Access to Justice Commissions
March/April 2018 Updates*

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

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

Improve and expand the provision of legal assistance to Alabamians, particularly low-income individuals and families.

Increase the participation and provision of services by attorneys, legal professionals and volunteers.

Provide the various social service agencies and organizations with more effective tools to assist those in need of legal services.

Top Three Accomplishments in the Last Year

We have commissioned an independent strategic research firm to conduct a series of six listening sessions among key stakeholders across the state about their views on civil legal aid and related services. We are working with Lake Research Partners, a nationally recognized research firm, on this project.

Supported legislation to insure statutes of limitation do not run because a judge has not ruled on an indigent plaintiff’s affidavit of substantial hardship. The legislation did not pass this session, but we hope it will next year.

Top Three Accomplishments Since Commission Began

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.

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

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 for tenants.

Revise garnishment information.

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

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, implement the statewide action plan to provide all Alaskans with 100% access to appropriate legal information and services.
• Develop a proof of concept for a legal access platform for an integrated service delivery system. A portal will be a centerpiece of the JFA action plan to provide all Alaskans with access to justice.
• Support the work of the Cultural Competence Subcommittee of the Fairness, Diversity, and Equality Committee.
• Participate in and support events and CLEs to help continue to diversify Alaska’s judiciary.
• Continue to promote and provide restorative justice options to Alaska’s judiciary.

Top Three Accomplishments Since Commission Began

• Receipt of Justice for All (JFA) planning and implementation grants to move toward goal of 100% access to justice.
• Continuing community outreach through programs such as Color of Justice, Supreme Court LIVE, and other diversity events, including the annual diversity luncheon.
• Receipt of technical assistance from Microsoft as one of two pilot states to develop a legal access platform for civil legal needs with Microsoft, LSC and Probono.net.

Recent and Current Initiatives

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

• Promoted a 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 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 and community groups that allow for tribal courts to conduct their own restorative justice processes. The court also recently created a restorative justice page on the court system website - http://courts.alaska.gov/trialcourts/rjp.htm which includes forms, tribal and community agreements, and instructions.
• Committee members are involved in moderating and participating in a CLE to encourage more female attorneys to apply for judgeships. The CLE is entitled “Roadblocks to the Robe: What Keeps Women Off the Bench, and How to Overcome It!”
• Continue to 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
• 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. http://courts.alaska.gov/outreach/index.htm#scl
• 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?” http://courts.alaska.gov/outreach/index.htm#scl The student artwork is made into posters and the posters are displayed in courthouses statewide.

**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; and Minor Offenses. Content and plain language forms for debt collection cases are in development.
• 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.
• Support the 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 using volunteer attorneys coordinated by Alaska Legal Services.
• Support the court’s language access initiatives. These include:
  o Court’s adoption of a rule that addresses language interpreter services in court proceedings and provides for free interpreters to limited English proficient (LEP) litigants, witnesses and victims using in person, video remote or telephonic interpreters. The rule helps ensure that individuals who need an interpreter in court will be able to obtain services from a certified or trained interpreter. Resources include a guide for clerks and judges on proceedings involving interpreters and persons of limited English proficiency; frequently asked website questions (FAQs) about language interpreters for judicial officers, the public and attorneys. The commission will also regularly track efforts to facilitate access to the courts by 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.
The court created website information on interpreting for deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals and presented to newer judges on the topic.

The court also conducted a training for ASL interpreters on interpreting in the legal environment.

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 2,000 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.

- Implement the Justice for All (JFA) action plan which was completed in December 2017 after a year-long process. Funding will be awarded by NCSC from the Public Welfare Foundation and Kresge Foundation to implement the JFA plan.

- Develop the legal access platform with Microsoft, Legal Services Corporation and Probono.net to provide online gateway to information and services to address civil legal needs.

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) project to implement the action plan that was developed in 2017. Over the next 12-18 months, the JFA project plans to:

  1. build relationships between legal, social service, medical and information service providers to extend their capacity to connect Alaskans to appropriate justice-related
services that address their justice-related needs. The JFA plan identifies the specific steps to build these partnerships:

1. Educate medical, social service and information service providers about legal information and services and develop training curricula and “legal checkup” tools for providers on the availability and scope of legal services and information.

b. Build the justice ecosystem network through enhancing connections between legal and non-legal providers and embedding legal providers within existing networks.

c. Expand the capacity of legal and non-legal providers to address legal and associated needs through technology including the Microsoft legal access platform, training programs, and improving legal referrals from 2-1-1.

2. Test the efficacy of this approach in the area of debt collection by building out resources to assist debtors to address their debt issues in a preventative fashion when possible, and to resolve them when the matters result in court cases.

- 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

Mission

The Commission’s directive 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

• Assisting self-represented litigants and revising court rules and practices to facilitate access and the efficient processing of family court and eviction cases;
• Encouraging lawyers and law firms to provide pro bono services or financial support for civil legal aid for those who cannot afford counsel; and
• Develop an information campaign to inform lawyers and other citizens about the state tax credit for contributions to agencies that serve the working poor, including legal services agencies in Arizona.

Top Three Accomplishments in the Last Year

Statewide Virtual Legal Information Resource Center: A virtual legal information center, AZCourtHelp.org, launched in 2017, and is a collaboration between the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC); the Commission; the State Bar Foundation for Legal Services & Education; and in partnership with Coconino County, the Department of Economic Security and the Arizona Attorney General’s Office. It provides “one-stop shopping” for legal help, court forms, informational and “how-to” videos, links to legal aid and other community resources, webinars, and online legal clinics. These resources are accessible remotely: online, from home, from an office, on a personal computer, tablet, or smart phone. The site is ADA compliant, offers language translation and has a “live chat” feature that allows users to communicate directly with volunteer law librarians.

Launch of State LAIR Project with Governor’s Office: With the approval of the Governor’s office, Arizona is participating in a pilot project bringing together the various state agencies that provide services to our poverty population, sharing information and best practices and, through accessing existing and potential state, federal or foundation block grants, looking for ways to add civil legal aid services to the menu of services these agencies provide to their constituents.

Development of the Arizona In House Counsel Access to Justice Commission: The Arizona Chapter of the Association of Corporate Counsel (ACAC), with assistance and support of the Arizona Supreme Court’s Commission on Access to Justice, initiated its own internal Access to Justice Commission to develop meaningful pro bono opportunities to increase participation of corporate counsel attorneys and their outside law firm partners in access to justice efforts. To date, these corporate lawyers have provided free legal services to the poor (debt counseling), small businesses (via an entrepreneurship clinic and mediation services in business court) and to veterans (as dedicated projects by corporate counsel for major Arizona-based corporations).

Top Three Accomplishments Since Commission Began
**Court Navigator Program:** With support of the Commission, Maricopa County Superior Court received a three-year AmeriCorps grant to have 38 undergraduate students from Arizona State University (ASU) serve as AmeriCorps Navigators in the newly-renovated Law Library/Self-Help Resource Center. They assist self-represented litigants in family court matters (divorce, custody and child support issues) by helping them find legal information, complete court forms and accompanying self-represented litigants to the Clerk’s filing counter and to courtrooms. Structured self-help classes and volunteer lawyer clinics are planned in the future, and a long-term goal is to expand these navigator services to other types of civil cases, including probate, eviction and debt collection matters. Last year, navigators assisted over 100,000 self-represented litigants in family court in Maricopa County.

**Q & R Handbook:** The Commission published an updated “Question and Response” Handbook (electronic and printable options) for court staff across the state. It is a resource to help court staff better serve self-represented litigants. The handbook includes: “Resources” such as links to web pages and reference materials; a new section concerning fee waivers and deferrals; another new section that outlines the Arizona court system; a new section that provides practical examples demonstrating the difference between legal information versus legal advice, and includes a list of things court personnel can and cannot do when helping court customers.

**Partnership with Public Libraries:** Law4AZ Project. Public librarians and public libraries are now sources of legal information for patrons in their community. They have been trained to assist in accessing social services/community resources, legal information and forms, and are hosting volunteer law clinics. Additionally, a statewide group of volunteer law librarians serve as a resource for public librarians if they need additional assistance in helping their library patrons.

**Current Initiatives**

1. Through the efforts of the Self-Represented Litigants in Limited Jurisdiction Courts Work Group (SRL-LJC), the Commission will continue to develop informational videos for self-represented litigants in housing-related litigation.
2. The Commission, with the approval of the Supreme Court, will continue to raise public awareness and advocate for maintaining or increasing federal funding for civil legal aid services.
3. The Commission will continue participating in a pilot project bringing together the various state agencies that provide services to our poverty population, sharing information and best practices and, through accessing existing and potential state, federal or foundation block grants, looking for ways to add civil legal aid services to the menu of services these agencies provide to their constituents.
4. The Commission will continue working with the Attorney General office is helping to develop a model public law agency pro bono policy.
5. As facilitated by the Commission, the Administrative Office of the Courts is moving forward to launch a pilot project providing an online dispute resolution option for self-represented litigants. Such a program, in both limited and general jurisdiction courts, could offer an option to effectively resolve traffic/parking offenses, misdemeanor warrants, debt collection and other disputes without having to physically appear in a courtroom. The online program would be accessible from a smart phone, tablet or personal computer, and could be accessed off-hours, at night, or on weekends. An RFP for potential vendors has been issued.
6. The Commission will continue working with the Arizona Chapter of the Association of Corporate Counsel (ACAC) to assure meaningful pro bono programs and targeted opportunities/marketing
designed to increase participation of corporate counsel attorneys and their outside law firm partners.

7. With encouragement from our Congressional representatives, the Commission may seek to expand these medical-legal clinics into Arizona’s existing Veterans hospital locations, and encourage the Veterans Administration to fund those clinics for the benefit of their patients.

8. The Commission will continue its efforts to build community-based partnerships with all groups involved or interested in enhancing access to justice, including the executive and legislative branches, and within the judicial branch.

9. The Commission will continue efforts to improve plain-language family law and housing-related forms and instructions.

10. The Commission will continue to support collaborative efforts to increase availability of non-lawyer advocates on a statewide basis for victims of domestic violence.

11. The Commission recommends and will continue to develop and support specific training of judges and court staff in both general and limited jurisdiction courts for dealing with and assisting self-represented litigants.

12. Members of the Commission will continue to work with the State Bar and local bar associations to educate attorneys about recent changes in the ethical rules and to encourage lawyers to provide limited scope legal services for self-represented individuals.

**Planned Initiatives**

Exploring the expansion of the lay legal advocate program as a means to assist in celebrating the 20 year existence of the inter-governmental partnership, the Arizona Domestic Violence Legal Assistance Project.

Encourage the expansion of the Maricopa County Court Navigator Project to other county courts to increase meaningful assistance to self-represented litigants across Arizona.

Develop meaningful coordination of civil legal services in Arizona, in collaboration with the state’s law schools, the State Bar of Arizona, and the various civil legal aid organizations and volunteer lawyer programs.
Arkansas Access to Justice Commission

Mission

The Arkansas Access to Justice Commission works to ensure justice for all. That means that all Arkansans get the protections of the law. We research the unmet legal problems of Arkansans, encourage attorneys to do pro bono work for families who are priced out of the legal market, and recommend evidence-based solutions to policymakers.

Goals

The Commission’s goals, as articulated in the 2003 per curiam order establishing the Commission, are to do the following:

• 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 in the Last Year

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.

• The Arkansas Supreme Court adopted changes to the Rules of Civil Procedure that explicitly authorize ghostwriting and further clarify the obligations of attorneys who provide limited scope legal representation. The proposed changes were originally developed by the Arkansas Access to Justice Commission in 2014 and shepherded through an extensive vetting process prior to their adoption.

• The Commission launched an attorney toolkit for lawyers wishing to incorporate unbundling into their practice (arkansasjustice.org/unbundling/unbundling-resources-for-attorneys/), as well as a directory of limited scope attorneys for use by the public (arkansasjustice.org/directory-of-attorneys-offering-unbundled-services/).

• The Commission and its sister foundation jointly published a free online children’s book called Palindromic Pledge, which has been viewed or downloaded more than 800 times.
Top Three Accomplishments Since Commission Began

- In 2005 and 2009, the Commission worked with state legislators to secure state funding for legal aid through filing fee increases. That legislation currently generates about $500,000 in funding for legal aid in Arkansas each year.

- 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, Judicial Conduct provisions were adopted 12/2016, and amended Rules of Civil Procedure were adopted 12/14/2017.

Current Initiatives

- The Commission is currently planning an Unbundling Symposium in June 2018 for private attorneys who are interested in offering limited scope legal services to clients.

- The Commission is partnering with a Master’s in Public Service candidate on a project that will review, collect and compile various state-level data sets and map those using data visualization tools. The goal is to have maps that will help tell a story not just of what the civil legal needs are in Arkansas, but what resources there are relative to the need (e.g., civil legal aid funding, pro bono attorneys).

- In partnership with the Arkansas Access to Justice Foundation, the Commission has established a cy pres committee that is advising on the development of materials, sample pleadings/briefs, and publicity to promote the Foundation and legal aid programs as recipients of cy pres funds and other court awards.

Planned Initiatives

A complete set of the Commission’s strategic priorities can be found at [http://arkansasjustice.org/our-work/strategic-priorities/](http://arkansasjustice.org/our-work/strategic-priorities/). Three of the more notable planned initiatives include the following:

- The Commission will be undertaking a strategic planning process to determine the feasibility of conducting a 100% access inventory assessment (as promoted by the Justice for All Initiative) and updating its 2013 plan for providing access to justice for all Arkansans.

- The Commission is planning to develop, in partnership with the state’s judicial bodies, a judicial training curriculum and benchbook on strategies for handling self-represented litigants in the
courtroom consistent with ethical obligations, judicial economy, and due process rights of litigants.

• The Commission is coordinating with the Arkansas Bar Association to schedule visits with each member of the Arkansas Congressional delegation and their constituent services staff in their home districts.
California Commission on Access to Justice

Mission

The California Commission on Access to Justice was founded to pursue long-term fundamental improvement in our civil justice system so that it is truly accessible for all, regardless of income or language ability.

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 in the Last Year

- Achieved two-year increase of $10 million by the Legislature for the Equal Access Fund, in collaboration with the courts, the Legal Aid Association of California, and the legal services community.
- The Access Commission’s Modest Means Incubator project continued with grant support for incubator programs, including a boot camp training program for new lawyers beginning a solo practice.

Top Three Accomplishments Since Commission Began

- Successfully advocated for the creation of and dedicated funding for the Equal Access Fund. Since the fund’s creation in 1999, almost $229 million has been distributed to legal services programs for various projects and programs to increase access to justice. Related successes included increasing the revenue to the fund annually with a share of filing fee revenue in addition to the general fund allocation, as well as the $5 million general fund increased contribution noted above.
- Partnered with other entities to unlock state funding through Victims of Crime Act grants, making tens of millions of dollars of new funding available to California legal aid programs that help victims of crime. For example, funds are available to help domestic violence victims and victims of elder abuse with a wide variety of assistance, including legal help with their family law, housing and immigration matters.
- Researched and reported on key areas: The Path to Equal Justice, Rural Access, Language Access, and Incubators. The Commission published “white papers” concisely analyzing specific issues to draw attention to needs within the legal aid community, and to foster collaboration to propose solutions to meet those needs.

Current Initiatives
• Publishing new resources, including “Successful Business Planning: Representing the Moderate Income Client,” as well as new reports focused on access to justice issues in rural California.
• Providing an online pro bono directory.
• Studying legal resources available to veterans and active duty service members, convening service providers and creating/updating veteran focused resources that will be available online.

**Planned Initiatives**

• By 2019, complete a California Justice Gap Study, which will be modeled on the 2017 Legal Services Corporation Justice Gap Study.
• By 2020, explore options to increase access through licensing of paraprofessionals such as, limited license legal technicians.
Colorado Access to Justice Commission

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

Current goals are drawn from the Justice for All Strategic Plan, available here: Colorado ATJ Strategic Plan December 2017

Top Three Accomplishments in the Last Year

1. Justice for All Strategic planning (included surveys, 5 working groups, consultant, and a lot of volunteer hours)
2. Justice for All Summit

Top Three Accomplishments Since Commission Began

1. Increase state funding for Colorado Legal Services
2. Creation and facilitation of local access to justice committees in almost all 22 judicial districts
3. Conduct 2 sets of statewide hearings on need for funding of access to justice

Current Initiatives

1. Justice for All implementation grant
2. Revamping the Access to Justice Commission
3. Finding resources to hire full-time access to justice coordinator for the Commission

Planned Initiatives

1. Implement specific provisions of the strategic plan
Connecticut Judicial Branch Access to Justice Commission

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 Since Commission Began
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.

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,

Recent and Current Initiatives

- Continuing 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.

- A public relations campaign to highlight and support the resources of legal information provided by libraries and the Judicial Branch is being developed by the Workgroup on Libraries and Access to Justice.

- A May 4, 2018 symposium Modest Means Representation and Unbundled Legal Services will be held at the University of Connecticut School of Law. Justice Kahn and Judge Moll, along with Judge Bright and other judges will participate. Program description:

  *Current studies suggest a large percentage of potential clients are not able to afford the retainer and/or fees typically charged by lawyers for full representation. Limited Scope Representation (LSR) or Unbundled Legal Services can make legal representation more affordable to many individuals who might otherwise represent themselves. Further, LSR can create an expanded revenue stream for attorneys who provide limited scope representation or unbundled legal services for individuals of modest means. This symposium will cover all aspects of LSR or Unbundled Services and how lawyers can build successful legal practices by expanding their client base.*

  *You Will Learn: Practical do’s and don’ts of LSR and Unbundled Services and how lawyers can build successful legal practices by expanding their client base Ethical considerations of LSR and unbundling for practicing attorneys LSR ethical considerations from the judges’ perspective.*
- **Reformation of the Commission:** New members have been added, including deans of the three law schools located in Connecticut: the University of Connecticut School of Law, Quinnipiac University School of Law, and Yale Law School. Additional new members represent smaller bar associations, appellate practice, and large and small firms with pro bono components. The Commission met once in 2017, in November.

**Planned Initiatives**

- Develop a pro bono program to assist self-represented parties with cases at the appellate level. Judge Moll lead this effort.

