Access to Justice Commission Updates 2016-2017

Thanks to Kelly Carmody for collecting and organizing these updates from each Access to Justice Commission.
Alabama Access to Justice Commission

Commission Chair:

Lisa Borden – Pro Bono Shareholder for Baker Donelson

Commission Staff:

Emily Strickland & Tracy Daniel

Mission

The mission of the Alabama Access to Justice Commission is to coordinate, expand and promote effective and economical civil legal services for the poor and vulnerable people of Alabama.

Goals

1. Improve and expand the provision of legal assistance to Alabamians, particularly low-income individuals and families.
2. Increase the participation and provision of services by attorneys, legal professionals and volunteers.
3. Provide the various social service agencies and organizations with more effective tools to assist those in need of legal services.

Top Three Accomplishments to Date

• Alabama ATJ website – This is Alabama’s Access to Justice website with resources to help clients find lawyers, information on Alabama Courts, pro bono, mediation, Limited Scope Representation, explanations on how a number of other things work, and the ability to download an array of forms for pro-se litigants. The website also has a leadership login with access to educational materials for pro bono lawyers.

• Alabama Legal Answers website - Alabama Legal Answers is a project of the Alabama Access to Justice Commission based on Online Tennessee Justice. The system screens clients for eligibility and, if qualified, allows them to post a question to a private messaging system. The questions are answered by private attorneys volunteering their time. An Alabama Legal Answers client has the ability to check the system for answers at any time. Only the name of the client is shared with the volunteer attorney assisting them. All other information is anonymous to insure complete privacy.

• Manual for Clerks and Court Personnel Who Assist Self-Represented Litigants in Alabama Courts

• Bench Card for Alabama Judges on Collection of Fines and Court Costs.

• Annual pro bono recognition program for attorneys in the State of Alabama to help promote pro-bono work.
Current Initiatives

- Making a series of videos on legal issues for the public especially on self-represented litigation.
- Creating Handouts for self-represented litigants in landlord/tenant cases for both landlords and tenants.
- Revise garnishment information.
- Improve the affidavit of hardship form.
- Aid Catholic Services with unaccompanied minor issues.
- Increase Limited Scope Representation.
- Bench book on dealing with pro-se litigants.
- Increase the number of volunteer lawyers for our Alabama Legal Answers website.

Planned Initiatives

- Develop mobile checklists for pro bono lawyers.
- Put HotDocs forms for pro bono clinics on a central server to give lawyers at clinics online access to them.
Alaska Fairness and Access Commission

Commission Co-Chairs
Alaska’s Fairness and Access Commission is a commission with a broad membership composed of leaders representing the state courts, the bar association, private attorneys, rural and urban representatives, and legal aid providers. The commission is co-chaired by Alaska Supreme Court Justices Joel Bolger and Peter Maassen and Superior Court Judge Mark Rindner. The commission comprises two committees: the Fairness, Diversity and Equality Committee (chaired by Justice Bolger) and the Access to Civil Justice Committee (co-chaired by Justice Maassen and Judge Rindner).

Commission Staff
Staff: Mara Rabinowitz, Communications Counsel
Staff: Stacey Marz, Self-Help Services Director

Mission
The commission’s mission is to increase fairness and access to the courts for all Alaskans, particularly those who are members of cultural and minority groups, Alaskans of limited means, and self-represented litigants.

Goals
- Provide all Alaskans with access to justice. Through a Justice for All (JFA) grant from the Public Welfare Foundation, develop a statewide action plan to provide all Alaskans with 100% access to appropriate legal information and services. Identify essential services that constitute “justice,” and expand access to those services. Utilize asset mapping, gap analysis, and an action plan to close justice gaps, focusing efforts on educating non-legal service providers.
- Develop a proof of concept for a legal access portal for an integrated service delivery system. A portal would be a centerpiece of the action plan to provide all Alaskans with access to justice.
- Support the work of the newly created Judicial Anti-Bias Subcommittee of the Fairness, Diversity, and Equality Committee.
- Create a Model Judicial Diversity Institute (similar to what was done in Washington state), to help diversify Alaska’s judiciary.
- Continue to promote and provide restorative justice options to Alaska tribes and communities.

Top Three Accomplishments to Date
- Receipt of Justice for All (JFA) grant to move toward goal of 100% access to justice.
- Creation of an Access to Civil Justice pamphlet, “What is Civil Legal Aid?” translated into Russian, Tagalog, Korean, and Spanish. The pamphlets are being distributed at a variety of locations state and city wide.
- Continuing community outreach through programs such as Color of Justice, Supreme Court LIVE, and the “Bar-to-Bench” CLE Increasing Diversity in Alaska’s Judiciary.
Recent and Current Initiatives

Current Fairness, Diversity and Equality Committee projects and strategies to improve fairness and access and increase diversity include:

• Promote a new court rule setting forth procedures by which a state court may refer cases to local restorative justice programs. The rule allows communities to play a role in assessing the impacts of criminal behavior and to help to shape the consequences through circle sentencing and other restorative justice programs. The rule provides an express mechanism for a tribal court to conduct their own restorative justice process, such as circle sentencing, and then propose to the state trial judge the sentence recommended by the participants in the restorative justice proceedings. The court system has formal plans with several tribes that allow for tribal courts to conduct their own restorative justice processes.

• Sponsor a diversity CLE to encourage diverse attorneys to apply for judgeships. Provide statistical data for the CLE. The CLE helps demystify Alaska’s judicial selection process - from the application stage, to the Alaska Judicial Council’s evaluation, to the Governor’s appointment. The CLE highlights day-to-day lives of diverse judges.

• Co-sponsor diversity luncheons with distinguished and diverse panel members that address the topic of diversity and how diversity has impacted their lives.

• Provide the Color of Justice law-related education program for diverse youth including workshops, mentoring events, and hands-on learning to promote awareness about careers in law and the judiciary and to encourage youth of diverse backgrounds to pursue legal education and careers. Create a new Rural Student Initiative component to the Color of Justice Program. Information about the program and the initiative is available here: http://courts.alaska.gov/outreach/index.htm#coj

• Co-sponsor annual women judges events to promote and encourage women lawyers to consider applying for judicial positions.

• Provide the Supreme Court LIVE program, where the court holds oral argument at different high schools around the state before an audience of students. Teams of volunteer attorneys teach the students about the cases prior to the argument.

• Co-sponsor the Justice for All Art Contest where students submit artworks on the theme “Fairness, Diversity, Equality: Our justice system depends on them. What do they mean to you?”

Current Access to Civil Justice Committee projects and strategies to improve fairness and access to justice include:

• Provide information to Self-Represented Litigants. The court has created self-help website content that provides detailed information about court procedure and options for forms in the following areas: Family Law; Civil Appeals to the Supreme Court; Probate/Estates; Guardianship and Conservatorship.

• Support the Family Law Self-Help Center (FLSHC) to provide legal information to self-represented Alaskans in divorce, custody, paternity, and support cases. In addition to the website, the FLSHC staffs a statewide telephone helpline which assists approximately 7,000 callers annually with questions about procedure and forms. The FLSHC has created several short videos which are on the website in English, Spanish, and Tagalog, and domestic violence protective order videos in English, Yup’ik, and Spanish.
• Established court mediation programs for child custody and visitation, child protection, small claims, and adult guardianship and conservatorship cases. There is also a new court negotiation and resolution program for Forcible Entry Detainer (FED) cases.

• Support the court’s language access initiatives. These include:
  o Court’s adoption of a new rule that addresses language interpreter services in court proceedings. The rule helps ensure that individuals who need an interpreter in court will be able to obtain services. Resources created to accompany the new rule include a guide for clerks and judges on proceedings involving interpreters and persons of limited English proficiency; revised instructions for accessing language line telephonic services; and frequently asked website questions (FAQs) about language interpreters. The commission will also regularly track efforts to facilitate access to the courts by Limited English Proficiency (LEP) populations.
  o The court system hired a full-time statewide interpreter scheduling coordinator.
  o The court system is also working with the Language Interpreter Center to create a Yup’ik legal glossary for court interpreters to use.
  o The court created website information on interpreting for deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals and presented to newer judges on the topic.
  o The court also conducted a training for ASL interpreters on interpreting in the legal environment.
  o The court has advanced the use of video remote interpreting using certified and trained interpreters from in-state as well as outside Alaska to provide the most qualified interpreters regardless of where the LEP litigant or witness is located.

• Support the Early Resolution Program (ERP) that has helped close to 1,500 families in four of Alaska’s highest volume courts. Parties in newly filed divorce and custody cases can avoid protracted legal proceedings by working with volunteer attorneys coordinated by Alaska Legal Services who provide unbundled legal services, court mediators, and settlement judges who work with the parties at the ERP hearings to resolve their child custody, child support, and marital property disputes usually within weeks after their cases are filed. The court expanded the program to other court locations, including the state’s most rural courts, and remote parties appear by videoconference or telephone into the ERP hearing at a different court location. The state’s child support agency as well as attorneys from military legal assistance participate monthly in the program.

• Increase the range of user-friendly forms for the self-represented.

• Partner with public and private efforts to promote appropriate legal services to at-risk populations.

• Coordinate with the pro bono section of the bar association to develop methods for linking pro bono activities with court system improvements and self-help resources.

• Co-sponsor the MLK Day free legal clinic in three locations in Alaska, where volunteer attorneys provide free unbundled legal services on a range of topics to Alaskans without attorneys.
Planned Initiatives

• The Fairness Diversity and Equality Committee will continue to provide successful initiatives designed to increase equality and diversity, including the Color of Justice Program (and the new Rural Student Initiative component of that program), the Diversity Luncheon, and the Bar-to-Bench program designed to encourage diverse attorneys to apply to the bench by offering them opportunities to learn about the application and appointment process from sitting judges, the merit selection screening council, and a representative of the appointing authority. The committee sent an observer to the Washington State Judicial Diversity Institute, and will explore also whether to create a similar program in Alaska. The Committee has formed a new Judicial Anti-Bias subcommittee and will support subcommittee efforts in this arena.

• The Access Committee is working on the Justice for All (JFA) grant program and developing the inventory of existing legal services. It is exploring doing a social network analysis to create the asset and gap map of services and information and how providers make referrals.

• Four primary JFA grant objectives include: Asset mapping - to identify the assets in place within the legal and service provider community to help meet the goal of justice for all; Gap analysis - to conduct an analysis of the service gaps that prevent Alaskans from securing justice for themselves and their families, including identifying connectivity (or the lack of) between service providers (legal and non-legal); Action plan - Upon completion of the asset map and the gap analysis, the commission will develop an action plan to address how to close the justice gaps; Development of metrics and evaluation protocols for success - adopt a system to collect data necessary to understand how Alaskans are accessing justice and whether those means are sufficient.

• Members of the commission will engage in outreach, including drafting opinion pieces on fairness, equality, and access to justice issues.
Arizona Commission on Access to Justice

Commission Chair: Hon. Lawrence Winthrop

Commission Staff:
Direct AOC staff – Theresa Barrett, Kathy Sekardi, Julie Graber
AZ Bar Foundation staff assisting- Kevin Ruegg

Mission
The purpose of the Commission is to study and make recommendations on innovative ways of promoting access to justice for individuals who cannot afford legal counsel or who choose to represent themselves in civil cases.

Goals
The Commission shall evaluate best practices within Arizona and other states, identifying possible changes in court rules or practices to reduce barriers to access, identify and encourage the adoption of best practices among legal service providers, and consider potential long-term funding options.

Top Three Accomplishments to Date
1) All 15 counties now have public librarians trained to assist the public with legal information questions and resources.
2) A Virtual Self Service Center is in place, in coordination with relevant state agencies, providing court forms, online legal clinics and other interactive web services: http://www.azcourthelp.org
3) The largest populated county, Maricopa, has developed and implemented a Court Navigator Program, utilizing AmeriCorp volunteers, providing self-help services in 2016 to 70,000 pro per family court litigants.

Recent and Current Initiatives
In addition to those accomplishments cited above and the planned initiatives described below:
1) Review and proposed modification of eviction forms and processes by rule change to provide uniformity across jurisdictions.
2) Development and promotion of a Public attorney Pro bono Policy to increase pro bono opportunities and awareness.
3) Have met with the Governor’s office and obtained approval to proceed with evaluation/implementation of an inter-agency collaboration project to advance access to justice issues across state government (see #4 below).
Planned Initiatives
The commission utilizes workgroups to focus on separate initiatives. Following is the list for each workgroup:

(1) **Public Information and Messaging:** Create and manage a media plan; establish and maintain a speaker’s bureau on ATJ issues and opportunities and Commission recommendations and plans; evaluate and update website information through AOC; promote state tax credit; design and work on annual report.

(2) **Judicial and Attorney Engagement:** Create/coordinate/sponsor CLE programs for private and public attorneys on ATJ importance and issues, including limited scope representation and other *pro bono* opportunities. Evaluate potential for coordinating statewide legal service triage programs. Make recommendations on engaging retired lawyers and judges in *pro bono* clinics and projects. Create/coordinate/sponsor COJET programs for judges on ATJ issues, including ethical parameters and dealing with self-represented litigants.

(3) **Limited Jurisdiction Courts:** Continue to focus on self-represented litigant issues, including continuing work on eviction-related issues and consideration of a “navigator” project in the Maricopa County consolidated justice courts concerning housing and debt collection cases.

(4) **Inter-Governmental Collaboration:** Providing access to justice for our poverty and underserved populations is a challenge that cuts across all three branches of government. State, county and local governments are involved, to one extent or another:
   (1) In providing health services and in improving health;
   (2) In expanding access to housing and preventing homelessness;
   (3) In strengthening families and keeping children in school;
   (4) In keeping our citizens working;
   (5) In enhancing public safety and helping crime victims;
   (6) In combatting fraud and protecting consumers; and
   (7) In meeting the needs of special populations, such as veterans, tribes and tribal members, people with disabilities, people with criminal records, immigrants and disaster survivors. The goal here is to encourage and facilitate communication and collaboration among and between these agencies, particularly as it relates to the impact that civil legal aid can provide in effective delivery of services and in meeting collective goals. In collaboration with the Governor’s office, we will evaluate existing state programs in Massachusetts and California, and the federal model (Dept. of Justice/White House Legal Aid Inter-Agency Roundtable (LAIR)), and make recommendations as appropriate to encourage the creation of an Arizona model. Additionally, this same group could also work on developing a strategy for engaging appropriate legislative leaders on ATJ issues and opportunities.
Arkansas Access to Justice Commission

Commission Chair:

Rodney Nagel, Senior Vice President, Human Resource Operations, Tyson Foods, Inc.

Commission Staff:

Amy Johnson, Executive Director
Jordan Rogers, Program Coordinator
Erin Jacobson, Executive Assistant

Mission

To provide equal access to justice in civil cases for all Arkansans.

Goals

• Develop an objective and accurate understanding of the problems Arkansans face in using our legal system to obtain justice in civil cases
• Devise a strategic plan for statewide delivery of civil legal services to all Arkansans
• Review and report on the efficient allocation and application of available resources
• Educate the people of Arkansas about the importance of equal access to justice and of the problems many Arkansans face in gaining effective access to our civil justice system
• Encourage a strong and consistent commitment to providing equal access to justice among the leaders of our state
• Suggest innovations that will increase effective access to the civil justice system for all Arkansans
• Provide technical and other support to the efforts of the legislature, courts, and other government agencies to improve access to justice for the people of Arkansas
• Develop stable, long-term funding and other resources to support access to civil justice.

Top Three Accomplishments to Date

Below are three of the Arkansas Access to Justice Commission’s most notable accomplishments since its formation in 2003. For a complete list of the Commission’s accomplishments since its inception, visit www.arkansasjustice.org/accomplishments. Copies of the Commission’s various reports and studies can be found at www.arkansasjustice.org/research.

• Held a series of town hall meetings around the state in 2006, which were hosted by members of our state’s congressional delegation. Each U.S. representative attended his district’s meeting. These gatherings allowed attorneys, judges, agency heads, clients, and the public to express their ideas and opinions about access to the civil justice system. Because of these meetings, for the first time in 2006, all four Arkansas members of Congress voted to increase the level of funding for the Legal Services Corporation.
• Completed and adopted a strategic plan for the delivery of legal services to self-represented litigants in 2013 through a State Justice Institute grant. Although not explicitly couched in terms of “100% access,” the plan affirmatively stated that its recommendations were intended to serve as a “plan for universal access to civil justice in Arkansas” and laid out a continuum of services to be provided, from basic legal information all the way to full-serve representation.
• Developed proposed amendments to the Arkansas Rules of Professional Conduct, Arkansas Rules of Civil Procedure, and Judicial Code of Conduct to explicitly authorize limited scope representation and judicial accommodations for self-represented litigants; Professional Conduct amendments were adopted 5/2016 and Judicial Conduct provisions were adopted 12/2016. Rules of Civil Procedure are pending as of 3/27/2017.

Recent and Current Initiatives

• Last year, the Commission adopted a set of strategic priorities to pursue through 2019 (see attached).
• Resources for implementation of limited scope representation rules and judicial code of conduct are under development, including an attorney toolkit, a judicial training curriculum, and a benchbook. The Commission is also coordinating with the Arkansas Supreme Court Committee on the Unauthorized Practice of Law to develop a set of standards on the types of information and assistance that court personnel, librarians, and others can provide to the self-help public.
• The Commission is partnering with its sister foundation and the state’s two legal aid providers to expand and enhance their coordinated annual private bar fundraising campaign for legal aid.

Planned Initiatives

• See attached Strategic Priorities
Arkansas Access to Justice Commission and Foundation
Strategic Priorities 2016-2019

GOALS
(1) Increase the financial resources available to support the delivery of civil legal aid and to expand access to the civil justice system for all Arkansans.
(2) Strengthen support systems for the delivery of civil legal help through pro bono attorneys and resources for self-represented litigants.
(3) Provide technical expertise and other support to the efforts of the legislature, courts, and other entities to adopt innovations that improve access to justice for all Arkansans.

Goal One: Increase the financial resources available to support the delivery of civil legal aid and to expand access to the civil justice system for all Arkansans.

Outcomes:
- The Commission, Foundation, and legal aid are equipped with the staff capacity and tools necessary to support resource development efforts.
- Commissioners, Foundation Board members, and legal aid Board members have a good understanding of the importance of access to justice and legal aid and use that understanding to advance resource development efforts.
- Individual giving ($1 to $499) to the statewide Campaign for Legal Aid will increase through retention of 85% or more of existing donors and acquisition of 200 new or lapsed ones.
- Major individual gifts ($500 or more) to the Campaign for Legal Aid will increase through retention of existing major donors and the acquisition of 10 new or lapsed ones.
- Corporate giving to the statewide Campaign for Legal Aid will increase through retention of 85% or more of existing corporate donors and acquisition of 10 new or lapsed ones.
- The Foundation, in partnership with the Commission and legal aid, will establish one or more endowment funds to provide long-term, sustainable sources of funding for legal aid.
- Increase revenues for grants to legal aid and programs of the Commission through IOLTA “orphan funds” rule.
- Explore unclaimed court registry money as source of revenue for grants to support to legal aid and programs of the Commission.
- Increase court settlement revenues to support grants to legal aid and programs of the Commission.
- Establish support from Arkansas Congressional Delegation for maintaining or increasing Legal Services Corporation funding.
- Seek state legislative funding for legal aid.
- Programs of the Commission and legal aid will receive grant funding for core activities that are priorities for the philanthropic community.
- Self-help resources created by legal aid have sustainable sources of funding and staff support.
Goal Two: Strengthen support systems for the delivery of civil legal help through pro bono attorneys, limited scope representation, and resources for self-represented litigants.

Outcomes:
- Private attorneys understand the prevalence of self-representation and adapt their service delivery models to provide limited scope representation, which in turn results in greater access to justice.
- Judges are supportive of Arkansas-specific self-help resources and limited scope representation in their courts.
- Circuit clerks and other court staff are supportive of self-help resources and are equipped to provide appropriate legal information to self-represented litigants.
- The concept of assisted self-help will be supported and promoted by the leadership of the bar as a means of attaining meaningful access to justice.
- The concept of assisted self-help will be supported and promoted by the leadership of the judicial branch as a means of attaining meaningful access to justice.
- Attorneys will be more aware of pro bono opportunities and will have favorable attitudes toward pro bono service.

Goal Three: Provide technical expertise and other support to the efforts of the legislature, courts, and other entities to adopt innovations that improve access to justice for all Arkansans.

Outcomes:
- Legislature, courts, nonprofits, and other entities are aware of the Commission and seek input from Commission on issues that impact access to the court system in civil matters (i.e., Commission is a thought leader).
- Legislature, Congress, courts, and other entities have access to up-to-date, relevant statistics and other information needed to make evidence-based decisions on matters that relate to legal aid and access to justice.
- Arkansas’s Justice Index ranking improves.
- Adoption of innovations by other stakeholders that improve access to justice, e.g., incubator program; rural fellowships; etc.
California Access to Justice Commission

Commission Chair: Mark A. Juhas, Los Angeles County Superior Court Judge

Commission Staff: Theresa Mesa, Program Developer

Mission
The mission of the Access to Justice Commission is to make significant improvements in the administration of justice and to increase access to the judicial system for low and moderate income Californians.

Goals
The Commission’s goals include expanding pro bono and language assistance, increasing resources for legal services for the indigent, and increasing the availability of self-help assistance and limited scope legal representation. It works closely with the State Bar, the judicial branch, legal aid programs, and other agencies to implement its far-reaching recommendations.

Top Three Accomplishments to Date


2) Incubator Education and Funding Initiative. The Commission created a Pilot Task Force to support the growth of incubators in California, with the hope that incubators could address the unmet legal needs of many Californians, and the unprecedented number of lawyers seeking work. With grant funds from the Public Welfare, Ford, and California Bar Foundations, the Commission convened law schools, legal services, law libraries, and bar associations to educate and encourage them to apply for funding to expand and seed incubators in California.

The Project funded four incubator programs, but has had a larger measurable effect: there are now thirteen California incubators, with two more planned; more than a dozen law schools are involved with incubators, scores of new lawyers have graduated from incubator programs; thousands of low and modest income Californians have received legal information, advice, or assistance; and thousands of lawyers considering careers in modest means solo practice have participated in two nationally broadcast, Project-sponsored Incubator Boot Camps.

3) Unlocking Significant New Funding Source for Legal Aid. The Access Commission, in partnership with the State Bar and Legal Aid Association of California (LAAC), helped to make millions of dollars of new funding available for legal aid organizations to support their work with crime victims. Since the 1980s, the federal government has provided block grants to the states to pay for victim compensation services and victim assistance services. While many states have funded legal aid programs for their legal work for victims and survivors, California has not. The Commission, State Bar, and LAAC worked to educate the funding
agencies about the critical legal assistance to victims that legal aid programs provide. As a result of their efforts, the California Office of Emergency Services released more than $10 million in new grant opportunities available to legal aid to support legal assistance for crime victims in 2016.

