

Minutes
Public Service and Trust Commission
Pro Bono Committee
May, 26, 2011

The Pro Bono Committee met on Thursday May 26, 2011, at 2:00pm in the Attorney's Conference Room, 231 Capitol Avenue, Hartford, CT.

Those in attendance: Hon William Bright, Chair, Attorney Alfred Casella, Attorney Timothy Johnston, Attorney Barry Hawkins, Attorney Steve Eppler-Epstein, Attorney Dwight Merriam, Hon. Brian Mahon, Attorney Ian Lodovice, Attorney Norman Janes, Attorney Livia Barndollar and Attorney Daniel Horwitch. Attorney Catherine Mohan and Attorney Mark Nordstrom participated by phone.

A member of the public arrived at the meeting at approximately 3:10p.m.

Meeting was called to order at 2:07 pm.

The Committee voted to approve the minutes of the April 27, 2011 meeting. Attorney Livia Barndollar abstained.

1. The subcommittees each reported out on their progress since the April 27th meeting.

Metrics

Judge Bright, Chair of the Metrics subcommittee reported that the subcommittee continues to discuss the merits of anonymous mandatory reporting of pro bono efforts. Judge Bright reported that there seems to be general support amongst the bar for mandatory anonymous reporting, but the specific details such as including questions regarding pro bono work on the annual attorney registration and meeting with FOIC (Freedom of Information Commission) to ensure that the anonymity of these electronic and paper responses are preserved still need to be worked out.

Communications

Attorney Janice Chiaretto, chair of the Communications subcommittee was not present, so Judge Bright reported out on her behalf. Judge Bright reported that the subcommittee continued to work on its primary objective of creating a pro bono portal on Legal Aid's website. The website will have a specific section for attorneys which will contain information on available pro bono programs and training, as well as other relevant information as it relates to pro bono work and achievement. The subcommittee hopes to have the portal available for the Pro Bono Summit in the fall.

Training

Attorney Gregg Benson, chair of the Training subcommittee was not present, so Attorney Ian Lodovice reported on his behalf. Attorney Lodovice reported that the subcommittee discussed the set of questions regarding training that was circulated by Attorney Benson after the last meeting. Attorney Eppler-Epstein, Chair of the Programs subcommittee, added some program related questions to the training questions and circulated the combined list to the Programs subcommittee for comment. The proposed template of pro bono programs will be sent out to the

various legal services agencies shortly. Once the responses have been received, there could be a joint meeting of the Training and Programs subcommittees to discuss the next steps.

Recognition and Recruitment

The work of these combined subcommittees has been completed.

Programs

Attorney Steve Eppler-Epstein, chair of the Programs subcommittee reported that there are two key components to the work of the subcommittee – the pro bono programs themselves and logistics surrounding the creation and implementation of the programs. Attorney Eppler-Epstein reported that the work of the Programs subcommittee was divided into three parts:

1. Reviewing the draft template of pro bono questions;
2. Drafting the outline for the pro bono programs;
3. Finalizing the video of the client testimonial

Attorney Eppler-Epstein stressed the importance of asking the right questions on the template so the responses are helpful and of some use to the Committee. The template will be distributed as early as the beginning of June to non-profit agencies as well as to members of the Judicial Branch. As the responses to the questions will impact the content of the catalog for the Summit, the recipients will be asked to return their completed templates within a month so as to allow ample time to compile the responses and finalize the catalog for printing and mailing. The Programs subcommittee will not schedule another meeting at this time, but will instead defer decisions on the substantive issues pertaining to their work to the larger Pro Bono Committee.

Attorney Eppler-Epstein also reported that the subcommittee discussed whether to include a keynote speaker(s) from the administration in addition to the welcoming remarks from the Chief Justice. The subcommittee agreed that it would be more in line with the spirit and intent of the Summit to utilize the remaining time on topic specific speakers rather than formal remarks by other administration officials.

The subcommittee also discussed the merits of having a panel discussion at the Summit with a moderator to raise issues and generate discussion amongst the managing partners and corporate counsel attendees as to how they recognize pro bono work and what they believe to be the issues as they relate to pro bono work. A suggestion was made to have a separate panel discussion including the Chief Administrative Judges for Civil, Family and Juvenile to discuss the types of things the Judicial Branch can do make it easier for attorneys to perform pro bono work.