- Increasing the use of videoconferencing as a tool to effectuate pro bono service: This initiative is being continued, with an eye towards expanding from the single pro bono videoconference program currently available.

- New workgroups to address general pro bono efforts, and one to facilitate the use of the law schools and law students in pro bono, will be developed in 2018.
Delaware Access to Justice Commission

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

As initial steps to address its long-term mission, 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.

Top Three Accomplishments in the Last Year

The three civil Subcommittees: (i) the Subcommittee on the Efficient Delivery and Adequate Funding of Legal Services to the Poor; (ii) the Subcommittee on Judicial Branch Coordination in Helping Pro Se Litigants; and (iii) the Subcommittee on Promoting Greater Private Sector Representation of Underserved Litigants completed their findings and recommendations in respective Final Reports to the Delaware Supreme Court.

As part of its continuing, comprehensive review of Delaware’s criminal justice system, the Access to Justice Committee on Fairness joined with the Delaware Police Chiefs’ Council and the Fraternal Order of Police, to launch and successfully complete a wide-ranging survey on policing in Delaware.

Top Three Accomplishments Since Commission Began

The Committee on Fairness in the Criminal Justice System was reconstituted into: (i) the Juvenile Justice Subcommittee; (ii) the Policing Subcommittee; (iii) the Alternatives to Incarceration Subcommittee; and (iv) the Bail and Pretrial Subcommittee.
See the section above for additional Commission accomplishments.

**Current Initiatives**

- The Pro Se Subcommittee continues to explore the expansion of limited legal representation in Delaware.

- The Pro Se Subcommittee is also working closely with the courts to turn underutilized law libraries in court facilities into Pro Se Self Help Centers.

- The Funding Subcommittee continues to look for ways to secure additional and stable funding for legal aid to low-income Delawareans.

- The Pro Bono Subcommittee is planning a first annual pro bono summit/fair, and developing a pro bono challenge for attorneys to meet a clear, measurable, and collective pro bono target.

- The Juvenile Justice Subcommittee is investigating school discipline policies to ensure use of discipline is consistent, fair, and optimal.

- The Policing Subcommittee is analyzing the results of their law enforcement survey as part of an effort to guide future efforts.

- The Alternatives to Incarceration Subcommittee is developing community-based sentencing alternatives, vocational training and rehabilitation.

- The Bail and Pretrial Subcommittee, in conjunction with other state entities and non-profit agencies, is in the process of completing a bail reform package.

**Planned Initiatives**

The Commission will continue with their current initiatives in an effort to help the Delaware Justice System efficiently deliver outcomes that are fair and accessible to all.
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 in the Last Year

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 Initiative—and since then has led community-wide efforts to secure, preserve, and increase that funding. (See more below.) In fiscal year 2018, the District government appropriated its highest level of public funding to date: $5.3 million for the core Access to Initiative, which funds the provision of legal services in underserved areas, housing-related cases, a shared legal interpreter bank, and the District’s law school loan repayment assistance program for legal services lawyers; and $4.5 million in first-time, additional funding for the Civil Legal Counsel Projects Program, a new landmark effort to support legal services in eviction proceedings.

Raising the Bar
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. (See more below.) In 2016, 47 law firms donated nearly $5.5 million in support of legal services providers serving low-income and at-risk communities in the District of Columbia, a $2.5 million cumulative increase for all the participating firms, and a more than $500,000 increase from 2015 totals. The campaign continues to grow, and we anticipate adding new law firms to the 2017 campaign leadership circle.

**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 to provide counsel to tenants facing eviction from subsidized or public housing and address other systemic challenges. The Housing Right to Counsel 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 fourteen law firms. Over the past two years, project partners have represented over 200 tenants in eviction cases through this Project, making it possible for the vast majority of these tenants to stay in their homes, hold onto their housing subsidies, and avoid long-term homelessness. The Project’s results are indeed compelling: tenants helped through this Project are six times less likely to face an imminent threat of eviction. There is an effort underway to bring even more law firms into the project to multiply its successes.

**Top Three Accomplishments Since Commission Began**

**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 Initiative—and since then has led community-wide efforts to secure, preserve, and increase that funding. In the twelve years since this first appropriation, the Commission has helped secure $50 million to fund the provision of legal services in underserved areas, housing-related cases, a shared legal interpreter bank, the District’s first law school loan repayment assistance program for legal services lawyers, and a new, landmark program to provide legal services in eviction proceedings.

**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. This results in participation from a wide range of firms - from large private firms to solo practitioners. 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 2016, 47 law firms donated nearly $5.5 million in support of legal services providers serving low-income and at-risk communities in the District of Columbia, and the campaign continues to grow.
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 mutual 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. The Commission is currently finalizing a new report that will include the following: changes in the legal services community since the last report; data that illustrates the legal needs of low- and moderate-income residents of the District, and shifts in that need since the last report; adaptations and innovations within the provider community that have been successful; a contextual analysis of policies, laws, and social structures that affect the low-income community in DC, including the courts; and a presentation of next frontiers in access to justice, including the need for enhanced self-help approaches to address the realities in our justice system.

Current Initiatives

While continuing work on all of 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 featured over 4,300 D.C. lawyers who devoted 50 or more hours to pro bono service, and while still unconfirmed, the 2017 list is projected to be the largest yet.

D.C. Courts

The Commission has always worked closely with the D.C. Courts to promote greater accessibility for low- and moderate-income litigants, including those proceeding pro se. Commissioners work regularly with the Chief Judge and other judicial officers of the Superior Court of D.C. and the D.C. Court of Appeals.

The Commission has worked with the Court on a wide range of initiatives that have 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 has also engaged in 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, particularly for those litigants who must proceed without legal representation. 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.

**Planned Initiatives**

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

*Strategic Planning*

After its updated legal needs report is published in Fall 2018, the Commission plans to embark upon a strategic planning effort to review its work since inception, identify relevant priorities moving forward, and set a series of action steps to meet its organizational goals.
Florida Commission on Access to Civil Justice

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 Administrative Order No. AOSC16-71 by the Supreme Court of Florida, which establishes the Commission as a standing body.

The Commission has three Committees, each of which has been given charges 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.
- 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.
Top Three Accomplishments Since Commission Began

1) Establishing a Standing Commission: The initial Commission was originally appointed for a term to expire on June 30, 2016, and was 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 a 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 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) Increasing Awareness of the Need to Address Access to Civil Justice: The Commission has consistently worked to increase awareness across Florida of the need to address access to civil justice issues. Activities in this regard include conducting a media availability prior to each Commission meeting, televising Commission meetings on The Florida Channel, using social media to share information about Commission activities and access issues, and posting information on the Commission website.

3) Building Relationships with the Business Community: Since appointment of the initial Commission, leaders from the business community have been included in and involved with the Commission’s work. Most recently, the Executive Committee of the Commission was directed to establish a Council of Business Partners to cultivate a collaborative relationship between the corporate community and the civil legal services community. The Committee considered several outstanding candidates and appointed individuals with the qualifications that are best suited to accomplish the tasks assigned by the Court to the Council. The Commission along with these esteemed members of the Council are anticipated to make a positive impact in engaging the business community to remove barriers that impede access to civil justice. The Council is developing materials to inform the business community about the types of cases that are encompassed within access to civil justice initiatives and about how the lack of meaningful access to civil justice affects their employees’ personal lives and work performance.

Top Four Accomplishments in the Last Year

1) Creation of Florida Courts HELP App: In association with the Commission, the Office of the State Courts Administrator developed the Florida Courts HELP App. With almost one-third of the visitors using mobile devices to access the Florida Courts website, the app was developed to respond to the gap in access for those users. Downloaded more than 2,000 times since its release on December 15, 2017, the app is a direct, mobile-friendly pathway to Florida’s most requested court information and forms, including:

- 186 Supreme Court-approved family law forms;
- Links and contact information for self-help centers across the state;
- Plain language instructions and descriptions of first steps and next actions; and
- Contact information for a range of legal help from multiple online resources, free and low-cost legal services, lawyer referral services, and other information, including eligibility criteria.
2) **Implementation of Florida Free Legal Answers**: Inspired by the work of the Commission, leadership at The Florida Bar implemented the American Bar Association’s Free Legal Answers in this state: [Florida Free Legal Answers](#). Since the site went live less than a year ago, more than 600 attorneys have volunteered to participate and nearly 2,000 legal questions have been answered.

3) **Expansion of Emeritus Lawyer Program**: The Supreme Court of Florida approved a change initially proposed by the Commission which was designed to expand the pool of professionals eligible to provide pro bono services as an emeritus lawyer. The Rules Regulating The Florida Bar were amended to allow a wider range of lawyers to become eligible to serve an emeritus lawyer providing pro bono legal assistance under the supervision of an authorized Legal Aid organization. Attorneys eligible to apply for certification as an “emeritus lawyer” now include members of The Florida Bar who are inactive or retired from the active practice of law in Florida, inactive or retired members of the bar of any other state or territory of the United States or the District of Columbia, any person who has served as a judge in Florida or any other state or territory of the United States or the District of Columbia, any person who is or was a full-time law professor employed by a law school accredited by the American Bar Association, or authorized house counsel certified by the Supreme Court of Florida.

4) **Completion of Florida Legal Access Gateway (FLAG) Pilot Project**: The Florida Justice Technology Center, a nonprofit organization that works on increasing access to civil justice through technology, designed and implemented a pilot project in Clay County, Florida. The pilot project is an online system that uses an interactive interview process to intake and analyze specific end user information, reviews available resources applicable to the user’s stated needs, and provides individualized referral options. The pilot project has concluded, the Center has submitted an evaluation report, and next steps are currently under consideration.

**Current Initiatives**

The Commission meets three times per year to discuss access to civil justice initiatives and the work of its three committees. The committees meet more frequently and are moving forward on accomplishing the tasks assigned in the administrative order.

1) **Long-Range Plan**: At its December 2017 meeting, Commission members were asked to vote on access-related issues they believed presented the most pressing needs in Florida. Ten categories were offered for their consideration based on information from the Justice for All project housed in the National Center for State Courts. Members selected their top four priorities and a weighted scoring model was used to recognize priorities. The four priorities chosen were: 1) triage and referral; 2) process simplification; 3) limited legal assistance; and 4) plain language forms.

Since that meeting, staff researched initiatives in other states under the four broad categories and drafted a memo outlining the research. At its next meeting in April 2017, Commission members will consider those initiatives and determine if any would be effective to increase access in Florida’s current environment. During that meeting, members will also have the opportunity to offer other initiatives under each of the four categories.
After the meeting, staff will compile the information and provide it to the Commission’s Executive Committee for further consideration. A final long-range plan is expected by June 2018.

2) **Florida Courts HELP App:** Florida anticipates expanding the app to including a chat function, as well as adding more self-help information such as short instructional videos for self-represented individuals.

3) **Court Navigators and Licensed Legal Paraprofessionals:**

   a. **Court Navigators:** The Service Options Committee is currently researching the concept of court navigators who might provide non-legal assistance to self-represented litigants. The Committee is exploring options including: (a) conducting a pilot that would recruit and train volunteers as in-person court navigators; and (b) a statewide program conducted through a chat option on a website and/or app.

   b. **Licensed Legal Paraprofessional:** The Service Options Committee has researched and compared licensed legal paraprofessional programs currently operating in other states and is considering ways to integrate the concept within the current structure of Florida’s Registered Paralegal Program.

4) **Emeritus Lawyer Outreach Campaign:** The Commission is partnering with The Florida Bar’s Standing Committee on Pro Bono Legal Services and The Florida Bar Foundation on an Emeritus Lawyer outreach initiative to inform qualifying lawyers and interested groups about the rule change.

5) **Young Lawyers Division ATJ Workgroup:** The Executive Committee is partnering with the Council of Business Partners to cultivate a collaborative relationship between the corporate community and the civil legal services community. To assist the Council in accomplishing its goals, the Council recently established the Young Lawyers Division ATJ Workgroup. The Workgroup is researching ways to: engage and inform the business community about access to civil justice issues that affect employees; and determine how the Commission can learn from the business community.

6) **Council of Business Partners Communications Toolkit:** The Council is working with staff on the development of a communications outreach toolkit to be used when members engage with the business community. The toolkit will include a slide deck containing information about access to civil justice issues as well as a resource guide for distribution to employees.

**Planned Initiatives**

The long-range plan currently being developed by the Commission and expected to be completed by June 2018 will establish the work of the Commission and its Committees for the next two to three years.
Hawai‘i Access to Justice Commission

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 Three Accomplishments in the Last Year

- In November 2016, Hawai‘i was selected as one of seven states awarded grants under the Justice for All project. In 2017, the Commission worked with Hawaii’s other stakeholders including the...
Hawaiʻi Judiciary, Hawaiʻi legislature, legal service providers, Hawaii Justice Foundation, and leaders in government and private and non-profit sectors to move towards the goal of one hundred percent access to effective assistance for essential civil legal needs. Six core principles were formulated that would be characteristic of such a civil justice system: (1) a system that listens to voices of all community stakeholders; (2) a system that is people-centered and sustainable; (3) a system that fosters gateways to legal, government, and community services; (4) a system that encourages collaboration and coordination of services; (5) a system that provides the integration and use of effective technology; and (6) a system that continues to build legal service capacity. The strategic plan identified four recommendations for implementation: (a) the development of Community Navigators, who would be trained by legal service providers and agencies, to assist in creating a network of connections to assist those in need; (b) the integration of preventative legal assessments in various settings to increase awareness of civil legal needs and identify opportunities to solve challenges before escalation into crises; (c) the strengthening of connections between institutions and organizations to address civil legal needs and connecting them with people in need; and (d) the creation of an interagency roundtable of state and county government agencies that would meet regularly to coordinate ways to improve meaningful access to justice for all.

• In May 2017, the Commission approved the Task Force’s proposal for a Volunteer Court Navigator program to be transmitted to the Hawaii Supreme Court. The proposal presented a pilot program in the First Circuit (Oahu) and in the Second Circuit (Maui) to assist the self-represented litigants who are appearing in the District Courts on landlord-tenant, debt collection, and temporary restraining orders (non-family) cases. The project is modeled after the New York Court Navigator program, which has been successful. On November 3, 2017, the Hawaii Supreme Court issued its orders establishing a Volunteer Court Navigator Pilot Program in the state’s First and Second Judicial Circuits.

• The 2017 Hawaiʻi Access to Justice Conference with the theme, “Fulfilling the Promise of Equal Justice,” attracted over 260 attendees. Opening remarks by Hawaiʻi Governor David Ige praised the work of the Commission, and he encouraged the audience to participate in expanding access to justice. Hawaiʻi Supreme Court Chief Justice Mark Recktenwald reviewed the myriad ways that recent advances in technology pose challenges to the role of the courts and the legal profession as traditionally understood. Commission Chair Hawaiʻi Supreme Court Justice Simeon Acoba (ret.) provided an overview of the Commission’s activities and said, “In this environment, what we can do through personal and collective acts of charity, of generosity, of sharing, of sacrifice becomes all the more important and valuable. We can stand for such virtues by encouraging public support of assistance to others and by endorsing the valuable contributions our colleagues make in this respect—especially in our legal system.” Kellye Testy, former Dean and Professor of Law at the University of Washington, delivered the keynote address on “Just Innovations.” She said that we must nurture “a spirit of innovation whose first principle is to advance justice and human dignity.” There were two morning concurrent workshops and five concurrent workshops in the two afternoon sessions.

Top Three Accomplishments Since Commission Began

1 On April 24, 2008, the Hawaiʻi Supreme Court formally adopted Hawaiʻi Supreme Court Rule 21, which established the Access to Justice Commission. For further information about the Commission, see http://www.hawaiijustice.org/hawaii-access-to-justice-commission.
• Led in the development of self-help centers in the state circuit courts, which centers are staffed by volunteer attorneys. Since the first one was opened on Kauai in October 2011 and the others were opened by 2012, these centers have provided self-help services to over 19,000 people as of October 2017.
• 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.
• Worked to increase funding available to legal services providers, such as supporting the amendment of Hawaii’s indigent legal assistance fund statute to enable an increase in the proceeds distributed to legal service providers and created a cy pres kit that instructs lawyers on the distribution of unclaimed class action proceeds to non-profit organizations.

Current Initiatives

• Adopting a protocol and rule changes for cases in which an attorney would perform unbundled, discrete task legal services.
• Implementing a Volunteer Court Navigator Pilot Program in the state Second Judicial Circuit (Maui) and the First Judicial Circuit (Oahu) after approval of the pilot programs by the Hawai’i Supreme Court in November, 2017. The Volunteer Court Navigator Pilot Program is a court-based volunteer program to assist the self-represented litigants who are appearing in the District Court on landlord-tenant, debt collection, and temporary restraining orders (non-family) cases. The Volunteer Court Navigator Pilot Program complements the work of the Judiciary Service Center staff in the First Judicial Circuit and supplements the pro bono services offered by the volunteer attorneys in the self-help centers described above.
• The Hawai’i Appellate Pro Bono pilot project was made permanent by the Hawai’i Supreme Court on April 19, 2017 in light of the project’s accomplishments since its inception and the importance of continued provision of pro bono assistance to financially deserving pro se litigants in appellate matters. The project is administered by Volunteer Legal Services Hawai’i.
• Hawaii’s Online Pro Bono is an opportunity for attorneys to provide limited assistance to those in need of legal guidance. The commitment is short-term, and there is no expectation for representation beyond the question and answer format. Through this program, users can register and post a specific civil legal question. In order to use the service, users must meet income and asset qualifications.
• Participation in the ABA-SCLAID 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

• Implementing Hawaii’s Justice for All plan for two proposed projects: Community Navigator Project and the Hawai’i Civil Legal Services Interagency Roundtable Project. The deliverables of the Community Navigator project will be to: (1) develop a training curriculum for community leaders; (2) deliver the training curriculum to community leaders; and (3) deliver
information on self-help resources locally using community leaders. The deliverables of the Interagency Roundtable project will be to: (1) create and establish the Interagency Roundtable; (2) improve alignment and coordination of existing resources and services (encourage collaboration across government agencies, especially for agencies working with the same or similar beneficiaries); and (3) encourage state agencies to integrate the provision of legal services into ongoing programs and state contracts and encourage collaboration on securing federal and other grant opportunities.

