



WSSFC 2022

**Quality of Life/Ethics Track –
Session 2**

Rural Practice: Providing Equal Access to Justice

Renee Taber

**Materials were not submitted for this
presentation in advance. Additional materials
will be posted as handouts.**

About the Presenter...

Renee M. Taber is the solo practitioner of Taber Law Firm, LLC in rural northwestern Wisconsin. After serving six years in the military, she obtained her undergraduate from Central Washington University and her law degree from Mitchell Hamline cum laude in January 2017. After graduation, she served as a prosecutor before starting her own firm focusing on criminal defense, CHiPs, and GAL cases. Attorney Taber primarily represents indigent clients appointed by different county judges and the state public defender's office. She is a member of the American and Wisconsin Bar Associations, National and Wisconsin Associations of Criminal Defense Lawyers, and National College of DUI Defense. Outside of the courtroom, she enjoys watching the Packers, playing cards, site-seeing, and spending time with her husband and three dogs.

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Home > News & Publications > Wisconsin Lawyer > Article

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Out of Luck: Need a Rural Family Law Attorney?

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Many Wisconsin residents struggle to find legal representation when going to court because they live in parts of the state underserved by lawyers, especially those who practice in family law. Is telelawyering a possible solution?

LORI S. KORNBUM & PROF. DANIEL POLLACK



When you hear the phrase “rural law,” what’s the first thing that comes to mind? Farming? Ranching? Maybe the next things are taxes, bankruptcy, or foreclosure prevention. Further down the list are innumerable family issues such as divorce, custody, protective orders, and child welfare concerns.

So how does this affect lawyers? Let’s look at an example. John¹ is a physician, a partner in a local practice. Mary is his wife. They are struggling with marital difficulties, and Mary has just learned that their 12-year-old daughter has told someone that John is abusing her. Mary is distraught and accuses John of child abuse. John immediately calls a local lawyer.

Would this be a problem? Not if John and Mary live in an area where a lot of lawyers practice. John calling one lawyer probably will not affect Mary’s ability to find a lawyer. However, John and Mary live in a small town in a rural area. The lawyer John calls is one of only two lawyers in the area who do family law and who will take a case involving child abuse allegations. When Mary contacts the other lawyer in town who practices family law, that lawyer discovers that John is a partner in the health care practice she uses for her family. The second lawyer faces an ethical conflict, because she might not fight as hard for Mary, knowing that it could affect her health care practitioner’s clinic. Additionally, Mary might think that the lawyer has divided loyalties. Mary is out of luck: finding lawyers who will handle cases like hers is extremely difficult because of the small number of lawyers in these locations.

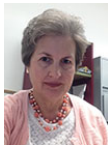
Cases involving domestic abuse, child custody, or child abuse may force a client to run through a maze to locate legal counsel in a part of the country where family law attorneys are scarce or overburdened. The first one to find the lawyer wins. As in a game of musical chairs, the second one to the chair is out of luck.

Maggie Hogan, who practices in Rhinelander, said that she encounters these types of situations. She mainly practices in Oneida County, but about one-half of her practice is in Vilas County, and occasionally

in other counties. Recently, she had a case in which she was contacted by a woman seeking representation in a family law matter. The woman's ex-partner had contacted the few lawyers in town in their own county, thereby conflicting them out. That county has about 12 lawyers, in total. The county was about a 90-minute trip away from Hogan, in good weather. The client traveled to Rhinelander to see Hogan, who took the case. The client then had to travel to the other county, which during a snowstorm took more than two hours and went through areas that have no cell phone reception. Ultimately, the ex-partner appeared and represented himself.

What is a "Rural" Area?

The problem of finding lawyers in rural areas particularly affects Wisconsin. Many of Wisconsin's counties are rural and have few lawyers, let alone lawyers who concentrate in family cases with sensitive issues such as domestic violence or child abuse.



Lori S. Kornblum, Boalt 1982, is an adjunct faculty member at Marquette University Law School and Northeastern University Law School and an instructor at Milwaukee Area Technical College (Paralegal Department) and has a private practice in Mequon. She is a former Milwaukee County assistant district attorney, focusing on child abuse and neglect. She has trained lawyers, law enforcement workers, social workers, and educators statewide on child abuse and neglect issues.



Daniel Pollack, M.S.S.A. (M.S.W.), Esq., is a professor at the School of Social Work, Yeshiva University, New York City. He has been retained as an expert witness in more than 25 states, on topics including child abuse and foster care. He was recently appointed to Game Over: Commission to Protect Youth Athletes, an independent blue ribbon commission created to examine the institutional responses to sexual grooming and abuse by former USA Gymnastics physician Larry Nassar.

