

**Minutes**  
**Public Service and Trust Commission**  
**Committee on Self-represented Parties**  
**Subcommittee on Forms**  
**December 18, 2008**

The Subcommittee on Forms met on December 18, 2008 at 225 Spring Street in Wethersfield, CT.

Those in attendance: Hon. Elizabeth A. Bozzuto (Chair), Ms. Krista Hess, Attorney Daniel Horwitch, Hon. John J. Nazzaro and Attorney Mark D. Shea

Judge Bozzuto called the meeting to order at 2:02 p.m.

1. The first order of business was the review of the subcommittee's charge. Attorney Horwitch prepared for the subcommittee's review and discussion, a list of the most frequently downloaded forms for the month of October 2008. A discussion was held regarding the financial affidavit and the appearance form being among the most frequently used forms. It was determined that the end product of the subcommittee should be achieving understandable, accessible forms that use plain language. The question was raised regarding how many of the downloaded forms are actually being downloaded by self-represented parties versus attorneys. The subcommittee discussed the possibility of asking court service center staff to keep track of the forms self-represented parties most frequently require assistance with.

A discussion was held concerning the proposal of grouping forms. Attorney Shea explained that it might be less confusing to group or bundle all of the forms required to file a particular type of action. For example, the subcommittee discussed bundling all forms necessary for uncontested dissolutions, custody, child support, etc. Attorney Shea will check with his Administrative Judge and Clerk's Office staff for suggestions regarding grouping forms.

2. The subcommittee reviewed the current status of forms as they pertain to plain language. A discussion was held regarding web pages belonging to other states. The subcommittee suggested that some obscure forms may be either eliminated or consolidated and that miscellaneous forms be logically grouped on the Judicial Branch website. An idea was presented that the writ, summons and complaint for Civil, Housing, and Family be consolidated into one form which would contain a series of checkboxes for the filer to indicate which type of action he or she was filing. The subcommittee will consider how feasible these ideas are. The subcommittee agreed the public forms on the Branch's website should be the first to be examined for plain language and readability.
3. A discussion was held regarding the areas for consideration within the subcommittee charge. The subcommittee discussed how displaying Judicial

Branch forms in non-Judicial facilities such as libraries or senior centers was not feasible or desirable, as the forms are frequently revised, and the logistics of maintaining a large volume of forms at remote locations might prove to be a cumbersome task. The subcommittee further considered condensing various Judicial Branch publications and presenting the materials to the public in the form of small tri-fold pamphlets, using bullets to highlight information. It was agreed that some locations to be considered for distribution of Branch publications might be such places as senior centers, probate courts, libraries, schools, universities and law libraries.

The subcommittee discussed how to best determine if there are any unmet needs of the public who are without access to computers and how best to fulfill these unmet needs. A discussion was held regarding the location of forms on the Judicial Branch website and if there might be a more prominent, accessible location on the Branch's web page to assist self-represented parties in locating the forms with greater ease. The subcommittee talked about the possibility of acquiring a separate domain name specifically for Judicial Branch forms. The subcommittee agreed to look into this further. A discussion was also held regarding the development of a website dedicated to self-represented parties with a more direct link for accessing Judicial Branch forms. The subcommittee briefly reviewed the State of Indiana's website.

The subcommittee also discussed changes that have been made to some Judicial Branch forms to incorporate plain language and readability. Attorney Shea provided the subcommittee with samples of forms that he bundled together. The subcommittee agreed that bundling forms together was an excellent idea and they would consider this option as a recommendation to the Committee on Public Service and Trust. It was further suggested that signage be placed at the locations where self-represented parties access our forms most frequently. With respect to increasing the number of plain language forms, Attorney Horwitch indicated that process is already in place, but the work was voluminous and additional staff was unlikely at this time. Attorney Horwitch further explained that the goal of the Judicial Branch is to eventually apply the principles of plain language to all Judicial Branch forms.

Finally, the subcommittee reviewed the self-help portion of the Judicial Branch website. The self-help section of the State of California's website was also reviewed by the subcommittee. The subcommittee discussed collaborating with the Technology subcommittee to assist in the bundling of all Judicial Branch forms.

4. The next meeting date was set for Tuesday, January 6, 2009 at 2:00 pm. in Wethersfield. Steve Marhefsky will be asked to attend this meeting to begin discussions concerning performance measures.
5. The meeting was adjourned at 3:49 p.m.