- Coordinating the 2018 Hawai‘i Access to Justice Conference scheduled for Friday, June 29, 2018. 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.
- Coordinating the 2018 Pro Bono Celebration, which recognizes the law firms, law organizations, or law offices that volunteer at the self-help centers on each of the major islands of the state.
- The Commission’s Task Force on Paralegals and Other Nonlawyers will be examining and developing a tenant advocate pilot program or advocate program for paralegals to assist self-represented litigants in certain cases.
Illinois Supreme Court Commission on Access to Justice

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. 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's defining strategic goal over the next few years is to promote meaningful access to the Illinois courts for unrepresented litigants, which will make the courts more fair, accessible and efficient for everyone. This strategic goal recognizes that large and increasing numbers of Illinois residents – especially among the poor and vulnerable – effectively have no choice but to proceed on their own in a system that historically has been designed and operated for litigants with lawyers. The ATJ Commission has identified this focus on addressing challenges caused and faced by growing numbers of unrepresented litigants because it suggests work where the Illinois Supreme Court is uniquely positioned to make the greatest impact on improving access to justice; builds on work of the Administrative Office of the Illinois Courts’ new Civil Justice Division; and complements the work being done by other entities.

The ATJ Commission’s current strategic plan for FY 2017-2020 is available at: http://www.illinoiscourts.gov/SupremeCourt/Committees/ATJ_Commn/ATJ_Commn_Strategic_Plan.pdf

Top Three Accomplishments in the Last Year

(1) Launch of the Self-Represented Litigant Coordinator program. The goal of this project is to create, train, and support a statewide network of Coordinators to serve as a bridge, linking their courthouses with others throughout the State to share ideas, develop new resources, and establish programs for assisting self-represented litigants. At program launch, grants of up to
$20,000 were given to ten judicial circuits, and two days of professional development were planned for the program lunch (including sessions on language access, implicit bias and customer service training conducted pro bono by United Airlines) with on-going monthly Coordinator conference calls.

(2) **Passage of "good cause exemption" from mandatory e-filing for certain self-represented litigants.** Over the past two years, e-filing has become mandatory in various courts throughout Illinois; and by July 2018, all civil courts across the State will have mandatory civil e-filing. As proposed by the ATJ Commission, Illinois Supreme Court Rule 9(c)(4) offers a failsafe for the most vulnerable Illinois residents who might otherwise struggle to access the courts and aligns Illinois practice with that of the rest of the country. In adopting the amended rule, the Court furthered its goals of establishing a modern, cost-effective, and efficient case management system, while protecting the needs of the most vulnerable litigants who would struggle to adapt.

(3) **Launch of two pilot Early Resolution divorce programs.** Borrowing heavily from the Alaska Office of Courts, the ATJ Commission has been working with the 22nd Judicial Circuit and the Circuit Court of Cook County to develop court-based triage and simplified divorce proceedings, involving court staff for case screening, pro bono lawyers for limited legal assistance and specific court dates for expedited case review and prove-up hearings.

**Top Three Accomplishments Since Commission Began**

(1) **Developing, automating and translating standardized, plain-language legal forms and other self-help resources into commonly spoken languages for areas of law frequently encountered by self-represented litigants.**

(2) **Training, educating and evaluating court interpreters on judicial ethics, the three modes of court interpreting as well as legal terminology; and educating and encouraging court staff to use qualified court interpreters.**

(3) **Developing judicial, clerk and court educational materials and trainings on access to justice issues, including poverty simulation workshops, a monthly access to justice judicial advice column, a Court-approved "Safe Harbor" policy on the difference between legal information and advice, a new Court-approved Plain Language policy encouraging judges and court staff to communicate with self-represented litigants in plain language as much as practicable.**

**Current and Planned Initiatives**

**INITIATIVE 1:** Develop, automate, and translate standardized, plain-language legal forms and other resources into commonly spoken languages for areas of law frequently encountered by self-represented litigants.

**INITIATIVE 2:** Support the continued and expanded use of court-based facilitators/navigators, including Illinois JusticeCorps, and evaluate the effectiveness of these services as a means to assist self-represented litigants and contribute to the efficient operation of the Illinois courts and study how to make facilitators/navigators most effective.
INITIATIVE 3: Evaluate and recommend policies to ensure that self-help services and court websites serve as a useful resource for self-represented litigants.

INITIATIVE 4: Evaluate and recommend policies to enable remote access to the court system, which will allow litigants to have meaningful access to the justice system and promote technologies that also enable remote interpreting services for limited English proficient litigants.

INITIATIVE 5: Research and make recommendations to simplify court procedures and processes that are frequently encountered by self-represented litigants, with the goal of making those processes and procedures easier for court users to understand and comply with, while possibly reducing the number of court visits necessary to complete a case.

INITIATIVE 6: Develop guidelines and promote training opportunities for judges who encounter significant numbers of self-represented and limited English proficient litigants in their courtrooms, consistent with Rule 63(A)(4) of the Illinois Code of Judicial Conduct; and

INITIATIVE 7: Develop guidelines and promote training opportunities for other court personnel – especially circuit clerks and members of their respective staffs – to enable them to assist self-represented and limited English proficient litigants in a consistent, ethically permissible manner.

INITIATIVE 8: Develop language access resources and language assistance services through recruiting and training interpreters to achieve court certification, promoting the usage of qualified interpreters in court proceedings and building awareness in limited English proficient communities about language access in the courts.

INITIATIVE 9: Identify, develop and promote the implementation of court policies and rules that promote legal representation, including limited scope representation, in partnership with bar associations and other community groups.

INITIATIVE 10: Develop community-based programming to build trust of the court system through educating community stakeholders about the access to justice resources that are available to help people use the court system.
Indiana Coalition for Court Access

Mission

The mission of the Coalition for Court Access is to develop and implement a statewide plan to improve the availability and quality of civil legal services for persons of limited means.

Goals

The 2018 goals of the Coalition, organized by work group:

**Best Practices:**
- Finalize and get approval for the forms vetting/approval process, including developing a role and process for two senior judges to participate.
- Migrate forms from the Court’s website to the CCA’s website - includes revising, vetting, approving, creating and posting.
- Develop an Indiana unbundling initiative.

**Communications:**
- Launch the CCA website. *(in partnership with Technology work group)*
- Develop a communications plan for civil legal needs study. *(in partnership with Data Collection work group)*
- Revise pro bono reporting FAQ and consider proposals for Rule 6.7 revisions in response to public defender, GAL and mediation questions. *(in partnership with Pro Bono work group)*
- Develop a communications plan for legislative education campaign. *(in partnership with Resource Development work group)*

**Data Collection:**
- Complete the CCA’s Indiana civil legal needs study.
- Develop a shared common set of definitions for the civil legal aid community *(Data Collection)*

**Pro Bono:**
- Revise Pro Bono Reporting infographic with 2016 data and FAQ to address questions about public defender, GAL and mediation work. Consider proposals to revise Rule 6.7 accordingly.
- Have the proposed emeritus pro bono rule approved.
- Sponsor a Lawyers in Libraries day during the October 2018 national Pro Bono Week.
- Support an initiative to strengthen Indiana’s pro bono delivery system.

**Resource Development:**
- Develop a legislative education and advocacy campaign for 2019/2019 legislative session that focuses on increasing civil legal aid funding.
- Refine a fund development “Case Statement.”
• Facilitate and encourage greater coordination of fund development efforts in Indiana by creating a common shared calendar to encourage cooperative calendaring/scheduling of events and major development efforts of Indiana Civil Legal Aid group.
• Continue to monitor and steward the Proposed Rule 1.15 on Unclaimed and Unidentified Trust Account Funds.
• Monitor federal funding issues and propose action when necessary, including LSC and other major civil legal aid sources.
• Evaluate Indiana civil legal aid funding info-graphic to consider suggestions on systemic change.

Rural:
• Expand advisory and evaluative capacity of Rural work group by adding new members in both advisory and evaluative capacities.
• Develop report for counties and judges that participated in 2017 surveying and data collection project.
• Refine and develop 2018 surveying and data collection project with fellowship and academic support.

Technology:
• Monitor the progress of the Legal Services Corporation/Microsoft portal prototype, currently being tested in Hawaii and Alaska.

Top Three Accomplishments in the Last Year

1. The Coalition launched the state’s first civil legal needs study since 2008, with an emphasis on exploring the civil legal needs of rural Indiana. The civil legal needs study is being conducted by a team of researchers from the Indiana University Public Policy Institute and the Maurer School of Law.

2. The Coalition developed a system for vetting and approving self-represented litigant court forms to be posted on the Coalition’s website, which is under development.

3. The Coalition hosted its second annual statewide civil legal aid conference, bringing together 200 legal aid providers, pro bono lawyers, law school clinics, members of the judiciary, Court staff, and people providing legal help to low and modest means people in Indiana.

Top Three Accomplishments Since Commission Began

1. Extended the sunset (by five years) on a state filing fee that is dedicated to pro bono civil legal services.

2. Began the process of developing a statewide triage portal and website.

3. Developed a process for vetting and recommending court rule changes that strengthen Indiana’s civil justice system.
**Current Initiatives**

1. Developing a Coalition for Court Access website that will help low-income people find legal help in their area; access information about working with a lawyer; locate basic legal information; and find self-help court forms.

2. Working with the Indiana Supreme Court to update and migrate the self-help court forms from the Court’s website to the Coalition’s new website – to be launched second quarter of 2018.

3. Undergoing a statewide civil legal needs study that includes GIS mapping; intake census with major civil legal aid and pro bono groups; stakeholder interviews and surveys with legal, social, human and medical service providers; in-depth legal needs analysis of five counties; review of Indiana’s 2-1-, pro bono reporting and civil legal aid funding data.

**Planned Initiatives**


2. Undertaking an economic impact analysis for civil legal services in Indiana.

3. Conducting a strategic planning process to make recommendations for strengthening Indiana’s pro bono civil legal aid delivery system.
Iowa Access to Justice Commission

Mission

Identify and assess current and future needs of low income Iowans for access to justice in civil matters; foster collaboration among private lawyers, the legal services community, and Iowa’s law schools, not-for-profit organizations, and other community service providers; explore initiatives and innovations to expand civil access to justice; and identify changes in court rules, procedures, and policies that may reduce barriers to Iowa’s justice system.

Goals

The mission description above outlines the broad goals of the Iowa Access to Justice Commission.

Top Three Accomplishments in the Last Year

1. 2017 Iowa Access to Justice Public Outreach Summit
2. Quarterly Commission meetings with quality educational components
3. Statewide survey of Iowa attorneys about barriers to performing pro bono work

Top Three Accomplishments Since Commission Began

2. Establishment, appointment of members, and progress of Commission work groups:

   - Corporate Involvement Work Group: white paper designed as a “call to action” in conjunction with American Corporate Counsel Association
   - Public Outreach Work Group: 2017 Iowa Access to Justice Public Outreach Summit and follow-up survey; inventory of currently available access to justice resources
   - Pro Bono Work Group: survey of Iowa attorneys about barriers to pro bono work
   - Veterans Work Group: identification of disparate resources available to veterans
   - Rural Access Work Group: hosting Rural Practice Meet & Greet with recent law graduates and current law students
   - Language Access Work Group: webinar presentation for Iowa Interpreters and Translators Association
   - Case Processing Work Group: gather and centralize access to legal services resources

Current Initiatives

- Commission representation at “National Meeting of State Access to Justice Commission Chairs”
- Preparation of Annual Report of Iowa Access to Justice Commission
Work groups’ progress on specific recommendations and goals of Report of the Iowa Supreme Court Access to Justice Commission, July 2017

Additional training for judges and judicial branch personnel on procedural fairness

Corporate Involvement Work Group: developing models—a “how to” handbook—for different sized businesses to use in becoming involved in access to justice projects

Public Outreach Work Group: partnering with Voices for Civil Justice for work on Commission communication plan; working on mockups for proposed Commission website

Pro Bono Work Group: using survey results, develop effective means of encouraging pro bono work and limited scope services among attorneys

Veterans Work Group: develop guide to linking veterans to legal services; encourage pro bono services specific to veterans’ issues

Rural Access Work Group: focus on limited scope representation and incubator programs for rural practice

Language Access Work Group: continue training efforts; focus on translation of legal forms into Spanish

Case Processing Work Group: coordinate recommendations from Iowa Guardianship and Conservatorship Reform Task Force 2017 Report; improve options for parents in dissolutions to attend “Children in the Middle” course

**Planned Initiatives**

Development of dedicated website for Commission

Conduct additional public outreach forums

Promote statewide understanding of importance of access to justice with all stakeholders and at all levels of society
Kansas Supreme Court Access to Justice Committee

Mission and Goals

The Kansas Supreme Court established a Pro Se Committee in 2007 to study and make recommendations on how to resolve issues about self-represented litigants. This ad hoc group was renamed the Self-Represented Study Committee but maintained a limited focus. In 2012, the Kansas Supreme Court formally established the Access to Justice Committee as a standing committee.

The Court directed the Committee to focus on ensuring access to the courts for all Kansans without regard to their level of income. The purpose of the ATJ Committee is to make 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. Kansas Supreme Court Rule 1401. 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.

Top Accomplishments Since the Committee Began

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 Risks and Responsibilities of Representing Yourself
- General Tips for Representing Yourself
- Things to Know
- Can Court Staff Help?
- Finding Legal Assistance
- Types of Courts in Kansas
- Understanding How State Courts Work

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. At this time, the Court is developing a new website and has involved the Committee in helping to update and reconfigure the information available to self-represented litigants.

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 that is available publicly on the Court's website. This Summary provides information that can assist Kansas district court judges, attorneys, and the public in evaluating how to address abusive filers and when imposition of restrictions on litigants is appropriate. The guidelines are available on the Court's public website: [http://www.kscourts.org/Programs/Self-Help/Summary-of-Authorities-Final-060515.pdf](http://www.kscourts.org/Programs/Self-Help/Summary-of-Authorities-Final-060515.pdf).

**Current Initiatives**

**A. Self-Help Centers for Unrepresented Parties**

The Committee continues to gather information and provide support for court-sponsored self-help centers that are being created by individual counties to assist self-represented parties. Self-help centers in Kansas vary from a facility staffed with five fulltime clerks to an unstaffed public access computer that links a self-represented litigant directly to Kansas Legal Services. The Committee is examining how it can provide support for these diverse centers across the state. Development of statewide training for clerks that interact with self-represented litigants is one of the primary issues the Committee is exploring at this time.

**B. Forms for Self-Represented Litigants**

In conjunction with the establishment of regional self-help centers, the Committee has identified the need to simplify legal forms used by self-represented litigants. This year, the Committee began working with the Kansas Judicial Council to modify forms developed for use by attorneys to convert them to plain English easily understood by non-lawyers. The conversion process has begun with family law forms, which are the forms most frequently requested by self-represented litigants in Kansas.

**C. Training on Interacting with Self-Represented Litigants**

Currently development of statewide training for clerks who interact frequently with self-represented litigants is a key focus of the Committee. The Committee is developing a training program that can be taken "on the road" to assist clerks in the state's 105 counties. The Committee believes creation of this training program is the first step toward developing a statewide call line to support clerks and to assist self-represented litigants across the state.
Kentucky Access to Justice Commission

Mission

To increase access to the courts and high quality legal representation for people of low and moderate income living in Kentucky through innovative partnerships with civil legal aid programs, private bar, the judiciary, law schools, business and community based organizations

Goals

Identify and assess current and future needs of low and moderate income Kentuckians in matters related to access to civil justice.

- 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 legal matters.
- Promote principled and efficient use of available resources and encourage the coordination and sharing of resources or funding.
- Develop and implement initiatives to increase access to the courts and meaningful use of the judicial process, such as creative pro bono opportunities, strategic uses of technology, and enhanced community education.
- Monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the statewide justice systems and services and periodically report the findings to interested parties in Kentucky.

Top Three Accomplishments in the Last Year

- In November 2017, with funding through the generous support of the Kentucky Bar Association, 2 full-time staff were hired; and with the support of the Kentucky Supreme Court providing office space the Capitol, the Commission opened its office.
- Collaborated with KY civil legal aid programs and the KY Supreme Court to preserve state funding for legal aid, culminating in all justices of the Court appearing at appropriations hearing to support funding.
- Partnered with the American College of Trial Lawyers, Kentucky State Committee, to provide trial skills training to legal aid and legal aid pro bono attorneys.

Top Three Accomplishments Since Commission Began

N/A

Current Initiatives
• Complete survey of district and circuit court judges and court clerks on barriers they identify to access to the courts, meaningful participation in legal proceedings, etc., and report those findings to the Supreme Court and judicial colleges.
• Develop online resource compendium for use by judges, court clerks, private bar, and public to enable users to provide information on and referrals to legal services.
• Complete white papers on right to counsel in civil legal matters, effectiveness of limited scope representation, and the impact of mass incarceration for non-violent offenders on the judicial system and process.

**Planned Initiatives**

• Symposium on civil right to counsel with the intent to develop an action plan to encourage, support and coordinate advocacy to expand recognition and implementation of a right to counsel in civil cases.
• Explore the creation and implementation of incubator programs, non-profit and sliding scale law firms and public interest law firms housed in law schools.
• Develop five-year strategic plan.
Louisiana Access to Justice Commission

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 in the Last Year

1. Creation of Single Access Point for Legal Services - In recent years, the availability and diversity of legal services in Louisiana has rapidly expanded. This single access point located on the state bar site is designed to connect the public with the full spectrum of statewide and local services available - including an attorney database to hire an attorney; a modest means directory for those unable to either get total assistance or unable to pay for full price legal services; listing of legal aid organizations providing direct representation; access to remote limited services including online initiatives (i.e. FreeLegalAnswers); a telephone hotline number; and various self-help services and court-approved forms. The access point is promoted by courts and other Access to Justice partners statewide and includes training for court staff and public librarians on how to navigate these options. www.lsba.org/goto/findlegalhelp

2. Creation of Modest Means Online Legal Directory – This program connects attorneys offering affordable legal services with people who do not qualify for free legal services but cannot afford market rate. The Directory is open to all attorneys who are licensed to practice law in Louisiana and prepared to charge reduced rates based on client income, charge a flat fee, or charge less because they represent the client for just part of the case and not all of it. People falling at or below 400% of the Federal Poverty Line are eligible to view the Directory available at: www.lsba.org/ATJCommission/ModestMeans.aspx

3. Distinguished ATJ Pro Bono Fellows Program – 2018 marks the first year for this program which 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.
Seven Fellows have been placed with seven public interest organizations and will complete 20 hours of pro bono work per month for their assigned organization.