Unfortunately, there is no universally accepted definition of the term "rural area." The U.S. Census Bureau defines it as "any population, housing, or territory *not* in an urban area."² It defines an *urban area* as one of two types: an "urbanized area," which has a population of 50,000 or more, and an "urban cluster," which has a population of at least 2,500 and less than 50,000.³ By this definition, 97 percent of Wisconsin's land is in rural areas, and 30 percent of Wisconsin residents live in rural areas.⁴ Of Wisconsin's 72 counties, 44 have a population of less than 50,000 and would be considered "rural" under the Census Bureau definition. The combined population of Florence, Menominee, and Iron counties is not even 15,000.

According to another measure, the Rural Health Information Hub, about 26 percent of Wisconsin residents live in rural areas.⁵ The definition of "rural" according to the U.S. Office of Management and Budget is different from the definition of "rural" according to the Census Bureau, which is different than the definition of "rural" according to the Economic Research Service Rural-Urban Commuting Areas (RUCA).⁶

So, we don't really have a common understanding of "rural." However, Wisconsin, like many states, has counties where the population is less dense, and those counties have fewer lawyers. Whether or not people self-define as living in rural areas, the lack of access to lawyers means trouble in times of trouble.

By the Numbers: Lawyers in Rural Areas

According to the State Bar of Wisconsin's 2017 Economics of Law Practice Survey, "Overall, more than one-third (36%) of respondents reported that their community was underserved in 2016, including 26% who said that individuals with limited means had difficulty finding representation. Respondents in the more rural northern regions were more likely to say they had fewer or the right amount of attorneys. Nearly one-half of those in the North/Central-West region indicated that their community was underserved."⁷

Nearly 50 percent of Wisconsin lawyers live in the state's seven most populous counties: Brown, Dane, Milwaukee, Outagamie, Ozaukee, Racine, and Waukesha.⁸ Only about 17 percent of lawyers consider themselves "rural" lawyers.⁹ According to Wisconsin Public Radio, fewer than 40 percent of active lawyers in Wisconsin practice outside urban areas.¹⁰

Some counties are harder hit than others. This is not a new phenomenon. Nearly five years ago, the chief judge of the Marinette County Circuit Court, Judge James Morrison, observed that "lawyer supply is low compared to the legal demand that exists." When lawyers have retired, "there's little

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*Why do you do what you do?
What's the best advice you ever*

new blood coming in.”¹¹ In 2016, Florence and Buffalo counties had only three lawyers practicing in each county, and most were age 50 or over.¹² According to recent data from the State Bar of Wisconsin,¹³ the five least populous counties are Florence, Menominee, Iron, Pepin, and Forest. They have a combined total population of 44,040. There are only 40 lawyers total in these five counties, which is less than one lawyer for every 10,000 people.¹⁴

As a result, Wisconsin residents may not be having some or all of their legal needs met.¹⁵ People may need to travel 60 miles or more just to see a lawyer.¹⁶ Lawyers may need to take cases from almost 100 miles away.¹⁷ The trend has been toward fewer lawyers, not more.

In 2014, the *Wisconsin Lawyer* reported that Adams County had only 11 lawyers to serve a population of more than 20,000. That is one lawyer for every 1,861 residents. Oconto County had 17 lawyers for more than 30,000 residents, or one for every 2,195 residents.¹⁸ Contrast that with Milwaukee County, which had one lawyer for every 186 residents, or Dane County, with one lawyer for every 156 residents.¹⁹

The situation has not improved significantly. In 2019, Adams County and Oconto County each have only 12 lawyers. Milwaukee and Dane counties still have the most lawyers per resident. Milwaukee County has one lawyer per every 189 residents, and Dane County has one lawyer for every 163 residents.²⁰ (See [Figure 1: Total Population Compared to Number of Lawyers by County.](#))

Scarcity of Family Law Attorneys in Rural Areas

These facts and figures are distressing enough for people who need legal services involving transactional areas such as wills and estate planning or real estate. However, for a family in crisis, the lack of legal services can be overwhelming.

According to one author, a contentious divorce is one of 11 life situations when people need to seek legal advice.²¹ Not only are lawyers for family law matters hard to find in rural areas, but the shortage means that as soon as one party finds a lawyer locally, the other party may be shut out due to conflict-of-interest rules.²² For those who live in rural or remote areas and can afford to hire a private attorney, they may be fortunate to find a single family law attorney living in their community. For those who cannot afford to pay, there may be only one legal service agency serving thousands of people over a wide area. In addition, if a client needs to travel great distances to see an attorney, the costs mount astronomically.

