

# WORKING MOTHER

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Meet the firms that are leading the way in attracting, retaining and promoting women lawyers.

## 2013 Working Mother and Flex-Time Lawyers Best Law Firms for Women

### Shook, Hardy & Bacon Kansas City, MO

**Women: 38%**

**Check it out:** Guided by this firm's flex policy advisor, female attorneys (who make up 29% of office managing partners and 50% of office administrative partners) can adjust their hours, shorten their days, telecommute or phase back to work after childbirth or adoption.

- Female Equity Partners 21%
- Female Nonequity Partners 29%
- Lawyers Working Reduced Hours 9%

## For the Public Good

**The Best Law Firms for Women offer great flex and parental leave to their lawyers, but they also fight for issues crucial to moms worldwide through powerful pro bono programs.**



When Jane Bartley's son, Jake, was 2 1/2 years old, she faced a classic working-mother dilemma: As a partner at Shook, Hardy & Bacon, she was needed at an upcoming out-of-town trial, but it was scheduled for the same day as Jake's crucial medical appointment to be evaluated for autism.

"I told my firm, 'I can't do it,' and I felt universally supported by the partners with whom I was working," says Jane, 46, who lives in Overland Park, KS. "They echoed my thoughts that of course I needed to fulfill that responsibility first, and they would cover for me at work until I could get there."

But Shook, Hardy & Bacon took its support for Jane and other working parents like her much further than offering one lawyer mom some much-needed flexibility. At Jane's suggestion, the firm eventually created a new pro bono (volunteer) program to serve parents of children with special needs, to ensure that their kids receive all the services they need and are entitled to at school.

Experiences like Jane's are not unusual at the 2013 Working Mother & Flex-Time Lawyers Best Law Firms for Women. Yes, these employers offer generous maternity leaves, reduced-hour schedules, flexible hours and telecommuting, and they have a record of promoting associates who flex to partner. But also notable in a competitive industry obsessed with the billable hour: They support far-reaching pro bono programs that benefit women and families without the resources to hire a top-notch lawyer.

"The firms that are family-friendly, that do much better putting women in leadership positions, you will find they are also very strong in pro bono, supporting women who are less prosperous and have less power," says Esther Lardent, president and chief executive officer of the pro bono institute, a Washington, DC-based research and consulting nonprofit that promotes broader access to legal services for the poor.

A full 71 percent of attorneys at Shook, Hardy & Bacon participated in pro bono cases last year, logging a whopping 20,000 volunteer hours (plus 5,000 more by staffers), says Matt Keenan, pro bono chair and a Shook partner in Kansas City, MO.

Lawyers who contribute to pro bono work are supported by three full-time pro bono attorneys. In addition to their work on behalf of kids with special needs, firm lawyers also work on matters involving adoption placement, juvenile delinquency and parent neglect and serve as guardians ad litem, whose role is to represent a child's best interests in court.

"My work life balance challenges were never greater than in that time period shortly after my son was diagnosed," says Jane (Jake is now 11, and daughter, Taylor, is 9). "I looked around me thinking there must be so many struggling families who don't have the resources available to me. I was quite busy getting my arms around the issues, but I remember pledging that when the opportunity arose I would find a way to help others as they start on that journey."

It's a journey that's even tougher for clients in child-oriented pro bono cases, who are typically poor and lack education. Indeed, their need for legal assistance—simply to help them uphold their basic rights and stay above water financially—has never been greater. "The demand continues to grow, and the recession hasn't helped," agrees Dianne Heins, pro bono counsel at Faegre Baker Daniels in Minneapolis. "Civil legal services programs can't meet the demand."

To help, many Best Law Firms have signed on to the Law Firm Pro Bono Challenge, an initiative organized by the Pro Bono Institute through which firms set a target of either 3 or 5 percent of total billable hours or 60 to 100 hours per attorney each year. Participating firms generally give attorneys credit for pro bono work when looking at billable-hour quotas, although some cap that credit at 50 or 100 hours.

At another of the Best Law Firms, DLA Piper US, 90 percent of lawyers participate in pro bono work, averaging 80 hours per year for U.S.-based attorneys, says Lisa Dewey, 45, pro bono partner and director of new perimeter, DLA Piper's nonprofit affiliate dedicated to global pro bono work. The firm is working in communities where lawyers are usually viewed as a group to be feared and avoided, hoping to change that perception and become a useful resource to help make families more stable.

