



Michigan  
Litigation  
Assistance  
Partnership  
Program

Qualified  
Domestic  
Relations  
Order  
Referral  
Program



A N N U A L R E P O R T

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## Introduction

2010 was another successful year for the Michigan Litigation Assistance Partnership Program's (MI-LAPP) QDRO Referral Program (Program). Since 2006, MI-LAPP has coordinated the referral of approximately 200 qualified domestic relations order (QDRO) drafting assignments to volunteer drafters.

A QDRO is a court order which dictates how retirement benefits are divided and paid to respective spouses in a divorce. Because of strict filing requirements by federal law guidelines, Michigan domestic relations laws, differing plan requirements, and many other issues, drafting a QDRO is a difficult, time-consuming, and potentially frustrating process. In most cases, a highly trained professional must be retained for the proper drafting of a QDRO. Through a panel of QDRO professionals, the Program is able to refer QDROs to volunteer drafters for completion. Without the Program, many low-income individuals would be unable to obtain a QDRO, possibly preventing them from receiving retirement benefits that they are legally entitled to receive.

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## Mission of the Program

The Program was created to meet the needs of low-income clients requiring a QDRO and to attract willing and experienced volunteer drafters to assist them. Clients' needs are at the heart of our efforts. State Bar staff appreciates and values the time donated by volunteer drafters and strives to reduce the administrative work for volunteers, making it as simple as possible to participate in the Program. Legal service providers (LSPs) are considered partners of the Program and are consulted regularly to ensure quality and ease of use.

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## How the Program Works

In general, domestic relation order drafting assignments referred by participating LSPs are assigned to volunteer drafters. A drafter prepares a proposed QDRO for review and final approval of the LSP. The LSP who utilizes the QDRO referral process remains responsible for providing legal services to his/her clients throughout the referral and drafting process.

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## The Referral Process

Referring a QDRO case to the Program is simple. The LSP initiates contact with State Bar staff after having gathered information regarding his/her client's retirement plan(s). The LSP fully completes the MI-LAPP referral form, located on the State Bar of Michigan's website. The LSP then sends the completed referral form along with other required information to the State Bar. This information can be mailed to the State Bar of Michigan, Pro Bono Initiative, 306 Townsend Street, Lansing, MI 48933, emailed to [rmathis@mail.michbar.org](mailto:rmathis@mail.michbar.org), or faxed to (517) 316-7204. If you have any questions regarding the referral of a QDRO to the Program, do not hesitate to contact Robert Mathis at the State Bar, at (517) 346-6412.

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## 2010 Facts and Figures

In 2010, the Program closed 83 QDRO referral cases. The great success of the Program in 2010 was due in very large part to the Program's dedicated volunteer drafters. In 2010, the Program's volunteers included: **Joseph Cunningham, Bob Treat, Nancy Keppelman, David and Jackie Roessler, Mary Ade, and Jim Crowley.**

The Program makes a significant positive impact on the lives of many low-income persons by providing a much needed service in cases

that require the preparation of QDROs. The Program also makes a significant impact on LSPs by helping them help clients that might otherwise not receive needed assistance.

Each QDRO case that is prepared by a drafter requires, on average, four hours to complete. For 2010, 83 cases were closed at four volunteer hours per case, resulting in 332 pro bono hours being donated. The table below shows the number of QDRO cases closed in 2010 for each volunteer drafter, and the number of donated hours provided by each drafter to assist low-income persons that probably would not have received assistance anywhere else.

QDRO	Cases Closed in 2010	Donated Hours in 2010
Bob Treat	26	104
Divorce Solutions	18	72
Joseph Cunningham	17	68
Nancy Keppelman	14	56
Mary Ade	5	20
Jim Crowley	3	12
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>332</b>

In addition to the Program's volunteer drafters, LSPs are an important part of the Program. Without LSPs referring cases to the Program, the Program would not exist. The Program is very thankful for the many LSP's that referred QDRO cases to the Program in 2010, which included **Lakeshore Legal Aid (LLA), Legal Aid and Defender Association (LADA), Legal Aid of Western Michigan (LAWM), Legal Services of Northern Michigan (LSNM), Legal Services of South Central Michigan (LSSCM), and Elder Law of Michigan's Mid-American Pension Rights Project (MAPRP).**

LSPs referred a total of 52 QDRO cases to the Program in 2010. The number of LSP referrals has continued to increase from year to year. MI-LAPP is pleased with the increased utilization of the Program and hopes to maintain the current trend going forward. The table below illustrates the participating LSPs and the total number of cases referred over the last three years.

Legal Services Provider	Cases Referred		
	2008	2009	2010
LLA	0	2	10
LADA	5	11	13
LAWM	1	2	3
LSEM	0	0	2
LSNM	2	1	0
LSSCM	9	18	18
MAPRP	2	5	6
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>52</b>

As mentioned above, in 2010, volunteer Drafters donated a total of 332 hours of pro bono legal services. The table below illustrates the value of the pro bono work provided by the volunteer drafters to each of the Program's participating LSPs.

Legal Services Provider	Cases Closed in 2010	Donated Hours in 2010
LLA	10	40
LADA	22	88
LAWM	9	36
LSNM	5	20
LSSCM	26	104
MAPRP/ELM	10	40
Women's Survival Center	1	4
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>332</b>

## Going Forward

MI-LAPP and the Program encourage LSPs to refer cases requiring the drafting of QDROs to the Program through the referral process outlined above. The Program is fortunate to have a panel of dedicated volunteer drafters willing to draft QDROs for the low-income clients of LSPs throughout Michigan. The income that a low-income client receives as the result of a properly drafted QDRO can help the person, and in many cases an entire family, pay rent or mortgage payments, buy food, get medical care, and many other necessities. If you are an LSP and have a client that requires a QDRO, please consider referring the client's case to the Program.

Another benefit of referring a QDRO case to MI-LAPP is the amount of time and resources that the LSP will save. When an LSP attorney that is inexperienced in drafting QDROs attempts to draft a QDRO, a single QDRO could take up to 60 hours to complete. The time spent drafting a QDRO is time that could have been spent on other cases. Referring a QDRO case to MI-LAPP helps the LSP save resources that can be utilized for other higher priority cases.

The Program also needs more dedicated volunteer QDRO drafters. If you are a QDRO drafter, please contact the State Bar of Michigan to find out how you can get involved and help someone that truly needs help. The time commitment to the Program will be relatively small, but the impact that you can have on the lives of low-income persons needing a QDRO will be tremendous.

## More Information

For more information about MI-LAPP and the Program, contact Robert Mathis at the State Bar of Michigan at (517) 346-6412 or at [rmathis@mail.michbar.org](mailto:rmathis@mail.michbar.org), or visit the State Bar of Michigan's website at [www.michbar.org](http://www.michbar.org).

**SBM**

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