**Top Three Accomplishments Since Commission Began**

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 $8.73 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. To date, the Committee has trained over 200 attorneys with a 40% recruitment rate.

3. **Expansion of Court Innovations (SRL) Efforts** - The Commission works on both statewide initiatives and local partnerships to advance services and resources for self-represented litigants. Most of Louisiana’s judicial districts now offer “live” or online self-help centers launched in partnership with the Commission. Courts are also provided with template forms, training resources for staff (on how to assist the public in accordance with court rules), IFP best practices, and other resources to help serve the public. This work is highlighted by the annual “Louisiana Self-Represented Litigant Service Provider Network Statewide Summit” scheduled for April 11th. In the coming year, the Commission is working to expand these services in partnership with “city” and “parish” courts, and also coordinate partnerships between courts and local libraries, particularly in rural areas, as part of the Legal Education & Assistance Program (LEAP).

**Current Initiatives**

1. **LIFT Incubator Program** – This program partners with civil legal aid and nonprofit organizations to identify unmet legal needs in Louisiana and support new attorneys develop public interest solo practices that address those needs. Through the incubator program, attorneys have addressed the legal needs of domestic violence survivors, modest means clients, people formerly incarcerated including juveniles, and people with criminal records. To date, LIFT has partnered with six civil legal aid and nonprofit organizations to operate six different incubator projects across the state, with two additional projects set to launch this year. Thus far, LIFT has assisted 20 attorneys with the development of their public interest practice.

2. **LA.FreeLegalAnswers.org** - The Louisiana ATJ Commission continues to support Louisiana’s online pro bono resource, which allows volunteer attorneys to answer the civil legal questions submitted
by low income Louisianans. To date, 468 civil legal questions have been submitted to the site and
volunteers have answered 411 of those questions; this is an answer rate of 88%.

3. **Funding Initiative/State Legislative Funding Efforts** – The Funding Committee will seek funding
from the State of Louisiana in its 2018 legislative session. The plan is to seek both a general
appropriation and funding in connection with the Justice Reinvestment Initiatives as a result of
the Criminal Justice Reforms of 2017.

4. **Language Access Efforts** - Working with Louisiana Appleseed, volunteer attorneys have reviewed
national language access practices and determined “best practices” used in other jurisdictions.
Their final report will be incorporated into a comprehensive committee report which will report
best practices and make suggests to the Commission on improving language access to individuals
in Louisiana courts.

5. **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.

**Planned Initiatives**

1. **In Forma Pauperis Efforts** - This committee will continue discussion with the judiciary, clerks of
court and civil legal aid providers on the best ways to provide education about Louisiana’s In
Forma Pauperis Statutes. The Commission is considering alternative ways to address IFP issue
working with civil legal aid providers and Louisiana Appleseed.

2. **Pro Bono Summit** – The ATJ Commission will sponsor a statewide Pro Bono Summit in May 2018
which will bring together judges, pro bono professionals and volunteers to examine the current
state of pro bono in Louisiana, focus on cultivating pro bono leadership and plan for future pro
bono innovations. Cheryl Zalenski, Director of the ABA’s Center for Pro Bono, will present the
results of the 2017 Louisiana Pro Bono Survey conducted by the American Bar Association.

3. **Assistance for Consumer Debtors** - A 2015 Louisiana Appleseed report found systemic issues
facing consumers in collection lawsuits brought by third-party debt buyers. An overwhelming
number of defendants are self-represented in these cases, and default judgments are frequently
entered against them despite plaintiffs failing to meet prima facie evidentiary requirements. A
Consumer Protection Task Force is developing resources for self-represented litigants and
creating educational materials and resources for state courts. A legal service partner will make
the forms available online through document automation.
Maine Justice Action Group

Mission

JAG advocates for a system of justice that is fair to all and accommodates Mainers who have low incomes or are vulnerable, and who in many ways and at all levels, are not represented by traditional means. We seek to achieve the objective of “justice for all” by obtaining increased support from public and private sources; raising awareness among the legal community, legislature, and public about the needs of Mainers who face daunting barriers to civil justice; encouraging greater pro bono representation by lawyers; sharing of resources between legal services providers; and facilitating access to justice in innovative and creative ways.

Goals

To increase funding for Maine’s civil legal services providers and encourage pro bono legal by the private bar.

Top Three Accomplishments in the Last Year

• Access to Justice Day at the Legislature
• Pro Bono Service awards and recognitions
• Economic Benefits Study

Top Three Accomplishments Since Coalition Began

• Enactment of legislation creating the Maine Legal Services Commission
• Creation of Katahdin Counsel Pro Bono recognition program
• Sponsoring biennial Access to Justice Symposium

Current Initiatives

• CLE and outreach educational programs
• Access to Justice Day at the Legislature
• Lawyers in Libraries
• Pro Bono Committee (enhancing and supporting private pro bono efforts)
• Emeritus Counsel program (retired lawyers assisting providers and offering pro bono services)
• Business Community/In-House Counsel Outreach
• Justice Systems Committees (identifying best court practices related to low income and SRL parties)
• Website upgrades
• Creation of database of initiatives addressing unprofessional behavior within the legal community

Planned Initiatives

Strategic planning for major request to legislature for direct funding of civil legal services
Maryland Access to Justice Commission

Mission

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

Initiatives and Accomplishments

• Advocated in Maryland General Assembly on bills that will increase access to justice, including bills to stabilize and increase funding for civil legal aid. The Commission supported the state’s IOLTA funder’s efforts to stabilize revenue from filing fee funds in the amount of $6M and increase funding from Maryland’s Abandoned Property Fund by an additional $500K. The Commission added value to the effort by spearheading a corporate counsel letter explaining the value of civil legal aid to the business community and convincing the State’s Attorney General to weigh in on the matter as well.

• Convening monthly all immigration legal services providers in the state to work on a statewide strategy to meet the growing need for immigration legal services. The Commission conducted a survey of the providers to ascertain the services currently offered; based on this, we developed a one-pager highlighting funding need and priorities; we then worked on a Principles, Priorities and Guidance document as a roadmap for our work together. This group also formed three sub-committees to tackle specific concerns. One sub-committee worked on collecting, reviewing,
updating and organizing all immigration related content for the state’s People’s Law Library website, so that there could be a central store-house for all immigration related material in the state. A second sub-committee formed to consider and tailor the use of an on-line referral technology to ease referrals for immigration-related cases. A third sub-committee has just started work on understanding and responding to the scope of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) arrests in state courts.

- Convening Rent Court Summits to identify and address issues related to Rent Court in Maryland using the collective impact framework. In the past few years, momentum for reform has been building in the wake of two quantitative studies and a lengthy Baltimore Sun series that were published on Rent Courts in Maryland. In Baltimore City, just in the past year, there are new interventions and innovations in Rent Court, including a new Court Self-Help Center and a Lawyer of the Day program, in addition to traditional civil legal aid full-representation services. The Commission is using a collective impact framework to work with all legal services providers to improve coordination, triage, referrals, institute uniform outcome measures and if possible, conduct a study to understand how best to provide 100% access to everyone that encounters Rent Courts in Maryland.

- With State Law Librarians, worked to develop uniform curriculum for state-wide legal reference trainings for public librarians; will implement trainings in 8 regions around the state; will collect data on the number of library patrons that seek legal reference; will bring legal resources (brochures, know your rights materials) into libraries and into local library websites; will do a communications campaign in libraries to inform patrons that librarians have been trained in legal reference and are part of the solution for access to justice. We have developed a strong partnership with the State Public Library System to institutionalize legal reference trainings for public librarians moving forward.
Massachusetts Access to Justice Commission

Mission

The first Massachusetts Access to Justice Commission (“Commission”) was established in 2005 to provide leadership, vision, and coordination in the search for equal justice for all persons in the Commonwealth. Our current and third Commission was established in 2015 and focuses on five core strategies for continued work toward our original mission:

- Increasing justice by improving the effectiveness of, and the funding for, civil legal services organizations
- Increasing services provided by private attorneys
- Improving assistance to unrepresented litigant;
- Improving access to justice beyond the courts, such as in administrative agencies
- Exploring the role of non-lawyers in the provision of appropriate civil legal assistance

Goals

Our Commission’s goal is to continue progress toward our vision of a legal system that:

- Focuses on the user experience
- Provides and requests information in formats and processes easily accessed and easily understood
- Empowers individuals by helping them
  - Recognize when a legal problem exists
  - Understand available options for relief and assistance
  - Find and connect with appropriate resources
- Expands the capacity of existing resources and fills in gaps in the resources continuum
- Effectively triages cases in order to match individuals to the appropriate level or type of assistance, recognizing that full representation may not be necessary in all cases
- Addresses problems before they become court cases
- Offers a menu of resolution options
- Supports collaboration, coherence, and efficiency among legal and social services agencies
- Collects and responds to data and assessment

Top Three Accomplishments in the Last Year

Over the past twelve months, our Commission has:

- Successfully advocated for the statewide expansion of the Massachusetts Housing Court
- Completed a Strategic Action Plan and begun work toward its implementation
- Spearheaded the allocation of an additional $8.3 million in funding for civil legal aid for victims of crime over the next two years from Federal Victims Crime Act funds

Top Three Accomplishments Since the Commission Began
Over the course of the past twelve years since our Commission’s inception, we have made many significant steps in furtherance of our mission. Among those that stand out are:

- Conducting research later used by the Trial Court regarding the “gold standard” for Court Service Centers at courthouses to provide information to unrepresented litigants
- Proposing two new streams of revenue for the Massachusetts Interest on Lawyers’ Trust Accounts (IOLTA) Committee to allocate to legal services: a $51 “Access to Justice Fee” as a voluntary opt-out contribution with the annual attorney registration fee, which has generated about $1.2 million per year, and a pro hac vice fee, which has generated nearly $200,000 annually
- Increasing access to attorneys for low- and moderate-income litigants by
  - Establishing the Civil Appeals Pro Bono Program, which has served 359 individuals since May 2015
  - Creating the Access to Justice Fellows program, through which 94 current and former Fellows have provided 76,000 hours of pro bono services to more than 60 nonprofit organizations, courts, and other public interest entities
  - Investigating how fee-shifting statutes, limited assistance representation, and further education and training can encourage and support private attorneys in making service to low-income clients a larger component of their practices
  - Supporting the Supreme Judicial Court’s Standing Committee on Pro Bono Legal Services

**Current and Planned Initiatives**

Our Commission has several committees currently planning and working on initiatives, including:

- Implementing two pilot programs testing strategies identified in the Strategic Action Plan
- Continuing support of, and coordination with, the Trial Court as it implements aspects of its own strategic action plan, including many access to justice initiatives (e.g. generation of simplified court forms, creation of six attorney-staffed Court Service Centers, production of a comprehensive Language Access Plan, training court personnel on domestic violence awareness, unconscious bias, cultural awareness, and poverty issues, and providing ADA coordinators in each court department)
- Continuing revenue enhancement efforts, including efforts to support piloted implementation of elements of the Strategic Action Plan and additional investigation of novel grant opportunities and funding partners
- Completing (June 2018) a report on administrative justice
- Supporting current Probate and Family Court reform efforts
- Continuing support of free online legal information and assistance platforms, such as Massachusetts Legal Answers Online
- Exploring a “virtual court service center” concept, possibly to be housed in public libraries
- Creating a civil/criminal crossover committee to highlight the need for, and facilitate the development of, programs to assist individuals with civil legal issues affected by criminal proceedings
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.

The following are our current goals:

- 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 Mississippian; and
- monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the statewide system and services provided, and periodically evaluate the progress made in fulfilling their respective responsibilities.

In May, the Commission released a Legal Clinic Toolkit for county bar associations that want to hold legal clinics for low- and moderate-income individuals in their home communities. The toolkit covers every aspect of holding a legal clinic from forming a committee and planning the clinic to itemizing what you need to have on hand on the day of the clinic. It also discusses how attorneys can receive hour-by-hour credit for volunteering at legal clinics sponsored by bar associations. The toolkit was designed to help assure legal clinics are successful and impactful for those most in need throughout Mississippi. The toolkit is available on the Commission’s website at http://www.msatjc.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/Bar-Association-Legal-Clinic-Toolkit.pdf.

Last year, in partnership with the Mississippi Legal Services Programs and the Mississippi Volunteer Lawyers Project (MVLP), the Commission solicited proposals for a study to analyze the impact civil legal aid programs have on the state’s economy. While most states have conducted studies of this type, Mississippi has not, and the Commission believed that it could have a significant bearing on the capacity to generate resources for the state’s legal aid programs. States that have conducted impact studies have
achieved considerable success with increasing the funding that reaches nonprofit legal programs because they have been able to show the positive impact that legal aid has on the economy.

According to the study’s findings, the Mississippi Legal Services Programs and MVLP have an annual economic impact of $73.4 million in Mississippi. The study, performed by The Resource for Great Programs on data from 2016, put the total direct economic benefits to civil legal services clients at $32.4 million. The legal aid programs were able to secure for their clients benefits including:

- $17.1 million in Supplemental Security Income (SSI), Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) and other Social Security benefits, including projected future benefit payments;
- $5.8 million in Medicare benefits;
- $7 million in Medicaid benefits;
- $1.4 million in child support;
- $275,000 in Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits;
- $855,000 in mortgage assistance, tax credits and other awards.

The study estimated that the spending of those benefits, combined with other resources of legal aid clients, amounted to $39.8 million. The study noted that most of those benefits are spent locally on needs such as health care, food, utilities and transportation. The cost savings to the community was an estimated $1.2 million in foreclosure prevention and emergency shelter avoidance.


Expungement Resources

In January 2017, the Commission launched an expungement web app, www.expungemississippi.com, for users who wish determine whether a past arrest, conviction or charge is eligible for expungement. There are no income requirements to use the web app. The site refers those who qualify to upcoming expungement workshops and clinics. It also includes information about nonprofit legal organizations that currently provide expungement services, including the Mississippi Center for Justice, Mission First Legal Aid Office and North Mississippi Rural Legal Services. The Magnolia Bar Association sponsors the app with the Commission. The Commission launched a screening tool for expungement legal clinics late last year.

Top Three Accomplishments Since Commission Began:

Virtual Forms Project

The virtual form packet for adult name change was finalized in January 2016 and made available to the Mississippi Legal Services Programs and the Mississippi Volunteer Lawyers Project. The Commission has now developed virtual form packets for irreconcilable differences divorce, removal of disability of minority/emancipation and name change. Individuals can access the forms at the aforementioned programs and on the Commission’s website at http://www.msatjc.org/need-legal-assistance/. It is the Commission’s hope that the legal services programs will make the packets available to eligible individuals on their respective websites as a way to serve those who exceed the programs’ financial guidelines and/or
have the capacity to represent themselves in the aforementioned proceedings. The Commission hopes to add more legal forms in the future.

**Law Student Limited Practice Act**

On November 19, 2015, the Mississippi Supreme Court handed down an Order granting the Commission’s request to adopt a Court rule governing law student limited practice. The former Law Student Limited Practice Act, codified in Mississippi Code Sections 73-3-205-207 (Revised), was created by the Mississippi Legislature and prohibited law students from participating in limited practice through voluntary legal aid programs that do not provide course credit. It also prevented students who attend law schools in other states from limited practice in Mississippi through summer volunteer opportunities and externships. Finally, it limited eligible attorney supervisors to state or legal services employees thereby limiting *pro bono* collaborations between law schools and the private Bar. The new rule will expand practice opportunities for law students by allowing them to provide limited legal services as part of a clinical legal education course, law school legal internship program or through a volunteer legal services program under the supervision of licensed attorneys.

**Pro Se Clinic Expansion**

The Commission continues to work with chancery court judges to develop in-court access to justice initiatives with the involvement of county bar associations. In 2015, the Commission worked very closely with Lee County Chancery Court Judge Jacqueline Mask to implement *pro se* legal clinics in the eight counties that make up the First Judicial Chancery District. There has been quarterly *pro se* family law legal clinic in Lee County since February 2014. Judge Mask worked closely with attorneys in Alcorn, Itawamba, Monroe, Union, Pontotoc, Prentiss and Tishomingo Counties to develop similar events in their communities. As of December 14, at least one clinic was held in all eight counties, with Lee County hosting three and Alcorn County hosting two. Each of the eight counties is scheduled to have a legal clinic in 2016.

Other counties are now looking to Northeast Mississippi to develop their own clinics and the Commission has helped to connect the Mississippi Board of Bar Commissioners, county bar associations and others with legal nonprofits that can provide administrative support for these events, including the University of Mississippi’s *Pro Bono* Initiative, Mission First Legal Aid Office and the Mississippi Volunteer Lawyers Project, among others. The Commission will continue to provide guidance to courts, bar associations and legal service providers that desire to provide these local initiatives. It has been extremely encouraging to participate in the expansion of the legal clinics and witness the number of people who have received assistance and the number of attorneys who are engaged in *pro bono* service as a result of the growth in these local access to justice initiatives. Without question, the amendments to Rule 6.1 which were handed down by the Mississippi Supreme Court in 2011 and allow attorney to unbundle their legal services to the poor have contributed substantially to the increase in the number of attorneys who volunteer at these legal clinics and other limited representation activities.

**Current Initiatives**

**Statewide Pro Se Legal Clinic Project**

Last year, the Mississippi Supreme Court asked the Commission to help plan and coordinate a Statewide *Pro Se* Legal Clinic Project for June 2018. The Commission’s leadership conducted a training session for the Chancery Court Judges and attorneys on October 27 in conjunction with the Fall Trial and Appellate
Court Judges Conference in Jackson. We are currently organizing the Clinics and finalizing the clinic dates.

**Planned Initiatives**

**Justice Index Working Groups**

In response to the National Center for Access to Justice’s 2016 Justice Index's which ranked Mississippi as 50th in providing access to justice, in fall 2017, the Commission formed five working groups to address several issues where Mississippi falls short when compared with other states with respect to providing access to civil justice. The Commission hopes to have made significant progress toward these goals by December 2018. The working groups have been tasked with addressing the following:

- **Working Group #1**: Work with the Mississippi Judicial College and the Self-Represented Litigant Network to develop a judicial education program with training on how to ensure that self-represented litigants are fairly heard and prepare a desk reference manual for judges.