Recent and Current Initiatives

1) **20th Anniversary Event.** In honor of the Access Commission’s 20 year anniversary, a special celebration was held at the California State Capitol in Sacramento. The celebration was an opportunity for statewide justice partners to celebrate progress and discuss the future of access to justice in California. In addition to a special keynote address by Judge Lisa Foster, former Director of the Office for Access to Justice at the United States Department of Justice, the celebration included discussions among distinguished panelists about current access to justice issues.

2) **Convening of Incubator Participants.** This summer the Commission will convene California incubator program participants to gather information about best practices for establishing a moderate means solo practice.

Planned Initiatives

1) Updating key publications, including the following:
   a. *Improving Civil Justice in Rural California.*
   b. *Incubator Guide.*

2) publishing new resources, including the following:
   b. *Serving Modest Means Clients in California*
Colorado Access to Justice Commission

Commission Chair: Frederick J. Baumann, Chairman of the Executive Committee at Lewis Roca Rothgerber Christie LLP

Commission Staff: The Colorado ATJC has no staff of its own. It receives staff support from the Colorado Bar Association, specifically Kathleen Schoen and Josh Junevicus.

Mission
The mission of the Colorado Access to Justice Commission is to develop, coordinate and implement policy initiatives to expand access to and enhance the quality of justice in civil legal matters for persons who encounter barriers in gaining access to Colorado's civil justice system.

Goals
1. Increased capacity for communication, coordination, and ongoing accountability and oversight of all access-to-justice initiatives.
2. Better integration and coordination of the resources available to unrepresented litigants in state court.
3. Increased funding for Colorado’s statewide legal aid program.
4. Improved and more intentional communication to various constituencies, including elected officials and the general public, about the value of civil legal aid.

Top Three Accomplishments to Date
1. A significant increase in the annual state appropriation for civil legal aid through the Family Violence Justice Fund, from $500,000 in 2008 to $2.5 million in 2016, as a result of a series of statewide hearings, first in 2007 and then in 2013.
2. A significant increase in pro bono activity statewide as a result of a robust Supreme Court Pro Bono Commitment and Recognition Program, the inclusion of a Model Law Firm Pro Bono Policy in Colorado Rule of Professional Conduct 6.1, and the revision of other rules to promote access to justice, including those dealing with CLE credit for pro bono work, pro bono service by otherwise retired lawyers, and discrete task representation (or unbundling).
3. Active local Access to Justice Committees in all but one of Colorado's 22 Judicial Districts, which include local members of the bench and the bar, as well as other community stakeholders, and spearhead projects in response to local needs.

Recent and Current Initiatives
1. Undertaking a statewide inventory and assessment of access-to-justice initiatives in connection with a Justice For All Strategic Action Planning Grant received from the National Center for State Courts in December of 2016.
2. Strengthening the governance structure of the ATJC, revitalizing its Committees, and broadening its membership, consistent with plans made at an ATJC Planning Retreat in April of 2016.

3. Regular quarterly meetings with Colorado Supreme Court and Colorado Bar Association leadership to ensure appropriate coordination and collaboration.

Planned Initiatives

1. A Justice Summit for this fall, which will be the culmination of the Justice For All Strategic Planning Process and will hopefully lay the groundwork for implementation going forward.

2. Applying this fall for a Justice For All Implementation Grant from the National Center for State Courts to assist with implementation of our Strategic Action Plan.

3. Continued leadership and action to protect federal funding for civil legal aid through the Legal Services Corporation.

4. Continued attention to the completion, launch, and continued improvement of the Colorado Legal Help Center, an online resource of the Colorado Supreme Court for Coloradans with civil legal issues seeking legal information and a centralized, robust place to start.
Connecticut Commission on Access to Justice

Commission Co-Chairs:
- Judge Maria A. Kahn, Judge Ingrid L. Moll, Co-Chairs 2016-present
- Judge Elliot N. Solomon, Judge Maria A. Kahn, Co-Chairs, 2013-2016

Commission Staff:
- Ms. Heather Collins, Court Planner, Connecticut Judicial Branch

Mission
The mission of the Access to Justice Commission is to develop recommendations to help ensure equal access for all people, including low- and moderate-income individuals, people with different physical or developmental abilities, the elderly, limited English proficient and ethnic, cultural and racial minorities.

Goals
*These goals were stated in the Commission’s original charge, from 2011:

The Access to Justice Commission seeks to achieve the following:

1) To call attention to the importance of legal services for indigent residents and the disparity between the need for such services and the resources available to meet those needs.
2) Continue to work to increase funding and resources for legal services through fee and fine surcharges, special fees and other methods.
3) Recommend ways to increase the number of attorneys trained, including attorneys from the corporate and business sectors, to provide pro bono legal services.
4) Continue to expand the availability of services and resources for the self-represented through Court Service Centers, Public Information Desks and Law Libraries, as well as through advancements in technology through the Judicial Branch website, including posting self-help videos on the Judicial Branch website to guide self-represented parties through court procedures.
5) Continue to expand the Judicial Branch’s Volunteer Attorney Program and Volunteer Information Officer Program, and develop and implement other programs to assist the unrepresented and the underrepresented.
6) Recommend ways to continue to increase the services and resources available to Connecticut’s Limited English Proficient (LEP) population, including interpreter and translation language services, and multi-language and plain language written materials. The Access to Justice Commission will work with the existing LEP Committee to recommend ways to improve, support and coordinate the work this Committee has already done.
7) Continue compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act by enhancing existing resources and services, implementing new initiatives and creating new tools to better serve the ADA community. The Access to Justice Commission will provide input and assistance to the existing ADA Committee to further remove the barriers that deny individuals with disabilities equal access to our justice system.
8) Recommend and identify best practices in the delivery of legal services and determine the changing legal needs of those unable to afford counsel. Develop goals and strategies to meet those changing legal needs including addressing existing and proposed court rules, procedures and policies that negatively affect access to justice in Connecticut such as limited scope representation and limited appearances by attorneys.
9) Continue to develop and expand new and innovative ways to provide access to justice through the use of technology in Connecticut’s courts.

**Top Three Accomplishments to Date**
- Successfully secured seed-funding grant, from the ABA’s Fund for Justice and Education grant under the Kresge and Public Welfare foundation ATJ expansion project, to launch Lawyer Corps Connecticut’s website, recruitment materials,
- Established an ongoing relationship with Connecticut’s public library system via the Commission’s Workgroup on Libraries and Access to Justice. This important partnership cemented itself with the September 2015 “Access to Justice Fair.” The Fair featured multiple panels comprised of public librarians, Judges and Judicial Branch staff, and members of the legal aid community, for an audience of public librarians. The Workgroup is co-chaired by a leader in Connecticut’s public library system, a Judicial Branch law library, and the Branch’s pro bono program manager. Members of the Workgroup include law librarians, public librarians, legal aid staff with expertise in the delivery of online services/tools; Judicial Branch administrative staff with expertise in pro bono programs, and others, as needed.
- Developed a remote videoconferencing pro bono program, in which volunteer attorneys in one location provided legal advice to people with foreclosure cases in another judicial district.
- A mandatory, Branch-wide training on the delivery of services to people with limited English proficiency was created and will be completed by every Branch employee, in support of the Branch’s Language Access Plan.

**Recent and Current Initiatives**
- The Judicial Branch in March 2017 sought requests for proposals for a consultant to develop framework for the Branch implement a triage approach to justice. In essence, an administrative access plan will serve as a blueprint for a communication and referral system between State of Connecticut administrative agencies (e.g., Dept. of Education, Dept. of Social Services, Dept. of Veterans Affairs) and the court to remove barriers to administrative justice for Connecticut Citizens. Administrative justice refers to people who may have been denied health, social security or disability benefits, or are unable to gain access to appropriate educational or mental health resources. The plan will identify legal barriers in these matters and suggest a set of procedures to refer them to appropriate legal resources.
A strategic plan will suggest methodologies to mitigate or remove barriers to justice for people who are experiencing a legal issue. The plan will help identify gaps between unmet legal needs and available legal services across a wide range of civil and family court matters such as housing, foreclosure, small claims, divorce, domestic violence, and child custody.
• The co-chairs are working with the leaders of the Massachusetts Access to Justice Commission to discover what shared issues, particularly with respect to expanding pro bono programs, the commissions can work on together.
• Continue to train public librarians on what resources are available for their patrons, so that they can better assist those in the community before they come to court.

Planned Initiatives
• Develop a pro bono program to assist self-represented parties with cases at the appellate level. Connecticut has both a Supreme Court and an Appellate Court and growing numbers of cases at both courts are on the rise.
• Implement the strategic plan and administrative plan to bring a triage approach to access to justice, as described in the “Recent and Current Initiatives” section above.
• Develop and implement a series of small “Justice Fairs” at public libraries across the state, with an emphasis on helping public librarians understand what services are available for their patrons from the Branch, including free legal assistance; an extensive, online legal information resource and the brick-and-mortar law libraries; and establish connections between legal aid providers/pro bono volunteers to develop on-site assistance.
• Increasing the use of videoconferencing as a tool to effectuate pro bono service.
• The Connecticut legislature passed Special Act No. 16-19, AN ACT CREATING A TASK FORCE TO IMPROVE ACCESS TO LEGAL COUNSEL IN CIVIL MATTERS, which reads in part: “Section 1. (Effective from passage) (a) There is established a task force to study the nature, extent and consequences of unmet legal needs of State residents in civil matters. The task force shall examine, on a state-wide basis, the impact that the lack of access to legal counsel in civil matters is having on the ability of State residents to secure essential human needs.” The Task Force was appointed over the course of the summer of 2016 with a legislative charge to issue a report and recommendations by December 15, 2016. The report included findings and recommendations that:
  o (f) … include suggested mechanisms to: (1) Secure access to justice and legal representation in civil matters by increasing the availability of legal assistance with civil matters throughout the State; and (2) encourage increased pro bono service by the State's legal community.

In addition to the recommendations submitted in the report to the legislature for consideration, several non-legislative recommendations were referred to the ATJC for further action. These include:

• Recommendation 1. Further Expand the Efforts of the ATJC.
  o The Judicial Branch adopted Practice Book § 3-8 to facilitate some provision of legal services to those who might not otherwise be able to afford a full time lawyer, permitting limited scope representation (“LSR”), i.e., representation for a particular phase or project in a litigation.
  o Moreover, more should be done to promote LSR, including working with the state and local bar associations to promote LSR. The ATJC should carefully study the implementation of limited scope representation programs to determine whether they should be modified.
A significant part of the Judicial Branch’s efforts towards providing equal access to justice for all of Connecticut’s citizens has been the movement to increase awareness regarding the importance of pro bono service. These pro bono efforts have, in part, focused on the number and diversity of attorneys who perform pro bono work. An important component has been enacting changes in the Rules of Professional Conduct to permit retired attorneys and in-house attorneys to perform pro bono service under the supervision of an organized legal aid society, a State or local bar association project, or a court-affiliated pro bono program. To that end, Practice Book § 2-55 was amended on June 14, 2013, and took effect on January 1, 2014. This initiative should be promoted.

The Judicial Branch has Court Service Centers and public information desks which, in 2015, provided assistance and services to 354,673 court patrons, 265,375 of whom were pro se parties.

The Connecticut Judicial Branch has also established eighteen court-based advice-only Volunteer Attorney Programs (VAPs) in the areas of family law, foreclosure law, contract collections law, and small claims in conjunction with the CBA. The program should be expanded by establishing VAPs in the areas of housing law, immigration law, employment law, and public benefits law. The undertaking has helped well in excess of 12,000 litigants since it began. Additional outposts should be created.

The ATJC report was a significant undertaking and made a series of noteworthy recommendations, many of which are still pending, each of which would, if adopted, have a significant impact on addressing access to justice issues. Those recommendations should be reviewed and adopted if still appropriate. These include:

- Instituting a review of Connecticut’s Unauthorized Practice of Law rule and the Student Practice rules with the purpose of identifying revisions that expand the ability of law students to provide pro bono assistance to persons of limited means;
- Exploring with the Connecticut Bar Association, local bar associations, and law schools’ legal clinics the feasibility of establishing modest means programs to assist low income individuals who need legal assistance but who do not qualify for, or cannot obtain, free legal services; and
- Working with Connecticut law schools to identify additional ways in which to engage law students in providing legal assistance to persons of limited means through clinics, externships and other training programs;

To these the Task Force added:

- Study additional ways in which it might be able to facilitate providing legal services to the poor. This might entail quicker resolution time, reducing the amount of time spent at court appearances, and promoting limited appearances and information.
- We encourage the ATJC’s ongoing efforts to increase access to justice at the appellate level. In the last several years, the percentage of appeals at the
Connecticut Appellate Court, in which at least one party was pro se, has remained around 35%.

- **Recommendation 2. Continue to enhance Judicial Branch systems to facilitate access.**
  - The Judicial Branch has taken many steps in the last decade to make the courts and their systems accessible to both represented and unrepresented parties. There is more that can be done, especially in those dockets with significant numbers of pro se parties.
  - One of the areas of significant progress by the Judicial Branch is in the field of Online Dispute Resolution (ODR), an idea that has recently gained traction in several other jurisdictions.

- **Recommendation 3. Improve Access to Counsel for Persons with Disabilities.**
  - The Justice Index, which evaluates and ranks all 50 states along a number of access to justice measures, currently ranks Connecticut sixth on its “disability access index.” The rankings are determined by Connecticut’s performance on 13 practices tied to assuring access to the justice system for indigent persons with physical disabilities, mental health issues, or cognitive limitations. Connecticut’s relatively high ranking is a function of its adoption of 11 of 13 practices described by the Index.
  - We also recommend funding improved outreach to disabled persons. In addition to funding community partnerships, Connecticut should consider funding mobile, wheelchair accessible legal help centers that could travel directly to rural communities and to immobile individuals that would otherwise be unable to reach community-based legal assistance programs.

- **Recommendation 4. Encourage Lawyers Employed by the State to Perform Pro Bono Services.**
  - We note that several hundred attorneys employed by the State of Connecticut currently do little or no pro bono work. This is not for lack of desire or commitment to service to the bar and public.
  - However, these lawyers – Assistant Public Defenders, Assistant States Attorneys, Assistant Attorneys General and counsel employed within Executive Branch agencies and others - lack malpractice insurance coverage for claims that might arise from pro bono activities, unless they accept a referral from a legal service program that provides referral coverage. Consideration by the Executive Branch should be given to appropriate means to facilitate pro bono work by these attorneys.

- **Recommendation 7. Commission a Study of the Potential Rule Changes to Support Funding.**
  - Further study should be undertaken to determine how Connecticut might use its leverage to help the organizations find and secure available public grants and private foundation dollars. Two years ago, for example, the Superior Court changed Practice
Book § 9.9 to permit a court, in the absence of another designation, to direct class action residual funds to be disbursed for the purpose of funding legal aid. The United States District Court did the same with its adoption of Local Civil Rule 23. As a result, the CBF has received over $142,000 in additional funding for the legal service programs.

- **Recommendation 12. Study of New Legal Services Delivery Methods.**

  - Many new lawyers have difficulty finding jobs practicing law, while many Americans cannot afford a lawyer. We must find ways to bridge this gap. Many changes are underway in the methods by which entities are delivering legal information and legal services, especially through the internet. Some of these are disruptive to traditional law firm business models. They also challenge traditional regulatory regimes. At the same time they promise savings to clients who might be satisfied by the level of information or service obtainable by such systems. RocketLawyer, Shake, and LegalZoom offer online legal document creation services and “education centers” for individuals and small businesses searching for help with their legal needs. The Judicial Branch and the Connecticut Bar Association should study the impact of these new service delivery models and provide guidance on how the State should respond to them.
Delaware Access to Justice Commission

Commission Co-Chairs:

Gregory B. Williams, Esq. and Yvonne Takvorian-Saville, Esq. serve as co-chairs of the Delaware ATJ Commission.

Chief Justice Leo E. Strine, Jr. and Justice Karen L. Valihura serve as Supreme Court Liaisons to the Delaware ATJ Commission.

Commission Staff:

Amy Quinlan and Katherine Neikirk serve as the commission reporters, but this is in addition to their duties as deputy court administrator and staff attorney, respectively. The DE ATJ Commission has no dedicated staff.

Amy Quinlan, Deputy Court Administrator
Katherine Neikirk, Supreme Court Staff Attorney

Mission

“Identify the critical needs related to access to justice in Delaware and to develop realistic and cost effective solutions to those identified needs.”


Goals

“The Commission will study and make recommendations to address: (i) whether resources devoted to providing legal services to the poor are effectively deployed, whether there would be gaps in funding regardless of whether resources are optimally deployed, and creative means to close any gaps; (ii) the difficulties that confront lawyers who wish to provide legal services to clients of ordinary means and to do so in a manner that enables them to run their law firms in a profitable, ethical and sane manner; (iii) means to increase the pool of qualified legal advisors to help litigants of limited means, such as increasing pro bono service by in-house counsel and by members of the bar who are not litigators, and considering whether forms of limited representation should be authorized in critical areas of need; (iv) rationalizing and coordinating the efforts of the various courts in helping pro se litigants, including by considering broadening the role of the law libraries to make them a central resource in the provision of services to pro se litigants in all courts; and (v) identifying the causes of the stark disparity between the percentage of Delawareans who are black and the percentage of those incarcerated in Delaware’s prisons who are black, and recommending measures to ensure that this disparity does not result from racial discrimination and to reduce any inequities that are not justified as a matter of sound criminal justice policy.”

The Delaware Access to Justice Commission includes three subcommittees focused on civil issues: Efficient Delivery and Adequate Funding of Legal Services to the Poor Subcommittee, Judicial Branch Coordination in Helping Pro Se Litigants Subcommittee, and Promoting Greater Private Sector Representation of Underserved Litigants, as well as a fourth subcommittee: Fairness in the Criminal Justice System that is focused on racial disparities in our state’s criminal justice system.

**Top Three Accomplishments to Date**

**Racial Disparity Study**

In September 2016, the Fairness Subcommittee released a detailed independent study that looked into the issue of racial disparities in Delaware’s criminal justice system. John M. MacDonald, Ph.D. and Ellen A. Donnelly, Ph.D. from the University of Pennsylvania’s Department of Criminology conducted this study, “Evaluating the Role of Race in Criminal Justice Adjudications in Delaware”, at the request of the Fairness Subcommittee. The study was pursued based on the recommendations made by criminal justice experts during the public hearings of fall 2015. The study involved a year-long statistical review of all adults arrested and charged with a criminal offense in the state between 2012 and 2014 to determine the extent to which race played a role in whether an arrestee is sentenced to incarceration and the length of an incarceration sentence. The report is available on the Delaware Courts website at: [http://courts.delaware.gov/supreme/docs/DE_DisparityReport.pdf](http://courts.delaware.gov/supreme/docs/DE_DisparityReport.pdf).

**Subcommittee on Judicial Branch Coordination in Helping Pro Se Litigants’ Report on Locating Delaware Pro Se Centers in Law Libraries**

The Subcommittee on Judicial Branch Coordination in Helping Pro Se Litigants’ submitted a report to the Chief Justice in December 2016 on converting Delaware’s court based law libraries into pro se centers. The subcommittee’s report was based on its research into other states’ successes in creating court based pro se centers, and from interviews with judicial officers and staff members across the state on each court’s most significant pro se needs. The report provided guidance on the required services which must be included in a pro se center to meet the basic needs of pro se litigants, optional, but preferred services to be included in a pro se center, and what investments would need to be made for both required and optional services. This report will serve as a blueprint for the courts as they consider the option of converting the law libraries in pro se centers.

**Delaware Courts Website Redesign**

In March 2016, the Delaware Judiciary unveiled a new, modern, and fully responsive website for the Delaware State Court System. The redesigned site became more visually pleasing as well as more user friendly, particularly for those visiting the site on a mobile device. The Delaware Access to Justice Commission was able to weigh in on needed changes on everything from the use of simpler language to the location of icons. The Delaware Access to Justice Commission is continuing to monitor the website and has an open line of communication with the Judicial Information Center to continue to recommend website improvements for the public generally, but especially for the pro se litigant.
Recent and Current Initiatives

All of the Access to Justice Commission Subcommittees have been gathering information in their areas of interest, and have drafted reports, to be finalized in June, with their findings and recommendations. The findings in their reports were based on the following information gathering activities.

- The Underserved Subcommittee has surveyed current and former solo and small firm practitioners to identify challenges and most useful assistance for serving clients of limited means.
- The Underserved Subcommittee also met with the Delaware State Bar Association to determine what relevant support and programs they provide solo and small firm practitioners, as well as analyzed the discipline sanction records to determine the most common ethical violations by firm size.
- The Underserved Subcommittee has surveyed and interviewed a number of attorneys along with representatives from legal service providers in Delaware to determine the greatest unmet legal needs in the state as well as identify barriers to pro bono service.
- The Funding Subcommittee has prepared a service matrix setting forth the legal services provided by the three legal service organizations in Delaware as well as a financial matrix showing a comparison of revenues and expenses of the legal services organizations.
- The Funding Subcommittee has identified a variety of sources of additional resources.
- The Funding Subcommittee has produced a literature review on other states’ best practices funding sources for civil legal services.
- The Pro Se Subcommittee has gathered information on all on-site and online services provided to pro se litigants in all of the Delaware courts.
- The Pro Se Subcommittee has surveyed front line staff to determine top pro se needs, as well as what training they would find useful in their jobs communicating with pro se litigants.
- The Fairness Subcommittee held a series of public meetings in late 2015 which began with two public informational hearing sessions with experts from University of Delaware, Equal Justice Initiative, and University of Pennsylvania discussing papers they had submitted to the subcommittee on the topics of: bail and pre-trial, alternatives to incarceration, policing strategies, root causes of racial disparities, and sentencing. Four public forums throughout the state followed the informational hearings which allowed a number of Delawareans to share their opinions on those topics of interest with the Fairness Subcommittee. The expert recommendations and public input continues to guide the Fairness Subcommittee.
- Consistent with Delaware Access to Justice Commission recommendations, the Delaware Combined Campaign for Justice has created a new position of Chief Development Officer. The Delaware ATJ Commission intends to work closely with the Chief Development Officer to further the shared goal of increasing access to justice.
Planned Initiatives

- In June 2017, the civil subcommittees will present their efforts over the past year at the Delaware State Bar Association’s Bench and Bar Conference. Later that month, the Commission members will meet to prepare a statewide implementation plan to pursue
- The Fairness Subcommittee, as a result of interest expressed from experts and the public during its public forums, has recommended that system wide training in implicit bias should be pursued in the state’s criminal justice system. The Administrative Office of the Courts and the Criminal Justice Council have partnered in seeking such a system wide training, and intend to present an implicit bias training proposal to criminal justice agencies this year.
District of Columbia Access to Justice Commission

Commission Chair:
Professor Peter B. Edelman
Carmack Waterhouse Professor of Law and Public Policy, Georgetown University Law Center

Commission Staff:
Nancy E. Drane, Executive Director
Jessica Rosenbaum, Senior Advisor

Mission:
In recognition of the large number of unmet civil legal needs of low- and moderate-income residents, the D.C. Court of Appeals created the D.C. Access to Justice Commission in 2005. The Commission was charged with assuring high quality access for low- and moderate-income residents and others in the District, who suffer disparate access barriers to the civil justice system and with raising the profile in the community of the need for equal access to justice.

