legal career?**

RH: The most recent best advice I've had is that "a shared load is half a load."

**MCB VLP: What advice would you give others?**

RH: Don't forget to look for the forest when your looking at the trees.

**MCB VLP: Any other pertinent things you would like to share with the Mecklenburg County Bar and legal community?**

RH: We have a great community with a Bar that is very active and willing to provide pro bono services. Our community also has many persons who are unable to afford legal services, many of whom have their legal needs unsatisfied. I hope that our Bar continues to provide a great example of what the legal profession can do to help satisfy those legal needs and I hope attorneys will continue to volunteer to provide pro bono legal services as their practices permit.