- **Working Group #2**: Work with state courts to designate court staff members (other than judges) to take specified steps to assist self-represented litigants. Develop resources and training materials for court staff designees.

- **Working Group #3**: Work with the Mississippi Supreme Court and Administrative Office of Courts to designate a place on the state judiciary website to explain: (1) that civil filing fees can be waived if person meets a designated financial eligibility standard; (2) where self-represented litigants can access court-approved legal forms; (3) how and who to contact to request an accommodation because of a disability; (4) how and who to contact to file a disability access complaint.

- **Working Group #4**: Examine the unauthorized practice of law statutes related to the distribution of legal forms by court clerks and others. Determine whether legislation or court rules could facilitate greater access to free legal forms.

- **Working Group #5**: Work with the Administrative Office of Courts to develop a language access plan to ensure that in areas in which a significant number of people speak languages other than English, clerk counter staff has resources available to assist with communication. Research how Mississippi might prohibit courts from charging deaf or hearing-impaired people from paying for sign language interpreters.
Montana Access to Justice Commission

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 in the Last Year

Forms Development

The Commission has continued significant work to revise and automate standardized, plain-language forms and instructions for use by self-represented litigants and pro bono attorneys, including updates to forms for family law matters and a fee waiver form. The Commission’s Standing Committee on Self-Represented Litigants completed a pilot project of updated family law forms, collecting valuable feedback that will be used as the committee continues to work towards statewide, automated, standardized forms. The committee also secured approval for a standardized fee waiver form, concluding more than a year of work to address inconsistencies in fee waiver forms used among the courts and that had resulted in disparities among litigants.

Commission members also worked diligently to develop a mechanism for developing, reviewing, and updating additional forms and instructions in the future. That work has resulted in a proposed new rule to govern the process of creating and approving new forms. The State Bar of Montana and other stakeholders are in the process of reviewing the proposed rule and considering submitting a petition to the Montana Supreme Court for its adoption.
Additionally, a Commission members conducted a small pilot program for a checklist to assist litigants with collecting evidence and preparing for a permanent order of protection hearing. Copies of the checklist are being distributed to parties, resulting in a marked improvement in hearing participation, better understanding of the process, and more instances of participants gathering appropriate evidence for the hearing.

**Legal Incubator**

The Commission’s Committee on Law School Partnerships collaborated with Montana Legal Services Association and the Montana State Bar in an Incubator Working Group to develop a rural incubator program focused on developing law practices serving modest means clientele in rural areas and serve pro bono populations during the training phase. With the Commission’s support, the working group developed the program, successfully secured initial funding, and hired an attorney coordinator. The program will launch in May and expects to welcome its first participants in fall 2018.

**Student Pro Bono Programs**

The Committee on Law School Partnerships worked with the Blewett School of Law and Montana Legal Services Association to secure an AmeriCorps service member to assist with implementing new pro bono initiatives through the law school. The coordinator started her service in September and has worked to connect law students and faculty with pro bono opportunities. Additionally, the law school’s faculty approved a new pro bono program at the law school that offers incentives and support for students to engage in pro bono work.

**Top Three Accomplishments Since Commission Began**

**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.

**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. The bill would have increased some civil court filing fees and appropriate that new revenue to the Office of Court Administrator for grants to legal aid organizations. The bill passed the Montana House of Representatives, but failed to clear the Senate. Since the legislative session ended last April, the Commission has continued to educate legislators about the work already accomplished by the Commission and its partners, the gaps that remain in the access to justice spectrum of services, and the need for civil legal aid funding. Commission members presented on those topics at a legislative interim committee hearing in January and made good use of the public forum video compilation and other educational materials.

**Early Resolution and Mediation Program**
The Commission continued 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 Commission has approved mediator standards and qualifications as well as an intake form and the program has begun providing mediator training.

**Resource Inventory and New Strategic Plan**
The Commission continued to work on developing and maintaining mechanisms for linking Montanans who have legal problems with the programs, attorneys, and service providers who may be able to assist with their particular issues in their community. The Commission supported the updating of individual county resource guides and Commission members continue to work on creating a statewide, searchable resource database. The Commission also formed a committee to create a new strategic plan. The committee met five times over the past year and has prepared an initial draft plan for the Commission’s consideration and expects to further revise the plan before final adoption by the Commission in 2018.

**Domestic Violence Working Group**
The Commission held a joint meeting with the State Bar of Montana’s Justice Initiatives Committee (JIC), which focused on opportunities for furthering various domestic violence initiatives. Members of the Commission and JIC agreed to convene a domestic violence working group to better coordinate efforts. The working group has started meeting and will continue to meet throughout 2018. The group began by creating an inventory and map of domestic violence legal assistance resources across the state.

**Planned Initiatives**
In addition to continuing its work on the current initiatives above, the Commission plans to create a library of educational materials promoting access to justice programs, with up-to-date and relevant statistics and information, and develop a mechanism for regularly updating and disseminating those materials on a variety of platforms.
Nebraska Access to Justice Commission

Mission

To promote the Nebraska Supreme Court’s goal of providing equal access to swift, fair justice for all Nebraskans regardless of income, race, ethnicity, gender, disability, age or language.

Goals

• Coordinate, leverage and expand access to justice initiatives and activities across Nebraska;
• Identify obstacles to obtaining needed legal services, and develop/implement solutions for Nebraska’s underserved population;
• Educate the legal community and the public about available resources;
• Actively engage the judiciary, the bar, and the community in programs to close the justice gap;
• Determine geographic areas and populations where access needs are most acute in order to better prioritize and target initiatives;
• Identify and recommend changes to procedures, court rules, and legislation to reduce barriers and improve access;
• Promote the efficient use of available resources and encourage the coordination or sharing of resources;
• Monitor the effectiveness of the various access-focused programs and initiatives across the state.

Top Three Accomplishments in the Last Year

The approval by the Nebraska Supreme Court to create the Nebraska Access to Justice Commission. The appointment and approval of commissioners, as well as, the drafting and approval of operating rules for the Commission.

The Commission has worked to coordinate the work and developing uniform reporting by the existing Self-Represented Litigation Committee and the Language Access Committee.

The Nebraska Supreme Court approved the creation of and approved the membership to the Committee on Equity and Fairness, a subcommittee of the Nebraska Access to Justice Commission.

Top Three Accomplishments Since Commission Began

The Commission was started one year ago.

Current Initiatives

The Self-Represented Litigation Committee is continuing work to develop accessible court forms.

The Committee on Equity and Fairness is working to reduce the Failure to Appear Rate through the utilization of text message reminders.
The Language Access Committee is working to revise Supreme Court Rules regarding interpreter candidate criminal history background checks to eliminate costly testing for interpreter candidates, ineligible for certification as a Nebraska court interpreter.

**Planned Initiatives**

Nebraska has significant rural access to justice challenges. The Commission is seeking to form a Rural Access Committee to work with the Commission to address those specific needs.

The Language Access Committee is working to design, development and implementation of an Interpreter Ethics Committee Opinions webpage for inclusion on the Supreme Court’s website.

Work will continue to provide legal and procedural information and assistance in forms, including instructional videos for self-represented litigants.

Expand access to legal advice through Limited Scope Representation, by improving website information on what limited scope representation is, how it might help the self-represented litigant and where to find an attorney to provide limited scope representation.

Expanded the use of technology in the courtroom through a variety of programs.
Nevada Access to Justice Commission

Mission

The Nevada Supreme Court Access to Justice Commission works with Nevada’s legal aid providers to improve access to civil justice for people of limited means in Nevada.

Goals

To improve access to justice by

- Assessing needs
- Developing policies
- Improving self-help and pro bono services
- Increasing awareness
- Pursuing funding
- Recommending rules and legislation

Top Three Accomplishments in the Last Year

- Began a statewide Study of Legal Needs and Economic Impacts
- Greatly enhanced Celebrate Pro Bono Week activities and awareness
- Complete website overhaul

Top Three Accomplishments Since Commission Began

- Vastly reduced legal aid provider conflict and overlap
- Completed a coordinated Statewide Service Delivery Plan
- Created a sustainable funding source through IOLTA

Current Initiatives

- Completing a statewide Study of Legal Needs and Economic Impacts
- Previewing Study findings to stakeholder groups throughout Nevada
- Advancing on the potential for pro se litigants to e-file
- Considering Commission restructuring to welcome more non-lawyer community representatives statewide

Planned Initiatives

- Creating awareness of Study of Legal Needs and Economic Impacts findings
- Making improvements indicated by Study of Legal Needs and Economic Impacts
- Assess how Study of Legal Needs and Economic Impacts findings impact Statewide Service Delivery Plan
- Complete Commission restructuring, including rule change
New Hampshire Access to Justice Commission

Mission and Goals

According to the Commission’s 2007 establishment order, the scope of its work includes to:

1. Foster the development of a statewide integrated civil legal services delivery system;

2. Identify and assess current and future needs for access to justice in civil matters;

3. 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 whose access to civil justice is limited either by the actual or perceived cost of legal services; develop and implement initiatives designed to meet these needs, such as limited representation and limited appearances by attorneys and identification of types of services that could be provided by nonlawyers;

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. Develop and implement initiatives designed to expand civil access to justice;

6. Work to reduce barriers to the justice system by addressing existing and proposed court rules, procedures, and policies that negatively affect access to justice in New Hampshire;

7. Monitor the effectiveness of the statewide system and services provided and periodically evaluate the progress made by the Commission in fulfilling the civil legal needs of low-income New Hampshire residents.

8. Provide long-range, integrated planning among the numerous legal assistance providers and other interested agencies and entities in New Hampshire;

9. Coordinate civil access to justice, foster the development of a statewide, integrated civil legal services delivery system, and design and implement new programs to expand access to justice opportunities;

10. Work toward securing funding for civil access to justice;

11. Have the authority to apply for, obtain and administer grant funds and to hire, set the compensation of, and direct such persons as may be necessary to assist the Commission in its work; and

12. Develop and implement other initiatives designed to expand civil access to justice, such as increasing community education, enhancing technology, developing assisted pro bono programs, and encouraging greater voluntary participation of the private bar in providing pro bono legal assistance to low-income people in New Hampshire.

This order has been amended by a Memorandum of Understanding with the New Hampshire Supreme Court that proscribes the Commission ability to seek funding without first obtaining court approval.
economic crash of 2008-09, and budget cuts to the court system’s budget resulting from that economic recession contributed significantly to the circumstances leading to the Memorandum of Understanding.

**Current and Planned Initiatives**

Over the past several years, the Commission has undertaken an outreach effort to ascertain legal needs, identify barriers within the system inhibiting access, and to develop plans for improving access. That process included performing a Legal Needs Study in 2013. In addition, the Commission conducted a series of interviews with members of the Court system, legal services providers, social service agencies, and others whose roles touch the justice system with a summary of conclusions from that meeting. It included a day-long strategic planning retreat with participation of the entire New Hampshire Supreme Court in 2014. It also included a review of concepts and ideas which were developed at other access to justice commissions.

As a result of this work, a summary list of approximately 24 areas was identified for further exploration or implementation, and discussed with the Commission in July, 2016.

Since September, 2017, the Commission has been on a regular meeting schedule with sub-committee meetings in between full Commission meetings. The seven subcommittees, and a brief description of their areas of focus are as follows:

- **Enhanced Information Services.** This subcommittee is evaluating information available from a variety of sources that may be available to address legal issues faced by indigent individuals. This subcommittee is looking for ways to streamline, clarify and make more effective the presentation of that information.

- **Simplification of Court Forms.** Members of the Commission are working with members of the court to simplify and clarify court forms. This includes working with the court, as it moves toward electronic filing, to ensure that e-filing best practices for self-represented litigants are followed and that there are appropriate off ramps for questions and answers to frequently complicated issues.

- **Consumer Debt Docket.** This subcommittee has been working with court personnel to establish a specialized consumer debt docket that could be replicated on a state-wide basis. This subcommittee also looks to enhance information about the nature of consumer debt claims and categories of income that may be exempt from collection. A trial consumer debt docket has been, or is being, implemented in select jurisdictions.

- **Public Relations Campaign.** This subcommittee is planning for ways to establish and improve the Commission’s communications about its work. Such planning will include improving the Commission’s website, instituting regular reporting, writing articles in legal and other publications about the Commission’s work, and other forms of public relations.

- **Expanded ADR.** This subcommittee is reviewing ways to expand the use of ADR, especially in areas of landlord and tenant matters. The subcommittee is evaluating processes to institute ADR in appropriate circumstances before matters get to court.
• **Pro Bono Reporting.** This subcommittee is evaluating whether to recommend mandatory pro bono reporting as a way to gather information about the extent of pro bono service to the indigent, as well as to increase pro bono participation. This subcommittee is evaluating the efficacy of pro bono reporting in other jurisdictions and considering developing a pilot project on a county-wide basis.

• **Beg Borrow & Steal.** This subcommittee is evaluating work performed by other Access to Justice Commissions around the country to determine which programs might be adaptable for use in New Hampshire. Among other possibilities, this subcommittee is evaluating whether to establish a Fellows Program of retired practitioners and judges, among others, to perform pro bono services in conjunction with, or through, existing legal services entities.

Over the coming months, these subcommittees will be synthesizing their ideas for presentation to an executive committee consisting of the subcommittee chairs and co-chairs and the Commission co-chairs and Supreme Court liaison. The Executive Committee will work to further prioritize the ideas presented and develop a plan to implement some or all of them.
New Mexico Commission on Access to Justice

Mission

The New Mexico Commission on Access to Justice is an independent, statewide body dedicated to expanding and improving civil legal assistance in New Mexico.

Goals

- Expand resources for civil legal assistance
- Increase public awareness
- Increase pro bono assistance

Top Three Accomplishments in the Last Year

- Roll-out of Justice for All Initiative
- Completion of Communication Plan

Top Three Accomplishments Since Commission Began

- Establishment of Self-Help Centers/Personnel in all New Mexico District Courts
- Establishment of local pro bono committees that conduct legal fairs and pro bono clinics throughout NM
- Increased cooperation and collaboration among legal aid providers
- Mandatory reporting of pro bono activity and contributions by lawyers
- Development of comprehensive state plan addressing the unmet legal needs of low income New Mexicans which guides funding decisions and ATJC work

Current Initiatives

New Mexico is currently beginning the Justice for All Strategic Action Planning Process. We plan to hold a meeting in early April to conduct the inventory assessment. We will then divide the JFA components among working groups who will develop strategic action plans for each one. Meanwhile, we plan to hold listening sessions around the state to hear from community members and justice system users. The NMATJ plans to expand its membership to include community members and justice system users as well. We have taken advantage of, and very much appreciate, the technical assistance offered by the National Center for State Courts.

Planned Initiatives

We plan to begin implementation of the Justice for All Strategic Action Plan in 2019. Prior to learning about the Justice for All Initiative, we had worked with a public relations firm to develop a communications plan for educating the public about the importance of civil legal aid and educating attorneys about the importance of pro bono. We hope to roll out the communications plan in 2019 as well.
New York State Permanent Commission on Access to Justice

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 for submission 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 2018, the Permanent Commission is engaged in implementing components of a statewide strategic action plan developed in 2017 for the delivery of coordinated and comprehensive legal assistance to all New Yorkers.

Top Three Accomplishments Since Commission Began

1. Attaining $100 Million in Dedicated State Funding for Civil Legal Services

   • The passage of New York’s 2017-2018 budget marks the second year that the Permanent Commission has achieved its foundational goal that $100 million in state funding be allocated for civil legal services for matters involving the essentials of life. Those funds are distributed through Judiciary Civil Legal Services grants. In 2017, 81 civil legal services providers throughout New York State received these grants pursuant to a competitive Request for Proposals process.

   • In 2014, the Permanent Commission proposed, and the New York State Legislature adopted, a concurrent resolution declaring, as a matter of state policy, that low-income New Yorkers facing legal matters concerning the essentials of life have effective legal assistance.

   • The Permanent Commission annually assists the Chief Judge in convening a public hearing(s) to evaluate the continuing unmet civil legal services needs in New York. The findings of the hearing form the basis for the Permanent Commission’s annual report and proposed recommendations for monetary and non-monetary initiatives to help close the access to justice gap in New York.

2. Developing a Statewide Strategic Action Plan to Provide Effective Assistance to All New Yorkers in Need
• In 2017, the Permanent Commission, supported by a $100,000 grant from the Public Welfare Foundation, developed a statewide strategic action plan for a civil legal services delivery system to move New York toward an integrated and coordinated statewide civil legal services delivery system that provides for effective assistance to 100% of New Yorkers confronting civil legal challenges impacting the essentials of life.

3. Marshalling New Resources to Help Close the Justice Gap

• Convene an 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, and increase pro bono activity by the law school community.

• Convene an 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.

• Recommended creation of an advisory committee to consider the contributions that non-lawyers can make to bridge the justice gap; the committee’s 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 New York City (two in Brooklyn and one in Queens) 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; support the opening of three additional centers in New York City in 2018.

Top Three Accomplishments in the Last Year

1. Continuing State Funding for Civil Legal Services

• The New York State Unified Court System’s 2017-2018 budget contains a $100 million allocation for state funding to be distributed to 81 legal services providers for the provision of direct civil legal services to low-income New Yorkers confronting challenges to essentials of life matters.

2. Year-long Strategic Planning Process Resulting in the Development of a Statewide Strategic Action Plan to Provide Effective Assistance to All New Yorkers Confronting Challenges to the Essential of Life

• The strategic planning process focused on acquiring an in-depth understanding of the justice gap statewide through: (1) community listening sessions involving a diverse group of civil
justice stakeholders; (2) a statewide inventory and assessment of key components of a service delivery system by Working Groups of the Permanent Commission; (3) a geographic pilot in Suffolk County to create an action plan to address the local access to justice gap; and (4) a Statewide Stakeholders Meeting where the framework for the Strategic Action Plan was presented for discussion and stakeholder feedback before incorporation into the final plan.