In Wisconsin, when we look at the numbers cited above, the situation is even more dramatic. The areas of practice in which lawyers are likely to encounter people in dire emotional straits include criminal law, family law, general practice, and juvenile and children’s law. Taking a look only at those four areas, the number of lawyers who self-identify in the five least populated counties shrinks from 40 to 22. Buffalo County has no lawyers who self-identify as practicing in any of those four areas.²³

We can look at the numbers in a different way. Wisconsin has 24 counties with 20 or fewer attorneys practicing in the county.²⁴ Yet, that number does not tell the entire story. Of the Wisconsin counties with 20 or fewer attorneys, all counties except three have 10 or fewer attorneys practicing in the areas of criminal law, family law, juvenile and children’s law, or general practice.²⁵ (See [Figure 2: Number of Lawyers Practicing in Family, Criminal, General, and Children’s Law in Counties With 20 or Fewer Lawyers Overall.](#))

Raw numbers do not necessarily tell the whole story. But looking at the information in still another way – the number of lawyers in the selected practice areas in relation to the number of people in the county – also illustrates that there are many counties with very few lawyers in these four practice areas.²⁶

What does all this data mean? It means that people who live in rural areas may have a very difficult time finding a lawyer in a time of crisis. For example, in a county with only four lawyers, the first party in a particular dispute who contacts any lawyer may contact all four of them before retaining one (if any). Then, the second party will be unable to retain any of the lawyers due to conflicts. In addition, in a small town, if the first party to seek counsel is a professional, such as a dentist or a physician, or a business owner, like John and Mary in the above example, finding a lawyer becomes even more difficult. All four lawyers in the county may use the same health care practitioners or patronize the same businesses, creating even more conflicts.

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[Check out our Q&A with the author below](#)

The Greater Wisconsin Initiative: Considering a Rural Practice? Need Advice? Want to Help Fill the Justice Gap?

The State Bar’s Greater Wisconsin Initiative encourages attorneys to consider practicing in rural communities. In prior years, the initiative sponsored a bus tour that introduced interested members to rural communities directly and networking with local lawyers, judges, and community leaders.

The State Bar's commitment to help ensure residents in rural parts of the state have access to justice is stronger than ever. Lawyers transitioning out of practice and lawyers interested in moving to rural Wisconsin will soon have access to more resources on the State Bar website, wisbar.org. In the meantime, contact the following for assistance:

- **Kim Burns** for areas in Wisconsin needing attorneys or program suggestions on serving rural parts of the state, kburns@wisbar.org;
- **Michelle Sherbinow** (Ready.Set.Practice. mentoring program) on help for young lawyers looking to expand their professional knowledge and experience, msherbinow@wisbar.org, www.wisbar.org/readysetchpractice;
- **Mary Spranger** (WisLAP) for health and wellness support, mspranger@wisbar.org, www.wisbar.org/wislap, Helpline (800) 543-2625;
- **Christopher Shattuck** (Practice411™) for practice management and technology information, cshattuck@wisbar.org, www.wisbar.org/practice411, (800) 957-4670;
- **Aviva Kaiser** or **Tim Pierce** (Ethics Program) for help with ethical issues related to starting or transitioning a law firm, akaiser@wisbar.org, tpierce@wisbar.org, www.wisbar.org/ethics, Ethics Hotline (800) 254-9154, (608) 229-2017;
- **Jeff Brown** (Pro Bono Program) for opportunities to help fill the justice gap in rural areas, including through Wisconsin Free Legal Answers, an online resource in which qualified consumers get answers to civil legal matters, jbrown@wisbar.org, www.wisbar.org/probono;
- **Lawyer-to-Lawyer Directory** to access hundreds of lawyers willing to share their career and practice knowledge with other lawyers through free, brief consultations (sign up to be part of this peer network), www.wisbar.org/lawyertolawyer; and
- **Katie Wilcox** (Lawyer Referral Programs) for lawyers interested in expanding their client base and Wisconsin residents who are in need of legal help, kwilcox@wisbar.org, www.wisbar.org/lawyerreferral.



A Potential Solution

Is there a solution? The main fix that people have proposed is getting lawyers to practice in rural areas. Wisconsin has made great efforts to attract new lawyers to less densely populated parts of the state. The *Wisconsin Lawyer* has published numerous articles trying to persuade new lawyers to work in rural areas. This effort has not been successful.

According to Megan Heneke, director of the Office of Career and Professional Development at the U.W. Law School, very few U.W. Law School graduates want to go to more rural areas to practice. The law school's efforts to introduce students to the idea of working in these settings include sponsoring networking events for students to introduce them to lawyers in more rural areas, and encouraging participation in a State Bar-sponsored bus trip to rural areas for networking. The school also has participated in a joint initiative with the nursing and medical schools to host a series of roundtable discussions with nursing and medical students who were interested in working in rural areas to discuss these types of concerns. Despite these efforts, the vast majority of graduates want to remain in urban areas. For the class of 2018, of the 111 graduates who remained in Wisconsin, more than 70 took jobs in Madison, Milwaukee, or surrounding areas within commuting distance. Heneke commented, "We will continue to make these efforts, but getting traction is a real challenge."

Another strategy some observers advocate is to forgive student loan debt for lawyers who work in rural areas.²⁷ This may help some, but it is unproven as a long-term solution.

