

Volunteer Spotlight



From the April 2024 Pro Bono Newsletter:

Meet Attorney Sara Butler

Attorney Sara Butler graduated from the University of Wisconsin Law School in May of 2021 and currently practices in the healthcare practice group at Hinshaw and Culberston, a national insurance defense firm with an office in Milwaukee. When she joined Hinshaw, she had a strong interest in appellate practice and knew that gaining appellate experience early in her career would allow her to be a better practitioner for her clients. With the support of her law firm, Attorney Butler accepted an appointment with the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit in November of 2022 and completed her oral argument in January of 2024.

Pro Bono Appointments with the Court

Attorney Butler discovered that an attorney can be appointed to represent indigent prisoners in their appeal, and that her firm would offer the support she needed to navigate the process. As a new attorney, this pro bono program gave her the opportunity gain appellate experience that she could later use to benefit her clients after having had the full experience of briefing and arguing a case in front of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit.

After the notice of appeal was filed and she accepted the appointment in November of 2022, Attorney Butler took the appeal through the briefing process. There was a lot of work on the front end, including reviewing all of the filings at the lower level, from the indictment to trial and sentencing transcripts. After taking a fine tooth comb approach, she identified which issues were appealable and narrowed the issues to those that presented the greatest possibility of achieving appellate success for her client's goals.

About a year later, on January 4, 2024, Attorney Butler had her oral argument in front of Circuit Judge Candace Jackson-Akiwumi, Judge Ilana Rovner, and Judge David Hamilton. Looking back on the experience, she's grateful to see how interested the judges were in the issues, the nature of the questions asked, and how substantial the arguments were – both sides used all of the allotted argument time.

No opinion has been released yet. The average time to get a decision can vary depending on the authoring judge but ordinarily ranges between 90 and 120 days for criminal cases. Attorney Butler would recommend the experience for any attorney looking to gain practice experience.

Professional Benefits and Social Justice

While Attorney Butler benefited from having the opportunity to argue a federal appeal, her client also benefitted from the pro bono representation. Taking these types of appointments will always have the ability to benefit both client and attorney.

For questions about being featured in a Volunteer Spotlight, contact the Pro Bono Program Manager at probono@wisbar.org.