

**Draft Minutes**  
**Access to Justice Commission**  
**Workgroup on On-Line Pro Bono Legal Assistance**  
**March 25, 2014**  
**3:00 pm**  
**225 Spring Street, Room 204**  
**Wethersfield, CT**

Workgroup members in attendance: Chairperson Attorney Susan Nofi, Ms. Aisha Banks, Ms. Heather Collins, Atty. Steve Eppler-Epstein, Ms. Krista Hess, and Ms. Claudia Magnan. The Hon. William H. Bright Jr. was unable to attend.

- I. **Review and approval of minutes:** Atty. Nofi called the meeting to order at 3:02p.m. The Minutes of the February 19<sup>th</sup> meeting were accepted as written and approved by the members. Atty. Nofi asked that support staff to the Access to Justice Commission inquire whether the Chairs have any recommendations for membership from the private bar to join this Workgroup. Ms. Collins said she would inquire and get back to Atty. Nofi.
- II. **Discussion regarding Tennessee Alliance for Legal Services on-line pro bono program, [OnlineTNJustice.org](http://OnlineTNJustice.org):** Ms. Hess noted that, thanks to a grant from the National Center for State Courts' Center on [Court Access to Justice for All](#), she would be traveling to Nashville, TN, on March 26 to meet with ATJ leaders there. Specifically, she would be meeting with directors of the Tennessee Alliance for Legal Services, a statewide non-profit that promotes access to justice through [cooperation and shared resources, with assistance from LSC](#). The TALS operates the online pro bono program that allows low-income people to ask legal advice of volunteer attorneys. Also, Ms. Hess would be meeting with Attorney George T. Lewis, Chairman of the TN Supreme Court Access to Justice Commission. Atty. Lewis spearheaded the design and roll-out of OnlineTNJustice, just one of [many pro bono programs](#) that he has initiated and helped to implement in TN. Ms. Hess will report back to this Workgroup, the [Access to Justice Commission](#) as a whole, and court administrators on her visit to examine how the online pro bono program works and whether it would be a 'good fit' for Connecticut volunteer attorneys. In anticipation of the meeting, the Workgroup members offered suggestions for inquiries into the following areas:
  - **Marketing/Outreach to attorneys:** How do they recruit volunteers? Are bar associations supportive of the program? What are the requirements for attorneys? Is there a certification that protects the attorney from malpractice allegations or complaints? Practice done under limited scope? Is there insurance and if so, how much (per attorney, or total)? Any pushback from their bars on the income limit of 250 percent < poverty level? Any suggestions from volunteers on how to improve the site, the management, or the experience?

- **Marketing to self-represented parties and outside agencies** (libraries): The program will serve people who earn up to 250 percent of the poverty level. How did they arrive at that figure (250 percent)? How do they market the availability of this program to the public? Do they use social media? Do they let outside agencies, such as public libraries, know about the program so that they can tell their patrons?
- **Training:** Is there training for lawyers? Do lawyers take cases in only one or two areas, ie, family, probate, etc.? What are the rules of pro bono in TN: Do all lawyers have to report their annual pro bono hours with registration? Is there anything in place that will help the administration to evaluate the quality of the advice given? Are self-represented parties asked about their experiences?
- **Technical considerations:** Does the program run on Drupal? What is the annual tech. cost, i.e., storage? How long are the data kept/stored?
- **Staffing/day-to-day administration:** How much staff time is dedicated to operating the program? Is that LSC-approved? Have there been any glitches, in terms of service delivery, or dissatisfaction? Do the attorneys ever receive questions from people that present tough ethical concerns, or have they ever had to involve authorities because of questions or inquiries that may give rise to an impending criminal action? Does this program indicate whether

III. **Next meeting date:** The Workgroup will hold its next meeting on Thursday, April 24, 2014 at 3:00p.m. at 225 Spring Street, Wethersfield, CT.

IV. **Adjourn:** The meeting was adjourned at 4:15 p.m.