Goals:
In its order establishing the Commission, the D.C. Court of Appeals directed the Commission to: (1) establish a coordinated planning process that involves all members of the community who are affected by the crisis in equal access to justice in an effort to develop strategies to improve access and reduce barriers; (2) facilitate efforts to create improved coordination and support of civil legal services programs; (3) work with the courts, administrative agencies and lawmaking bodies to propose and promote rules and systemic changes that will open greater access to the justice system; and (4) propose and promote strategies to generate adequate levels of public, private, and volunteer resources and funding for the District’s civil justice network and the access to justice initiatives identified by the Commission. To that end, the Commission seeks to increase significantly the resources for civil legal services, reduce barriers that prevent equal access to justice by low- and moderate-income District residents, advocate for increased pro bono work by local attorneys, and improve planning and coordination of legal services delivery. The Commission also strives to call attention to the importance of legal services for indigent residents and the appalling disparity between the need for such services and the resources available to meet those needs. The Commission works closely with the D.C. Courts, the Office of Administrative Hearings, the D.C. Council, legal services providers, the D.C. Bar Foundation, D.C. Bar leaders and members, area law firms, and community leaders to achieve these goals.

Top Three Accomplishments to Date:
Public Funding
Since its inception, the Commission has taken a leadership role in securing public funding for civil legal services. In 2006, the Commission persuaded the D.C. Council to establish a landmark annual appropriation—the Access to Justice Program—and since then has led community–wide efforts to secure, preserve, and increase that funding. In the ten years since this first appropriation, the Commission has secured over $40 million to fund the provision of legal services in underserved
areas and in housing-related cases, as well as to establish a shared legal interpreter bank and the District's first law school loan repayment assistance program for legal services lawyers.

**Private Funding**
In December 2010, the Commission launched the Raising the Bar in D.C. Campaign. The Campaign sets benchmark levels for law firm giving to local legal services organizations and recognizes firms that donate at those levels. The District's model is somewhat unique in that it sets benchmarks as a percentage of D.C. office revenue rather than on a per-attorney basis. In the Campaign's inaugural year, the 23 participating firms that qualified for the Raising the Bar in D.C. Leadership Circle in 2011 donated over $3 million to local legal services organizations. In 2015, 46 law firms donated nearly $5 million in support of legal services providers serving low-income and at-risk communities in the District of Columbia.

**Legal Needs Report**
Shortly after its creation, the Commission made one of its first priorities a close examination of the civil legal needs of District residents and the capacity of the existing network to meet those needs. The resulting report—*Justice for All?*—documented an appalling justice gap. In every area examined—eviction prevention, domestic violence, public benefits, child support, employment, consumer and many others—the need for services far outstripped the supply. In domestic violence cases, for example, where the safety of the victim and often her children was imperiled, the representation rate was a mere two percent. Rates in landlord-tenant cases, where families were faced with the loss of homes, were barely better at three percent. This legal needs report continues to inform the Commission's efforts to bring legal services to chronically underserved communities.

**Recent and Current Initiatives:**
While continuing work on the above initiatives, the Commission has also focused on:

**Pro Bono**
The Commission is working on many fronts to increase pro bono service. In 2011, the Commission and the D.C. Bar Pro Bono Center worked with the D.C. Courts to launch the Capital Pro Bono Honor Roll, which recognizes attorneys who provide 50 hours of pro bono service or more - or 100 hours or more for the higher recognition category - yearly. In the program's inaugural year, over 3,000 attorneys registered for the Honor Roll, and over 2,000 of them registered for the High Honor Roll. The 2016 Honor Roll will feature over 4,300 D.C. lawyers who have devoted 50 or more hours to pro bono service.

**Housing Initiative**
In 2013, the D.C. Bar Pro Bono Center with the D.C. Access to Justice Commission brought together the legal services community and the private bar to address the housing crisis in the District. The result of this effort became the D.C. Right to Housing Initiative, a multi-pronged effort with the following four broad goals: (1) provide counsel to tenants facing eviction from subsidized or public housing; (2) revamp the broken shelter and emergency housing system; (3) preserve existing affordable housing and increase production of affordable housing; and (4) litigate to enforce fair housing laws and advocate for policy changes. The Housing Right to Counsel Pilot Project is a key piece of this groundbreaking initiative. The project aims to dramatically reduce subsidized and public housing evictions by increasing access to pro bono
representation for these particularly vulnerable tenants and guaranteeing pro bono counsel to a percentage of subsidized or public housing tenants who are sued for eviction. The project is a collaborative effort between District legal services providers and thirteen law firms.

*Expanding Access to Justice*
In 2016, the D.C. Council – in collaboration with a broad spectrum of the D.C. legal community -- introduced legislation, the Expanding Access to Justice Act, which sought to move toward a right to counsel for low-income individuals or groups in civil cases involving fundamental human needs through creation of civil right to counsel projects. The legislation called for legal representation in certain housing matters. While there was a public hearing on the legislation, it did not move forward to a vote. The legislation was reintroduced in January 2017 and is pending review in the D.C. Council.

*Updated Legal Needs Report*
The Commission’s first legal needs report set the stage for the Commission’s work on expanding access to justice for D.C. residents. In 2015, the Commission set out to update the first legal needs report to see where the community had come, where improvements have been made, and where more work needs to be done, with recommendations for strategies moving forward. That updated legal needs report is an ongoing Commission project with publication pending.

*Planned Initiatives:*
While continuing work on the above initiatives, the Commission will also focus on:

*D.C. Courts*
The Commission has always worked closely with the D.C. Courts to make them even more accessible to low-income and pro se litigants. Commissioners work regularly with the Chief Judge and other judicial officers of the Superior Court of D.C. The Commission has worked with the Court on a wide range of initiatives that has included successful efforts to launch a fast-track Housing Conditions Calendar that gives tenants a simplified mechanism for seeking redress of housing code violations, ensure access to interpreters in all civil cases, strengthen the Code of Judicial Conduct provisions governing judicial assistance to pro se litigants, improve the application and process for fee-waiver applications, remediate child-support related problems, and improve the experience of pro se litigants. The Commission is engaged in ongoing projects related to limited scope of representation, training of judges and staff on working with pro se litigants, and language access. The Commission remains committed to bringing best practices in access to justice efforts to our local courts. Moving forward, the Commission plans to focus its attention on identifying court-based models that have been proven successful elsewhere, with consideration of whether they would enhance the experience of litigants in the D.C. Courts.
Mission

The purpose of the Florida Commission on Access to Civil Justice is to study the remaining unmet civil legal needs of disadvantaged, low income, and moderate income Floridians. The Commission encompasses the viewpoints of multiple constituencies and stakeholders and is not limited to those of any one particular institution. The Commission considers Florida’s legal assistance delivery system as a whole, including but not limited to staffed legal aid programs, resources and support for self-represented litigants, limited scope representation, pro bono services, innovative technology solutions, and other models and potential innovations.

Goals

The goals for the Commission are set forth in the Supreme Court of Florida Administrative Order No. AOSC16-71, which establishes the Commission as a standing body.

The Commission has three Committees, each of which has been given goals to be accomplished.

Executive Committee:

- Establish a Council of Business Partners to cultivate a collaborative relationship between the corporate community and the civil legal services community.

Commission Chair:

Florida Supreme Court Chief Justice Jorge Labarga

Commission Staff:

Francisco-Javier Digon-Greer, Esq.
Commission Administrator
• Oversee the development of a long-range plan for the Commission.
• Examine proposals that have been identified, researched, and recommended by Commission committees.
• Review the evaluation of each Commission initiative.
• Identify and submit to the Supreme Court those Commission matters that require further guidance from the Court.

Service Options Committee:
• Evaluate the existing civil legal services delivery system to identify opportunities for enhancing coordination and employing business efficiencies.
• Examine and recommend proven components of a continuum of services that includes resources for self-represented litigants such as interactive forms; unbundled legal services; the involvement of court, law, and public libraries; and other options and alternatives.
• Collaborate with other entities, as appropriate, to review the Florida Rules of Court Procedure for the purpose of identifying barriers to access.

Resource Evaluation Committee:
• Inventory existing federal, state, and private funding opportunities that might be used to help support components of a continuum of services that afford access to the Florida civil justice system.
• Research the effect of the unmet civil justice needs on Florida’s businesses and economy.
• Upon referral by the Executive Committee, review or develop funding plans for projects endorsed or approved by the Commission.

Commission members are dedicated to the ultimate goal of 100% access to civil justice in Florida through the identification and implementation of initiatives that help low income, moderate income, and vulnerable Floridians get the legal help they need.

**Top Three Accomplishments To Date:**

1) **Permanent Commission:** The initial Commission was originally established for a term to expire on June 30, 2016, and tasked among other things with making recommendations on the need for a permanent access to civil justice commission in Florida. In its June 30, 2016, report the Commission recommended to the Supreme Court that it be reappointed on a continuing basis, as means to enhance its effectiveness in addressing the long-term and complex barriers that create difficulties for those Floridians seeking meaningful access to civil justice. The Supreme Court of Florida concurred with the recommendation and on October 10, 2016, Chief Justice Jorge Labarga signed an administrative order re-establishing the Commission as a standing commission.

2) **Florida Legal Access Gateway (FLAG):** A proposed statewide portal is envisioned to serve as an online connector to existing resources, such as hotlines, law libraries, legal aid organizations, free online resources, local court self-help centers, law school clinics, and
social service providers. The Commission is collaborating with the Florida Justice Technology Center, a nonprofit organization that works on increasing access to civil justice through technology, to design and implement a pilot project in Clay County. Following the pilot, the gateway will be evaluated for statewide implementation.

3) **Emeritus Attorney Rule:** Changes to the Rules Regulating The Florida Bar that would allow retired judges and retired and active law professors to serve as “emeritus attorneys” in some cases and advise individuals on a pro bono basis, are currently being considered by the Florida Supreme Court.

**Recent and Current Initiatives:**

The Commission has met once since October 2016, when it was established as a standing commission. The Committees have met several times and are moving forward on accomplishing the tasks assigned in the administrative order.

Currently the Commission is finalizing an educational slide deck to inform the business community about the types of cases that are encompassed within the access to justice initiatives and about how the lack of meaningful access to civil justice affects their employees’ personal lives and work performance.

The Commission is also continuing its work on the development and possible implementation of the statewide triage gateway: Florida Legal Access Gateway (FLAG). As indicated above, the FLAG pilot project is underway in Clay County, Florida, through June 30, 2017. When the pilot program is completed, a report will be issued to Commission. The pilot is a proof-of-concept project using an exploratory process designed to: 1) Determine feasibility of a statewide triage system, 2) Surface factors that affect system success, and 3) Identify implementation strategies with greatest potential for the system. If the pilot project is successful, it is anticipated FLAG may span a wide range of information and service entities including, but not limited to, legal aid organizations, court self-help centers, Florida’s Elder Law Hotline, law school clinics, law libraries, and lawyer referral service.

**Planned Initiatives**

Since establishment of the permanent Commission in October 2016, the Commission has been examining promising initiatives in other states to evaluate the feasibility of modifying them for possible implantation in Florida.

It is anticipated that, depending on the outcome of the pilot project, the triage gateway (FLAG) may be expanded, possibly on a regional or statewide basis.
HAWAII ACCESS TO JUSTICE COMMISSION

Commission Chair:

Hawai‘i Supreme Court Associate Justice Simeon R. Acoba (ret.)

Commission Staff:

There are no paid Commission staff.
Contact persons:
Derek Kobayashi
David Reber

Mission

The purpose of the Commission shall be to substantially increase access to justice in civil legal matters for low- and moderate-income Hawaii residents. Hawai‘i Supreme Court Rule 21.

Goals

The following are the principal goals the Commission endeavors to achieve:

1. Provide ongoing leadership and oversee efforts to expand and improve delivery of high quality civil legal services to low-income people in Hawai‘i;
2. Develop and implement initiatives designed to expand access to civil justice in Hawai‘i;
3. Develop and publish a strategic, integrated plan for statewide delivery of civil legal services to low-income Hawai‘i residents;
4. Increase and stabilize long-term public and private funding and resources for delivery of civil legal services to low-income Hawai‘i residents;
5. Maximize the efficient use of available resources by facilitating efforts to improve collaboration and coordination among civil legal services providers;
6. Increase pro bono contributions by Hawai‘i attorneys through such things as rule changes, recruitment campaigns, increased judicial involvement, and increased recognition for contributors;
7. Reduce barriers to the civil justice system by developing resources to overcome language, cultural, and other barriers and by giving input on existing and proposed laws, court rules, regulations, procedures, and policies that may affect meaningful access to justice for low-income Hawai‘i residents;
8. Encourage lawyers, judges, government officials, and other public and private leaders in Hawai‘i to take a leadership role in expanding access to civil justice;
9. Educate governmental leaders and the public about the importance of equal access to justice and of the problems low-income people in Hawai‘i face in gaining access to the civil justice system through informational briefings, communication campaigns, statewide conferences (including an annual summit to report on and consider the progress of efforts to increase access to justice), testimony at hearings, and other means, and increase awareness of low-income people’s legal rights and where they can go when legal assistance is needed;
(10) Increase effective utilization of paralegals and other non-lawyers in the delivery of
civil legal services to low-income Hawai‘i residents;
(11) Increase support for self-represented litigants, such as through self-help centers at
the courts;
(12) Develop initiatives designed to enhance recruitment and retention of attorneys who
work for nonprofit civil legal services providers in Hawai‘i and to encourage law students to
consider, when licensed, the practice of poverty law in Hawai‘i;
(13) Encourage the formation of a broad coalition of groups and individuals to address
ways to alleviate poverty in Hawai‘i.

Top Accomplishments to Date

On April 24, 2008, the Hawai‘i Supreme Court formally adopted Hawai‘i Supreme Court
Rule 21, which established the Access to Justice Commission. Among the Commission’s top
accomplishments are the following:

- Developed model pro bono policies for private firms, government lawyers, and judges
  and obtained commitments from law firms and some government offices to do pro
  bono work, many of whom volunteer at the Access to Justice Rooms at the district
  court and family court
- Created a cy pres kit that instructs lawyers on the distribution of unclaimed class
  action proceeds to non-profit organizations
- Initiated rule changes to promote pro bono activities, access to the legal system, and
  legal services such as exempting lawyers from conflict of interest rules in pro bono
  activities, allowing a $500 contribution to non-profit legal entities in lieu of 50 hours of
  pro bono activities, permitting military attorneys limited admission to practice law and
  waiving character reports for them, and granting attorneys employed by non-profit
  entities limited admission to practice for two years.
- Obtained a grant of $20,000 from the ABA to hold training programs for attorneys on
  language access for clients and for judges on implicit bias in the courts.
- Supporting the amendment of the indigent legal assistance fund statute to enable an
  increase in the proceeds distributed to legal service providers to help defray their
  expenses.
- Supported installation of court form and document assembly workstations at
courthouses.
- Supported a partnership with the Judiciary, Legal Aid Society of Hawai‘i, and the
  Hawai‘i State Library System, training librarians with interactive interviews in 50
  libraries across the state, accessible on nearly 1,000 computers.
Recent and Current Initiatives

The following are some of the more recent initiatives of the Commission:

- Adoption of a protocol and rule changes for cases in which an attorney would perform unbundled, discrete task legal services
- Implementation of the Hawai`i Appellate Pro Bono Pilot Project, which matches eligible pro-se appellate litigants with volunteer appellate attorneys in certain limited civil cases.
- Launching of the Hawai`i Online Pro Bono, which is part of the ABA Free Legal Answers project.
- Assistance, recruitment, and recognition of the law firms, law organizations, or law offices that volunteer at self-help centers now actively operating in at least one court on each of the major islands of the state.
- Development of a strategic plan with the Justice for All project grant received from the National Center for State Courts and the Public Welfare Foundation to provide effective assistance for all Hawai`i residents for their essential civil legal needs.
- Participation in the ABA-SCLAD Working Group on Self-Help Services and Courtroom Innovations monthly conference calls to facilitate the exchange of information and ideas on programs and initiatives with the Judiciaries and Access to Justice Commissions of other States.

Planned Initiatives

The Commission is currently in the advanced planning stage for the following initiatives:

- Pursuing the development of the utilization of paralegals and other nonlawyers in a volunteer court navigator program and a dedicated paralegal advocate in practice areas of unmet need.
- Coordinating the 2017 Hawai`i Access to Justice Conference scheduled for Friday, June 16, 2017. It is an all-day conference, which generally attracts the legal and general communities, to discuss the current access to justice issues in civil legal matters.
Indiana Coalition for Court Access

**Commission Chair:** Justice Steven David, Chair

**Commission Staff:** Marilyn Smith
LaKesha Triggs
Michelle Langdon

**Mission**

The purpose of the Coalition is to act as a legal aid organization that develops and implements a statewide plan to improve the availability and quality of access to civil legal services for persons of limited means.

**Goals**

1. Improvement of the access to and delivery of civil legal services to persons of limited means and low to moderate income.
2. Integration and coordination availability and provision of services by pro bono organizations and other legal assistance organizations.
3. Enhancement of the availability of volunteer legal services for persons of limited means, including without limitation incentivizing greater lawyer pro bono services; assessing, utilizing, and making recommendations to the Court to improve the Volunteer Attorney Pro Bono Plan established in Professional Conduct Rule 6.6; and working closely with the Indiana State Bar Association, Indiana Bar Foundation (“Bar Foundation”), and other bar associations to foster the growth of pro bono public service and a public service culture within the Indiana bar.
4. Consideration and utilization of a wide variety of programs and policies to increase the access to courts, such as strategic use of technology, community education, public libraries, and other similar resources.
5. Expansion and promotion of opportunities for lawyers to volunteer their time and services for pro bono work in litigation, mediation, and other dispute resolution programs serving persons of limited means.
6. As may be deemed helpful in the pursuit of the above goals, identification of the current and future needs, outcomes, and trends regarding access to civil legal services by persons of limited means and promotion of ongoing development of financial and other resources for civil legal aid organizations in Indiana.

**Recent, Current and Planned Initiatives**

After holding its first meeting on August 17, 2016 the Coalition for Court Access (CCA) created seven working groups:

- Best Practices
- Communications
At its December 19, 2016 meeting, the CCA adopted the following 2017 priorities:

- Developing a statewide triage process
- Designing a process for managing self-represented litigant forms
- Launching a legal needs and resources study with rural focus, including development of uniform definitions
- Gathering data for a civil legal aid economic impact study
- Developing FAQ and messaging for Rule 6.7 Pro Bono reporting
- Extending the sunset on civil legal aid filing fee
- Advancing an education and messaging campaign for the Coalition’s priorities
- Creating a Coalition website
- Researching and drafting a proposed rule for unclaimed property in IOLTA accounts
- Reviewing and making recommendations on pro bono district configuration

Since the December 2016 meeting, the CCA working groups have advanced their initiatives as follows:

The **Best Practices Working Group** convened a two-day session facilitated by technical consultant John Greacen, the former Director of the Administrative Office of the Courts in New Mexico. The goal of these sessions was to:

- Develop a process/entity that creates and maintains a legal information website and plain language forms and instructions for use throughout the state of Indiana.
- Explore establishing a statewide triage process for Hoosiers that will involve the courts, the bar, legal aid providers, law schools, libraries, social service agencies, and other providers of civil legal assistance, and will ensure users a referral to the entity best suited to resolving their problem.

In addition to CCA members, our group included three Court Clerks, the head of the Indiana Library Federation, the Indiana Supreme Court Librarian. As a result of these sessions and further meetings, the Best Practices group has developed the following recommendations [to be confirmed after the 3/31/17 meeting]:

1. Designate the CCA Best Practices working group as the committee that reviews and approves self-represented litigant (SRL) court forms.
2. CCA Best Practices group will develop an effective, clear and easy to manage process for forms vetting, approval and updating.
3. Focus in the short-term on developing plain language PDF forms in a selected number of areas (housing, family and expungement?) and develop a longer-term strategy for incorporating online/e-filing forms using Guide and File and/or A2J Author and HotDocs.

4. Have the Court issue a statement or an order that court forms vetted and approved through this system must be accepted in trial courts.

5. Develop a job description and salary funding strategy for a staff person who can oversee the court forms function.

6. Create a CCA website (administered by the Indiana Bar Foundation) that can house these approved forms. Include on the website an opportunity to link people with limited scope representation and have red flags/stop signs for people who need more help than just forms. Website will link to CCA partners.

7. Identify a Court Technology project manager who could work with the Best Practices group on this process.

8. Collaborate with the following groups in the development of the forms process: IN State Bar Association, Bench-Book committee; IN Library Federation; IN Supreme Court Library; Indiana Association of United Ways; Indiana 2-1-1; Law schools

The Communications Working Group, in conjunction with the Best Practices and Technology Working Groups, is reviewing proposals to develop a CCA website for gathering legal information, resources and court forms. The Communications group is also collecting and developing common messaging on the value of civil legal aid to the community, economy and state. One goal is to develop a messaging campaign to raise awareness and increase support for civil legal aid. An example of such a message is:

Supporting civil legal aid helps ensure fairness for all in the justice system, regardless of how much money you have; and delivers on the Indiana Constitution’s mandate to administer justice freely, completely, and speedily.

The Data Collection Working Group has created an RFP for a statewide legal needs and resources study. The goal of the legal needs study is to focus on three areas:

The 2017 Indiana Legal Needs Study would focus on three areas of inquiry:

- The legal needs of low-income households in Indiana.
- The civil legal aid system in Indiana.
- The legal needs of rural and underserved counties.
The RFP was distributed on February 24, with letters of intent due on March 31, proposals due on May 1 and decision announced by June 1, 2017.

The **Pro Bono Working Group** is developing support resources for attorneys who are reporting their pro bono hours under Rule 6.7. The group is also developing strategies for encouraging law school pro bono and serving as a liaison with Indiana’s pro bono districts.