3. Expanding the Roles of Law Schools and Technology to Help Close the Justice Gap

- Convened the Sixth Annual Law School Access to Justice Conference to highlight and promote increased student involvement in public interest work and strengthen the law graduate pipeline into civil legal services work; to encourage law schools to provide increased opportunities for student participation in social justice and access to justice initiatives; and to focus attention on the need to broaden law school recruitment from diverse populations.

- Convened the Third Annual Statewide Civil Legal Aid Technology Conference to educate stakeholders, and promote collaborative and sustainable use and support of technology among civil legal services providers. The Conference brought together stakeholders to learn about the latest technological initiatives, how those could be leveraged to maximize efficiency in servicing clients and the resources available to assist in implementation.

Current Initiatives

- Supporting the implementation of the Strategic Action Plan’s statewide priorities, by designating liaisons to work with the Deputy Chief Administrative Judge for Justice Initiatives. Initiatives to be implemented include expansion of Help Centers statewide, development of judicial and court staff education on cultural competence, establishment of an advisory group on plain language to develop an action plan and increased efforts to further promote limited-scope representation.2

- Supporting the implementation of the Suffolk County Action Plan, including the expansion of services provided at the Middle Country Library through integration of legal services into the community and social services already being offered.3

- Establishing a second geographic pilot in Monroe County, a large county in western New York comprised of urban (city of Rochester), suburban and rural regions.

- Supporting the opening of three additional Legal Hand neighborhood storefront centers in New York City.

Planned Initiatives

- Support the convening of the Chief Judge’s Annual Civil Legal Services Hearing on September 24, 2018 at the New York Court of Appeals in Albany.


• Convene the Annual Law School Conference on the Role of Law Schools in Expanding Access to Justice on May 15, 2018 at the Elizabeth Haub School of Law at Pace University in White Plains.

• Convene the Annual Civil Legal Aid Technology Conference on June 19, 2018 at Cornell Tech in New York City.

• Convene Statewide Stakeholder Meeting to further promote collaborations and integration of community resources on October 5, 2018 at the New York State Bar Center in Albany.

• Expand and support outreach and training for public librarians to provide legal information and referrals.

• Engage in an additional cost-benefit analysis and data collection to evaluate the impact of funding, pro bono assistance and statewide and regional initiatives.
North Carolina Equal Access to Justice Commission

Mission

- The NC Equal Access to Justice Commission (NCEATJC) was established in November 2005 by order of the Supreme Court of North Carolina. The mission of the Commission is to expand access to civil legal representation for people of low income and modest means across North Carolina.
- 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 is 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.

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 in the Last Year

1. Coordinated Statewide Legislative Advocacy in Support of Civil Legal Aid
For 27 years, the North Carolina Access to Civil Justice Act helped provide access to justice for North Carolina’s most vulnerable citizens. This act provided the funding mechanism to support the three primary civil legal aid providers in North Carolina: Legal Aid of North Carolina, Charlotte Center for Legal Advocacy (formerly Legal Services of Southern Piedmont), and Pisgah Legal Services.

At the height of state support, North Carolina directly appropriated or dedicated fees and fines totaling over $6.1 million to support access to justice. In this past legislative session, the North Carolina General Assembly repealed the Access to Civil Act and removed the allocation of $1.50 from civil and criminal fees that fund the Act, withdrawing approximately $1.7 million in funding.

The new loss of the Access to Civil Justice Act funds, which constitute over half of the remaining state funding, will result in a significant reduction of service capacity and legal representation for thousands of North Carolinians. This cut not only impacts our citizens but also impairs judicial system accessibility, effectiveness, and efficiency.

In response to the threatened elimination of the Access to Civil Justice Act in June 2017, the Commission issued a unanimous resolution opposing the cuts to state funding. Post-elimination, the Commission continues to coordinate state funding legislative advocacy in partnership with the Equal Justice Alliance, a statewide assembly of legal service providers, who have contracted with two paid lobbyists to support this work.
2. **Launched NC Pro Bono Honor Society Recognizing Attorney Pro Bono Legal Service**

The NC Pro Bono Resource Center, a program of the NC Equal Access to Justice Commission, implemented North Carolina's first statewide voluntary reporting process in January 2017. The online survey collected information about pro bono legal services as well as other activities encouraged by NC Rule of Professional Conduct 6.1.

To celebrate the work of attorneys who provided at least 50 hours of pro bono legal services in 2016, the Resource Center worked with the Supreme Court of North Carolina to recognize 170 attorneys as the inaugural cohort of the NC Pro Bono Honor Society. Each attorney inducted into the society received a certificate from the Supreme Court of North Carolina in recognition of their efforts, as well as a society seal they could use to publicize their achievements.

The Resource Center will continue facilitating this voluntary reporting process annually.

3. **Convened Regional Pro Bono Councils**

In 2017, the NC Pro Bono Resource Center, a program of the NC Equal Access to Justice Commission, began convening Pro Bono Regional Councils to offer new spaces for private attorneys to come together to discuss challenges, opportunities, incentives, and best practices regarding pro bono work at the local level. Pro Bono Regional Councils provide a venue for firms to share how they are meeting needs in their own backyards, and how others may have policies or procedures to share to encourage an increase in that good work.

The first of these conversations took place in Greensboro in mid-September, 2017. The Triad Area Pro Bono Legal Council saw representatives from Greensboro and Winston-Salem come together to hear former NC Supreme Court Justice and Smith Moore Leatherwood attorney Bob Edmunds share about the increasing need for pro bono legal services and Afi Johnson-Parris, Ward Black Law attorney and Co-chair of the NC Equal Access to Justice Commission’s Pro Bono Committee, describe her personal commitment to pro bono legal service. The group then discussed the history of pro bono legal services in the area and opportunities for increasing attorney volunteerism moving forward.

The Triangle Area Pro Bono Legal Council came together at the NC State Bar in early November 2017, hearing remarks from Chief Justice Mark Martin on the current state of access to justice in NC and the role that the private bar can play in supporting those efforts. The group discussed best practices in managing pro bono legal service provision, such as appropriate conflict checks and limiting the scope of services, and shared policies regarding incentives encouraging attorney participation. Both groups also heard about reporting and recognition efforts for pro bono legal services provided in 2017, available at ncprobono.org through March 31, 2018.

While initial conversations through these regional councils focus on the current state of pro bono legal service at the local level, assessing current challenges, opportunities, incentives, and structures for attorney volunteerism, they will expand into venues for collaboration on new pro bono initiatives to address unmet legal needs. These councils will also help to inform statewide efforts supporting access to justice for low income North Carolinians.

Additional area meetings were held in 2018, including a Charlotte Pro Bono Roundtable (an ongoing initiative from the Charlotte Center for Legal Advocacy) and a Coastal Area Pro Bono Regional Council which heard remarks from Commission member and former Appellate Judge Linda Stephens.
Top Three Accomplishments Since Commission Began

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.ncaccesstojustice.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.ncaccesstojustice.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.

In the short time since its launch, the pro bono resource center has seen the implementation of voluntary statewide pro bono reporting; the facilitation of new, collaborative pro bono projects among legal aid providers, government attorneys, community organizations, and the private bar; the convening of regional pro bono councils for private firms to discuss challenges and opportunities in attorney volunteerism; the launch of a new website functioning as a statewide clearinghouse of available pro bono opportunities; the integration into new attorney swearing-in ceremonies and Professionalism for New Attorney CLE’s, encouraging new attorneys to prioritize pro bono early in their careers; the development and delivery of CLE’s educating the bar about the ethics of pro bono legal service; the assembly of statewide stakeholders to evaluate pro bono delivery responsive to pressing issues, such as disaster relief and immigration; and many more accomplishments.

Current Initiatives
- Host Access to Justice Summit featuring Texas Supreme Court Chief Justice Hecht
- Facilitating pro bono clinics focusing on veterans’ issues, expunction issues, and driver’s license restoration
- Administering statewide voluntary pro bono reporting and recognition
- Developing trainings for effective pro bono legal service
- Developing FAQ materials for pro se litigants in legal issue areas of high need
- Coordinating Legislative Advocacy
- Planning the NC Legal Services Conference to be held in late September
- Implementing a new Appellate Pro Bono Program and CLE
- Reconvene Pro Bono Regional Councils

Planned Initiatives
- Host pro bono focused receptions for firm summer associates
- Launch a Pro Bono Resource Center Advisory Board
- Facilitate discussion around disaster relief effort preparedness
- Develop additional support for Self Represented Litigants
- Expand legislative advocacy efforts
- Expand pro bono clinic offerings
Oklahoma Access to Justice Commission

**Mission**

To facilitate and empower access to justice.

**Goals**

1. To increase legal aid resources
2. To increase access for disabled and ESL persons
3. To increase pro bono

**Top Three Accomplishments in the Last Year**

1. Created Oklahoma Access to Justice Foundation
2. Engage rural libraries/pro bono
3. Engage rural judges/Courthouse Navigators

**Top Three Accomplishments Since Commission Began**

1. Statewide needs assessment
2. Limited license in Oklahoma for legal aid attorneys with out-of-state license
3. Launching and publicizing Commission

**Current Initiatives**

1. Emeritus pro bono
2. Lawyers in Libraries
3. Courthouse Navigators

**Planned Initiatives**

1. Resource development
2. Annual Event
Puerto Rico Advisory Commission on Access to Justice

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 Advisory 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 ascribed to the Administrative Office of the 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, professors and community leaders. 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 Branch 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 to achieve 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.

4 Administrative Order No. OAJP-2014-175.
5 Ibid.
5. To carry out any other actions necessary to achieve the goals outlined by the Commission.

**Top Accomplishments in 2017-2018**

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 in 2017-2018:

1. Members of the Advisory Commission on Access to Justice provided specific recommendations and suggestions to the proposed *Rules for the Appointment of Court-Appointed Counsels in Criminal and Civil Proceedings*, which was submitted for the consideration of the Supreme Court of Puerto Rico.

2. The Advisory Commission on Access to Justice approved the disclosure of Resolution No. CAAJ-2018-3, regarding Hurricane Maria and Access to Justice. In summary, the Resolution states the following: “On September 6 and 20, 2017, respectively, Hurricane Irma and Hurricane Maria struck Puerto Rico and left a trail of devastation that profoundly altered the lives of its residents. The greatest impact of this catastrophe has befallen on the most vulnerable sectors, such as residents of impoverished communities, children, the elderly, persons with disabilities, hospital patients or persons with pressing health needs, students, and families headed by women.” The Resolution also establishes: “The access to justice by the totality of the population will depend on how fast the country will recover from the effects of these hurricanes and on how promptly and efficiently all public entities, the private sector, and nonprofit organizations will respond to these circumstances.” The Resolution also recognizes the work performed by the Judicial Branch to resume court operations as soon as possible.

3. The Evaluation and Institutional Improvements Committee is currently developing recommendations to improve data collection on our Unified Case Management System (SUMAC), particularly in cases of child abuse and adoption. Through the SUMAC system, the Judicial Branch of Puerto Rico is establishing a fully electronic file to support our case management system.

**Current and Planned Initiatives**

The Evaluation and Institutional Improvement Committee will analyze the data collection processes and evaluations methods of diverse access to justice programs administered by the Office of Courts Administration.

Nowadays, the Education Committee is working with the Office of Courts Administration to develop an Access to Justice Guide: A handbook for the Communities and Employees of the Judicial Branch.

The Advisory Commission on Access to Justice 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.
South Carolina Access to Justice Commission

Mission

Our mission is to facilitate collaboration that ensures equal access to civil legal assistance for all South Carolinians.

Goals

- To Develop Resources for Self-Represented Litigants
- To Increase Pro Bono Participation by Lawyers and Law Students
- To Expand Resources and Encourage Collaboration with Staffed Programs
- To Provide Education to the Bench, Bar and General Public about Access to Justice Barriers

Top Three Accomplishments in the Last Year

1) The South Carolina Access to Justice Commission has aided in establishing an innovative pro bono software to increase pro bono work across the state.
2) The South Carolina Access to Justice Commission has thoroughly reviewed Limited Scope Representation and will submit proposed changes to the South Carolina Rules of Civil Procedure.

Top Three Accomplishments Since Commission Began

1) The American College of Trial Lawyers Young Lawyer Incubator Pilot Project which received intakes from South Carolina Legal Services and matched them with attorneys willing to take cases.
2) An Access to Justice Summit was held in October 2016.
3) The innovative pro bono software which is currently being operated out of Greenville County and will be expanded throughout the state.

Current Initiatives

- Limited Scope Representation and submitting proposed changes to the South Carolina Rules of Civil Procedure
- Language Access Task Force
- Pro bono software

Planned Initiatives

- Compile data from SC Bar Clinics, SC Law Answers, and Ask a Lawyer services regarding types of issues posed by users of the services and creating an annual report on the SC Justice Gap.
- Aid in establishing Judicial Education for Human Trafficking.
- Assist self-represented litigants by establishing referral services and handouts of available resources for courthouse use.
- Continue development of the pro bono software.
Tennessee Access to Justice Commission

Mission

Commission is authorized under TN Supreme Court Rule 50. The Commission shall develop a strategic plan for improving access to justice in Tennessee that shall include education of the public concerning the need for legal representation to meet the ideal of equal justice under law, identification of the priorities to meet the need of improved access to justice, and recommendations to the Supreme Court of projects and programs the Commission determines to be necessary and appropriate for enhancing access to justice in Tennessee. The Rule provides the Commission with a variety of issues to explore.

Note: The Commission will be developing a mission statement and core values at its June 2018 quarterly meeting.

Goals/Role

Facilitate
Educate
Communicate
Remove Barriers
Develop Resources
Advocate
Connect

Top Three Accomplishments in the Last Year

1) #Help4TNDay
#Help4TNDay is a statewide public awareness campaign, designed to draw attention to the civil legal needs of disadvantaged Tennesseans and highlight the good work of the agencies and programs that serve them. The inaugural Help4TNDay was on Saturday, April 1, 2017. Events taking place during the two-week period prior to that date and the weeks afterwards were included in the celebration. Over 50 events, including expungement clinics, general civil legal advice clinics, Know Your Rights presentations, and volunteer attorney trainings took place throughout the state. The Tennessee Supreme Court kicked off the celebration by holding five simultaneous press conferences across the state. Each press conference featured a TN Supreme Court Justice, a member of the ATJ Commission, one or more legal aid organization, a pro bono lawyer, and a client who was served by the organization. The Commission was able to get proclamations from the city and/or county mayors in each city where a press conference was held in support of Help4TNDay. Over 800 Tennesseans were helped directly during Help4TNDay and Tennessee’s equal justice community received over $1 million dollars in free publicity. Help4TNDay is now an annual public awareness campaign that will take place in April each year.

2) Pro Bono & Faith Days (#PBFDays)
#PBFDays took place over nine days in October 2017. October is Celebrate Pro Bono Month in Tennessee and 2017 marked the first instance that the TN ATJ Commission and its TN Faith & Justice Alliance as a whole organized its participation in the celebration. #PBFDays highlighted the impact that houses of worship can have on the lives of their members through helping with their civil legal issues.
Houses of worship and faith-partners were encouraged to participate by sharing information on free civil legal resources to their members or host a pro bono project during the month of October.

#PBFDays was built around the letters “PBF” which were used to reference both “pro bono and faith” and “peanut butter and fluff.” The peanut butter and fluff sandwich was a creative visual tool incorporated into the marketing materials. “Recipe cards” for pro bono and faith involvement were used in social media posts, showing statistics on Tennesseans’ civil legal needs and information on available resources. During #PBFDays, forty-six houses of worship shared information to their members on social media, bulletin boards, newsletters, or other public locations.

Twenty-five organizations partnered to host 18 events through various formal programming such as during a sermon, youth group, children’s ministry, Sunday school or its equivalency, clinics, public education programs, and faith leader trainings.

3) Conducted Multiple Stakeholder Surveys
The Commission conducted multiple stakeholder surveys in 2017. The first was designed to gain an understanding of family law resources across the state. There is a huge need for pro bono help and self-represented litigants resources in this area. The survey went out to judges, court clerks, private attorneys, legal aid providers, mediators, and other stakeholders. Participants were asked to inform the Commission of resources in their communities and identify needs. This survey will be used to develop regional summits designed to address family law needs.

The Commission created a survey titled “The Stories of Pro Bono” to get access to justice leaders to describe their favorite pro bono experience, why pro bono matters, or why access to justice is important to them. The first round of stories was used in the 2016 Pro Bono Report. The Stories of Pro Bono is an on-going survey that the Commission will use for future pro bono reports, social media, and marketing materials going forward.

As part of the Commission’s preparation for its strategic plan, it launched a stakeholder survey for all access to justice stakeholders. Participants were asked to rank 18 different initiatives or programs from most important for the Commission to address or undertake to least important. Over 130 people responded to the survey, which was extremely helpful for the Commission during its planning. The Commission’s Advisory Committees will use this survey data going forward.

**Top Three Accomplishments Since Commission Began**

1) Tennessee Faith & Justice Alliance
The Commission has had a Faith-Based Initiatives Committee since it began in 2009, recognizing that many people in crisis turn to their faith leaders. In 2012, Commission and Committee leadership made two determinations. First, to effectively communicate and educate faith leaders and recruit attorneys motivated to by their faith to do pro bono work, the Commission need to emphasize the faith-based component and develop a different message and way of conveying that message to this target audience. Faith leaders, in particular, value face-to-face communication, especially in the early stages of forming a partnership. This leads to the second determination, that a full-time staff person was needed who would devote at least half of their time to faith-based programming.

The Pro Bono Coordinator position was created and funded using reserves from the TN CLE Commission. The position was first filled in November 2012. One of the first goals for the Pro Bono Coordinator was
to develop a method for connecting with the faith communities. The Tennessee Faith & Justice Alliance arose from these discussions.

The TFJA is an alliance of faith-based groups in Tennessee who commit to providing legal resources to their congregations and communities. The goal is to attract attorneys who are not currently involved in pro bono work and to connect them with low income Tennesseans in need of legal services. One assumption behind this program is that people in need will go to their houses of worship to seek assistance. A second assumption is that some members of the private bar experience a spiritual sense of calling to serve the poor. Perhaps there are attorneys in this congregation that already serve in this church’s soup kitchen, but they haven’t connected that they are empowered to provide legal services in addition to providing meals.