We propose a different strategy. This solution is to set up systems for what we call "telelawyer services," a virtual law office that provides assistance and holds meetings over secure video-conferencing technology.²⁸ This can be done in private offices, governmental buildings, local bar centers, or other locations.

Other professions use secure video-conferencing technology to provide access to clients. For example, according to a July 2019 news release, North Dakota has launched telehealth services for providing therapy for traumatized children who otherwise would not have access to therapists.²⁹ Presently,

psychiatrists use telemedicine for conferencing with patients. Several companies provide secure links so psychiatrists can exchange confidential information with patients.³⁰ The difference between what we propose and existing commercial services is in providing a secure conferencing link for dialogue, video, and document sharing, so client confidentiality is preserved.³¹

Requirements for confidentiality in the provision of legal services are not significantly different than for those in health care. Both health care and law require confidential communication between professionals and customers (patients or clients). One example of a telelawyer service is in India.³² We recognize that some lawyers in the United States already are experimenting with telelawyer-type services³³ or are using videoconferencing for other purposes. What we propose is expanding these types of services in a more formal way to increase access to justice in rural areas.

Hogan stated that being able to confer by secure video link would be extremely helpful, especially if the courts were amenable to appearance by video link. She comments, “For certain hearings, this would be very helpful, such as stipulated hearings, to reduce travel time for the attorneys involved, and to reduce client costs. Traveling two hours each way for a stipulated 15-minute hearing would be a fraction of the time and cost to the client, instead of the current situation, where the client pays for an additional four hours of travel time.”

There are various potential barriers to the success of telelawyering. One is internet access. Wisconsin and many other states have areas where internet service is not easily available. Dealing with this barrier would require determining whether the same security can be obtained over a cellular link or whether internet services should be expanded.

Another potential barrier is lack of access to private spaces in which to communicate. Lawyers should advise clients that even if the technology link is secure and confidential, if the client chooses to have the conversation with the lawyer in an open place, such as a coffee shop or a public library, the client may compromise his or her own confidentiality and waive attorney-client privilege. This might especially be a concern in a small town where bystanders may know both parties to the case and can tell someone what they overhear.

A third possible barrier is the ability to share documents across a video platform. However, other professions, including medicine, currently use video-conferencing technology to share documents on secure platforms, so this does not appear to be a major technological problem.

How can this solution be accomplished on a scale to make lawyers accessible in rural areas? One suggestion is to have local bar associations assist in providing the video technology for license or rent by lawyers. Even if such investment is not possible or feasible, local bar associations could allocate some physical private space, such as a small conference room, where clients could speak confidentially with attorneys over a secure video link. The Wisconsin court system might also expand access by increasing the ability of teleconferencing in county courtrooms.

Conclusion

There is no perfect solution to the problem of lack of access to legal help in rural areas. At the least, we need to better understand the nuances of this problem. Then – perhaps – as Steve Jobs advised, “If you define the problem correctly, you almost have the solution.”

Figure 1: Total Population Compared to Number of Lawyers by County

County*	Number of Attorneys**	USCB*** Population	Population per Attorney	Attorneys per 10,000 Population
FLORENCE	4	4,321	1,080	9.26
MENOMINEE	10	4,658	466	21.47
IRON	11	5,676	516	19.38
PEPIN	5	7,289	1,458	6.86
FOREST	8	8,991	1,124	8.90
BUFFALO	2	13,125	6,563	1.52
PRICE	15	13,397	893	11.20
RUSK	8	14,147	1,768	5.65
BAYFIELD	20	15,042	752	13.30
BURNETT	11	15,392	1,399	7.15

MARQUETTE	8	15,434	1,929	5.18
ASHLAND	30	15,600	520	19.23
WASHBURN	18	15,878	882	11.34
CRAWFORD	12	16,291	1,358	7.37
SAWYER	22	16,489	750	13.34
LAFAYETTE	6	16,665	2,778	3.60
RICHLAND	14	17,377	1,241	8.06
GREEN LAKE	24	18,918	788	12.69
LANGLADE	14	19,268	1,376	7.27
ADAMS	12	20,348	1,696	5.90
KEWAUNEE	19	20,383	1,073	9.32
TAYLOR	15	20,412	1,361	7.35
JACKSON	35	20,478	585	17.09
VILAS	36	21,938	609	16.41
IOWA	25	23,771	951	10.52
WAUSHARA	15	24,263	1,618	6.18
JUNEAU	18	26,617	1,479	6.76
DOOR	55	27,610	502	19.92
LINCOLN	40	27,689	692	14.45
TREMPEALEAU	28	29,442	1,052	9.51
VERNON	36	30,785	855	11.69
CLARK	18	34,709	1,928	5.19
ONEIDA	63	35,470	563	17.76
GREEN	47	36,929	786	12.73
OCONTO	12	37,830	3,153	3.17
MARINETTE	35	40,434	1,155	8.66
SHAWANO	35	40,796	1,166	8.58
PIERCE	48	42,555	887	11.28
DOUGLAS	55	43,208	786	12.73
POLK	42	43,598	1,038	9.63
DUNN	33	45,131	1,368	7.31
BARRON	38	45,164	1,189	8.41
MONROE	49	46,051	940	

*Counties with less than 50,000 population.