The **Resource Development Working Group** is focused on:

- Supporting the pro bono filing fee bill that is moving through the state legislature, continued budget support for the Civil Legal Aid Fund, and the extension of the mortgage foreclosure filing fee
- Maintaining the continued existence and funding for the Legal Services Corporation, which provides approximately $7 million in support for civil legal aid in Indiana through Indiana Legal Services
- Drafting a proposed rule to revert unclaimed or unidentified IOLTA accounts to the Indiana Bar Foundation (Indiana’s IOLTA agency) to be used to strengthen the civil legal aid system.
- Updating the CCA on the Indiana Bar Foundation’s Community Redevelopment Justice Grants
- Developing a longer-term strategy for coordinated statewide action on civil legal aid fund development

The **Rural Working Group** has designed a law school research fellows program to engage law students in collecting civil legal aid and access data in rural communities throughout the state. The group is also conducting qualitative interviews with informed stakeholders (judges, senior members of the bar), starting in Scott County. The group intends to coordinate with the Data Collection group to design the portion of the legal needs study that focuses on rural and underserved counties.

The **Technology Working Group** is undertaking the following initiatives:

- Working with the Best Practices and Communications working groups to design and launch a CCA website in 2017
- Exploring the possibility of convening a 2017 Indiana Civil Justice Conference (*with a tentative date of Friday, October 20*)
- In preparation for the future development of a triage portal, bring legal service providers together to map out service definitions, intake criteria, and data collection.
Illinois Supreme Court Commission on Access to Justice

Commission Chair: Justice Mary K. Rochford, First Appellate District
Commission Staff: Danielle Hirsch

Mission

The Illinois Supreme Court Commission on Access to Justice (“ATJ Commission”) was founded in 2012 to enhance access to justice efforts, with specific direction to complement existing efforts and to coordinate and collaborate with other civil legal aid funders and service providers. That intention was reflected in Rule 10-100, which designates that each of these four organizations appoint one member to the ATJ Commission and states that: “(t)he purpose is to make access to justice a high priority for everyone in the legal system and, to the maximum extent possible, the ATJ Commission is intended to complement and collaborate with other entities addressing access to justice issues.”

The ATJ Commission's strategic focus on access to the Illinois courts recognizes that the Court and the ATJ Commission are best positioned to make improvements within the courts. Other organizations devote significant resources each year to supporting pro bono and legal aid programs that provide legal representation to those most in need. The ATJ Commission can most effectively complement those efforts by concentrating on what happens within the justice system itself, directing its attention and resources in ways that are complementary, rather than duplicative, of these existing efforts outside the courts.

Finally, the existence and ongoing work of the AOIC Civil Justice Division strengthens the ATJ Commission's focus on access to the courts. The Division has successfully integrated much of the ATJ Commission's work into judicial branch operations, which coordinate with other divisions of the AOIC to promote meaningful access to justice. The core goals of the ATJ Commission and the Civil Justice Division will help make the entire justice system more fair and efficient for litigants, judges, circuit clerks, court personnel, and all other stakeholders.

Goals

The ATJ Commission sets forth the following long-term goals to guide its work:

Plain Language Principle: Court users should have access to a wide variety of plain language resources designed to help them understand and exercise their civil and procedural rights and reduce the number of barriers encountered while using the court system.

Process Simplification Principle: Court users should find that court procedures and policies are streamlined and efficient and communicated in plain language to allow for a positive user experience with the court system while still preserving substantive and procedural fairness and due process rights.
**Procedural Fairness Principle:** Court users should have access to a court system that serves as a fair, impartial, and transparent forum in which they are addressed with dignity, respect, equality, and professional courtesy by all judges, circuit clerks, and other court staff.

**Equal Access Principle:** Court users should have access to justice through full participation in the judicial process, regardless of their socio-economic status, English language proficiency, cultural background, legal representation status, or other circumstances.

**Continuous Improvement Principle:** The ATJ Commission should strive for continuous improvement and increased capacity to best meet the diverse and constantly evolving needs of court users.

**Top Three Accomplishments to Date**

1. **Develop and automate standardized, plain language legal forms**

   The Forms Committee has established ten subcommittees: appellate, divorce, adult expungement/sealing, juvenile expungement/sealing, landlord/tenant, mortgage foreclosure, name change, orders of protection, procedures and small claims. In 2014, the Civil Justice Division added a Forms Officer to oversee the development of new standardized forms and to serve as liaison to the Forms Committee and its subcommittees. Under her leadership, the Forms Committee has finalized over 25 suites of forms, ranging in topics from an appellant’s brief to a motion to stay a foreclosure sale to a petition for dissolution of marriage/civil union (without children). Dozens more form suites are currently in various stages of development. Through a partnership with Illinois Legal Aid Online (ILAO), many approved forms have been automated and can be completed through a guided interview on its website. All standardized forms are also available in fillable form, along with step-by-step instructions, on the Supreme Court’s website. The AOIC—through an outside vendor—has translated selected forms into the six most common languages spoken in Illinois: Spanish, Polish, Arabic, Russian, Mandarin Chinese, and Korean. This process is iterative and ongoing as new forms are approved and current forms are updated.

2. **Promulgate Illinois Supreme Court Language Access Policy and Code of Interpreter Ethics**

   The ATJ Commission was instrumental in drafting the Illinois Supreme Court Language Access Policy, which instructs that all courts in Illinois must provide language access assistance to limited English proficient litigants, witnesses and in certain circumstances, family members.

3. **Support the continued and expanded use of court-based facilitators/navigators (including Illinois Justice Corps)**

   Illinois JusticeCorps now operates in 10 courthouses in nine counties across all of the state’s five appellate districts. In 2015, a consulting firm, Philliber Research Associates (PRA), conducted an external assessment of the effectiveness of the JusticeCorps program, and concluded that JusticeCorps volunteers have robust contacts with litigants at all sites and provide valuable assistance to litigants across the state.
4. **Develop guidelines and promote training opportunities for judges**

The Court Guidance and Training Committee has worked with the Illinois Judicial Conference Committee on Education to develop a best practices manual on access to justice for judges. The annual new judges training includes sessions on procedural fairness, best practices for interacting with self-represented litigants and language access. The bi-annual 2016 Education Conference incorporated several access to justice sessions in its curriculum: including a session on standardized forms, a session on best practices for interacting with self-represented litigants and a session on procedural fairness, and a session on implicit bias. In addition, the annual New Judge Training also includes access to justice sessions, including sessions on procedural fairness, language access, and interacting with self-represented litigants.

5. **Develop guidelines and promote training opportunities for other court personnel – especially circuit clerks and members of their respective staffs**

The Court Guidance and Training Committee developed a series of guidelines for circuit clerks, court staff, and court volunteers to shed light on the distinction between legal information and legal advice. The ATJ Commission and the AOIC have conducted two trainings for the Illinois Association of Court Clerks (IACC) on the Court Patron (Safe Harbor) Policy at the 2016 Access to Justice regional meetings. In addition, AOIC staff conducted training sessions for several individual counties at the invitation of circuit clerks and court administrators.

**Recent and Current Initiatives**

1. **Research and make recommendations to simplify some court procedures and processes**

The AOIC has begun researching court simplification procedures in other states and has held conversations locally to identify areas particularly well-suited to process simplification. On a national level, the AOIC is co-chairing a working group on Process Simplification through the Self-Represented Litigation Network to lead national conversations on the topic and to identify best practices from other states. The AOIC drafted a report on small claims mediation services in Illinois and used the research to develop a draft list of best practices and model rules for counties interested in starting new mediation programs.

2. **Research and make recommendations for technology to enable remote access to the court system**

The Process Simplification/Remote Access Committee, in collaboration with the Forms Committee, is in the process of developing a remote appearance form suite to expand the use of Supreme Rule 185 that permits for telephonic appearances in some circumstances. The Remote Access Committee has also retained a nationally recognized consultant, John Greacen, to develop a best practices manual for remote appearances and explore technology options to allow for remote appearances. In addition, the Committee has been involved with the Circuit Court of Cook County on remote appearance pilot programs in civil mental health hearings and probate matters.
3. Limited Scope Representation

The ATJ Commission's Limited Scope Representation Committee is collaborating with circuit courts and bar associations to innovate new strategies for connecting private attorneys with modest means litigants for all or part of their cases as provided by the limited scope representation rules approved by the Court in 2013. The ATJ Commission is considering ways to support and expand court-based pro bono programs that offer legal information and advice through partnerships with legal aid agencies, pro bono organizations, and local bar associations.

Proposed Initiatives

The ATJ Commission is currently engaged in strategic planning for a three-year plan of future activities. All proposed activities include continuing current initiatives, and all additional proposed initiatives will continue to further systemic access to justice work (including training, development of resources, examination of court processes, rules and procedures).
Iowa Access to Justice Commission

**Commission Chair:** Justice Brent Appel

**Commission Staff:** Molly Kottmeyer

**Mission:** Find solutions that will best serve Iowans who may encounter barriers to or difficulties with full accesses to the Iowa justice system.

**Goals:**

- Identify and assess the current and future needs of low-income Iowans for access to justice in civil matters by conducting a study of unmet legal needs. The study may include: (a) determining the manner in which unrepresented Iowans are attempting to meet their legal needs without attorneys, the extent to which those efforts are successful and the consequences of the lack of attorney representation, (b) identifying the efforts currently made by attorneys to represent low-income Iowans, (c) analyzing the need for additional funding and resources to meet the needs of unrepresented Iowans, (d) addressing other matters related to the delivery of equal access to justice in civil matters for all Iowans.
- Foster mutual collaboration among private lawyers, the legal services community, Iowa’s law schools, not-for-profit organizations and other community service providers.
- Explore initiatives designed to expand civil access to justice, such as increasing community education, enhancing technology, and developing additional self-represented litigant assistance programs.
- Propose recommendations on innovative ways of promoting access to justice for individuals who cannot afford legal counsel or who choose to represent themselves in civil cases.
- Identify changes in court rules, procedures and policies that may reduce barriers to Iowa’s justice system.

Submit an annual report to the Supreme Court regarding the gaps in service for Iowans wishing to access the court system. The initial report is due July 1, 2017.

**Top Three Accomplishments to Date:** None yet

**Recent and Current Initiatives:** n/a

**Planned Initiatives:** n/a
KANSAS ACCESS TO JUSTICE COMMITTEE

Committee Chair:

Hon. Nicholas St. Peter, Chief Judge, 19th Judicial District

Committee Staff:

- Martha Coffman, General Counsel, Kansas Office of Judicial Administration
- Sarah Hoskinson, Staff Attorney, Kansas Office of Judicial Administration

I. About the Kansas Access to Justice Committee – Mission and Goals

The Kansas Supreme Court established a Pro Se Committee in 2007 to study and provide recommendations on how to resolve issues related to self-represented individuals in the state’s legal system. This ad hoc group, which was renamed the Self-Represented Study Committee, maintained a limited focus.

In 2010, the Kansas Supreme Court expanded the focus of the ad hoc group to include ensuring access to the courts for all Kansans without regard to their level of income. Kansas Supreme Court Rule 1401 formally established the Access to Justice Committee in 2012 as a standing committee for the purpose of making recommendations to the Court about issues such as (1) increasing resources available for legal service for low-income litigants in civil cases; (2) improving planning and coordination of legal services delivery; and (3) reducing potential barriers to equal access to justice. The Committee has a minimum of 18 members who serve three-year terms, with a limit of two consecutive terms. The Court appoints committee members who include district court judges, court staff, and attorneys from across the state.

II. Major Accomplishments to Date

A. Limited Representation – New Kansas Supreme Court Rule Adopted

Kansas Supreme Court Rule 115A Limited Representation allows attorneys to provide limited assistance to clients. The requirements and procedures for entering into a limited representation relationship are defined in the rule. The Access to Justice Committee, in its earlier incarnation, was instrumental in developing pilot projects and forms that ultimately led to the implementation of Rule 115A.

B. Material for Self-Represented Litigants

The Committee developed brochures for pro se litigants addressing the legal process. These brochures covered topics such as:

- Should I Represent Myself?
- How to Use an Attorney to Represent Yourself in Court
The Committee also worked with the Office of Judicial Administration to provide information for self-represented parties on the Court’s public website: http://www.kscourts.org/Programs/Self-Help.

C. Summary of Authorities for Restricting Filings from Abusive Litigants

The Committee developed a Summary of Authorities for Judges Considering Whether to Restrict Court Filings to assist Kansas district court judges in analyzing whether to impose restrictions on litigants who are abusive filers. The guidelines are available on the Court's public website: http://www.kscourts.org/Programs/Self-Help/Summary-of-Authorities-Final-060515.pdf.

III. Current Initiatives

A. Self-Help Centers for Unrepresented Parties

Last year the Committee toured the first court-sponsored self-help center for unrepresented parties which is located in the Tenth Judicial District (Johnson County, Kansas). Following the tour, the Committee discussed how that concept could be developed to serve litigants across the state. A second self-help center has since been opened in Ellis County, Kansas to serve the 23rd Judicial District and surrounding areas. The Committee is studying the feasibility of opening additional regional self-help centers and providing assistance remotely in other areas.

B. Self-Help Forms for Unrepresented Parties

In conjunction with the establishment of regional self-help centers, the Committee identified a need to simplify the legal forms that are used in those centers. The Committee is currently considering how best to approach the process of simplifying and standardizing these forms.
Commission Co-Chairs:
Chief Justice Bernette Johnson, Chief Justice of the Louisiana Supreme Court
Marta Schnabel, 2006-2007 LSBA President, Partner at O’Bryon & Schnabel

Commission Staff:
Monte Mollere, LSBA Access to Justice Director

Mission
The mission of the Louisiana Access to Justice Commission is to “assure continuity of policy and purpose in the collaboration between the private bar, the courts, and the civil justice community so as to further the goal of assuring that Louisianans, regardless of their economic circumstance, have access to equal justice under the law.”

Goals
The Louisiana Access to Justice Commission:

- Seeks to increase resources for low-income individuals in Louisiana through increased funding of civil legal aid providers, and through increased participation of the private bar, law schools, and other entities.
- Seeks to increase access to legal assistance by reducing barriers related to language access, by working with courts to develop customized forms and services, and by expanding opportunities for private attorney involvement with low and moderate income Louisianans.
- Seeks to educate the judiciary, private bar, state lawmakers, and other entities, about Access to Justice issues and initiatives, and the continuum of services available in Louisiana.

Top Three Accomplishments to Date

While the Louisiana Access to Justice Commission convened its first meeting in January 2016, its predecessor, the Louisiana State Bar Association (LSBA) Access to Justice Policy Committee was created in 2009, building on 18 years of statewide coordination by the LSBA. The top three Commission accomplishments include:

1. **Economic Impact Study** – Through the work of our Funding Committee and with the leadership and financial support of the Louisiana Bar Foundation, an Economic Impact Study was completed in December 2016, which demonstrates a social return on investment of $8 for every $1 invested in civil legal services in Louisiana. A copy of the report can be found at: [http://files.lsba.org/documents/ATJ/EIS2017.pdf](http://files.lsba.org/documents/ATJ/EIS2017.pdf)
2. **Louisiana Re-Entry Collaborative Lawyering Program** – This project was created to address the civil legal needs of Louisiana Re-Entry Court participants with the goal of reducing recidivism and increasing successful return to communities after incarceration. This collaborative effort includes working with community organizations and individual judicial districts “re-entry courts.” By providing support in certain civil matters, the collaborative helps participants avoid legal pitfalls upon release that may increase the
likelihood of recidivism. Much of this support is provided by pro bono attorneys who complete a training coordinated by this committee.

3. **Access to Justice Developing Leadership Internship** - In response to the recognized need to cultivate the next generation of access to justice leaders, representatives of the LSBA, Louisiana civil legal aid providers, Louisiana District Judges Association, Louisiana law schools, the Louisiana Supreme Court, and private bar created the ATJ Developing Leadership Intern Program. Through this initiative, interns are sponsored by prestigious law firms with records of dedication to access to justice issues, and spend their time working with civil legal aid programs. Weekly programming focuses on the various civil legal needs of low-income people, the ways in which organizations within the justice community address those needs, and how these services are increasing the quality of life for those served.

**Recent and Current Initiatives**

- **Statewide Uniform Domestic Forms** - The Self-Represented Litigation Committee is currently developing domestic pleadings for self-represented litigants to be utilized statewide. Louisiana’s lack of a unified court system poses some unique challenges to standardization, but the work group includes judges, clerks, legal aid attorneys, and other stakeholders. Once completed, the forms will be available online via the Louisiana State Bar Association and also at public libraries, and eventually automated for a more user-friendly experience.

- **State Legislative Funding Efforts** – The Funding Committee will seek funding from the State of Louisiana in its 2017 legislative session. The plan is to seek both a general appropriation and an additional fee dedicated to funding Louisiana’s two civil legal service providers.

- **LA.FreeLegalAnswers.org** - The Louisiana ATJ Commission supported the launch of Louisiana’s new online pro bono resource, which provides free legal advice to indigent individuals.

- **Language Access Efforts** - This committee has begun to review efforts supporting Louisiana language access and to, on a national basis, review of other states’ language access “best practices.” A survey has been completed to examine current interpreters’ qualifications and prevailing practices, and a report will soon be complete. A similar survey is being developed to understand the experiences attorneys have with LEP clients. The
Committee has also developed an Attorney’s Guide, based on the Supreme Court’s “Judicial Bench Card,” designed to give the general public and attorney’s information in the use of interpreters, including statutes, practice tips, and general information.

- **Legal Needs Assessment** – The Louisiana State Bar Association engaged Professor David Yarbrough at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette to undertake a comprehensive evaluation of the legal needs of Louisiana’s poor. The assessment is complete and the initial draft of the report is due soon.

- **Legal Education & Assistance Program (LEAP)** – LEAP is a partnership between Louisiana’s Access to Justice Community and public libraries across the state. Libraries are provided with specialized plain-language resources for the public, and also training for staff on how to respond to legal inquiries. Local branches also host pro bono attorneys and legal aid programs through “Lawyers in Libraries” events. In 2016, ATJ Staff trained over 150 librarians, and assisted over 700 people with legal problems in our annual Lawyers in Libraries day of service.

**Planned Initiatives**

- **Modest Means Legal Needs Initiative** – Program initiatives to increase access to legal services for clients of modest means that do not qualify for free legal assistance but cannot afford market rate legal services.

- **LSBA ATJ Distinguished Pro Bono Fellowship** - This project enables senior lawyers and retired judges to partner with non-profit organizations, courts and other public interest legal organization to increase access to justice. The program allows retired lawyers with specialized skill and experience to be matched with entities that need their help.

- **In Forma Pauperis Efforts** - This committee will begin a discussion with the judiciary, clerks of court and civil legal aid providers to examine Louisiana’s In Forma Pauperis Statutes and the verified incidents of their misapplication. Initial conversations include recommended educational seminars for clerks of court, the judiciary and providers.

- **Language Access**- Volunteer attorneys will review language access practices nationwide and focused on gleaning “best practices” used in other jurisdictions. Their final report will provide information, best practices and recommendations to the Commission to improve language access to individuals in Louisiana courts.
Maine Justice Action Group

Commission Chair:
Hon. Andrew M. Mead; Associate Justice, Maine Supreme Judicial Court

Commission Staff:
Cynthia A. Brochu

Mission

The Maine Justice Action Group (JAG) is a judge-led coalition consisting of civil legal services providers and other organizations and individuals committed to civil access to justice. JAG advocates for funding for civil legal services and encourages innovative approaches for provision of civil legal services for Maine’s underserved populations. JAG convenes, educates, and serves as a catalyst in its quest for justice for all.

Goals

• Obtain increases in funding for legal services
• Expand pro bono services provided by lawyers
• Educate the public on the need for civil legal services
• Provide technological support for legal services providers and pro bono attorneys

Top Three Accomplishments to Date
(1) Creation of Equal Justice Partners and Immigrant Legal Advocacy Project
(2) Establishment of biennial Access to Justice Seminar in conjunction with the Maine State Bar Association and the annual ATJ Day at the Legislature
(3) Creation of Katahdin Counsel Pro Bono Recognition program

Recent and Current Initiatives

• Access to Justice Symposium 2016 – Serving Those Who Served: Meeting the Legal Needs of Maine’s Veterans, Service Members and their Families
• ATJ Day at the Legislature
• Lawyers in Libraries
• Legislative Initiative (seeking increased funding)
• Katahdin Counsel (recognizing pro bono contributions of 50 hours or more)
• Establishment of Emeritus Counsel status (to allow unadmitted retired attorneys to do pro bono work)
• Business Outreach/In-House Counsel Initiative
• Justice Systems Committee (seeking innovations and best practices to serve unrepresented litigants and individuals being represented by pro bono counsel)
• Economic Benefits Study (publishing and distributing the recently completed study)

Planned Initiatives

• 2018 Access to Justice Seminar
• Request to legislature for increased funding for legal services providers
Maryland Access to Justice Commission

Commission Chair:

Ward B. Coe, III, Partner, Gallagher, Evelius and Jones

Commission Staff:

Reena K. Shah, Executive Director, Maryland Access to Justice Commission

Mission and Goals

The Maryland Access to Justice Commission was originally created in 2008 by order of the Chief Judge of the Court of Appeals of Maryland, and operated within the judiciary. By subsequent order, the Commission ended as an entity of the judiciary effective December 31, 2014. Some of the former Commission’s functions were absorbed into a new Access to Justice Department within the judiciary.

We have formed a new Access to Justice Commission that is an independent entity, separate from the judiciary. The new Access to Justice Commission will continue the work of the former commission, which has not been assumed by the Access to Justice Department. The Commission will:

- Advocate for laws, rules, programs, policies, and practices that expand access to justice and the quality of justice for all Marylanders
- Advocate for increased funding for the legal services delivery system
- Promote public awareness of the importance of civil legal services for disadvantaged people and communities in Maryland, and of the need for expanded access to justice
- Promote research, education, public awareness, and policy statements on ways to improve access to justice and the quality of justice in Maryland
- Promote collaboration and coordination among legal services providers
- Promote a commitment to pro bono legal services and access to justice among lawyers and law students in Maryland
- Seek the knowledge and advice of people who experience barriers to access to justice
Top Three Accomplishments to Date

In our foundational year alone, we worked with others in successfully advocating with the Governor’s Office of Crime Control and Prevention for a **five-fold** increase in funding to civil legal aid organizations from $2 million to almost $12 million. In addition, we also:

- Advocated in Maryland General Assembly on bills that will increase access to justice;
- Convened a consortium of legal service providers to develop and implement a communications strategy – a strategy that would raise awareness about the value of civil legal aid and influence legislative outcomes to increase state funding for civil legal aid; and
- Hosted a statewide conference to foster the use of use of limited scope representation.

Recent and Current Initiatives

As the convener of a broad-range of stakeholders and the united voice for civil legal aid funders, providers and clients, the Commission will provide leadership in developing a **statewide response** to meeting the increased demand for legal information and civil legal services. For example, the burden on providers who offer immigration services has increased substantially, and we will work with these providers in analyzing their needs and marshalling resources for them. We will also partner with a broad-range of civil legal aid organizations to develop and disseminate Know Your Rights materials that accurately describe available options and keep the public informed of changing laws.

