

Access to Justice Commission
Workgroup on On-Line Pro Bono Legal Assistance
April 24, 2014
3:00 pm
225 Spring Street, Room 133
Wethersfield, CT

1. The Workgroup meeting was called to order at 3:15p.m.with the following members in attendance: Attorney Susan Nofi, Chair, Judge William Bright, Attorney Steven Eppler-Epstein, Ms. Claudia Magnan, Ms. Heather Collins, Ms. Aisha Banks and Ms. Krista Hess.
2. The minutes from the March 25, 2014 Workgroup meeting were unanimously approved with a correction to III regarding the date of the next Workgroup meeting. The minutes should have reflected the next meeting date as April 24, 2014.
3. The Workgroup reviewed and discussed the report prepared by staff after the information gathering trip to Tennessee to learn about the Online Tennessee Justice (OTJ) program. Specifically, members of the workgroup discussed such logistical issues as cost of equipment, compatibility with current operating systems in place at Legal Aid and Judicial, staff time, and whether the program took business away from other more established pro bono programs and clinics.

The Workgroup also discussed the basic question of where and with whom this initiative would be housed should Connecticut decide to pursue implementation. Potential venues included the office of New Haven Legal Aid, the Judicial Branch and the more remote possibility of housing the program in Tennessee and providing funding to Tennessee to administer the program on their servers on Connecticut's behalf. Staff will contact Judicial Branch Legal Services Deputy Director Joe Del Ciampo to seek a legal opinion on whether it's feasible for the Branch to consider hosting and administering the online program, and whether the structure of the online program mirrors that of the existing Branch Volunteer Attorney Programs in family and foreclosure.

There was some concern that this online program not interfere or conflict with the Modest/Moderate Means Workgroup under Connecticut's Access to Justice initiative. The Workgroup discussed the possibility of implementing means testing for the online pro bono program at 250-300% of the Federal poverty guideline so eligibility also included those who might qualify for modest/moderate means. These eligible parties could, if necessary, also benefit from a referral to an incubator program. Judge Bright will speak with Bill Clendenen, the Vice-President of the CBA to identify a young attorney from the

CBA interested in the modest/moderate means intuitive to be a member of the Online Pro Bono Workgroup. Similarly, Attorney Nofi will contact Attorneys Patricia Kaplan and Christopher Nelson, Chairs of the Modest/Moderate Means Workgroup under the Access to Justice Commission, to see if they support the implementation of the online model of pro bono as an additional tool to assist modest/moderate means Connecticut residents or if their preference would be that the means testing for the online program remain at 125% of the Federal poverty level.

Attorney Eppler-Epstein will contact Elizabeth Todaro from the Tennessee Bar Association and the ABA to see if there's any research on whether "easy pro bono" adversely impacts more traditional pro bono models. In addition, Attorney Eppler-Epstein will contact Paul Davis, the programmer in Tennessee to discuss the more technical requirements for hardware and software necessary to successfully operate the online program.

4. The Workgroup agreed to convene via teleconference in advance of the next regularly scheduled Access to Justice Commission meeting on Tuesday, May 27, 2014.
5. The meeting was adjourned at 4:35p.m.