**State Bar of Wisconsin members in good standing on July 23, 2019, with active, active new, or emeritus membership status.

*** United States Census Bureau statistics.

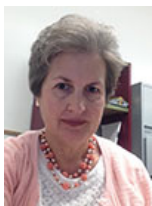
Figure 2: Lawyers Practicing in Family, Criminal, General, and Children's Law in Counties with 20 or Fewer Lawyers Overall

County	Number of Attorneys	Attorneys per 10,000 Population
BUFFALO	-	-
RUSK	2	1.41
LAFAYETTE	4	2.40
PEPIN	4	5.49
MENOMINEE	4	8.59
FLORENCE	4	9.26
FOREST	5	5.56
IRON	5	8.81
MARQUETTE	6	3.89
CALUMET	7	1.40
WAUSHARA	7	2.89
ADAMS	8	3.93
RICHLAND	9	5.18
CRAWFORD	9	5.52
BURNETT	9	5.85
OCONTO	10	2.64
KEWAUNEE	10	4.91
LANGLADE	10	5.19
BAYFIELD	10	6.65
PRICE	10	7.46
TAYLOR	11	5.39
WASHBURN	11	6.93
CLARK	12	3.46
JUNEAU	12	4.51
SAWYER	12	7.28
TREMPEALEAU	15	5.09
GREEN LAKE	16	8.46
DUNN	17	3.77
IOWA	17	7.15
POLK	18	4.13
SHAWANO	19	4.66
MARINETTE	19	4.70
VERNON	19	6.17
LINCOLN	19	6.86
DOOR	19	6.88
VILAS	19	8.66

ASHLAND	19	12.18
JACKSON	20	9.77

Meet Our Contributors

What legal memory will still bring a smile to your face 20 years from now?



One of my favorite legal memories is an ongoing one: working with seniors to help them understand the legal issues in the news. For the past five years, I have been doing pro bono work as a volunteer every few weeks at Ovation Sarah Chudnow in Mequon, and more recently, at L'Chaim Chaverut Clubhouse.

I started my class, "The Law Behind the News," to bring new information to seniors who mostly are homebound and whose activities in the senior centers may be under-stimulating. I take a single legal issue in the news and explain it, sparking questions and dialogue. My students range in age from 75 to 103. They are some of my best students ever. They eagerly await my arrival, they participate in class, and they discuss it afterward with each other, their aides, and their children and grandchildren. In turn, I learn a lot from my senior students.

Taking complex issues of the day and breaking them into comprehensible segments is a challenge that I relish. We have discussed issues including search and seizure, immigration, impeachment, patents and trademarks, the census, and juvenile waiver. Each class brings a new opportunity for me to both teach and learn with and from my students.

Lori S. Kornblum, Marquette University Law School, Milwaukee.

What's the best career advice you ever received?



In the early 1990s, I was an assistant general counsel for the Ohio Department of Youth Services (juvenile corrections) and the executive assistant for human services to the governor of Ohio. Simultaneously, I was an adjunct professor teaching a course in law and social work at Ohio State University.

To be able to bring to the classroom vivid, real-life examples of the intersection of the two disciplines was true education. At the end of one semester a couple of students were kind enough to come up to me and express how much they enjoyed the course. And then, one student casually asked, "Have you ever thought of teaching full time?" As the expression goes, "The rest is history."

Looking back at 27 years of full-time teaching, that was, without a doubt, the best career advice I ever received.

Daniel Pollack, Yeshiva University, New York City.

Become a contributor! Are you working on an interesting case? Have a practice tip to share? There are several ways to contribute to *Wisconsin Lawyer*. To discuss a topic idea, contact Managing Editor Karlé Lester at (800) 444-9404, ext. 6127, or email klester@wisbar.org. Check out our [writing and submission guidelines](#).

Endnotes

¹ This example is for illustration only and is typical of the types of calls that both authors get from individuals looking for legal help.

² U.S. Census Bureau, [How Does the US Census Bureau Define Rural?](#), (last visited June 12, 2019).

³ *Id.*

⁴ WisCONTEXT, www.wiscontext.org/putting-rural-wisconsin-map (last visited June 12, 2019).

⁵ RHI Rural Information Hub, www.ruralhealthinfo.org/states/wisconsin (last visited June 12, 2019).

⁶ USDA Economics Research Service, [State Maps](#), (last visited June 12, 2019).

⁷ State Bar of Wisconsin, *Economics of Law Practice Survey*, November 2017 Survey Report 24.

⁸ Christopher C. Shattuck, *Going Rural: Insights from Park Falls to Monroe*, 91 Wis. Law. 8 (Sept. 2018).