Our Immediate Response Strategy

- **Community Education** – Partner with civil legal aid organizations to do legal analysis, develop and disseminate Know Your Rights materials that accurately capture the shifting legal landscape to keep public informed
- **Communications** – Work to get media placements in English and Spanish language outlets where legal experts can relay important new information and showcase the broad-ranging work of civil legal aid and its value to society in upholding justice and the rule of law
- **Coordination** - Lead the effort to coordinate and support the impending need for mass defense efforts in immigration and other case types

Planned Initiatives

In 2017, we expect to accomplish the following:

- **Needs Assessment & Inventory** - Engage broad range of stakeholders and impacted communities to conduct a needs assessment and inventory of services to guide the future course of civil legal aid
- **Communications** – Implement statewide strategic communications campaign to increase public awareness and influence legislative outcomes to increase state funding for civil legal aid
- **Innovation** – Foster use of limited scope representation to strengthen the continuum of civil legal aid services that increase access to justice
• **Data** – Transform the civil justice system into one that focuses on data collection and analysis; has justice indicators; sets benchmarks; and has metrics to chart progress

Mission: The mission of the Massachusetts Access to Justice Commission is to promote equal justice for all by providing leadership and vision to, and coordination with, the many organizations and interested persons involved in providing and improving access to justice for those unable to afford counsel.1

Goals: The Commission strives to achieve its mission noted above.

Top Three Accomplishments to Date:

1. Expanded legal aid services through creative funding initiatives, including:
   - Enacting an access to justice fee for the annual attorney registration, which has raised over $1 million annually;
   - Adopting a pro hac vice fee, with all funds directed to legal services;
   - Supporting other grant/funds for legal services, such as Technology Innovation Grants; Homecorps funds for a statewide virtual law firm for foreclosure prevention; legislative appropriations (federal and state); federal monies (such as Victims of Crime Act funding); and cy pres awards;
   - Forming a stand-alone nonprofit fundraising organization, the Massachusetts Equal Justice Fund, which focuses on corporate funding of legal services innovations.

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1 The Commission pursues this mission by various means including the following: 1) Strengthening the civil legal services community in providing legal services for those unable to afford counsel; 2) Enlarging the number of attorneys trained, willing, and able to provide pro bono civil legal services; 3) Enlarging the number of attorneys in the private bar trained, willing and able to provide civil legal services through limited assistance representation or other means to low and moderate-income individuals who are unable to afford legal representation and unable to obtain legal aid representation; 4) Enlarging the number of nonlawyers trained, willing and able to provide appropriate assistance to improving access to justice; 5) Improving the ability of those without counsel to identify, articulate, and present their legal claims and defenses in civil judicial and administrative proceedings; 6) Working closely with the Chief Justices of the Supreme Judicial Court and the Trial Court, the Trial Court Administrator and the Special Advisor to the Trial Court on Access to Justice Initiatives to broaden access to justice within the court system; 7) Coordinating the efforts of the broad network of legal, social service and administrative organizations and interested persons who seek to improve access to justice.
2. Created numerous pro bono innovations, including:
   - the Access to Justice Fellows Program, in which over 70 retired and retiring lawyers have provided over 55,000 hours of pro bono time to legal services organizations, nonprofit entities, the courts and the commission over the past five years (each volunteering 10-20 hours/week for at least an academic year);
   - the Appellate Pro Bono Project, in which the Massachusetts Access to Justice Commission, the Appellate Clerks’ Offices, legal services and pro bono law firms have developed a statewide weekly clinic for self-represented low income litigants, with 131 pro bono attorneys from over seven law firms having served more than 230 individuals at the clinic to date, helping in areas such as family law and housing disputes;
   - Instituting a Pro Bono Honor Roll for attorneys who have performed commendable pro bono efforts in the prior year, which has typically seen increased participation and recognition each year since it began;
   - Providing institutional support for several pro bono initiatives developed by other legal services organizations in Massachusetts.

3. Created a Commission that is an effective institution within the state justice community, speaking on behalf of access to justice issues in a broad spectrum of areas.

Current Initiatives

At this time, the Commission's work has six broad strategic objectives, some of which involve continuing work to further the accomplishments listed above:

1. **Improving funding for civil legal services organizations.**
   - Facilitated the expected allocation of over $8 million of Massachusetts’ Victims of Crime Act funding for legal services support to victims of crime by providing 28 legal aid staff statewide for victims of crime.
   - Reviewing and supporting efforts on the civil right to counsel (removal proceedings, immigration, people with disabilities and eviction defense).
   - Monitoring continuing revenue from funding initiatives of the Second Commission ($51 annual "access to justice" attorney registration fee pro hac vice rule, cy pres rule, testing the feasibility of major philanthropic gifts from non-lawyers, spun-off Massachusetts Equal Justice Fund, encouraging legal aid programs to increase attorneys fee revenues through fee shifting).
   - Supporting increased appropriations of state funds for the Massachusetts Legal Assistance Corporation (MLAC).
2. **Increasing services provided by private attorneys.**
   - Developing methods for law firms to use to succeed financially while serving low and moderate income clients through a fee-shifting approach.
   - Focusing attention on law school curriculum, including the implementation of, and monitor the success of, incubators and accelerators.
   - Supporting and encouraging limited assistance representation.
   - Supporting the state’s interactive pro bono website, MassLegalAnswersOnline, following Tennessee and ABA models.
   - Supporting the ATJ Fellows Program, described above.
   - Supporting the Appellate Pro Bono Project, noted above.
   - Monitoring implementation of the Honor Roll program, noted above.
   - Monitoring implementation of "access to justice" as a bar exam topic, an idea developed by the Commission.

3. **Improving assistance to unrepresented litigants.**
   - Leading collaboration of many stakeholders in state justice system to develop strategic plan for achieving aspirational goal of 100% access to effective assistance to self-represented individuals in essential legal matters, with support from a $100,000 Public Welfare Foundation/Justice For All grant.
   - Participating in establishment of six Court Service Centers around the state to assist self-representing litigants.
   - Working on legislation to make Housing Court available statewide.
   - Developing information sheets about the legal process for Housing and Probate and Family Court at the summons and complaint stage for unrepresented litigants.

4. **Providing access to justice beyond the courts: enhancing administrative justice.**
   - Exploring technology-related barriers to administrative justice, language access issues and integration and information sharing between administrative agencies, including enhancements to the benefits application process that could be used by all administrative agencies.
   - Assisting in implementation of "Best Practices for State Agencies to Enhance State Administrative Justice" for agencies that administer benefit programs, emphasizing due process and procedures before benefits are altered.
5. **Increasing justice by helping civil legal aid programs be more effective.**
   - Providing planning leadership regarding critical decisions facing state legal aid system, including but not limited to encouraging legal aid organizations to increase systemic advocacy, use most effective technology, improve planning techniques and maximize efficiency.

6. **Exploring new roles for non-lawyers.**
   - Exploring the idea of pursuing a pilot project using non-lawyers in some capacity, likely in conjunction with our Justice For All Grant.
   - Developing website through which social service agency workers obtain legal support from expert legal aid and pro bono lawyers.

**Planned Initiatives**

The Commission is actively exploring new or expanded programs involving:

- Development of potential pilot programs in the areas of consumer debt, housing, and family law, as a second phase of our Justice For All grant;
- Following up on recommendations that will be presented in an upcoming report from our Access to Lawyers Committee (May 2017);
- Following up on recommendations that will be presented in an upcoming report from our Administrative Justice Committee (June 2017);
- Exploring potential justice issues that cross over between civil and criminal matters.
Mississippi Access to Justice Commission

Commission Co-Chairs: Honorable Jacqueline E. Mask, Chancery Court Judge, Lee County, Mississippi; and H. Rodger Wilder, Attorney, Balch & Bingham

Commission Staff: Tiffany M. Graves

Mission: The mission of the Mississippi Access to Justice Commission is to develop a unified strategy to improve access to justice in civil legal proceedings for the poor in Mississippi.

Goals: To accomplish our mission, the Commission was empowered by the Mississippi Supreme Court to:

• identify the current and future needs of the legal services community in providing access to justice to the poor in Mississippi;
• develop and establish a strategic statewide plan for delivery of legal services to the poor in Mississippi;
• develop strategies and ideas to increase resources and funding for access to justice in civil legal matters, and to make recommendations to appropriate entities to ensure that the resources and funding are applied to the areas and organizations of greatest need;
• work to maximize the wise and efficient use of available resources, including development of local, regional and/or statewide systems that encourage the coordination of resources and funding;
• develop and implement initiatives designed to expand civil access to justice
• work to reduce barriers to the justice system by addressing existing and proposed court rules, procedures and policies that affect access to justice for poor Mississippians; and
• monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the statewide system and services provided, and periodically evaluate the progress made in fulfilling their respective responsibilities.

Top Three Accomplishments to Date

1. In January 2011, at the request of the Commission, the Mississippi Supreme Court amended the Mississippi Rules of Professional Conduct to allow for the unbundling of legal services to the poor.
2. In 2014 and 2015, the Commission developed virtual self-help forms for divorce, emancipation and adult name change. The forms are available on the Commission’s site and through the state’s LSC programs and the Mississippi Volunteer Lawyers Project.
3. In June 2015, the Mississippi Supreme Court, at the request of the Commission, revised the Law Student Limited Practice Rule to allow law students to volunteer with legal aid and pro bono programs regardless of whether they attend a Mississippi law school and even if they are not seeking academic credit for their pro bono service. Now, more law
students can actively engage in pro bono work to help low-income Mississippians resolve their legal matters.

**Recent and Current Initiatives**

- In 2013, the Commission received an ABA “Access to Justice Commission Grant” to host a summit to discuss expanding access to justice to create pathways out of poverty. Approximately 80 professionals from the legal, health, faith and social services fields attended the event. We hope to host a similar event in the future.
- In May 2016, the Commission hosted the state’s first-ever “Medical-Legal Partnership” Learning Session to discuss ways health care and legal communities can work together to assist vulnerable populations more holistically. 65 attorneys, judges, social workers, nurses and physicians attended. The Commission’s Medical-Legal Partnership Subcommittee is currently planning roundtable sessions with many of these attendees to expand on the event.
- In August 2016, in sponsorship with the Mississippi Volunteer Lawyers Project, the Commission launched ms.freelegalanswers.org, a civil legal help site designed to assist Mississippi’s low-income citizens with their legal questions. The Commission handles public promotion of the site.
- The Commission has co-sponsored 13 expungement workshops and legal clinics over the past two years, serving over 600 people. In February 2017, the Commission, in partnership with the Magnolia Bar Association, launched [www.expungementmississippi.com](http://www.expungementmississippi.com), a website that allows users to determine whether their past convictions are eligible for record expungement. The Commission has been working with a state legislators to expand the state’s expungement laws.
- The Commission currently co-sponsors “Lawyers in the Library” legal advice clinics with the Young Lawyers Division of The Mississippi Bar. There have been 15 such events since 2014, serving approximately 300 people at public libraries throughout Mississippi. More events are planned for 2017.

**Planned Initiatives**

- The Commission’s Delivery System Committee will continue to explore ways to provide critically-needed services and supports to self-represented litigants in 2017. In an effort to provide a resource for anyone facing civil proceedings alone, we are working with a developer to design an app for Mississippi specifically for self-represented litigants with chancery court matters. Among other features, the app will include interactive maps of all of Mississippi’s chancery courthouses, downloadable pleadings for divorce, emancipation, name change, visitation, protection orders, and in forma pauperis, video libraries with filing and hearing instructions, information and links to Mississippi’s nonprofit legal aid programs, and a link to the recently-launched online legal help website. The app will be a powerful resource and we are already hard at work filling it up with helpful, plain language, user-friendly content. We expect to test the app with actual
prospective users—self-represented litigants—to ensure that it will be user-friendly and contain the elements that will be most beneficial to them.

- The Commission will work with the Mississippi Judicial College to provide presentations to judges, court administrators and clerks on access to justice and, in particular, the challenges faced by self-represented litigants. It is our hope that these presentation opportunities will help provide greater insight into the scope of the need for free legal services throughout Mississippi and the resources that currently exist to help bring some relief to those who lack the resources to afford attorneys to assist them with their legal issues. We also hope to engage in discussions with the judges and court staffs who attend the conferences about how we can work collaboratively to address issues that prohibit sufficient access to our civil courts.
Montana Access to Justice Commission

Commission Chair:  Hon. Beth Baker, Montana Supreme Court Justice

Commission Staff:  Niki Zupanic and Crystine Miller

Mission
The Commission was formed in 2012 with a mission of assuring access to the civil justice system through identifying, overseeing, and coordinating access to justice projects in Montana.

Goals
The Commission identified the following objectives in its 2013 Strategic Plan and continues to be guided by these goals:

☐ Address the challenge of increasing numbers of self-represented litigants to the end that they can obtain expeditious, fair, and appropriate resolution of their legal claims and defenses.
☐ Create meaningful alternatives for persons to resolve disputes and solve legal problems without recourse to the Courts.
☐ Improve access to the Courts by overcoming impediments to access caused by geographic, economic, cultural, or linguistic isolation or by mental or physical dis-ability.
☐ Support a high level of coordination and networking among legal assistance providers, the law school, and other pertinent entities in order to foster a statewide, integrated civil legal services delivery system that is effective and efficient in responding to the needs of low-income communities and individuals.
• Educate the judiciary, the legislature, law students, lawyers, and the general public regarding the importance of access to justice for all communities, including Montana’s Native American communities, and the value of a strong, well-funded legal services delivery system, particularly as it affects the efficient operation of the Courts and the economic health of Montana.
☐ Secure adequate funding for civil access to justice, including but not limited to seeking support from the State government.

Top Three Accomplishments to Date

Public forum series
Between October 2015 and October 2016, the Commission conducted a statewide series of public forums designed to evaluate the state of access to the civil justice system in Montana. The Commission held forums in each of Montana's seven largest cities. The series brought together judges, legislators, community leaders, and Montana legal aid organizations to discuss pressures on Montana courts and the barriers people face when accessing our legal system.
The testimony and discussion offered insights into the successes and challenges of existing statewide programs, current pressures on the court system, and unique perspectives from each community. The Commission concluded the series by issuing a written report and a video compilation. Following the report’s recommendations, the Commission drafted and sponsored legislation for the 2017 legislative session to approve increases in some civil court filing fees and dedicate that new revenue to funding for legal aid.

**Data collection and published studies**
Within the first years of its inception, the Commission shepherded several studies and data collection projects. Through its Standing Committee on Self-Represented Litigants, the Commission completed a project collecting and analyzing data illustrating the experiences between self-represented litigants and the courts. The Commission sponsored a Gaps and Barriers study (*The Justice Gap in Montana: As Vast as the Big Sky*), which took an in-depth look at legal services in Montana and identified potential strategies for bridging Montana’s justice gap. The Commission also supported an economic impact study (*The Economic Impact of Civil Legal Aid to the State of Montana*), which presents relevant data and rigorous analysis demonstrating how civil legal aid strengthens state and local economies in Montana. The research and analysis from these projects continue to provide invaluable information as the Commission pursues its educational and advocacy activities.

**Cy Pres Rule**
The Commission recommended changes to the rule of civil procedure regarding state class action cases. The change stipulated that not less than 50% of residual funds in class actions will be directed to organizations to support activities and programs that promote access to the Montana civil justice system. The Montana Supreme Court ordered the rule change in 2014, based largely on the Commission’s recommendation.

**Recent and Current Initiatives**

**Legislation for State Funding**
Recognizing that an effective continuum of legal services requires adequate and sustainable funding, the Commission developed a legislative proposal for the 2017 session to create new revenue. House Bill 46, introduced by Commissioners Kimberly Dudik and Nels Swandal, would increase some civil court filing fees and appropriate that new revenue to the Office of Court Administrator for grants to legal aid organizations. The Commission explored several funding mechanisms before determining that a filing fee increase presented the best option. As of the date of this Report, HB 46 has passed the Montana House of Representatives and is on its way to the Senate.

**Forms Development**
The Commission has continued significant work to revise and automate standardized forms for use by self-represented litigants and pro bono attorneys, including updates to forms for Dissolution of Marriage with Children and for Guardianship of a Minor. The Commission’s
Standing Committee on Self-Represented Litigants combined the dissolution forms with instructions, provided training to court staff and other users, posted the forms to the committee webpage and collected public comment and feedback as part of a pilot project. Once the pilot phase is completed, the forms will be finalized for wider use. The Commission also approved the committee’s continued work to address inconsistencies in fee waiver forms used among the courts and that result in disparities among litigants. The committee is currently working with the Attorney General’s office to complete a proposed standard fee waiver form and order for final consideration by the Commission. Additionally, a Commission working group created and continues to develop a checklist to assist litigants with collecting evidence and preparing for a permanent order of protection hearing.

Legal Incubator
The Commission’s Committee on Law School Partnerships is exploring the potential for an “incubator” program at the University of Montana School of Law. CLSP developed, promoted, and administered a multi-question survey for University of Montana law students. The survey, which received a 60% response rate, showed strong support for limited scope practice and interest in starting a practice in a town with fewer than 10,000 residents. Participants noted several barriers to starting rural practices serving modest means clients, including student loan debt and lack of opportunities for spouses and other family members. The committee then held several facilitated focus groups with law students to explore the students’ interest in and suggestions for a law practice incubator program in Montana. The committee has begun collaborating with Montana Legal Services and the Montana State Bar in an Incubator Working Group to develop a detailed proposal, which suggested that such a program should focus on developing law practices serving modest means clientele in rural areas and serve pro bono populations during the training phase.

Early Resolution and Mediation Program
The Commission created an ad hoc Mediation Project Committee to provide guidance and support for a court-connected mediation program. The purpose of the program, known as E-RAMP (Early Resolution and Mediation Program), is to provide litigants in parenting disputes a path to mediation for self-determined, early resolution; to facilitate early District Court case management; to produce greater likelihood of compliance with agreements; and to provide pro bono opportunities to volunteer attorneys and mediators. The E-RAMP pilot program is limited to court fee-waived cases involving two self-represented litigants in a child custody or visitation proceeding. The project’s initial focus was to create mediator qualifications. After reviewing the Montana Mediation Association standards, the committee developed a set of recommended attorney mediator qualifications, education, and training for the Commission’s review and approval. The Commission approved those proposed attorney mediator standards at its December 2016 meeting.

Student Pro Bono Programs
The Committee on Law School Partnerships began implementing a Court-approved process to incorporate law students into performing pro bono service. The Committee is focused on eliminating barriers to law student pro bono participation, including a review of possible
changes to the rules of professional conduct. The committee has also met with Montana law school faculty to develop ideas for increasing law student involvement in pro bono legal services. The committee identified law student time and supervisor availability as barriers to greater student involvement, and identified priority areas of developing discrete task programs in the law school building, promoting pro bono involvement through the first year theory and practice course, and recruiting law professors as supervisors. Additionally, the committee worked with the State Bar of Montana and the Court’s Statewide Pro Bono Coordinator to develop a process to give all bar examination applicants the opportunity to submit a voluntary statement of any pro bono law-related activities. The first report from that new system will be available soon.

**Planned Initiatives**

*New Strategic Plan and Resource Inventory*
The Commission renewed its resource inventory assessment and strategic planning activities in 2016. The Commission supported and several stakeholders collaborated on a grant proposal submitted by the Montana Justice Foundation to develop a detailed resource inventory and strategic action plan. While that proposal was not funded, its development prompted the Commission to review its current strategic plan and to create new comprehensive statewide resource guides. That work will continue in 2017.
Nevada Supreme Court Access to Justice Commission

Commission Co-Chairs:

Justice Michael L. Douglas
Justice James W. Hardesty

Commission Staff:

Angela Washington

Goals

Provided in Nevada Supreme Court Rule 15:

The supreme court shall appoint a commission on access to justice. The commission shall:

(a) Assess current and future needs for civil legal services for persons of limited means in Nevada.
(b) Develop statewide policies designed to support and improve the delivery of legal services.
(c) Improve self-help services and opportunities for proper person litigants and increase pro bono activities.
(d) Develop programs to increase public awareness of the impact that limited access to justice has on other government services and on society.
(e) Investigate the availability of and pursue increased public and private financing to support legal services organizations and other efforts to provide legal services to persons of limited means.
(f) Recommend legislation or rules affecting access to justice to the supreme court.

Top Three Accomplishments to Date

- Collaboration of ATJ Commission and Nevada’s participating IOLTA financial institutions. (Nevada does not use the normal IOLTA index; Nevada’s ATJ Commission and participating financial institutions regularly collaborate on higher IOLTA rates to provide as many services as possible to those in need; as a result, Nevada legal aid organizations have enjoyed a regular increase and continued stability of IOLTA revenue.)

- Collaboration of Nevada Supreme Court and legal services providers in the promotion of legislative funding for pro bono programs and support.

- The ONE Promise Nevada Campaign. (In 2013 the Campaign, which encourages all attorneys in Nevada to take one pro bono case, was launched. The campaign is supported by a video, website [www.onepromisenevada.org] and printed campaign...
materials. Since the launch, pro bono participation in the state has increased to more than 41%.

**Recent and Current Initiatives**

1. The Nevada Supreme Court Access to Justice Commission recently completed a statewide service delivery plan.

2. Currently, the Commission is preparing to complete a civil legal needs assessment.

3. Also, currently, the Commission is close to completing a rural self-help website that will contain uniform court forms for use in the rural court districts.

4. The Commission continues to work closely with the Nevada Bar Foundation to ensure that Nevada legal aid organizations have consistent IOLTA revenue to support their programs.

**Planned Initiatives**

- A study group/subcommittee to address potential reduction and/or loss of federal funding;
- Commission membership expansion;
New Hampshire Access to Justice Commission

Commission Co-Chairs:

The Honorable Joseph N. Laplante, Chief Judge, United States District Court for the District of New Hampshire

Richard Y. Uchida, Partner, Hinckley, Allen & Snyder,

Commission Staff:

None

Mission

The New Hampshire Access to Justice Commission ("Commission") was created in 2007 to help expand access to and enhance the quality of justice in civil legal matters for New Hampshire residents. The objective of the Commission is to develop and implement policy initiatives and coordinate strategic development to effectively move the ideas into action.

Goals

Despite the lack of staffing or funding of any kind, the Commission has moved forward with a set of initiatives, given the enthusiastic commitment of the court system, especially the circuit court, to partner with Commission members on the Initiatives. Below is a truncated summary of each initiative on which work is progressing, together with next steps, factors to assess success, timetables, etc. Notably a number of them cover areas including technology, active partnering with judges and court staff at community levels, expanded triage, referral and channeling of those in need in the court system, work to simplify court forms, more meaningful self-help and information resources (inside and outside of the courthouse), growth of volunteer attorney participation and opportunities, alternative dispute resolution, and expanded limited (unbundled) representation opportunities.