For instance, one signature program focuses on areas designated as "Promise Neighborhoods" by the U.S. Department of Education, where nonprofit groups are aiming to wrap the community in social services to support children from before birth through college. To help, DLA Piper represents nonprofit groups working in promise neighborhoods in Chicago, East Palo Alto, CA, and Washington, DC, operating legal clinics with a focus on landlord-tenant disputes, domestic violence cases, government benefits, special education and family law.

"Pro bono work can be very transformative for lawyers who've done it. I often hear from lawyers saying it's the most gratifying thing they do at the firm," says Lisa, mom of 10-year-old Aidan and 8-year old twins Stefan and Skyler. "For our younger attorneys, pro bono often allows a great training experience that they may not get immediately on billable projects."

Take the DLA Piper pro bono client who fled Guinea with her 3-year-old to protect the child from ritual female genital mutilation—a practice that killed the woman's older daughter. "Her first daughter bled to death," Lisa says. "With her second she put her foot down. She was brutally beaten by her husband and his family, and she was terrified that he was going to sneak off with her daughter and have this done." DLA Piper successfully represented her claim for political asylum, got her a work authorization and eventually helped her become a citizen.

Attorneys are most strongly motivated to work on pro bono cases when they feel that personal connection to the individual or community needing representation, says Faegre Baker Daniels's Dianne Heins. In 2012, 45 percent of the firm's pro bono matters aligned with advocacy on behalf of women's issues. The firm (Minnesota's largest) formed last year when Baker & Daniels merged with Faegre & Benson, and it is continuing the latter's 19-year commitment to partnering with the Minnesota Indian Women's Resource Center to provide a weekly on-site legal clinic to meet the legal needs of American Indian women and their families. The merged firm also offers pro bono help to women entrepreneurs, female and child victims of domestic violence, families with immigration issues, breast cancer patients who need end-of-life planning documents, low-wage health and child care workers, women in family court proceedings to modify child support, and LGBT or non-gender-conforming students experiencing harassment.

"I've seen lawyers moved to tears by some of the pro bono work we do," says Dianne, recalling an adoption placement case in which the firm represented the guardian ad litem for a child with special needs. "It was life-changing for the child in question but also for the lawyers involved."

Beyond building morale and pride in the firm, pro bono programs also connect attorneys across different practice areas who otherwise might not work together, encouraging teamwork and bringing the members of a global law firm closer. Moreover, they take lawyers out of their comfort zone, often giving young associates their first chance to appear in court. Pro bono work "adds a dimension to your own legal practice; it makes you a better lawyer for the clients that do pay us," says Shook's Matt Keenan. "You're put into situations that are unlike anything you've faced before as a legal advocate."

DLA Piper partner Stefanie Fogel, co-chair of the litigation group in Boston and co-founder and co-chair of the firm's Leadership Alliance for Women, sees a connection between valuing pro bono and creating a firm culture where working mothers can excel. "Firms that are more family-friendly appreciate the importance of seeing different perspectives, being flexible in that perspective and understanding that what's fulfilling and makes one successful is not written in stone from when law firms were created," says Stefanie, 44, mom to Griffin Warren, 10, and Maizey Warren, 4. "The types of people who may have that open mind may also see the value of contributing to the community."

The variety of DLA Piper pro bono programs gives every attorney the chance to participate, even if just for a few hours here and there. Stefanie says it's "really wonderful for people who have a limited amount of time but still want to feel they're doing good things."

A strong pro bono program also helps firms recruit and retain a diverse group of lawyers, says Jerri Shick, 39, pro bono counsel for O'Melveny & Myers in New York City, which requires all new attorneys to perform pro bono work in their first year and expects partners to supervise at least one pro bono case annually, with no cap on the billable-hours credit for pro bono work. O'Melveny & Myers does a variety of pro bono work for people in need, with a strong focus on women's issues—from helping low-income women start businesses to assisting immigrant domestic violence victims in obtaining legal immigration status.

"Recruiting helps you get better lawyers, do better work and get better business," says Jerri, mom to Zarya, 1. "And if you care about morale and your attorneys being happy, you will think about these kinds of programs. Pro bono makes people really happy. They love doing it."

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