⁹ *Id.*

¹⁰ Danielle Kaeding, [Rural Wisconsin Lacking Lawyers, Especially Up North](#), Wisconsin Public Radio (Aug. 23, 2016).

¹¹ Dianne Molvig, *The Road to Rural Practice*, 87 Wis. Law. 9 (Oct. 2014).

¹² Kaeding, *supra* note 10.

¹³ State Bar of Wisconsin, iMIS Database, 1 p.m., July 23, 2019. The authors are extremely grateful to market research manager Fred Petillo, who pulled the data for this article from the State Bar's iMIS database, and ran the numbers, as well as *Wisconsin Lawyer* editor Karlé Lester, who worked with Petillo and us to make this happen.

¹⁴ *Id.*

¹⁵ Molvig, *supra* note 11.

¹⁶ *Id.*

¹⁷ *Id.*

¹⁸ *Id.*

¹⁹ *Id.*

²⁰ State Bar of Wisconsin, iMIS database, *supra* note 13.

²¹ Elena Prokopets, [11 Situations Where You Need a Lawyer \(and 3 Where You Don't!\)](#), Lifehack.org, (last visited Aug. 10, 2019).

²² SCR 20:1.7(a)(1).

²³ State Bar of Wisconsin, iMIS database, *supra* note 13.

²⁴ Buffalo, Florence, Pepin, Lafayette, Forest, Rusk, Marquette, Menominee, Iron, Burnett, Crawford, Adams, Oconto, Richland, Langlade, Price, Taylor, Waushara, Calumet, Washburn, Juneau, Clark, Kewaunee, and Bayfield. State Bar of Wisconsin, iMIS database, *supra* note 13.

²⁵ The three counties of the 24 cited above with more than 10 lawyers practicing in those areas are Clark, Juneau, and Taylor counties. State Bar of Wisconsin, iMIS database, *supra* note 13.

²⁶ Buffalo County has no lawyers in these practice areas. Calumet and Rusk counties have fewer than 2 lawyers for every 10,000 people. Lafayette, Oconto, and Waushara counties have fewer than 3 lawyers for every 10,000 people. Even Fond du Lac County, which has 38 lawyers in these practice areas, works out to fewer than 4 attorneys for each 10,000 people. On the other hand, Florence County, with only 4 attorneys (and all 4 are in the practice areas noted above), has almost 10 attorneys for every 10,000 people, because it is sparsely populated. State Bar of Wisconsin, iMIS database, *supra* note 13.

²⁷ Stephanie Francis Ward, [Wisconsin Considers Law School Loan Repayment for Lawyers Willing to Represent Rural Clients](#), ABA J. (Nov. 14, 2017).

²⁸ The term and concept telelawyer services in this article does not refer to any specific business, such as Tele-Law operated by [Perry4Law Organisation \(P4LO\)](#) and Perry4Law Law Firm.

²⁹ Pub. News Service, [Telehealth Used to Treat Rural ND Child-Abuse Victims](#) (July 19, 2019).

³⁰ For example, see <https://iristelehealth.com/telepsychiatry/>. Tele-psychiatry services work by a physician contracting with a telemedicine service, which provides a secure link for each conversation with each patient. When a physician sets up a meeting with the patient, the company provides the link for the physician to send to the patient. The patient then logs on with his or her own unique confidential credentials. The conversation is secure. We see no reason why that type of service cannot be used for legal consultations.

³¹ For an extensive discussion of the technical requirements for this type of telelawyer service, see Nicole Black, [It's Now a Trekkie World: Top Videoconferencing Tools for Lawyers](#), ABA Journal (July 26, 2019).

³² www.tele-law.in/; <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=188736>. The services in India appear to be much more extensive than what we initially propose to start; however, there is no structural reason why services could not be expanded to parallel or replicate the Indian model if that is appropriate in a given community. The diagram of services in India includes initial client consultation with a paraprofessional, registration, and ultimately a teleconference with a lawyer. This appears to happen in a center. Although we are not advocating this extent of services right now, our proposal does not preclude that either. Each county should be free to develop services that are appropriate to its needs.

³³ <https://crawforddefenseattorney.com/about-the-firm/tele-law-services/>.



Greater Wisconsin Initiative



The State Bar's Greater Wisconsin Initiative encourages attorneys to consider practicing in Greater Wisconsin. We're here to help you learn if rural practice is right for you and provide you with the resources you need to get started.

Wisconsin's rural population tops 1.6 million.¹ With many lawyers approaching retirement age, more and more nonurban communities are at risk of losing access to legal services. Why? As attorneys retire, there aren't always younger lawyers around to take their place.

Some areas of Wisconsin are already experiencing the consequences of lawyer shortages. More than 60 percent of Wisconsin lawyers are located in the state's three urban counties. On the other hand, a number of nonurban counties have fewer than 10 lawyers each. Many more counties have fewer than 20 lawyers.