In addition, the Commission continues to act as a convener of individuals and groups critical to the delivery of civil legal services in the state beyond the three major statewide legal services organizations in New Hampshire (the Pro Bono Referral Program, the Legal Advice and Referral Center and New Hampshire Legal Assistance). In addition to the Supreme Court itself, some of the other groups with interests in the system include the State Judicial Council, the State Public Defender program, the Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) program, the Disability Rights Center, the New Hampshire Bar Association, the New Hampshire Bar Foundation, the Campaign for Legal Services, the University of New Hampshire School of Law, including its Social Justice Institute, and law librarians at the Supreme Court and UNH School of Law. All of these groups have representation on the Commission.
**Top Three Accomplishments to Date**

1. Legal Needs Study - 2013
2. Summit conference of the State Judiciary, the State Bar Association and Bar Foundation, the leadership of the legal services provider network in New Hampshire and other key support organizations that provide funding and/or assistance to civil legal services for the poor – 2014.
3. Prioritization of access to justice initiatives and implementation of Phase I of those initiatives (see below) – 2016-2017.

**Recent and Current Initiatives**

1. Consumer Debt Docket – The 9th Circuit – District Division (Nashua) now serves as the home of a pilot program to educate debtors about debtor-creditor rights and to resolve collections cases and payment hearings short of trial. This Initiative will also serve as the vehicle to pilot several other initiatives (Courthouse Legal Clinic, Training and Toolbox for Volunteer Attorneys).

2. Courthouse Legal Clinic (Consumer Debt Docket) – See Consumer Debt Docket Above. Program now has volunteer attorneys providing advice about debtor-creditor rights. The development and organization of this initiative runs concurrently with the Consumer Debt Docket.


5. Simplification of Court Forms – Review of all public civil forms currently in use in the Circuit Court and identification of those requiring simplification for better ease of use. Forms to be revised and implemented for use statewide.

6. Online Pro Bono Project – Program imagines brief advice, information and legal services resource information for clients qualifying for pro bono assistance – primarily through call-in or other brief encounter forums. Implementation requires some organizational and professional conduct/court rule work, which is underway.
**Planned Initiatives**

1. **Public Relations Campaign**: Meetings led by appeals and trial court judges and the Commission with business, community and non-governmental groups emphasizing the importance of the access to justice movement.

2. **Enhanced Information Services** – This program imagines one or more statewide call-in locations and information services websites to obtain legal help and information. Preliminary analysis and evaluation underway.

3. **Adoption of Annual Pro Bono Reporting Requirement** – This Initiative is on hold until completion of the study authorized by the Commission. Report due in summer 2017.

4. **Expansion of Use of Limited Representation Models** – Planning Stage: Program is designed to increase both understanding and use of limited representation-unbundled services models to deliver legal services.

5. **Expanded Court Sponsored ADR** – Planning Phase – The Circuit Court is currently engaged in an aggressive project to introduce expanded ADR (neutral case evaluation and mediation) in landlord/tenant cases in certain jurisdictions. This could be expanded to martial/family law cases across the State in the future.

6. **Engagement of paralegals as possible courthouse navigators** under the guidance of the Circuit Court.

7. **Exploration of implementation of Massachusetts Fellows program** in New Hampshire.

8. **Expanded Use of Video Technology** to provide legal services, information, access in remote rural areas, etc.
New Mexico Commission on Access to Justice

Commission Chair:

Hon. Nan G. Nash, Chief Judge, Second Judicial District Court in Albuquerque, N.M.

Commission Staff:

Tina R. Sribbitt, Senior Staff Attorney, AOC

Mission
to provide every New Mexican, regardless of income level, with Access to Justice under our system of civil law.

Goals
Commission goals include building resources for civil legal assistance, increasing public and private bar awareness through communication and message development, encouraging more pro bono work by attorneys, and improving training and technology, especially with an eye to increase services to the rural areas of the state.

Top Three Accomplishments to Date

1. The N.M. Supreme Court’s adoption in 2006 of the New Mexico Ten Step Plan for Improving Access to Justice (the Ten Step or Pro Bono Plan), developed and recommended by the Commission. Perhaps the most important aspect of the Ten Step Plan was its recognition of the judiciary’s critical role in a successful effort to increase access to justice. Its implementation resulted in a series of groundbreaking steps: mandatory pro bono reporting, the establishment of pro bono committees in each of the thirteen judicial districts that hold regular clinics or other pro bono events, creation of the position of Statewide Pro Bono Coordinator, and establishment of the Volunteer Attorney Pool that trains and provides malpractice insurance coverage to volunteers. As a consequence of these steps, volunteer service by attorneys around the state has increased dramatically.

2. Updating and implementing the State Plan for the Provision of Legal Services to Low-Income New Mexicans that reduces barriers to access to justice, ensures appropriate services are maximally available, guides allocation of resources, and provides accountability. Every several years, the State Plan is revised to reflect new priorities. Moreover, each new Plan challenges all stakeholders to rededicate themselves to the Commission’s goal of access to the civil legal system for all low-income New Mexicans. The current version is the 2014 State Plan.
3. Development of a unified, streamlined process since 2012 through which the Supreme Court of New Mexico controls certain funds (generated by court rules) supporting the delivery of civil legal services to low-income New Mexicans. These funds include:

   a. registration fees collected by the State Bar of New Mexico from non-admitted attorneys appearing pro hac vice in civil cases before state courts;
   b. cy pres residual funds that might be disbursed to pro hac vice or IOLTA fund administration or civil legal service providers by court order;
   c. sums received by the Bar from attorneys in lieu of or supplementing their pro bono service; and
   d. interest on lawyer trust accounts (IOLTA).

The Commission recommended civil procedure rule changes which were adopted by the Supreme Court that allowed pro hac vice and residual cy pres funds to be directed to civil legal services. Requests for proposals about the distribution of court-controlled funds are issued to civil legal service providers each December. The RFP lists criteria (derived from the State Plan) that will be applied in determining eligibility for grants. Providers who are eligible and choose to respond apply by the deadline set in the RFP.

Recent and Current Initiatives

☐ SMART Objectives. With the assistance of Voices for Civil Justice and the Outreach and Communications Work Group, the Commission developed staged objectives for the next five years utilizing the SMART chart method: S = Specific; M = Measurable; A = Attainable; R = Realistic; T = Time-bound.

  o Objective 2 – Public Awareness/Communication Plan. One of the objectives was to develop a Communication Plan for the Commission:

    Part 1: By June, 2017, the % of New Mexico attorneys who believe that funding for civil legal aid is important and are willing to assist in the effort to increase funding will double.

    Part 2: By June 2017, at least three key members of the governor’s staff will support adequate funding for civil legal aid.

    Part 3: By December, 2017, 75% of local government officials and state legislators will see access to justice as a core societal responsibility.

    Part 4: By December 2017, 80% of low income New Mexicans will know that they can access civil legal services through a primary point of entry.

    Part 5: By December 2017, 51% of health- and mental health- care providers in New Mexico will see CLS providers as essential partners in achieving wellness for their patients/clients.
Part 6: By December 2017, 51% of the major community action groups in New Mexico and their leaders will see CLS providers as essential partners in addressing the needs of their communities.

Part 7: By December, 2017, 51% of front line staff of agencies who address the needs of low income New Mexicans will be able to identify when a client's problem has a legal component.

Part 8: By December, 2017, 51% of non-government funders will understand the role of CLS in ensuring that the basic needs of low income New Mexicans are met.

Part 9: By June 2018, the % of New Mexico voters who are aware of civil legal aid and believe that funding for civil legal aid is important will double.

The Outreach and Development Working Group obtained a McCune Foundation grant on behalf of the Commission to hire a marketing/communications firms to develop a multi-channel communications plan to increase statewide public understanding of civil legal aid. The resulting proposed plan will be presented to the Commission on March 24, 2017 by Carroll Strategies.

- Objective 5 – Fundraising

Part 1: During the 2017 NM legislative session, restore at least the 6% cut to the Civil Legal Services Fund that was cut in the 2016 session. *(To be undertaken by individuals rather than the Commission, which as a Supreme Court Commission, is restricted from lobbying)*

Part 2: By January 2020, a unified fund-raising and fund-distribution process for private (non-governmental) monies open to all New Mexico civil legal aid providers will increase revenue from non-governmental sources by 50%.

- Other Ongoing Objectives include increasing pro bono services, establishing standardized court-based self help services statewide, and related rule changes, including mandatory pro bono and expanding the scope of free process waived charges.

Planned Initiatives

- Justice for All (JFA) Initiative/ Access to Justice Project for New Mexico. Although the Commission’s Justice for All 2016 proposal was not chosen for the national JFA Strategic Action Plan Grants through NCSC and the Public Welfare Foundation, the Commission intends to capitalize on and utilize the proposal to work across organizational and
professional boundaries to optimize all available resources to advance access to justice in New Mexico. To kick off the Project, Tom Clarke of NCSC attended the Commission’s January 2017 meeting to explain how the JFA Project awards were chosen and the JFA components that New Mexico should analyze and develop to move forward.

- **Objective 6 – Technology.** Improve and expand the public’s use of access to justice technology by:

  **Part 1:** By December 2016, obtain baseline data about what percentage of New Mexicans use online services for legal assistance.

  **Part 2:** By July 2017, increase by 10% public use of online services by improvements to New Mexico’s interactive, user-friendly, online portal providing comprehensive legal information, self-help resources, and related links.

  **Part 3:** By December 2107, create a cohesive social media presence inclusive of all legal providers that ties together all of the legal services programs and pro bono providers.

  **Part 4:** By December 2017, promote legal services in rural areas through increased use of technology, as evidenced by a 10% or greater increase in the number of rural residents receiving legal assistance, advice or information on-line, by phone or through video connections to attorneys in urban centers.
New York State Permanent Commission on Access to Justice

Commission Chair: Helaine M. Barnett, President of LSC (2004-2009)

Commission Staff:

Lauren Kanfer, Barbara Mulé, Barbara Zahler-Gringer

Mission:
The mission of the New York State Permanent Commission on Access to Justice (Permanent Commission) is to expand access to civil legal services for individuals confronting challenges to the essentials of life (housing, including eviction, foreclosures and homelessness, family matters, including domestic violence, children and domestic stability, access to healthcare and education, subsistence income including wages, disability and other benefits and consumer debt) and the improvement of access to justice generally for individuals facing barriers to access due to language, disability, poverty or other challenges.

Goals:
The Permanent Commission has ongoing responsibility to study, analyze and develop both monetary and non-monetary recommendations to the Chief Judge of New York on all aspects of civil legal services to low-income New Yorkers; to issue recommendations providing for improved and increased access; and to collaborate on access to justice issues, including expanded pro bono services and help for unrepresented litigants.

In 2017, the Permanent Commission is engaged in a strategic planning process to develop a statewide action plan that establishes a framework for the delivery of coordinated and comprehensive legal assistance to all New Yorkers.

Top Three Accomplishments to Date:

1. State’s Recognition of Need to Provide Effective Legal Assistance to Low-Income New Yorkers: State Funding for Civil Legal Services and Declaration of State Policy

   - With the passage of New York’s 2016-2017 budget, the Permanent Commission achieved its goal of $100 million dollars of state funding for civil legal services for matters involving the essentials of life (housing, including eviction, foreclosures and homelessness, family matters, including domestic violence, children and domestic stability, access to healthcare and education, subsistence income including wages, disability and other benefits and consumer debt). In 2016, 82 civil legal services providers were direct recipients of Judiciary Civil Legal Services funding awarded pursuant to a competitive Request for Proposals process.
2. Role of Law Schools and Technology Initiatives to Help Close the Justice Gap

- Convene annual law school conference to focus on the role of law schools in closing the justice gap by bringing together the deans, faculty and students from New York’s 15 law schools to encourage further collaborations with civil legal services providers, the bar and the courts;
- Convene annual statewide civil legal aid technology conference to support effective use of technology by legal services providers and enable dissemination of information to improve technology and service delivery systems to increase access to civil legal assistance for low-income people;
- Established the Pro Bono Law Firm IT Initiative, which provides law firm IT staff to assess the technology needs of individual civil legal services providers and make recommendations for enhancing and improving technology.

3. Recognition of the Role of Non-Lawyers in Helping to Close the Justice Gap

- Recommended creation of an advisory committee to consider the contributions that non-lawyers can make to bridge the justice gap; its work resulted in the issuance of an Administrative Order authorizing creation of Court Navigator pilots in which community volunteers are trained to assist unrepresented litigants in certain matters;
- Supported the opening of three Legal Hand neighborhood storefront centers in two judicial departments that are staffed with trained community non-lawyer volunteers who provide free legal information, assistance and referrals to visitors to help resolve problems and prevent them from turning into legal actions.

Recent and Current Initiatives:

- Engaged in a statewide strategic planning process, supported by a $100,000 grant from the Public Welfare Foundation, to develop a coordinated civil legal services delivery system that endeavors to provide effective assistance to 100% of New Yorkers confronting civil legal challenges impacting the essentials of life.

Planned Initiatives:

- Convene Annual Law School Conference on the Role of Law Schools in Expanding Access to Justice on May 18, 2017;
- Convene Annual Technology Conference to Promote Effective Use of Technology by Legal Services Providers on June 12, 2017;
- Promote and support expansion of Legal Hand neighborhood storefront centers;
• Support proposed legislation to establish a new Court Advocates program;
• Expand and support outreach and training for public librarians to provide legal information and referrals;
• Engage in additional cost-benefit analysis and data collection.
Commission Chair:

The Honorable Mark Martin
Chief Justice, North Carolina Supreme Court

Commission Staff:

Jennifer M. Lechner, Executive Director

Mary L. Irvine, Director of External Affairs

Sylvia K. Novinsky, Director of NC Pro Bono Resource Center

Jared Smith, Programming and Engagement Associate

Mission

The NC Equal Access to Justice Commission (NCEATJC) was established in November 2005 by order of the North Carolina Supreme Court, making North Carolina the 19th state to establish such an entity.

The 30 member Commission is structured to include representative stakeholders from across the state, to reflect the diversity of ethnic, gender, legal and geographic communities of North Carolina and to be chaired by the Chief Justice. Commission members includes representatives of the judiciary, legal aid programs, law schools, general public, state government, philanthropic organizations, business communities and client communities as well as practicing lawyers. The NCEATJC mission is to expand access to the civil justice system for people of low income and modest means in North Carolina. We collaborate to increase and coordinate the delivery of civil legal aid services.

Goals

- Establish the right to counsel in civil matters affecting basic human needs
- Increase legislative funding of civil legal services at the state and federal levels
• Encourage/support pro bono attorney participation
• Help pro se litigants navigate the court system successfully
• Educate the public
• Increase the role of the business community
• Include people with limited English proficiency in the justice system
• Increase loan repayment assistance

Top Three Accomplishments to Date

1. Created the NC Access to Justice Campaign October 2011-present
In 2011, the Communications Committee of the Equal Access to Justice Commission, working with a marketing agency, developed a statewide communications plan to support the annual access to justice campaigns of Legal Aid of North Carolina, Inc., Legal Services of Southern Piedmont and Pisgah Legal Services. The EATJC developed a new website (www.ncaccessstojustice.org) and a series of print ads to be published in bar publications. The goal of this plan is to educate the bar, the General Assembly and the general public about legal aid. Following the website development (www.ncaccessstojustice.org) and a series of print ads, this effort continues to evolve and now includes the following under the “campaign” umbrella:
• Legislative advocacy for state and federal funding;
• Law firm fundraising campaign;
• Individual donor fundraising campaign;
• Education of bar and general public through articles, print ads and website;
• Brand and messaging adopted by one provider for pro bono efforts;
• NC Pro Bono Resource Center.

The Commission increased its communications activities to educate various audiences about unmet civil legal needs and how the Commission is addressing the justice gap. The NC State Bar dedicated an entire Bar Journal edition to access to justice issues. This inaugural edition included an introduction by Chief Justice Mark Martin and articles on Rule 6.1, the Safe Child Immigrant Project, North Carolina veterans legal services, NCAOC’s Language Access Services System, consumer protection success stories, and pro bono services in rural areas. Commission member Kirk Warner submitted an opinion editorial about the importance of state funding for civil legal aid in the News and Observer. Justice Cheri Beasley, Vice Chair of the Commission authored an article that appeared in Lawyers Weekly on the importance of pro bono.

2. Published a state wide legal aid economic impact report – January 2014
The NC Equal Access to Justice Commission worked with the UNC Center on Poverty, Work and Opportunity to study the economic impact of free civil legal services in North Carolina. The report attempts to better understand the direct and indirect economic impact of the work of three North Carolina legal aid providers: Legal Aid of North Carolina (LANC), Legal Services of Southern Piedmont (LSSP), and Pisgah Legal Services (PLS). The three providers compiled data about the economic benefit associated with their representation. Relying on data compiled by
the providers, the report totals the economic benefit of provided legal assistance including: (1) federal dollars obtained in the areas of food stamps, supplemental security and social security disability, temporary welfare assistance, and tax-related awards; (2) other financial awards won in the areas of child support and housing; and (3) cost savings attained in the areas of homelessness and domestic violence prevention. The report captures the direct economic impact in a few discrete practice areas to the local and state economies. Additionally, the report provides a projection of the indirect economic impact and costs savings generated by provided legal assistance, presenting an economic perspective on the investment in free legal services. In doing so, the report seeks to inform policymakers, foundations, and other stakeholders of the economic benefit of legal services, not just for low-income individuals but for the entire state of North Carolina.

3. **Launched the North Carolina Pro Bono Resource Center – January 2016-present**
On April 1, 2016, the EATJC launched the North Carolina Pro Bono Resource Center (PBRC), to increase pro bono participation statewide. One of only a handful of resource centers in the country, the PBRC develops pro bono projects statewide in partnership with legal aid organizations and community organizations and provides support for existing pro bono activities including recruitment, training, and communication.

Rule 6.1 of the North Carolina Rules of Professional Conduct encourages attorneys to provide at least fifty hours of pro bono legal services annually, and to contribute financial support to organizations that provide legal services to persons of limited means. However, there has not been a statewide mechanism to track this volunteerism, recognize pro bono efforts, and identify pro bono trends and unmet legal needs. To fill this void, the North Carolina Equal Access to Justice Commission adopted a resolution in June 2016, signed by Chief Justice Mark D. Martin, chair of the Commission. This resolution outlines a commitment to developing a voluntary pro bono reporting and recognition program through the North Carolina Pro Bono Resource Center, making North Carolina the 23rd state to track attorney pro bono participation.

North Carolina attorneys began sharing information about their pro bono work in January 2017 through an online form found at ncprobono.org. Attorneys who meet the 50 hour goal included in Rule 6.1 will join the North Carolina Pro Bono Honor Society and will receive a certificate from the Supreme Court of North Carolina honoring that achievement.

**Recent (past year) and Current Initiatives:**

**RECENT:**

**Hired the Inaugural Director of the NC Pro Bono Resource Center – April 2016**
After the establishment of the NC Pro Bono Resource Center, Sylvia Novinsky was hired in April 2016 as the Inaugural Director. Sylvia brings two decades of pro bono coordination and project development to the position.
Established the NC Pro Bono Resource Center Website with Searchable Pro Bono Opportunities – September 2016

The PBRC website, ncpробono.org, is one of the main ways the Center connects with attorneys across the state interested in doing pro bono work. The site offers a list of available volunteer opportunities in different areas of law, geographic locations and types of representation. These opportunities are established projects with partner organizations—not individual clients or cases. These opportunities provide information to the attorney so that the attorney may volunteer, it does not provide a sign up function for attorney volunteers directly. In addition to this primary function, the website also provides a list of legal service provider partners, information on North Carolina Rule of Professional Conduct 6.1 and other issues related to pro bono service, a calendar of relevant events and trainings, and a way to sign up for a biweekly newsletter. The PBRC website plans to host resources such as training videos, sample documents, and other items of support, as well as host a mechanism for attorneys to report completed pro bono work.

CURRENT

Facilitating Pro Bono Clinics for Attorney Volunteers and Presenting CLE sessions

The NC Pro Bono Resource Center is currently facilitating pro bono legal services clinics across the state to address the high demand for particular legal services. In addition to the facilitation of the clinics, the Center is presenting to CLE sessions to sharpen attorney knowledge on ethical issues surrounding pro bono legal service.

Increasing Advocacy Presence with the State Legislature

The NC Equal Access to Justice Commission is asking the 2017 General Assembly to dedicate additional funding to North Carolina’s three legal aid programs – Legal Aid of North Carolina, Legal Services of Southern Piedmont and Pisgah Legal Services – by increasing the portion of court fees currently used to help fund legal aid in three specific areas of great need: domestic violence, veterans issues and disaster relief. These resources will increase legal services to abused women and their children, veterans seeking rightfully earned benefits and victims of natural disasters

Planned Initiatives

The NC Equal Access to Justice Commission plans to

- Participate in the NC Commission on the Administration of Law and Justice recommendations;
- Strategize involvement in developing pro se resources.

The Pro Bono Resource Center plans to

- Increase regional capacity for pro bono service among North Carolina law firms;
- Increase recognition efforts for pro bono reporters;
- Increase facilitation of pro bono clinics across the state;
- Create training and support resources for effective pro bono legal service.
Oklahoma Access to Justice Commission

Commission Chair:
David Riggs, Attorney, Riggs Abney

Commission Staff:
The Commission does not have a staff per se and has no source of funding, however, the Order of the Oklahoma Supreme Court creating the Commission states that “the Administrative Office of the Courts shall provide staff and supervise the budget for the Oklahoma Access to Justice Commission.” As a practical matter the only staff assistance the Administrative Office of the Courts can provide the Commission has been to prepare and keep Minutes of the Commission’s meetings and to provide notice to members of the Commission regarding meeting times and places. The Commission operates without a budget as the Commission has not been provided operating funds, to date.

Mission
The Oklahoma Supreme Court Order creating the Commission states: “The Oklahoma Access to Justice Commission is created to develop and implement policy initiatives designed to expand access to and enhance the quality of justice in civil matters for low-income Oklahoma residents.”

Goals
The Order also states that the Commission shall:

1. identify and assess current and future needs for access to justice in civil matters by low-income Oklahomans;

2. develop and publish a strategic plan for statewide delivery of civil legal services;

3. foster the development of a statewide integrated civil legal-services delivery system;

4. work to increase resources and funding for access to justice in civil matters and to ensure that the resources and funding are applied to the areas of greatest need;

5. work to maximize the wise and efficient use of available resources, including the development of local, regional, and statewide coordination systems and systems that encourage the coordination or sharing of resources or funding;

6. develop and implement initiatives designed to expand civil access to justice;
7. work to reduce barriers to the justice system by addressing existing court rules, procedures, and policies that negatively affect access to justice for low-income Oklahomans; and,

8. monitor the effectiveness of the statewide system and services provided and periodically evaluate its progress in fulfilling the civil legal needs of low-income Oklahomans.