Together, these two assumptions invite collaborative projects that include:

1) training clergy to spot legal issues when they are listening to the concerns of parishioners.
2) using a Referral Model designed to pair volunteer lawyers with congregants in need.
3) establishing inter-faith free advice clinics; and
4) providing community education.

2) TN Supreme Court Approved Plain Language Forms
The ATJ Commission’s Self-Represented Litigants Committee identified the need to have universal plain language forms for divorces and small claims court. The need was identified through surveys of court clerks, judges, legal aid attorneys, legal aid intake staff, and other stakeholders. Resources available for self-represented litigants in family law matters are scarce, particularly if there is no domestic violence. Our small claims court judges indicate that the majority of the litigants in their courts, especially defendants, are not represented. To further complicate matters, Tennessee does not have a unified court system therefore procedure and required forms vary from county to county.

The Commission proposed a new Supreme Court Rule that would allow the TN Supreme Court to approve universally acceptable plain language forms. The Court adopted Rule 52. The Commission presented the Court with a set of forms for uncontested divorces when there are no minor children, no real property, and no retirement accounts. These forms were approved. The Commission also submitted forms for small claims court, which the Supreme Court approved. In 2017, the Commission submitted and the Court approved forms for uncontested divorces when the parties do have minor children together. All forms are approved with an accompanying set of instructions.

3) TN BPR Donation Check-Off
The Commission studied the possibility of including an option on attorneys’ annual registration form where they can donate to an Access to Justice Fund. We worked with the ABA to get data from other states that have a donation option. The Commission wanted to ensure that adding this option would not detract from fundraising efforts of the legal aid organizations. The Commission developed language for the registration form, which the TN Supreme Court adopted. The donation check-off option went into effect in 2015. Distributions are made in June each year.

The Commission also developed a system to determine eligible organizations and a method to calculate the distribution amounts. Organizations must provide civil legal representation directly to low income or disadvantaged Tennesseans. Representation can be full or limited scope, and does include civil legal advice clinics. For example, a mediation center would not qualify, nor would an organization that
conducts advocacy but does not host a legal clinic or take on legal representation. The Commission did not want to issue RFPs or evaluate grant proposals. The calculation method developed awards grants based on the organizations’ size, as determined by the revenue reported to the IRS on their form 990s. Seventy-five thousand dollars was raised in the first fiscal year and over $95,000 was raised in the second fiscal year.

**Current Initiatives**

1) **Court Kiosks (Self-Help)**
The Commission is launching a pilot project to place ten court kiosks in different types of courthouses in 2018. The kiosks will include a laptop or tablet, a printer, and be connected to the internet. The home page will be built off of the statewide legal information portal, [www.Help4TN.org](http://www.Help4TN.org). The links will be tailored to provide links to local resources and applicable statewide resources. Users will be able print needed forms immediately and get legal information on their issue on the spot. Court staff will be able to direct self-represented litigants to the kiosks so that people will leave the court house with information, an understanding of next steps, and where they can go to get additional legal help (legal aid, pro bono clinic, etc.) The ten counties will be announced in April 2018 and implemented throughout 2018.

2) **Law Student Video Contest – Why Pro Bono Matters**
The Commission is sponsoring a project for law students to make video projects on “Why Pro Bono Matters.” One goal of the project are to get law students involved in pro bono while in law school, as studies show that students who do pro bono are more likely to continue to do pro bono work after they are admitted to practice. The second goal is to generate qualify videos that the Commission can use in social media and other marketing to encourage attorneys and law students to get involved in pro bono work. The student(s) who win the contest will receive $1,000.

Law students were given certain parameters. The deadline to submit videos is April 8. The Commission is assembling a panel to judge them and the winner will be announced in April.

2018 is the first time the Commission has held this contest. We do not yet know if this will be an annual contest or if it will offered every other year. We are exploring using co-sponsors to underwrite the prizes.

3) **Re-Structuring Committees and Seeking New Volunteers**
The Commission went through a strategic planning exercise in March and is re-structuring Committees and recruiting new Committee volunteers. Part of this process involves changing how Committees interact with each other. We are exploring using Google Groups, Basecamp, and other platforms to connect and engage with volunteers.

**Planned Initiatives**

*Note: These are in the working draft of the 2018 Strategic Plan that will be approved by the Commission in April 2018.*

1) **Statewide Pro Bono Summit**
The Commission held its last statewide pro bono summit in January 2011. There have been many new developments since then, such as TN Free Legal Answers, the TN Faith & Justice Alliance, and our
statewide Legal Wellness Check-Up. The Commission is planning to hold the Summit in October, as part of Celebrate Pro Bono Month.

2) Launch a Fellows Group
The Commission is launching a Fellows Group, to be made up of former ATJ Commission members. There are over ten people who would qualify to be a Fellow. The Fellows will be charged with exploring collective impact in terms of funding and creating ways to support and increase funding and resources for legal aid and access to justice in Tennessee.

3) Listening Tour with Rural Bar Associations
The Commission is very interested in engaging with the rural bar, as there are many parts of TN that are rural and that are also very poor. The Commission will embark on a listening tour, where members will travel to local bar association meetings to get the community’s feedback on its work and how it can help improve access to justice in their area.

4) Implement Communications Plan
The Commission adopted a statewide communications plan, created with guidance from Voices for Civil Justice in late 2017. The Plan is designed not only for the Commission, but all ATJ stakeholders in Tennessee, to create a unified message on civil legal aid and Tennessee’s ATJ community.

5) Develop a Self-Representation Toolbox
The Commission will expand upon its plain language forms and create a toolbox for self-represented litigants. Staff will rely upon expertise from the Self-Represented Litigants Network and Committee volunteers that routinely engage with and assist SRLs.

6) Host Regional Family Law Summits
To address the need for increased resources for disadvantaged Tennesseans who need help with family law issues, the Commission will host regional meetings to bring stakeholders together. The Commission is exploring bringing innovators from other states to Tennessee for the Summits to present on how their states developed innovative ways to help people experience family law problems. Possible topics include limited scope representation and incubator programs.
Texas Access to Justice Commission

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 in the Last Year

- **Maintained** line item funding in the Texas general revenue budget for basic civil legal services (BCLS). In spite of a very tight budget year where BCLS was facing complete elimination, we helped pass legislation that kept this funding stream open. It is nearly impossible to be placed back in the budget once a program is removed, so this was vitally important. Total funding for BCLS did not decrease due to previous work to secure alternative revenue streams through settlement funds.
- Partnering with the State Bar of Texas Pro Bono Workgroup, the Commission worked on legislation to increase the pool of pro bono attorneys. The **New Opportunities Volunteer Attorney Pro Bono Program** now allows inactive attorneys and Texas-based attorneys licensed in other states to take pro bono cases through a civil legal aid program.
- Created a **vehicle transfer on death** mechanism for low-income people to properly transfer title of their vehicle outside of probate and avoid the cost of probate.

Top Three Accomplishments Since Commission Began

- **Passing Possessions Outside Probate**: Created ways for people to pass their assets outside of probate, including the creation of transfer on death process for both real property and vehicles which allows a property owner to pass title 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.
• **Affidavits of Indigency Reform**: Secured greater access to the courts and helped end abusive practices by revising Texas Rule of Civil Procedure 145 governing affidavits of indigency, promulgated forms adopted by the Texas Supreme Court for pro se divorce with no children or property and for protective orders, and increased support in the legal community for Court approved.

• **Law Schools & Students**: Promoted 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**

• **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.

• **Forms Task Forces**: Due to our successful work with the Texas legislature, the Texas Supreme Court has created task forces to propose plain language forms:
  - The Probate Task Force is creating forms for simple probate matters. They are finalizing the first set of simple will forms and will continue working on more will forms, small estate affidavits, and muniment of title forms.
  - The Landlord-Tenant Task Force is working to complete a full kit for eviction proceedings. They will then work on forms for other common housing issues.
  - 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.
  - The Protective Order Task Force updated the Supreme Court approved protective order kit to comply with current law.

• **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.

• **Poverty Simulations**: The Commission is currently preparing to conduct our Texas-centric and legal need-oriented poverty simulation for the entire incoming 1L class (approximately 250 students) at Southern Methodist University in Dallas.
Vermont Access to Justice Coalition

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

In the process of developing an (unsuccessful) grant application for the Justice for All project, we developed a list 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. Our timeline for working our way through that process will likely be years not months, though we expect the process to spawn individual projects along the way.

Top Three Accomplishments in the Last Year

1) Meredith McBurney from the ABA and Justice Andrew Mead from Maine made presentations to our group on ATJ fundraising and economic impact studies, respectively. As a result, the
Vermont Bar Foundation, in collaboration with the ATJ, has developed a plan for an economic impact study and a grant proposal to fund it. The Court will be reviewing the grant proposal in the next month.

2) We had a presentation from Christopher Griffin, from the Harvard A2J Lab on research relating to strategies to reduce the number of defaults in collections cases by sending defendants information in advance. This presentation is informing the expansion of landlord-tenant and collections docket lawyer-for-a-day pilot collaboration of the courts, Legal Aid, and bar in several counties, as the participants consider outreach strategies.

3) External presenters have presented on building connections with and providing training to non-lawyer social service providers (by Anne Sweeney, of Legal Aid Society of Cleveland), the New York Navigator program (by Fern Fisher, Deputy Chief Administrative Judge, New York City), and limited license technicians in Washington State (Paula Littlewood, ED, Washington State Bar and Steve Crossland, Chair of LLLT Board in Washington). We have had internal presentations on our own medical-legal partnership in Vermont and legal check-up tools. These presentations have informed ongoing discussions as well as the activities of our constituent coalition partners.

**Top Three Accomplishments to Date**

1) **Poverty Law Fellow:** The Coalition incubated and for years managed a Poverty Law Fellow position funded by contributions primarily from the private bar. The 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 has served as a launching pad for development of a grant-funded modest-means online referral tool through collaboration between Vermont Lawline and the VBA.

3) The Coalition serves as a connector between the State’s Legal Aid organizations, the Court, the Vermont Bar Foundation, the VBA and Vermont Law School. 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 VBF), multiple statewide Pro Bono Conferences, and participation in the ABA pro bono survey.

**Recent and Current Initiatives**
See above.

**Planned Initiatives**
See above.
Virginia Access to Justice Commission

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

Goals
1. Coordinate access to justice activities in Virginia
2. Actively engage the Supreme Court of Virginia, together with Virginia's judiciary at all levels throughout the Commonwealth, in enhancing equal access to justice
3. Identify barriers to obtaining needed legal services, and develop solutions
4. Mobilize legal professionals in closing the justice gap by:
   a. Increasing awareness of the importance of access to justice and the legal community's obligation to help provide it.
   b. 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.
   c. 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.
5. Encourage development of auxiliary resources (such as low-literacy legal information, simpler court forms, technological aids, etc.) for underserved populations
6. 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 in the Last Year

• The Commission developed multiple print resources to assist self-represented litigants (“SRLs”) and the public in general, including cards and bookmarks that promote the use of the Self-Help Portal, and posters that explain the kind of legal information court clerks can provide, as opposed to legal guidance which they cannot provide. All of these print resources are available in English and Spanish translations. The resources were distributed to district court clerks at the District Court Clerks Conference in May 2017, by a direct mailing in September 2017, and to circuit court clerks at the Circuit Court Clerks Association conference in September 2017.

• On February 27, 2018, the Supreme Court of Virginia approved Rules amendments proposed by the Commission, ordering that Part Six of the Rules of Court be amended by adding Paragraph 22 to § IV, relating to the voluntary reporting of pro bono legal services. The 2019 Virginia State Bar license application will include a section allowing lawyers to choose from four responses to supply information regarding their provision of pro bono legal services: identify the number of pro bono hours provided in the period from July 1, 2018, to June 30, 2019; identify the financial contribution made in lieu of direct service; indicate that the two percent aspirational goal is inapplicable; or decline to make any report. A letter from Chief Justice Lemons alerting Virginia
lawyers to this new requirement – so that they can begin to track their hours and donations now for reporting in 2019 – is expected to be included in the 2018 bar license renewal application.

- The Commission supported amendments to Virginia’s “Emeritus Rule” which the Supreme Court of Virginia approved on December 29, 2017. The Rule as amended now allows emeritus members (as specifically defined within the Rule) to provide pro bono services without supervision by an attorney so long as the emeritus member annually certifies his or her affiliation with a Qualified Legal Services Provider.

**Top Three Accomplishments Since Commission Began**

- The Commission developed the Virginia Judicial System Court Self-Help Web Portal for SRLs ([http://selfhelp.vacourts.gov](http://selfhelp.vacourts.gov)). The Portal became available for public use on June 13, 2016, and averages over 1,500 “hits” each month. The Portal emphasizes case types that frequently involve SRLs as litigants, and uses information from, and links to, various sources, including those that already are available on the Judicial System website. It also links to the VSB’s legal access website [Virginia.freelegalanswers.org](http://virginia.freelegalanswers.org).

  - The Commission has developed multiple print resources to assist SRLs. The “Practice Points for Civil Matters Involving Self-Represented Litigants” (“Practice Points”), provide guidance to judges in adjudicating matters involving SRLs, including supplying information regarding the new provisions in the Canons of Judicial Conduct which allow judges to inform SRLs about free legal aid and to encourage lawyers to provide pro bono service. The Chief Justice referenced the Practice Points in his State of the Judiciary address. The Commission also developed and supplied to judges and court clerks cards and bookmarks that promote the use of the Self-Help Portal, and posters that explain the kind of legal information court clerks can provide, as opposed to legal guidance which they cannot provide. The bookmarks, cards, and posters are available in English and Spanish translations.

- The Commission promoted revisions to Virginia’s Canons of Judicial Conduct, adopted by the Supreme Court and incorporated into the Canons in November 2016, which authorize judges to encourage lawyers to provide pro bono legal services, and allow them to attend an organization’s fundraising events as a speaker or guest of honor, so long as the events concern raising funds to improve access to the legal system for indigent and low income individual.

**Current Initiatives**

- The Commission is working to revise Rule 1:5 of the Rules of Supreme Court of Virginia to allow Virginia Legal Aid attorneys, and attorneys accepting pro bono referrals from Virginia Legal Aid attorney to engage in limited scope representation. The Commission’s proposal would allow Virginia courts to take a controlled approach to the concept of limited scope representation in order to assess its merits as a mechanism for advancing access to justice in the Commonwealth.

- The Commission initiated the Virginia Court Form Automation Project under the aegis of the Richmond School of Law, in collaboration with Southwest Virginia Legal Aid Society and Virginia Poverty Law Center, with funding from a Legal Services Corporation Technology Initiative Grant. The Project uses sophisticated automation tools and techniques to help SRLs locate and
complete some of the most frequently used court forms. Upon completion, the guided interviews will be accessible through links on the Virginia Judicial System Court Self-Help web portal.

- The Commission is working with the Virginia Law Foundation in its launch of a new Pro Bono Portal through which Virginia-licensed attorneys providing pro bono services to Virginia residents can access Virginia CLE’s 350+ on-demand online seminars and accompanying written materials at no charge to support their provision of pro bono legal services. As of March 2018, $40,000 in materials had been distributed, with the major areas of interest being Social Security, family law, and bankruptcy. The majority of lawyers accessing the materials have indicated that they intend to contribute 40 hours or more of pro bono service.

- The Commission also is working with the Virginia Law Foundation in developing a series of six videos, depicting lawyers who have offered and clients who have received pro bono assistance, along with commentary from others involved in the legal community. The Committee assisted the Foundation in redirecting the focus of the videos from clients to the lawyers providing the pro bono civil legal assistance, so as to allow the full import of the stories to be told, while preserving the privacy of the clients.

**Planned Initiatives**

- Develop a strategy to support creation of self-help centers or courthouse navigator services, staffed by pro bono attorneys or qualified non-attorneys, for the purpose of providing information to SRLs on the civil litigation process, court policies and procedures, and effective case development and presentation.

- Develop videos for publication on the Virginia Judicial System Court Self-Help Web Portal depicting various activities in Circuit Court, including how to complete forms (especially family law materials and forms associated with unlawful detainers and warrants in debt), how to present evidence, how to question a witness, how to dress for and conduct one-self before the court, and how to learn about the rules governing a particular court.

- Develop technical resources to help judges adjudicate cases involving SRLs, including scripts and other protocols, and distribute them in a variety of print and digital formats.

- Develop educational materials for Circuit Court judges on access to justice issues in the following areas: judges’ ability to encourage pro bono service and refer parties to legal aid organizations; the importance and availability of options for settlement and mediation of claims, including online dispute resolution and alternative dispute resolution; and the importance and availability of materials available to assist SRLs such as the on-line self-help portal, guided interviews, and videos.

- Continue researching the question of the number of SRLs who access the civil court system annually in order to generate data that can help determine the impact of legal representation on outcomes, and help inform the allocation of court resources.
The Commission has developed a model policy for portable electronic devices (such as cellphones and laptops) for consideration by Virginia’s courts. Emphasizing the access to justice factors implicated by broad bans on the carrying or use of such devices by courthouse users, including unrepresented litigants, the model policy offers options for loosening the restrictions to accommodate the ubiquity of these devices. The Commission is planning to disseminate this policy among Virginia’s courts, and encourage the adoption of a written policy governing portable electronic devices.
Washington State Access to Justice Board

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 ATJ Board prioritizes supporting the Alliance for Equal Justice’s collective effort to repudiate the devaluing and dehumanization of anyone seen as “other,” resisting the rollbacks of civil rights and other equity and justice progress, and realigning the equity and justice community so it can strengthen solidarity among organizations, agencies and communities. The Board’s Priorities for 2017-2019 include the following:

1. Promote racial equity both systemically and within the board practices, working toward a vision that race or color does not determine the availability and quality of services, fairness of outcomes, or opportunities for communities and individuals.
   
   o Engage in activities that create a shared awareness and understanding of what is needed to achieve race equity in our legal systems and society.
   o Conduct a race equity self-audit to identify practices that impede diverse recruitment and retention in board members, staff, and volunteers, and develop strategies to eliminate those practices.
   o Raise Board competency and capacity to advance race equity in our legal system and society through ongoing trainings and adoption of race equity tools.
   o Increase the visibility of activities and successes in advancing race equity that are supported by Alliance organizations and the greater legal community.
   o Partner with the Race Equity and Justice Initiative by serving on the Steering Committee and working with other REJI members to implement Goal One in the 2018-2020 State Plan for the Delivery of Legal Services to Low-Income People and activate the Acknowledgements and Commitments.
2. **Create a more integrated legal aid network by breaking down silos and strengthening partnerships across civil, criminal, and juvenile justice systems, and community-based organizations.**
   - Work with the Washington Minority and Justice Commission, Washington Gender and Justice Commission and the Washington Interpreter Commission to determine how the Access to Justice Board and those entities can collaborate to eliminate bias and inequity in the justice system.
   - Work with civil, criminal and juvenile system stakeholders to: identify the ways in which the systems intersect; explore how an individual’s involvement with the criminal or juvenile justice system leads to co-occurring civil legal problems and vice versa; identify gaps and explore ways the stakeholders in the different systems can collaborate to increase access to justice; and facilitate the development of methods to close the gaps in such a way that civil, criminal and juvenile justice systems respond in a coordinated and effective fashion.
   - Strengthen partnerships with the Washington State Bar Association and its affiliated justice stakeholders like the Moderate Means Program, the Low Bono Section, the Practice of Law Board and the Limited License Legal Technician Board to leverage our mutual commitment to equity and justice.
   - Promote partnerships to decrease the polarization and division that disproportionately harms communities who experience poverty and marginalization.