What happens when a rural area no longer has a lawyer? Vital legal needs go unmet and access to justice is jeopardized. What does this mean for you as a new lawyer? Opportunities abound all over Wisconsin to establish your practice!

Five Reasons to Consider Greater Wisconsin

1. **The Fast Track to Experience:** People and businesses in Greater Wisconsin have the same legal needs as those in larger cities. Typically, in nonurban areas, there is a small number of lawyers serving entire communities, which means you have the opportunity to address a wide variety of legal issues – criminal defense, business start-up, contracts, you name it. As a result, you may develop a broad range of skills and get more real-world experience, like more courtroom time, early in your career.

2. **Mentoring Opportunities:** Find rewarding mentoring experiences as you work closely with existing lawyers in the area or an attorney you may one day take over for.

3. **Scenic and Exciting Amenities:** Parks, lakes, trails, and other outdoor attractions make the perfect backdrop for hiking, biking, fishing, or watersports. Escape a hectic day at the office and recharge in the quiet, peaceful settings of lakes and forested hills.

If you like eating local and knowing where your food comes from, you'll feel right at home among farmer's markets and restaurants sourcing locally-produced ingredients.

Antique stores, area artists, and microbreweries are just a few examples of the kinds of unique shopping you can find along a town's main street. Local stores give you more personalized service and your purchases have a higher local economic impact. For every \$100 spent at a local business, \$68 remains in the area compared with only \$43 of each \$100 spent at a large chain retailer.²

4. **Chances for Community Involvement:** Whether you're interested in local history or have a desire to help area youth, small towns depend on dedicated volunteers to help meet the needs of the community. Getting involved in a local group helps you contribute to your community, develop leadership skills, gain visibility in the area, and make new friends. Your neighbors and clients will may be members of the same organizations, giving you the chance to truly get to know them.

5. **Commutes:** Just because small towns might be farther apart doesn't mean drive times are longer – they may just be more scenic. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, commutes in urban areas of Wisconsin are roughly equal to or even longer

Who should practice in Greater Wisconsin?

Young Lawyers

Attorneys with children

Lawyers who are advanced in their careers

You!

For Further Reading

[Going Rural: Insights from Park Falls to Monroe](#)

Hanging a shingle in one of Wisconsin's less populous counties offers all the practice-area variety of big-city lawyering plus the advantages of small-town life.

[Past President's Message](#)

Now Playing in Your Neighborhood:
State Bar Outreach and Services

[The Road to Rural Practice](#)

For some lawyers, the road to a satisfying and successful law practice runs between farm fields, through forests and sand flats, over hills and around bends to the smaller towns and villages that dot Wisconsin's countryside.

than nonurban commutes.

¹ According to 2010 U.S. census.

² <http://www.amiba.net/resources/multiplier-effect/>

Get in Touch

Have questions? Looking for more information? Please contact Kim Burns:
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What lawyers in smaller communities are saying:

"The time is ripe for new lawyers to consider taking over or starting a practice in rural areas. As small towns in rural areas lose their attorneys to retirement, there aren't always younger lawyers around to take their place. What happens when a rural area no longer has a lawyer? Vital legal needs go unmet." - Honorable James Morrison, Marinette County Circuit Court Judge

"It was enormously satisfying to be part of the fabric of the community, to build a successful life, financially and otherwise. It's a great place to raise children, with a great environment and great schools." - Vilas County Circuit Court Judge Neal Nielsen of Eagle River

"Even in the most remote areas of Wisconsin, the lawyers don't feel isolated." - Judge Richard Brown, a member of the State Bar's New Lawyers Challenges Committee

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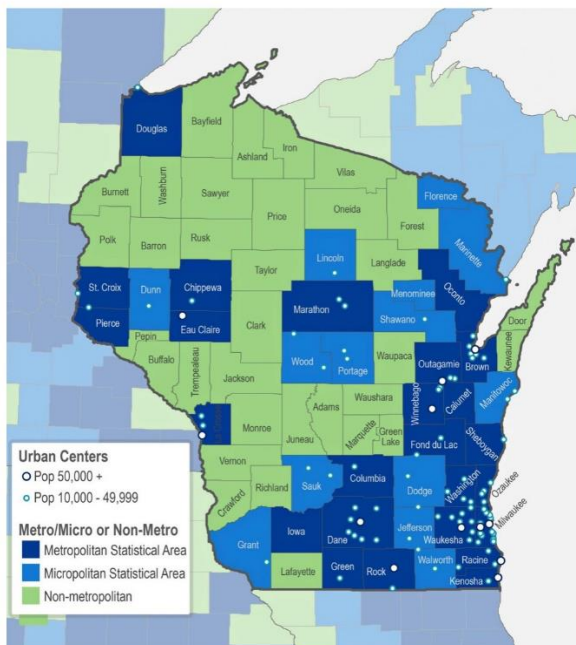
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Live 1