**Top Three Accomplishments to Date**

1. The Oklahoma Commission was one of the early States to begin providing essential legal information to low-income citizens over the internet by participating in the ABA Interactive Website Project through its website known as “OklahomaFreeLegalAnswers.com”.

2. The Commission has endorsed and is supporting the development of a single portal interactive website which will include a triage function designed to connect low-income Oklahomans who have legal problems with various service providers. When this single portal website is up and running, Oklahoma’s free legal answers website will be linked and incorporated into it. The Commission assisted Legal Aid Services of Oklahoma in a Grant application funding the single portal website.

3. The Commission has supported and provided critical assistance to Legal Aid Services of Oklahoma in developing a statewide Needs Assessment Survey. This survey has included approximately 4,000 stakeholders including clients, attorneys, judges and other members of the community. It is designed to assess the specific needs of the State’s underserved citizens in order to develop programs and resources tailored to address those needs through better access to the justice system. The Commission was able to obtain an ABA grant of $20,000.00 to support this Needs Assessment Survey.

**Recent and Current Initiatives**

The Commission has recently begun developing its own website and logo in order to publicize the Commission’s activities and generate public support for greater access to the justice system for low-income citizens. The Commission has also been instrumental in bringing about changes to the Oklahoma Rules of Professional Conduct in order to facilitate and encourage limited scope legal services by Oklahoma attorneys for clients with limited resources. The Commission has also submitted for consideration by the Oklahoma Supreme Court changes to the Licensed Legal Intern Rules for Oklahoma which would greatly facilitate and encourage participation by more law students in Oklahoma to provide supervised services to clients of legal clinics.
Planned Initiatives

1. Expand and promote the use of legal forms by unrepresented litigants.
2. Promote low-bono services for legal clients with limited resources.
3. Development of statewide programs such as two projects in Tulsa County, which assist unrepresented litigants in the family law area and in defending and negotiating resolution of home foreclosures.
Puerto Rico Advisory Commission on Access to Justice

Commission Chair and Vice-Chair:

**Chair:** Hon. Sigfrido Steidel-Figueroa, Administrative Director of the Courts, Administrative Office of the Courts

**Vice-Chair:** Carlos A. Rodríguez-Vidal, Esq., Managing Member, Goldman Antonetti & Córdova, LLC (Board Chair, Oficina Legal de la Comunidad, Inc.)

Commission Staff:

Juan Carlos Guzmán-Baigés, Esq., Director, Judicial Programs Bureau, Administrative Office of the Courts

Liani Cabán-Reyes, Esq., Legal Counsel, Judicial Programs Bureau, Administrative Office of the Courts

About the Commission

The 20th Judicial Conference and the First Summit on Access to Justice, held in 2002, served as a forum for the study of the economic obstacles faced by different sectors of the population in claiming and defending their rights. During the two-day event, numerous conclusions and recommendations were made to improve access to justice in Puerto Rico, many of which were later adopted by the Judicial Branch. Moreover, “[i]n response to the aforementioned Summit efforts, and to promote the broadest possible public access to justice, [a non permanent] Access to Justice Commission was established in 2003.”

A year later, this organism recommended the creation of a permanent Access to Justice Commission.

The Puerto Rico Commission on Access to Justice was created on January 22, 2014, through Administrative Order No. OAJP-2014-175. Its main goal is to advise the Judicial Branch on the formulation of public policy to strengthen/enhance access to justice and the equitable and equal treatment of all persons, particularly those who are vulnerable. The Commission is attached to the Office of Administration Courts and is chaired by the Administrative Director of the Courts, Hon. Sigfrido Steidel Figueroa. At the moment, the Commission is comprised of 17 members, which includes Executive Directors of legal services providers, Deans of law schools, judges, lawyers, academics and community leaders. Currently, the Commission has four committees that are in the process of researching and conveying a multi-disciplinary group to identify the specific obstacles, barriers, matters, considerations to be addressed by the organization and of developing work plans with specific strategies to achieve its goals. Each member serves on one or more of the following committees:
Identification of Needs and Available Services Committee
Evaluation and Institutional Improvements Committee
Standards and Resources Committee
Education Committee

Goals

Its main goal is to advise the Judicial Brach on the formulation of public policy to strengthen and enhance access to justice and the equitable and equal treatment of all persons, particularly those who are vulnerable, throughout the achievement of the following objectives:

1. To advise the Judicial Branch on the formulation of public policy that will guarantee access to justice based on fair and equal treatment of all persons. This includes but is not limited to: legal representation of indigent persons in civil and criminal cases, and sensitive, fair and equal access and treatment for populations in conditions of vulnerability.
2. To assess initiatives and recommend action plans for the implementation of an articulated and consistent public policy of access to justice.
3. To establish mechanisms that provide follow-up for the confirmation and attainment of the goals outlined by the Commission.
4. To recommend legislation to develop financing mechanisms and services for the legal representation of indigent persons and to attend to the needs of populations in conditions of vulnerability. This includes, but is not limited to, persons with disabilities, immigrants and victims of domestic violence and sexual assault, and underage and elderly persons. The Commission may also recommend new legislation and amendments to existing laws in keeping with its responsibilities.
5. To carry out any other actions necessary to achieve the goals outlined by the Commission.

Top Three Accomplishments to Date

Since the creation of the Commission, the meetings have become a multi-sectoral forum for the discussion of various issues that hinder or promote access to justice from a comprehensive and systemic approach. This has led to the exchange of knowledge and experiences to propose initiatives that promote access to justice, as well as to evaluate and rethink strategies previously aimed at strengthening them. In this regard, we highlight the following achievements:

1. The Advisory Commission on Access to Justice has been vocal in expressing the need to amend the Rules for the Appointment of Court-Appointed Counsel in Criminal Proceedings and on the adoption of New Rules for the Appointment of Court-Appointed Counsel in Civil Proceedings. Despite the existence of regulations for the appointment of course in criminal proceedings, after evaluating these rules, a consensus was reached
on the need to implement new regulations that would meet the needs of lawyers on our jurisdiction. Most recently, Hon. Maite D. Oronoz Rodríguez, Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Puerto Rico, highlighted several of the initiatives that the Judicial Branch has developed in order to achieve greater access to justice for the most vulnerable populations. Among them was the adoption of the *Rules for the Appointment of Court-Appointed Counsels in Criminal and Civil Proceedings*, which were submitted for the consideration of the Supreme Court of Puerto Rico.

2. The former Chief Justice, Hon. Liana Fiol Matta, invited the Commission to contribute as a focus group in the development of Strategic Plan of the Judicial Branch: Cardinal Points of Justice. It was understood that Commissioners could provide valuable information as representatives of different organizations and entities of the country, and contribute to validate the trends that are taken into account in establishing the priority points in planning the operation of the Judicial Branch from the judicial and administrative points of view. The focus group allowed us to collect various recommendations, which were under analyzed and many of them received by the strategic plan elaboration committee.

3. The Commission approved the disclosure of Resolution No. CAAJ-2015-2 of May 5, 2015 regarding the Impact of Access to Justice on the Occasion of the Proposed Reductions for the Fiscal Year 2015-2016 budget. In general terms, through the resolution, the Commission expressed its concern about the adverse effect on access to justice that would have a significant reduction in the budget of the Judicial Branch and entities providing free legal services to persons with fewer resources; and called for the Executive and Legislative Branches to adopt measures aimed at reducing such effects. This resolution was disclosed in the local media and sent to the former Governor of Puerto Rico, Hon. Alejandro García Padilla, the Office of Management and Budget, and the presidents and members of the House of Representatives and the Senate of Puerto Rico.

**Current Initiatives and Planned Initiatives**

This Commission is currently working on a Strategic Plan for the development of a comprehensive and integrated system of strategies and services to improve access to justice to the most vulnerable groups of the population.

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1 Administrative Order No. OAJP-2014-175.
2 Ibid.
South Carolina Access to Justice Commission

Commission Chair:
John Cannon Few, Associate Justice South Carolina Supreme Court

Commission Staff:
Robin F. Wheeler

Mission
Our mission is to facilitate collaboration that ensures equal access to civil legal assistance for all South Carolinians. (Adopted 2016)

Goals
Pursuant to the Administrative Court Order, the Commission is charged with the following goals, purposes, and responsibilities:

(1) Identify and assess current and future needs of low-income South Carolinians for access to justice in civil matters by examining the full range and volume of such unmet legal needs periodically.
   This evaluation should:
   (a) determine and document how unrepresented people with legal disputes are attempting to meet these needs without attorneys, the extent to which these efforts are successful, and the consequences of the lack of attorney representation;
   (b) recognize the enormous efforts currently being made by attorneys to serve low-income South Carolinians;
   (c) analyze the need for funding and other resources to close the gap; and
   (d) address any other matters related to the delivery of equal access to justice in civil matters to all South Carolinians.

(2) Develop a strategic plan for delivery of civil legal services to low income South Carolinians throughout the state that will assist with the education of the public about the large gap between the ideal of equal access to the legal system and the reality of lack of representation.

(3) Foster coordination within the civil legal services delivery system and between legal aid organizations and other legal and non-legal organizations.

(4) Support increase of resources and funding for access to justice in civil matters. Analyze feasible options and strategies for pursuing such funding. Examine additional state, local, and other non-IOLTA funding.

(5) Encourage wise and efficient use of available resources through collaboration among legal aid and other organizations including other legal advocacy groups, non-legal advocacy groups, providers of social services, law schools, the court system, corporate and government law departments, and other state and local agencies.
(6) Develop and implement other initiatives designed to expand civil access to justice, such as increasing community education, enhancing technology, developing assisted pro se programs, and encouraging greater voluntary participation of the private bar in pro bono legal assistance to low-income people in South Carolina.

(7) Consider the legal needs and access to the civil justice system of persons whose income and means are such that they do not qualify under existing assistance programs, and propose initiatives designed to meet these needs.

**Top Three Accomplishments to Date**

1. **Self Help Resources:** Forms, Packets, FAQs and Videos
   - **Poster:** Welcome to the South Carolina Court – A List of Some Things the Court Staff Can and Cannot Do
   - **Forms and Packets:** Divorce, Child Support Modification, Visitation
   - **FAQs:** General Questions, Circuit Court, Master-in-Equity Court, Family Court, Magistrates Court, Expungements and Pardons, Alternatives to Guardianship in South Carolina, Guardianship in South Carolina – Frequently Asked Questions from a Caregiver or Potential Guardian, Guardianship in South Carolina – Frequently Asked Questions from a Ward
   - **Videos:** Your Day in Circuit Court, An Introduction to Probate Court: Opening an Estate, An Introduction to Probate Court: Inventory and Appraisement; An Introduction to Probate Court: Closing an Estate

   - **Translation of Resources**
   - **Law School for Interpreters**
   - **Language Access Training for Attorneys:** Articles, CLEs, Videos
   - **Language Access Task Force:** Language Help page, Report

3. **100% Access to Justice Summit: Action Plan**

**Recent and Current Initiatives**

1. **One Stop Portal:** Work with stakeholders to develop a Comprehensive Legal Intake, Coordination, and Information System for Consumers, Providers and Volunteers. This is a long-term project, over 3-5 years. At this time, the Commission is devoting its efforts to ensure that the infrastructure is developed and coordinated.

2. **American College of Trial Lawyers (ACTL) /Young Lawyer (YL) Incubator Pilot Project.** This was begun as a micro-pro bono program partnering mentors from ACTL working with YLs to increase pro bono participation, in response to the state’s poor showing in attorney access within The Justice Index. South Carolina Legal Services (SCLS) provides intake screening on the topic (landlord/tenant disputes) and income eligibility. Once eligibility is confirmed, the case link is forwarded to the Commission, who sends out the conflict check. Once conflicts are cleared, the case is assigned to the YL and the ACTL for representation. Training materials and form templates are provided to the volunteers.
via Dropbox, and the Housing Unit head of SCLS has offered to provide additional back-up. The Commission is currently working with our partners to assess and expand the program. Once it is thoroughly reviewed, it may be transferred to the SC Bar and SCLS for continued expansion.

3. **The Justice Index Goals:**
   
   a. **Attorney Access:** Please see #2.
   
   b. **Language and Disability Access.** In 2016, the Commission convened a Language Access Task Force that developed recommendations for increased language access for South Carolinians with Limited English Proficiency (LEP) and who are either Deaf or Hard-of-Hearing. The recommendations were presented to the Commission, and submitted from the Commission to the Supreme Court in a report in December 2016.

   In 2017, the Commission will convene a Language Access Committee to continue to expand and implement language access initiatives for South Carolinians who have LEP or are Deaf or Hard-of-Hearing for the courts, the bar and the general public.

   c. **Self-Represented Litigant Resource Development.** The Commission has identified some key stakeholders to participate in a Family Court Self-Represented Litigant (SRL) Committee to develop a comprehensive, working protocol for developing and updating forms, packets and other resources for Self-Represented Litigants.

4. **Self-Help Center Pilot Models.** The Commission has been working with the Charleston School of Law and a judge in Charleston to develop a viable self-help center pilot for the Charleston area. After brief meetings with core stakeholders, the Commission and partners have been reviewing alternatives practices and partnerships to augment the reach of the program within and outside the legal community.

**Planned Initiatives**

In addition to some of the previously identified ongoing initiatives (One Stop Portal, ACTL-YL-SCLS-SCATJ Incubator, Language Access Committee, SRL Family Court Committee, and Charleston Self-Help Center Pilot), the Commission will provide follow-up to the South Carolina Summit on Access to Justice for All held in October 2016. Commission staff has been working on an Action Plan to harness the information and enthusiasm from the Summit. When the plan is approved, Summit participants will be invited to move the discussion into action. The identified goals are:

a. Increased Pro Bono service.

b. Technology development and use.

c. Education and Engagement of Bench, Bar, Law Schools, and General Public.

d. Increased Resources.

e. Access and connectivity.

f. Data collection and enhanced legal services delivery.

As the Commission begins its 10th year, we are looking into the possibility of a 10-Year Anniversary Celebration, possibly in collaboration with another entity such as the South Carolina Bar Foundation or South Carolina Legal Services, which is beginning its 50th anniversary year.
Tennessee Access to Justice Commission

Commission Chair: Marcy Eason (private attorney)

Commission Staff:

Anne-Louise Wirthlin, ATJ Coordinator
Kimi deMent, Pro Bono Coordinator (supervised by ATJ Coordinator)

Mission

Tennessee Supreme Court Rule 50: Develop and operate under a strategic plan that must educate the public on the need for legal representation to meet the ideal of equal justice under the law, identify the priorities to meet the need of improved access to justice, and include recommendations to the Court for projects and programs the Commission determine to be necessary and appropriate for enhancing access to justice.

Goals

The strategic plan sets out the goals and is modified every 2 years. The 2016 Strategic Plan states the Commission’s focus is to enhance existing initiatives and create new opportunities in Tennessee, to serve as a national repository on access to justice resources, and further its role as the statewide coordinating arm for communications on legal aid, pro bono, and self-represented litigants resources.

Top Three Accomplishments to Date

1) Created toll free legal information hotline, 1-844-Help4TN, with accompanying web portal, www.Help4TN.org and surrounding marketing (TV and radio public service announcement – video available at http://justiceforalltn.org/videos/help4tn-public-service-announcement). Help4TN.org is a web portal designed as a one-stop-shop to give Tennesseans information on legal and social services. Members of the public can find information on how to get free legal advice over the phone and online. Help4TN.org also has a list of free legal advice clinics, links to court forms, and information on legal topics.

2) Drafted and proposed amendment to TN Supreme Court Rule regarding annual attorney registration to allow attorneys to donate money to an Access to Justice Fund. Monies collected in the Fund are distributed to agencies that provide direct civil legal representation to disadvantaged Tennesseans. Collected and distributed over $76,000 in the first year (distributed June 2016).
3) Created of Tennessee Faith & Justice Alliance, an alliance of faith-based groups who commit to providing legal resources to their congregations and communities. The goal is to attract attorneys who aren't already doing pro bono work to do pro bono with their faith organization. The TFJA is based on two assumptions, that people in need will go to their houses of worship for help and that some members of the private bar experience a spiritual sense of calling to serve the poor. Possible TFJA projects include: 1) training faith leaders to spot legal issues when they are listening to the concerns of their parishioners, 2) using a Referral Model designed to pair volunteer lawyers with congregants in need for limited or full representation, 3) establishing free legal advice clinics, and 4) providing community legal education.

**Recent and Current Initiatives**

1) #Help4TNDay. The TN Supreme Court declared Saturday, April 1st, 2017, as #Help4TNDay. Tennesseans will be able to get free legal help online or in person at clinics near them. There will also be educational events across the state. The events kick off mid-March and will go through mid-April. As of March 17, there are 50 events scheduled. The TN Supreme Court hosted five simultaneous press conferences in Nashville, Knoxville, Memphis, Jackson, and Chattanooga on March 21, 2017. The primary goal of this public awareness campaign is to bring attention to the on-going need for free and low-cost civil legal services in Tennessee and highlight the groups that provide these services to disadvantaged Tennesseans. Go to www.Help4TN.org or http://www.justiceforalltn.com/Help4TNDay for information.

2) Creation of Statewide Communications Plan on Civil Legal Aid, Pro Bono, and ATJ. The Commission recognized that there is a general lack of knowledge and understanding about civil legal aid and how helping someone who can’t afford a lawyer have a better experience in the legal system can positively impact the local community. The Commission also believes that the general public and legal professionals are not fully aware of the legal resources available. The Commission is working with Voices for Civil Justice to create a statewide communications plan with legal aid and access to justice programs. The expected release date is June 2017.

3) Family Law Committee. Since the Commission was created, there has been a huge need for pro bono lawyers and resources for low income Tennesseans with family law issues. The Commission has previously set family law as one of its priorities. The Commission created a Family Law Committee. This is the first Advisory Committee devoted to a substantive area of law. The Committee is conducting a statewide survey to determine the extent of existing family law resources. It will develop a plan on how to best use existing resources and identify new family law resources that are needed and create them. The Committee is planning on hosting an invitation-only statewide summit of stakeholders later in 2017 to develop new ways of doing family law pro bono work.
Planned Initiatives

1) Self-Represented Litigants Kiosks. The Commission has piloted a court kiosk in a rural Tennessee county, the Marshall County Help Button. The kiosk is a laptop with a database of answers to common legal questions, court approved legal forms, and a directory of local lawyers with areas of specialty. It’s located in the court clerk’s office. The Commission set a goal of creating and implementing ten new court kiosks in different counties across the state by March 2018. The Commission is also exploring piloting a kiosk in a public place like a Wal-Mart or Dollar General.

2) Automated Forms. The Commission is working on automating its packet of plain language divorce forms for uncontested divorces when there are no minor children involved. The pilot should launch in Spring of 2017.

3) Mediation pilot project with area hospital to use alternative dispute resolution to resolve medical bill disputes with low and moderate income patients. The ATJ Commission is focusing on pro bono mediation. A specific initiative is a pilot project with a hospital where mediation will be used to resolve issues with outstanding medical bills. The Commission will recruit and train volunteer mediators to conduct mass mediations. It will partner with hospital staff to assist in identifying patients for the pilot and with logistical planning. It will develop a tool kit and best practice to replicate the program. The pilot will take place in 2017.
Texas Access to Justice Commission

Commission Chair:
Harry Reasoner, Partner, Vinson & Elkins

Commission Staff:
Trish McAllister
Jocelyn Fowler
Catherine Galloway
Kristen Levins

Mission

The Texas Access to Justice Commission, created by the Supreme Court of Texas in 2001, is charged with developing and implementing initiatives designed to expand access to, and enhance the quality of, justice in civil legal matters for low-income Texans.

Goals

Specifically, the Commission aims to:

- Identify and assess current and future needs for access to justice in civil matters by low-income Texans.
- Create a framework for equitable access to justice by promoting policies, procedures, court rules, and legislation that reduce barriers to our judicial system.
- Increase resources and funding for access to justice in civil matters.
- Promote wise and efficient use of available resources and encourage the coordination or sharing of resources or funding.
- Develop and implement other initiatives designed to expand civil access to justice, such as creating a culture of pro bono in our future lawyers, limited scope representation, and strategic use of technology.
- Monitor the effectiveness of the statewide system and services provided.

Top Three Accomplishments to Date

- Secured funding through the Texas Legislature to mitigate losses to Texas legal aid organizations in the wake of IOLTA declines and passed non-funding legislation, including the creation of a transfer on death deed which allows a property owner to pass title to real property to a named beneficiary upon the owner’s death outside probate. Texans cannot represent themselves in probate and this legislation is part of a series of initiatives to pass the most common assets a low-income individual might own – a home, a car, and cash in a bank account - outside the probate system.
• Secured greater access to the courts and helped end abusive practices by revising Texas Rule of Civil Procedure 145 governing affidavits of indigency and promulgated forms adopted by the Texas Supreme Court for pro se divorce with no children or property and for protective orders,

• Promote access to justice issues among law students through the yearly Pro Bono Spring Break, Access to Justice Internship Program, Poverty Simulations, and the bi-yearly Leadership Summit,

Recent and Current Initiatives

• **Language Access:** The Commission is partnering with Texas Appleseed to address language access issues in Texas. The Commission submitted a revision to Texas Rule of Civil Procedure 183 governing the appointment of interpreters in civil cases along with a report on language access issues in Texas.

• **Legal Notices:** The subcommittee is exploring the potential for centralizing legal notices online to provide better notice and serve as a potential funding source for legal aid.

• **Pro Bono Status:** The subcommittee has partnered with the State Bar of Texas Pro Bono Workgroup to change the Emeritus Attorney Pro Bono Participation Program. Currently, the program is limited to retired attorneys and burdensome on volunteers and legal aid organizations. The joint committee intends to simplify the program, expand the volunteer pool to include inactive attorneys and attorneys licensed in other states, and heighten the program’s visibility.

• **Self-Represented Litigants:** The subcommittee submitted three proposals to the Supreme Court on interactions with self-represented litigants. The first is a proposed amendment to the Code of Judicial Conduct, outlining permissible actions for judges who are faced with self-represented litigants. The other two are instructions to clerks and court personnel regarding interactions with court patrons, including the self-represented.

• **Probate Forms Task Force:** Due to our successful work with the Texas legislature, the Texas Supreme Court has named a Probate Taskforce to propose plain language forms in simple probate matters. The Probate Taskforce is finalizing the first simple will form and will continue working on more will forms, small estate affidavits, and muniment of title forms.

• **Justice for All Firm Competition:** The Commission created the Justice for All Firm Competition to encourage firm lawyers to make the suggested $150 Access to Justice Contribution on their annual dues statement. The Competition promotes awareness to individual lawyers in firms that participate in firm billing and pay the voluntary contribution on a firm-wise basis. Firms with the highest overall contribution and the highest overall percentage of contributing attorneys are recognized in the Texas Bar Journal and at the Justice for All reception in October.