The issue of the growing numbers of self-represented parties in our courts was raised and a suggestion was made to change the language on the draft outline for the Summit dated 5/26/11 under the Access to Justice bullet from “Why pro se is a problem to be overcome” to “Why low-income self-represented parties are a problem to overcome”. The Committee discussed the sensitive nature of the issue of how self-represented parties are treated in our courts. Some attorneys may feel that the court is overly solicitous of self-represented parties and the Committee would like to help debunk the perception that the courts are part of the problem.

A suggestion was made to invite the Judicial District Chief Clerks to the Pro Bono Summit so they can in turn bring the message regarding pro bono service and recognition back to their line staff.

Another suggestion was made to add “Mentoring” to the Structural portion of the program.

Attorney Eppler-Epstein suggested the formation of a small working group to determine the content of the program and finalize the names of the presenters. Judge Bright, Attorney Eppler-Epstein and Attorney Barndollar agreed to participate as members of the working group.

Logistics

Judge Bright reported that members of the Committee and support staff conducted a site visit of the Legislative Office Building (LOB) to determine which hearing room would best suit the needs of the Summit. Judge Bright reported that hearing room 2C was selected and the 2nd floor atrium area would be used to provide coffee and refreshments to the attendees. This area will also be utilized to run the slide show created by Legal Services in a continuous loop throughout the entirety of the Summit.

Judge Bright also reported that at the conclusion of the Summit, the attendees would be invited to the Old Judiciary Hearing Room at the Capitol for a box lunch and an informal meeting with the legal service providers to discuss the various pro bono programs and opportunities. As a possible alternative, a suggestion was made to have support staff look into the feasibility of using the LOB lobby or the LOB cafeteria for this portion of the program. Regarding the box lunch, a discussion was held regarding whether the Committee was ethically precluded from having a private sponsor to finance the cost of the box lunch. Attorney Dan Horwitch, legal staff to the Pro Bono Committee, will research this issue and get back to the Committee. The Committee continued to discuss the timing of the box lunch and the meeting with the Legal Service providers along with the concern that some of the Summit attendees would not stay for this portion of the program. A suggestion was made to invite Governor Malloy to provide closing remarks at the box lunch/Legal Service portion of the program to provide an incentive for attendees to stay.

Additionally, the Committee discussed whether the Summit would be taped by CTN and/or whether the Law Tribune would provide a live web cast. The Committee agreed that since the Summit is an open forum, it might be a good idea to preserve the program for future use.

2. The Committee agreed to hold the Pro Bono Summit on Wednesday, October 5, 2011. A tentative timeline for the day of the Summit was discussed:
 - 8:30a.m. – Attendees pick up their name tags
 - 9:00-10:30am – Program
 - 10:30-10:45a.m. – 15 minute break – coffee/refreshments on 2nd floor atrium
 - 10:45-12:15p.m. – Program
 - 12:30-1:30 p.m. – Closing speaker/lunch/meet Legal Service providers

The Committee will send out an e-vite “Save the Date” to the Summit invitees in a couple of weeks and will send out the formal invitations including the Summit program and speakers at a later date.

A discussion was held regarding the list of invitees and how the Committee should be careful not to exclude representation from some of the smaller firms in the smaller cities and towns in Connecticut such as Meriden, Rockville and Willimantic. A suggestion was made to identify the leadership in the local bar associations and also other members who might be receptive to the pro bono message in order to ensure representation from these areas.

The Committee also discussed the list of invitees from Connecticut Corporations and how best to determine which Corporations to invite to the Summit. Attorney Mark Nordstrom will research

Martindale Hubbell to determine the number of corporations listed in Connecticut who have at least 15 attorneys in their legal departments. The Committee agreed that this criteria would be appropriate for determining which Corporations to invite.

Support staff will contact the CBA to obtain the number of local bar groups and affinity bar groups in Connecticut. In addition, the Committee agreed that representatives from the CTLA (Connecticut Trial Lawyers Association) and the AAML (American Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers) should be invited to attend the Summit.

The Committee agreed that the goal was to have between 125-150 attendees at the Summit. A discussion was held regarding whether representatives from the Family Support Magistrate Division and the Small Claims Magistrates should also be invited to attend.

Attorney Eppler-Epstein provided a demonstration of a video produced by Legal Services about what a difference a lawyer can make. This client testimonial will be shown at the Summit in October as a concrete illustration of the positive effects a lawyer can have on the life of someone who is in crisis.

3. The next meeting of the Pro Bono Committee will be on Thursday, July 7, 2011 at 2:00p.m. at 231 Capitol Avenue, Hartford, in the Attorney Conference Room.
4. The meeting was adjourned at 4:15 p.m.