3. **Work with the Alliance for Equal Justice to oversee the implementation of the 2018-2020 State Plan for the Delivery of Legal Services to Low Income People.**
   - Oversee the implementation and evaluation of the State Plan.

4. **Improve internal and external communications about access to justice issues, the work of the Board and the Alliance for Equal Justice.**
   - Continue to implement the Board’s Communications Plan and ensure adequate staffing for Alliance communications.
   - Continue to conduct two Board meetings outside of King County annually for the purpose of gaining a better understanding of the needs and work taking place in different areas of Washington and to share about the work of the Board.
   - Continue to prioritize time during Board meetings to hear about equity and justice work being done across the state, particularly from smaller or newer organizations delivering legal services.

5. **Initiate and support efforts to ensure the effective and appropriate use of technology in the justice system and within the Alliance for Equal Justice in order to provide meaningful and equitable access to justice.**
   - Provide a voice on key issues that maintain or increase access to justice through technology for people and communities that experience poverty and injustice.
   - Monitor emerging local, state, national and international technology developments for potential adaption or application for Alliance organizations and their client communities.
   - Update the Access to Justice Technology Principles and work with the Communications Committee to develop a communication plan for the updated principles.
Monitor implementation of the updated Access to Justice Technology Principles and other uses of technology in the justice system.

Support ongoing efforts like the development of technology for automated family law forms, ATJ Tech Fellows, and other work which promotes the intersection of technology and justice for communities that experience poverty and injustice.

6. **Continue to support the Equal Justice Community Leadership Academy to ensure long-term sustainability and engagement.**
   - Support JustLead Washington in its work to build long-term sustainability for the Leadership Academy, its efforts to build a network of equity and justice leaders, and its development and delivery of leadership and race equity trainings for the Alliance for Equal Justice and other community partners.
   - Develop a plan to improve engagement of Leadership Academy alumni in the work of the Board and Alliance for Equal Justice.

7. **Work with statewide partners to actively promote and secure state funding to achieve greater access to civil legal aid and stimulate new and effective delivery innovations.**
   - Collaborate with the Office of Civil Legal Aid, the Equal Justice Coalition, the Legal Foundation of Washington, the Washington State Bar Association and others to coordinate and leverage support for increased state funding for civil legal aid.

Top Three Accomplishments in the Last Year

**State Plan for the Coordinated Delivery of Civil Legal Aid:** 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. The ATJ Board has facilitated the creation of four different state plans since the Board was created in 1994. It adopted the newest state plan, the **2018-2020 State Plan for the Coordinated Delivery of Civil Legal Aid to Low-Income People,** in May 2017. This plan was created by 23 stakeholders, mostly civil legal aid providers, over an 18-month period and sought input from a wide range of organizations, agencies and individuals.

**Website Redesign:** The ATJ Board shepherded a major website redesign project for the Alliance for Equal Justice so as to better facilitate intra-Alliance communications and communicate with the public about its work. The ATJ Board led the process of consolidating a variety of Alliance-related websites that were not regularly updated and redesigned a new website which was launched in December 2017. Through the redesign process, the ATJ Board produced several videos to explain the “why” behind the civil legal aid community’s work, the history of civil legal aid in Washington and an overview of the funding history. The ATJ Board also launched a blog which is accessed through the new website.

**Access to Justice Conference:** The Access to Justice (ATJ) Board organized its **19th Access to Justice Conference** last June in Yakima, Washington. The conference, “Racing to Justice: Community Lawyering to Bend the Arc,” built on the 20 year history of the ATJ Board and Alliance for Equal Justice, bringing together attorneys, judges, advocates and community members working within the civil, criminal, and juvenile justice systems. Over 300 people came together to build collective knowledge and strategize on how to partner with the community to advance equity and justice in our state.
Top Accomplishments Since Board Began

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 in 1994, 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 for the Coordinated Delivery of Civil Legal Aid to Low-Income People 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 112 leaders over four years. Having started as a pilot and evolved into a successful program, JustLead Washington was created in 2017 to house the Leadership Academy. Since then, JustLead Washington has started offering additional capacity building services, including leadership and race equity training and consulting for organizations as well as ongoing coaching and mentorship for the growing network of Leadership Academy alumni.

Technology Infrastructure and Principles: 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. The ATJ Board’s Technology Committee organized an Access to Justice Technology Symposium in 2016 which jumpstarted the process to update the Technology Principles. Over the last year, through additional symposiums and working sessions, technologists, access to justice advocates and community members have been working to update the principles.

Current and Planned Initiatives
Automated Family Forms Project: Through a partnership between the Washington Administrative Office of the Courts, the Office of Civil Legal Aid (OCLA), the Northwest Justice Project (ATJ) and the ATJ Board, Washington State completed a multi-year-long process to transform all of the family law forms into plain language in 2016. Following this effort, in 2017, the ATJ Board partnered with these same entities to begin the process to create a free, accessible statewide automated family law form platform (like Turbo Tax™ for family law litigants). To get the process started, the ATJ Board formed a Technology Assisted Forms (TAF) Committee, comprised of court administrators, judges, clerks, civil legal aid attorneys and administrators, private family law practitioners, and technologists, to design business and technology requirements for the project and issue a Request for a Statement of Interest. Funding for the project was recently secured through a grant from the Legal Services Corporation, which NJP applied for, and state funding, which was requested by OCLA. The TAF Committee will continue to work together with OCLA and NJP as this project is launched.

Alliance Communications Toolkit (ACT) Webinar Series: With the goal of supporting each Alliance for Equal Justice organization’s strategic communications efforts – especially smaller organizations who cannot afford in-house communications staff – the ATJ Board’s Communications Committee launched the ACT Webinar Series which offer best practices, tips and tools on a variety of communication topics. The free webinars will include the following topics: 1) Tested Civil Legal Aid Messaging; 2) How to Share Client Stories Effectively; 3) Social Media Best Practices; and 4) Effective Community Outreach.

Implementation of the 2018-2020 State Plan for the Coordinated Delivery of Civil Legal Aid: As mentioned above, the ATJ Board adopted its new State Plan and is now in the process of overseeing the implementation. Working through its Delivery System Committee and the State Plan Action and Resource Committee, the ATJ Board is providing staffing to track progress among the statewide network of organizations who committed to implementing the State Plan and organizing trainings and convenings to facilitate sharing of best practices and peer mentorship to advance the goals of the State Plan.

Race and Equity Justice Initiative: The Washington Race Equity and Justice Initiative (REJI) is a coalition of organizations and individuals who seek to coordinate and grow a network that can work together to eradicate racially biased policies, practices, and systems. REJI’s primary goal is to develop resources, tools, and infrastructure to support a highly collaborative, integrated and coordinated race equity & justice network. The ATJ Board is part of REJI and is working closely with JustLead Washington (which houses REJI) to advance its own race equity goals and support others in the Alliance for Equal Justice in their race equity work.
Wisconsin Access to Justice Commission

Mission

The Wisconsin Access to Justice Commission was created by the Wisconsin Supreme Court to aid the courts in improving the administration of justice by supporting civil legal aid to those who cannot afford them. Our mission is to develop and encourage means of expanding access to the civil justice system for unrepresented low-income Wisconsin residents.

Goals

1. Support adequate funding for access to justice programs in Wisconsin from a diverse and sustainable range of sources.
2. Support efforts to expand pro bono service by Wisconsin lawyers.
3. Promote efforts that expand legal resources available to assist volunteer attorneys and the public.
4. Ensure the Commission’s continued operation and success through adequate funding and staffing support from our stakeholders

Top Accomplishments in the Last Year

1. Collaborated with our stakeholders in a successful effort to convince the Legislature to restore $1 million to the 2017-2019 state budget for civil legal aid.
2. Advocated for and participated in successful efforts to advance a rule change that allows limited CLE credit for pro bono service and to permit in-house counsel to do pro bono work.
3. We relaunched Wisconsin Free Legal Answers on the ABA Free Legal Answers platform.
4. Organized “Just Breakfast” event to educate potential local funders about civil legal aid and the opportunities to support their work

Top Accomplishments Since Commission Began

1. Successful efforts with our stakeholders to restore Wisconsin’s state appropriation for civil legal aid. The appropriation is limited to domestic violence victims and comes from federal TANF block grant funds but that is a major step forward.
2. Advocated for and participated in the Wisconsin Legislative Council Study Committee on Access to Civil Legal Services. Three bipartisan bills resulted that would: encourage agencies to allocate a portion of federal block grant funds to civil legal aid (AB 115); create an interagency coordinating council on the use of federal block grant funds for civil legal aid (AB 116); and authorize district attorneys to participate in pro bono work when there is no conflict of interest (AB 117).
3. Obtained unanimous Supreme Court support for the Commission’s petition to change Wisconsin’s civil procedure rules to direct a portion of unclaimed settlement funds in state court class actions to WisTAF for civil legal aid.
4. Organized and executed statewide public hearings to broaden both public awareness and the base of support for civil legal aid to the poor. Published The State of Equal Justice in Wisconsin, our report and recommendations resulting from those hearings.
5. Garnered unanimous Supreme Court support for the Commission’s petition to modify the judicial code to clarify the scope of the judge’s role in ensuring that all litigants, including the self-represented, have a fair opportunity to present their cases.

Current Initiatives

1. We have developed proposed modifications to the student practice rule that would make it possible for law students and recent graduates to practice sooner under the supervision of a licensed attorney.
2. We are working with our stakeholders to develop a set of media priorities and identify resources in our community that our stakeholders can leverage to get message on civil legal aid to the right decision makers at the right time.
3. We are improving technology coordination, planning, and collaboration, including outreach to engineering programs.
4. Promoting the Pro Bono Honor Society to lawyers and encouraging local recognition events.

Planned Initiatives

1. Relaunching our Just Breakfast program as a locally funded and locally focused foundation outreach event.
2. Encouraging adoption of a pro bono emeritus bar membership status for retired lawyers who want to do pro bono work.
Wyoming Access to Justice Commission

Mission

The mission of the Wyoming Access to Justice Commission is to promote the fair and equal access to civil justice in Wyoming.

Goals

To further that mission, the Commission’s five-year strategic plan, covering 2015-2020, focuses on three initiatives to promote equal access to justice for Wyoming citizens:
1) Continued support for legal services in Wyoming;
2) Communications and public awareness;
3) Inspiring pro bono service by Wyoming attorneys.

Top Three Accomplishments in the Last Year

1. Federal funding campaign to support LSC

When the White House budget blueprint proposed the elimination of the Legal Services Corporation in 2017, the Commission’s Funding Working Group organized a campaign in support of continued LSC funding. The working group gathered letters of support for continued funding. Support was garnered from a wide range of diverse supporters, from the Wyoming Bankers Association to the Wyoming Association of Municipalities. The group was also able to get a resolution in support of LSC funding from the Wyoming State Bar Officers and Commissioners. A letter writing campaign with the Young Lawyers Section of the Wyoming State Bar was held. A campaign to gather support on the DefendLegalAid.org website was also successful in gathering support from a large number of Wyoming residents. The Funding Working Group, in collaboration with Wyoming’s ABA delegate, sent a group to DC during ABA days to meet with the Wyoming Congressional Delegation to discuss the importance of LSC funding.

2. Expansion of the Volunteer Reference Attorney Program

The Commission, in partnership with Equal Justice Wyoming, expanded the Volunteer Reference Attorney Program in the past year. The program places volunteer attorneys in courthouses to assist pro se litigants. The program started as a single-site pilot project in Cheyenne. Over the last year it has expanded to six courthouses throughout the state.

3. Creation of access to justice videos and presentation

The Communications Working Group created two videos highlighting the importance of access to justice from the perspective of two prominent attorneys and a pro bono client. In conjunction with the videos, the group also developed an access to justice presentation template. Each member of the Commission committed to giving at least one ATJ presentation in the next year.

Top Three Accomplishments Since Commission Began

1. Established state funding for civil legal services.
In December 2009, the Commission published a White Paper examining access to justice in the state with a recommendation for state legislation and funding for civil legal services. During the 2010 legislative session, the Commission drafted and helped sponsor legislation which resulted in the Wyoming Civil Legal Services Act, creating the first state funding for civil legal services in Wyoming. The funding is generated through a $10 addition to court filing fees and assessments.

In April 2011, with the funding from the Civil Legal Services Act, the Wyoming Supreme Court established Equal Justice Wyoming and charged the program, a division of the Wyoming Supreme Court, with establishing statewide services for civil legal aid.

Equal Justice Wyoming administers grants to legal aid providers and is the single largest funder for civil legal aid in Wyoming. In addition, Equal Justice Wyoming provides self-help resources for pro se litigants, provides support to legal aid advocates and pro bono attorneys, and manages a statewide pro bono program.

2. Increased funding for civil legal services.

The Commission recognizes the need for adequate funding for civil legal services. Although the state funding in Wyoming is generated through special revenue, the funds cannot be used absent a legislative appropriation that must be made each biennium. The Commission supported increased spending authority to utilize funds that have been generated under the Civil Legal Services Act and was successful in helping to obtain an additional $100,000 supplemental appropriation during the 2015 legislative session and an additional $233,490 for the FY 2017-2018 biennium. The total state appropriation for the FY 2019-2020 biennium is more than $2.9 million.

3. Legislative success in breaking down statutory barriers to access to justice

In 2014, the Commission acknowledged the difficulty tenants face in eviction hearings. In Wyoming, tenants facing eviction were required to file a written answer in order to participate in the hearing. Many tenants were prevented from presenting a defense due to this requirement. The Access to Justice Commission successfully drafted and supported legislation doing away with the requirement of a written answer in eviction cases and now tenants may appear at the hearing and present evidence without the necessity of filing a written answer.

In 2016, the Commission drafted legislation to remove a barrier for those seeking to file for divorce. Under Wyoming law, the plaintiff must reside in the state for 60 days in order to file for divorce. This created cases where a party that had to leave the state, such as a victim fleeing domestic violence, was prevented from filing for divorce once they left the state, leaving many parties without a way to effectively dissolve their marriage. Upon the Commission’s recommendation, during the 2017 legislative session a divorce residency bill was successfully drafted and signed into law to allow that a divorce may be filed if either party to the divorce has resided in the state for 60 days.

Current Initiatives

1. Continued Support for Legal Services
The Commission continues to monitor and support stable funding for civil legal services and is increasing communication concerning the need to adequately fund and support these services. The Commission also created a Funding Working Group. The Funding Working Group helped organized a campaign to support the Legal Services Corporation in 2017 when the White House proposed the elimination of LSC. The Funding Working Group is again gathering support and is sending a group to DC in April 2018 to meet with Wyoming’s Congressional Delegation in support of continued LSC funding.

2. **Inspiring Pro Bono Service by Wyoming Attorneys**

The Commission, in collaboration with Equal Justice Wyoming and the Wyoming State Bar, works together to develop and support pro bono programs and initiatives to increase pro bono service around the state. The Commission supported the I’ll Do One campaign, a campaign launched by Equal Justice Wyoming and the Wyoming State Bar in 2014 to recruit more pro bono attorneys across the state. In 2016 the Commission, in collaboration with Equal Justice Wyoming, launched the Volunteer Reference Attorney Program putting volunteer attorneys in courthouses to help pro se litigants navigate the courts. Over the last year, the Volunteer Reference Attorney Program has grown from a single pilot project to expansion into six courthouses across the state. The Commission and Equal Justice Wyoming plan to further expand the program over the next year.

3. **Improvement of Law – Removing Barriers to Access to Justice**

The Commission has a working group that identifies laws or procedures that create barriers to access to justice. As the group identifies barriers, the Commission works to address and remove those barriers.

4. **Delivery of Legal Services**

The Commission’s Delivery Working Group is investigating alternative models for delivery of legal services, developing additional resources for self-represented litigants, and identifying ways to reach currently underserved segments of Wyoming’s population. As the group identifies new ways to deliver services, the Commission works to implement and support innovative methods to serve the people of Wyoming.

5. **Communication and Public Awareness of Legal Services and Access to Justice**

The Commission is working to strengthen communication and public awareness about legal services, emphasizing that access to justice is a necessary component of a healthy legal system. The Commission established a Communications Working Group which updated the Commission’s webpage to include more information about access to justice and is working to distribute information about legal services to the public. The working group also created two videos to highlight the importance of access to justice. Each member of the Commission has agreed to give an access to justice presentation in the next year to increase awareness. The group developed the presentation materials.

**Planned Initiatives**

1. **Tribal Working Group**

The Commission created a Tribal Working Group that is just getting off the ground. In January 2018, the Wind River Indian Reservation created a new Wind River Tribal Court which replaced the two former
courts that were serving the Reservation. The Tribal Working Group includes the Chief Judge from the Wind River Tribal Court. The Group is planning to work with the Tribal Court to identify ways the Commission can help increase access to justice on the Wind River Indian Reservation.

2. Communicating with State Legislators

The Communications Working Group is developing a plan to meet with state legislators before the next legislative session to discuss the importance of access to justice and civil legal aid.