• **Name Change Form Kit:** The Uniform Forms Task Force created a name change form kit for both adults and children. The kit is currently pending before the Supreme Court of Texas.
Poverty Simulations: The Commission has begun hosting poverty simulations in Texas law schools, immersing law students in the interactive presentation of navigating life and the legal system through the lens of a low-income family.

Legislative Initiatives: We are continuing support for the Supreme Court of Texas’ budget request and working on several policy related bills:

- Funding:
  - The Supreme Court of Texas Legislative Appropriations Request: The Court’s FY 18-19 baseline budget request included court filing fees, the legal aid fee paid by all lawyers, the pro hac vice fee paid by out-of-state lawyers who file cases in Texas, occasional AG Civil penalties as they arrive, Justice for All license plate revenue, and $16.86 million in General Appropriations Revenue, known as GR. Additionally, the Court requested continued funding of the legal services for Veterans ($2.88 million) and Legal Aid for Survivors of Sexual Assault programs ($9.6 million).

- Non-Funding:
  - Inactive Attorney Volunteers: Allows Texas Supreme Court to promulgate rule that would allow inactive status attorneys to practice law for the sole purpose of performing pro bono legal services. Additional pool of 13,000-16,000 potential pro bono attorneys
  - Law Library Fee Amendment: Clarifies that the law library filing fee can be used to offset expenses associated with the establishment and maintenance of a self-help center, and allows counties to establish a law library outside the county seat, which would enable smaller counties to partner together to establish a law library and self-help center.
  - Transfer on Death Deed Amendment: Clarifies that the anti-lapse statute applies to situations where there is a sole beneficiary and no named alternate beneficiaries. The Transfer on Death Deed passed during the 2015 legislative session.
  - Vehicle Transfer on Death: Creates a way for low-income people to properly transfer title to their vehicle outside of probate and avoid the cost of probate.
  - Small Seller Transactions: Requires non-federally related lenders to provide an annual accounting to a buyer on the status of their loan.

Planned Initiatives

- Landlord-Tenant Taskforce: The Supreme Court of Texas will be naming a Landlord-Tenant Forms Taskforce in the next few months. The Taskforce will be responsible for proposing plain language forms to be used in landlord-tenant matters.
- Self-Help Centers: The Commission will be educating County Commissioners’ Courts on funding for self-help centers.
Vermont Access to Justice Coalition

Commission Chair: Beth Robinson, Associate Justice

Commission Staff: None

Mission

The mission of the Coalition is to

• Increase public awareness of the need for civil legal assistance and serve as a voice for the civil legal assistance system in Vermont with members of the general public, government officials, and legislators;

• Promote coordination for maximum efficiency and effectiveness among the courts, members of the private bar, and providers of legal services to low-income Vermonters, and build partnerships with other potential stakeholders in expanding access to justice;

• Strengthen the civil legal services delivery system in Vermont to insure that it has the capacity to deliver a full range of services that address the legal needs of low income communities;

• Increase and support Vermont attorneys who provide free and reduced fee services to low income Vermont families;

• Provide a forum to discuss issues affecting access to civil justice among legislators, courts, government officials, the civil legal services community, bar leaders, funders, clients, and other interested parties;

• Encourage and support initiatives that help unrepresented litigants to understand the civil justice system in Vermont and to identify, articulate, and present their legal claims to courts and administrative bodies;

• Identify and work to eliminate barriers that reduce access to civil justice for disadvantaged Vermonters.

Goals

Although the Vermont ATJ Coalition did not win a Justice for All grant, in the process of developing a grant application we developed a roadmap of a series of focused investigations,
discussions, and planning sessions involving needs, innovative programs and best practices across the access to justice continuum for the purpose of identifying top priority needs and goals, improving our existing framework, and implementing new initiatives. Because we have no staff and rely entirely on volunteer energy, our timeline for working our way through that process will likely be years not months.

**Top Three Accomplishments to Date**

1) Poverty Law Fellow: The Coalition incubated and for years managed Poverty Law Fellow position funded by contributions primarily from the private bar. Poverty Law Fellow serves for two years, is housed with one of the State’s three legal services organizations, and focuses on a topic determined by the Coalition. In addition to handling cases themselves, fellows are expected to evaluate the needs within their assigned area and produce work product with systemic impact. Topics have included Veterans’ issues, children’s issues, mortgage foreclosures (during the foreclosure crisis), and, currently, responses to the opioid epidemic.

2) The Coalition served as a launching pad for development of a grant-funded modest-means online referral tool adopted through collaboration between Vermont Lawline and the Vermont Bar Association.

3) The Coalition serves as a connector between the State’s Legal Aid organizations, the Court, the Vermont Bar Foundation, and Vermont Law School. In that capacity it has participated in or led (and ultimately “handed off”) various successful initiatives including adoption of unbundling rules, participation in Free Legal Answers, cultivation of contributions from banks to backfill drop in IOLTA interest (led by Vermont Bar Foundation), participation in multiple statewide Pro Bono Conferences.

**Recent and Current Initiatives**

See above

**Planned Initiatives**

See above
Virginia Access to Justice Commission ("VATJC")

Commission Co-Chairs: Honorable S. Bernard Goodwyn  
Justice, Supreme Court of Virginia  
John Whitfield  
Executive Director, Blue Ridge Legal Services, Inc.

Commission Staff: Kenneth C. Grigg  
Staff Attorney, Office of the Executive Secretary  
Supreme Court of Virginia  
Maggie Mills  
Executive Administrative Assistant  
Office of the Executive Secretary  
Supreme Court of Virginia

Mission

The following mission statement is taken from the Order of the Supreme Court of Virginia establishing the VATJC which was entered on September 13, 2013:

“The Virginia Access to Justice Commission shall promote equal access to justice, with particular emphasis on the civil legal needs of Virginia residents.”

Goals

The Order of the Supreme Court of Virginia establishing the VATJC which was entered on September 13, 2013 established the following goals:

The Commission's goals shall include the following:

• Coordinate access to justice activities in Virginia;

• Actively engage the Supreme Court of Virginia, together with Virginia's judiciary at all levels throughout the Commonwealth, in enhancing equal access to justice;

• Identify barriers to obtaining needed legal services, and develop solutions;

• Mobilize legal professionals in closing the justice gap by:
Increasing awareness of the importance of access to justice and the legal community's obligation to help provide it;

Promoting universal participation among the legal community in providing pro bono publico services, particularly for low income individuals, and transforming legal culture/expectations about doing so;

Engaging Virginia's law schools in access to justice issues to inculcate a culture of pro bono service among Virginia's newest lawyers while harnessing their time, talents and energy as a part of their formal legal education to assist in the effort of closing the justice gap for Virginia's underserved;

- Encourage development of auxiliary resources (such as low-literacy legal information, simpler court forms, technological aids, etc.) for underserved populations;

- Strengthen delivery of civil legal services through Virginia's legal aid societies and other pro bono initiatives and nonprofit legal services entities.

**Top Three Accomplishments to Date**

1. The Virginia Judicial System Court Self-Help website for self-represented litigants was developed and is now available for use at [http://selfhelp.vacourts.gov](http://selfhelp.vacourts.gov). The website became available for public use on June 13, 2016. The website averages over 1,500 “hits” each month.

2. The VATJC has developed Practice Points for Civil Matters Involving Self-Represented Litigants, which provide guidance to judges in matters involving self-represented litigants.

3. The Canons of Judicial Conduct for the Commonwealth of Virginia were amended in December, 2016 to explicitly allow judges to promote and encourage pro bono service.

**Recent and Current Initiatives**

1. The VATJC is working to obtain the adoption of changes to Rule 6.1 of the Virginia Rules of Professional Conduct to require Virginia State Bar members to annually report their pro bono service hours and legal aid contributions.

2. The VATJC is developing a proposed amendment to the Rules of the Supreme Court of Virginia that would allow for “unbundling,” or limited scope representation of clients by lawyers, especially in the area of family law.

3. The VATJC is working to coordinate or create infrastructure to coordinate the pro bono training, recruitment, deployment, and associated activities of the many bar associations and related groups in the state.
4. The VATJC is developing a comprehensive set of user-friendly online access to justice resources, accessible via a prominent Web portal, to assist self-represented litigants and facilitate provision of pro bono services.

5. The VATJC is working to improve the design and use of court forms, including plain language revisions and better form instructions with completed sample forms. A goal is to develop online video tutorials and interactive form completion software like Turbotax for various types of litigation (accessible by computer and smart/mobile devices).

6. The VATJC is working to change court system mindsets with respect to helping self-represented litigants.

7. The VATJC is developing a comprehensive, long-term public outreach plan for the Access to Justice Commission.

8. The VATJC continues to solicit and advocate for the commitment of the Judiciary, particularly the Supreme Court, both individually and as a body, to the promotion and enhancement of access to justice for all citizens.

**Planned Initiatives**

Many of the Recent and Current Initiatives are also Planned Initiatives for the VATJC during 2017. Additional Planned Initiatives include:

1. Focusing attention toward, and efforts against, the possible elimination of Federal funding for Legal Services Corporation.

2. Developing and producing a video/webinar to be used as a resource for judges regarding the issues faced by self-represented litigants.

3. Developing a proposed uniform cell-phone and electronic device policy for Virginia courts.

4. Developing and disseminating posters and handout materials for all Clerks’ offices that would advise people about: (a) what types of assistance can, or cannot, be provided by Clerks’ office employees; and (b) easy access points/sites where people can obtain legal assistance.

5. Developing a public Pro Bono Resource Database in conjunction with Valegalaid.org and legal service providers throughout Virginia. This database, coupled with the Virginia State Bar’s “Free and Low Cost Guide to Free and Low Cost Legal Resources” pamphlet, should provide readily accessible and comprehensive information for the public and volunteer lawyers about pro bono legal services in Virginia.
**Washington Access to Justice Board**

**Commission Chair:** Geoff Revelle, Partner, Fisher Broyles

**Commission Staff:** Diana Singleton, Access to Justice Manager

**Mission**

The Access to Justice (ATJ) Board was established by the Washington Supreme Court in 1994 at the request of the Washington State Bar Association Board of Governors in response to a growing need to coordinate access to justice efforts in Washington.

Recognizing that access to the civil justice system is a fundamental right, the ATJ Board works to achieve equal access for those facing economic and other significant barriers. In carrying out its mission, the ATJ Board is guided by the enabling order of the Washington Supreme Court, the Hallmarks of an Effective Statewide Legal Services Delivery System, the ATJ Board’s Statement of Principles and Goals, and the ATJ Board’s Operational Rules.

**Goals**

The ATJ Board reviews and sets priorities every two years. In making these decisions, the board reviews the status of its current initiatives, recommendations from its committees and other stakeholders in the Washington State Alliance for Equal Justice, current and pending issues requiring attention by the ATJ Board, and the availability of resources. The Board will be evaluating its current priorities in May and determine its goals and initiatives for 2018-2020.

Priorities for 2015–2017 were updated and adopted Sept. 16, 2016. They include the following:

- Support efforts to eliminate bias and especially racial inequity in the justice system by developing competency within the board, addressing inequity in the board's own work, and convening the Alliance for Equal Justice and justice system partners to address inequity more broadly.
- Work with partners in the Alliance for Equal Justice to develop a state plan for the delivery of legal services for 2016–2019.
- Improve internal and external communications about access-to-justice issues and the work of the ATJ Board and the Alliance for Equal Justice.
- Initiate and support efforts to ensure the effective and appropriate use of technology consistent with the Access to Justice Technology Principles in the justice system and the Alliance for Equal Justice so as to provide meaningful access to and actual delivery of equity and justice for all.
Continue to provide strategic direction and support for the Equal Justice Community Leadership Academy to ensure long-term sustainability.

Top Four Accomplishments to Date

**Unifying Vision, Values and Planning:** Recognizing that access to the civil justice system is a fundamental right, the Access to Justice Board (ATJ Board) works to achieve equal access for those facing economic and other significant barriers. Every aspect of the Board’s work has a direct impact on the elimination of bias and barriers in the justice system. Created by the Washington Supreme Court, the ATJ Board has established itself as a permanent fixture in Washington State’s civil equal justice landscape. The ATJ Board is the primary planning body for all matters relating to the delivery of civil legal aid services in Washington State. It has adopted a vision and set of unifying in which all initiatives are grounded. Its [State Plan](#) (in which the fourth update is currently in process) details the design, organization, and support of a non-duplicative, integrated, efficient and effective legal aid delivery system. Its State Plan and [Performance Standards](#) create common expectations for all organizations involved in legal aid delivery and guide decisions regarding the investment and allocation of funding.

**Public and Private Funding for Civil Legal Aid:** The [Equal Justice Coalition](#), a committee of the ATJ Board administered by the Legal Foundation of Washington, has worked since 1995 to successfully defend and expand state and federal legal aid funding in concert with other justice system funding initiatives and justice system partners, including the Washington State Office of Civil Legal Aid and the Washington State Bar Association. The ATJ Board worked for years to unify private legal aid fundraising efforts under a single umbrella. Those efforts are now successfully being implemented through the Campaign for Equal Justice, managed by Legal Foundation of Washington.

**Leadership Development – Bridging Divides and Strengthening the Delivery System:** After many years of actively promoting leadership development in this state to address cultural and organizational gaps between legal aid and pro bono providers, expand coordination and planning at the regional level, and empower a new and expanded community of program leaders throughout the state, the ATJ Board, in partnership with the Office of Civil Legal Aid, launched the Washington State Equal Justice Community Leadership Academy (Leadership Academy) in 2013. With training designed and facilitated by the Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law, the Leadership Academy was designed to create a broader, more diverse, skilled and effective community of equal justice leaders prepared to build and protect this state’s values-driven justice community into the future. Drawn from Alliance programs and community partners throughout the state, the Academy has graduated 85 leaders over three years. In 2016, the Leadership Academy began offering additional capacity building services, including leadership training and consulting for organizations as well as ongoing coaching and mentorship for the growing network of Leadership Academy alumni. In response, the Leadership Academy rebranded and incorporated as [JustLead Washington](#), an independent
organization that continues to work in close partnership with the ATJ Board, the Alliance, and other entities working to eradicate poverty and further social, racial, and economic justice.

**Technology Infrastructure and Principles:** The ATJ Board has worked to ensure the existence of a uniform technology platform that ties all legal aid providers together in a seamless system. Additionally, the ATJ Board was the initiator, host and sponsor of the nationally recognized effort to develop core principles and values that are designed to ensure that the development, implementation and adaptation of technology systems are carried out in a manner that ensures full inclusion of all members of society. The ATJ Board’s Technology Bill of Rights project led to the development of the Access to Justice Technology Principles that were adopted by the Washington Supreme Court in 2004 and that are in the process of being updated.

**Recent and Current Initiatives**

**State Plan for the Coordinated Delivery of Civil Legal Services:** The principle purpose of the State Plan is to guide the collective efforts of the Alliance for Equal Justice in order to expand access to the civil justice system and identify and eliminate barriers that perpetuate poverty and deny justice. The plan is intended to articulate Alliance agreement about its core functions, strategic goals and existing gaps. We are working on updating our fourth State Plan which we expect to adopt in May 2017 and implement in October 2017.

**Access to Justice Conference:** The Access to Justice (ATJ) Board will host its 19th Access to Justice Conference this June in Yakima, Washington. This year’s conference, “Racing to Justice: Community Lawyering to Bend the Arc,” builds on the 20 year history of the ATJ Board and Alliance for Equal Justice, bringing together attorneys, judges, and others advocates and community members working within the civil, criminal, and juvenile justice systems. We will come together to build collective knowledge and strategize on how to partner with the community to advance equity and justice in our state.

**Website Redesign:** The ATJ Board and the Alliance aim to communicate its strategic intent by significantly improving our web presence to better facilitate intra-Alliance communications and communicate with the public about our work. Currently, the ATJ/Alliance web-presence is spread across six websites (WSBA: www.wsba.org/atj; ATJ Tech Principles: www.atjweb.org; ATJ Conference: www.wa.atj.org; Alliance: www.allianceforequaljustice.org; Equal Justice Coalition: www.ejc.org; and Living History: not yet live). Taking into consideration resources, branding needs, staff time and effective communications strategies, a new website will consolidate these existing websites, with the exception of the EJC website and some content on the WSBA website.
West Virginia Access to Justice Commission

Commission Chair: Justice Brent D. Benjamin

Commission Staff: Commission Director Kara Mann

Mission

The West Virginia Access to Justice Commission seeks to identify and analyze barriers West Virginians may face when navigating the civil legal system and develop ways to respond to identified needs. Recognizing expanding access to justice in West Virginia must be a collective effort, the Commission works to secure the involvement and commitment of attorneys, the judiciary, social service providers, and legal service providers to make equal access to justice a reality.

Goals

The West Virginia Access to Justice Commission was tasked in 2009 by the Supreme Court of Appeals of West Virginia to

1. Examine, identify, and analyze various barriers West Virginians face when using our legal system;
2. Devise, coordinate, and oversee a strategic plan for a statewide, integrated, non-duplicative legal services delivery system, responsive to the identified needs;
3. Promote understanding of the importance of equal justice and of the problems many West Virginians face in accessing our civil justice system;
4. Secure involvement and commitment on the part of attorneys and judiciary toward expanding access to justice, and help develop the capacities of future leaders of access to justice efforts in our State;
5. Enhance West Virginians' understanding of our legal system, and of their fundamental legal rights and responsibilities through providing public legal education, and addressing and improving the public perception and public trust and confidence in the court system.
6. Provide a mechanism for serving as a clearinghouse for communication and information dissemination about justice issues in West Virginia;
7. Assist in the procurement of stable funding and other resources to support access to justice, and work to maximize wise and efficient use of available resources; and
8. Address existing and proposed laws, rules, and regulations that may adversely affect access to justice in West Virginia (short and long term).
Top Three Accomplishments to Date

1. In 2011, the Commission made the recommendation to the Court to update Rule 1.2(c) of the West Virginia Rules of Professional Conduct to coincide with the ABA Model Rules. The Court approved crucial amendments to Rule 1.2(c) on September 29, 2014, to recognize ghostwriting as a form of limited scope representation.

2. In 2014, the Commission recommended an online legal help center which led to the creation of www.wvonlinelegalhelp.org, where volunteer attorneys provide information and basic legal advice to low income West Virginians without any expectation of long-term representation. Informational posters about this site are displayed in the offices of Circuit and Magistrate Clerks as well as “post cards” which can be distributed by clerks’ offices to those seeking assistance and guidance. Currently the site is supervised by the West Virginia State Bar’s Legal Outreach Committee.

3. In 2015, the Commission’s Disabilities Committee lobbied the West Virginia Courthouse Facilities Improvement Authority Board to prioritize accessibility in courthouses, as courthouses are one of the most fundamental places to have access. As a result, the Authority prioritized courthouse accessibility, and awarded more than $500,000 in grant requests for accessibility improvements in 2016.

Recent and Current Initiatives

- Creation of a West Virginia Access to Justice Commission Narrative Summary
  - The Commission created a narrative summary for judicial members, clerks, policymakers, social service providers, and the public about the Commission’s mission, history, and goals.

- Rejuvenation of the West Virginia Access to Justice Foundation
  - The Commission supported revitalization of the West Virginia Access to Justice Foundation through new officers and members in efforts to raise and expend funds to support the Commission’s directives and strategic plan.

- Justice Fairness in the Courts Survey
  - The Commission in an effort to continue to gather information on legal barriers is creating an online survey to collect current opinions on the West Virginia justice system. The survey is intended to be used in an on-going basis in order to reach the population of West Virginians who wouldn’t or couldn’t attend previously held regional forums.
Planned Initiatives

- **Create an Online Self-Help Center for Self-Represented Litigants**
  - The Commission supports and encourages an online self-help center to provide assistance, forms, and general information on the civil legal system for the general public.
  - The Commission supports the development of Court-approved, plain language forms to be accessible and available on the Court’s website.

- **West Virginia Online Legal Help Project**
  - The Commission will continue to support [www.wvonlinelegalhelp.org](http://www.wvonlinelegalhelp.org) through the promotion of the project, and the recruitment of additional attorneys to participate in the project.

- **Pro Bono Support Efforts**
  - In order to bring about systemic change, the Commission recommends a voluntary pro bono referral system that will:
    - Match cases and clients in need to volunteer lawyers across the State;
    - Explore ways to provide malpractice insurance for pro bono lawyers in expanded pro bono settings;
    - Facilitate multi-organizational support and collaboration (including Legal Aid of West Virginia, West Virginia Senior Legal Aid, bar associations, mediation groups, faith-based organizations, and many other service providers and organizations); and
    - Use technology to provide statewide services.

- **Education and Action: Attorneys, Judges, Magistrates, Law Enforcement, Clerks, Legislators, Executive Officials, and the General Public**
  - A critical component of the Commission’s activities is to develop and foster strong collaborative relationships and provide better information to the public across the State, including self-represented litigants, policymakers, general social service providers, the faith-based community, and others.

- **Continue to Examine, Identify, and Analyze Barriers West Virginians Face When Using the Legal System, and Address Existing and Proposed Laws, Rules, and Regulations that may Adversely Affect Access to Justice in West Virginia (Short and Long Term).**

- **Assist in the Procurement of Support, Through Stable Funding and Other Resources, for Civil Legal Services.**
Wisconsin Access to Justice Commission

Commission President: Jim Gramling, Retired City of Milwaukee Municipal Court Judge
Commission Staff: Jeff Brown

Mission

Our mission is to develop and encourage means of expanding access to the civil justice system for unrepresented low-income Wisconsin residents.

Top Three Accomplishments to Date

1. Created the Pro Bono Honor Society to recognize Wisconsin lawyers who provide at least 50 hours of qualifying pro bono legal services in a year
2. Bipartisan legislative education efforts over three state budgets, that led to the successful restoration of a $1 million appropriation for civil legal aid in the 2015-17 state budget
3. Obtained unanimous Supreme Court support for petitions to: (a) raise the pro hac vice fee to fund legal aid; (b) modify the judicial code to clarify that judges may take reasonable steps to ensure that all litigants, including the self-represented, have a fair opportunity to present their cases; and (c) direct half of any unclaimed state class action residual funds to support legal aid

Recent and Current Initiatives

1. Protecting funding for the Legal Services Corporation
2. Expanding state funding for civil legal aid and reducing restrictions on that funding
3. Seeking support for a pro bono emeritus bar membership status that would allow retired attorneys to perform certain pro bono legal services in exchange for reduced membership fees
4. Updating the law student practice rule to allow students to engage in supervised client representation after the first year of law school
5. Outreach to community foundations through local events using the “Natural Allies” framework

Planned Initiatives

1. Expand our legal aid community’s ability to engage in statewide media work that supports the civil legal aid mission
2. Advocate for the creation of improved online self-help and pro bono tools
3. Encourage state agencies that receive federal block grants to devote a portion of those funds to civil legal aid