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## **JALA Launches Low Bono Project in Effort to Solve the Access to Justice Gap**

**JACKSONVILLE, FLORIDA, February 21, 2018** -- Jacksonville Area Legal Aid, Inc. (JALA), the primary legal services organization in the Northeast Florida area since 1937, is launching a new project designed to provide family law and immigration services to area residents who traditionally have not been able to afford legal assistance. JALA's project targets individuals slightly above the poverty guidelines - but below the income level where attorneys can traditionally be hired - by placing eligible clients with members of the private bar willing to provide representation at a reduced fee.

This project - the first of its kind in Florida - is made possible by funding from the Florida Bar Foundation and the Large Firm Pro Bono Roundtable (a subcommittee of the Fourth Judicial Circuit Pro Bono Committee). The effort is termed "low bono" because services will be offered to families who fall below 400% of the federal poverty guidelines at a reduced fee. These are families who don't qualify financially for free services, but don't make enough money to hire an attorney. While many individuals choose to represent themselves, and while some family law cases are simple enough to not require a lawyer, the simple fact is that legal representation is unaffordable for a significant majority of litigants, and JALA hopes to change that reality.

Marquita Green has been named Director of the new Low Bono Project. Ms. Green, an FSU Law grad, joins JALA after several years at OSCA, and will work closely with JALA's Immigration Division Chief, Mariana Munoz. Ms. Green and Ms. Munoz will manage their own caseloads in order to have a hands-on view of the issues. JALA's project is designed to develop panels of attorneys who are willing to serve this segment of moderate-to-low income households at reduced fees.

The Low Bono Legal Services Project will be a collaboration with other departments of JALA and organizations in the legal community including Pro Bono JALA; The Jacksonville Bar Association, Family Law Section and Mentor Committee; The Family Law Inns of Court; Family Court Services; and our local judiciary.

Solving the access to justice gap is a priority for JALA - justice is the first promise made in our Constitution, and "justice for all" is the last promise made in the Pledge.

### **About Jacksonville Area Legal Aid:**

The mission of Jacksonville Area Legal Aid, Inc. is to obtain and provide high quality legal assistance to low income and other special need groups and to stimulate and empower groups of poor people to accomplish energetic and affirmative advocacy, all to alleviate the circumstances, incidents and causes of poverty. Donate at [www.JaxLegalAid.org](http://www.JaxLegalAid.org).

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