Caitlin McKown/UW Applied Population Laboratory

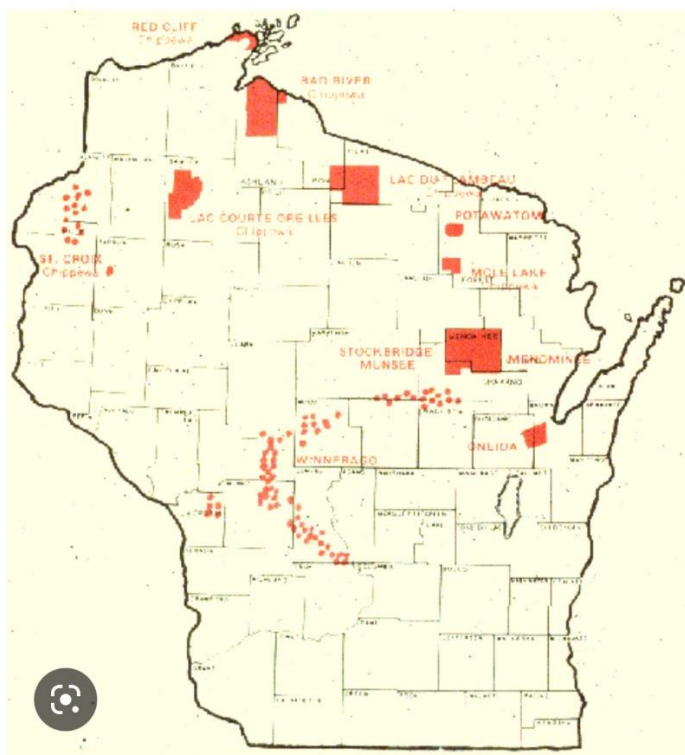
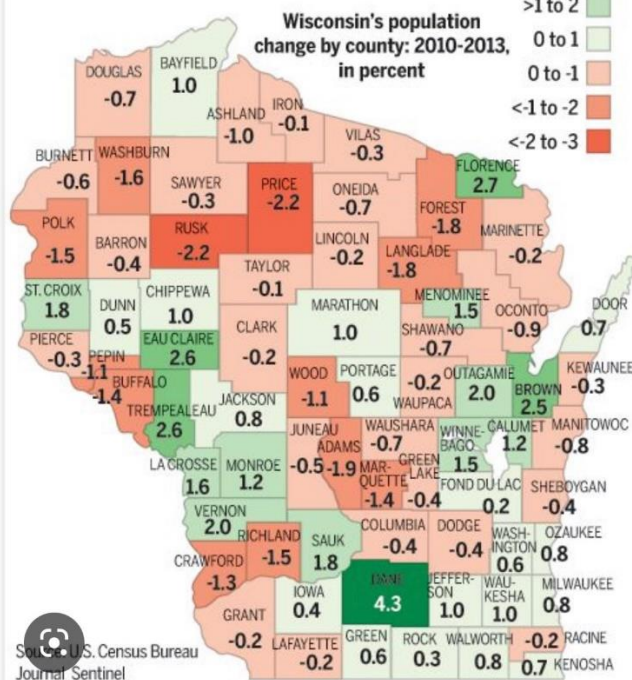
Figure 2. Metropolitan and metropolitan statistical areas, U.S. Office of Management and Budget, 2013.

Slight rural population decline

Forty counties in the state saw population declines in the past three years. Still, the growth in some of the larger counties counterbalanced the modest declines in rural areas. Overall, the state's population increased by 53,653, or just less than one percent, to 5,742,713.

PERCENTAGE GAINED/LOST

- >4 to 5
- >3 to 4
- >2 to 3
- >1 to 2
- 0 to 1
- 0 to -1
- <-1 to -2
- <-2 to -3



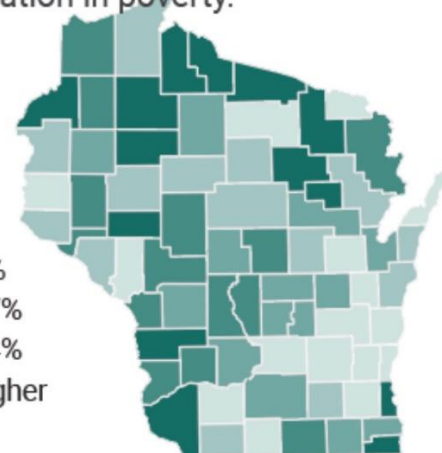
Wisconsin Tribes - American Indian Studies - UWM Libraries...

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Wisconsin's Rural North has High Levels of Poverty

Share of population in poverty.

- Under 9.1%
- 9.1% to 11.0%
- 11.1% to 12.7%
- 12.8% to 14.4%
- 14.5% and higher



Source: American Community Survey, 2013-17 average.
www.kidsforward.net