



Illinois Supreme Court Commission on Access to Justice

Quarterly Newsletter

May 2019

Community Trust Committee hosts town halls

With the goal of increasing community trust and dialogue, and with the assistance of Chief Judge Timothy Evans and Presiding Judge Tommy Brewer, the Community Trust Committee held three meetings in late 2018 at Prairie State College, New Faith Baptist Church, and the Markham Courthouse. Each town hall meeting included a panel of judges, other court stakeholders, and legal service providers. The audience included community members dedicated to serving the vulnerable citizens living in the south suburbs. Specifically, mental health service providers, juvenile justice advocates, librarians, law enforcement, and members of the community participated. As a result of discussions, many important issues were raised and ideas exchanged.

The Committee is meeting regularly to determine next steps and discuss more community outreach, better distribution of resources and information to the public, training of service providers on giving legal referrals, and other education programs. The next Committee meeting is scheduled for May 16, 2019.



Town Hall attendees



**Markham Presiding
Judge Tommy Brewer**

Law students learn about ATJ issues



**Sessions on poverty and importance of
pro bono services**



The ATJ Commission hosted an inaugural [Law Student Leaders Access to Justice Summit](#) on February 22, 2019 at the Michael A. Bilandic Building. We welcomed law students and faculty from each of our state's nine law schools for a day focused on educating and inspiring future leaders on how they can help provide equal access to our justice system in their respective career paths. Chief Justice Karmeier and Justice Kilbride gave thoughtful remarks about the importance of engaging in pro bono service and the value of legal aid.

Language Access Program continues to grow and improve

The AOIC ATJ Division continues to improve its online [Court Interpreter Registry](#), which currently has 372 certified interpreters in 33 languages. The certification process includes an orientation and written and oral exams, and is offered on a rolling basis each year. The AOIC reimburses counties that use interpreters on the Registry. In 2015, only 25% of state court interpretations used interpreters on the Registry. In 2018, this number increased to 66%. The AOIC also continues to offer courses to help interpreters prepare for the oral certification exam and improve their skills; our most recent course, for Spanish interpreters, was held on April 10-11, 2019.



Appellate self-help materials updated

Late last year, the ATJ Commission's [Appellate Self-Help Guide](#) was updated to reflect current law and e-filing requirements. In addition, a dedicated [self-help page](#) was launched on the Illinois Courts' website. It features detailed resources to assist SRLs in civil appeals, including a comprehensive FAQ section, e-filing manuals, a simplified process overview, and links to resources throughout the state to help litigants navigate an appeal.

New appellate SRL pilot project launched

In March 2019, the ATJ Commission launched a pilot project in the First Appellate District to assist SRLs with their civil appeals. After this pilot, we expect to better understand questions litigants have about the civil appellate process and barriers preventing them from completing their appeals. We also hope to obtain more specific data on outcomes to better inform stakeholders and to create additional self-help materials.

Illinois JusticeCorps program updates

Illinois JusticeCorps will begin operations in McHenry County in May 2019. Kaitlyn Schaefer will serve as the Fellow for the summer. Kaitlyn is a writing student at Drake University in Des Moines, Iowa with plans to graduate next year. She is from Crystal Lake, IL and looks forward to spending the summer learning more about the legal system and helping people without lawyers.

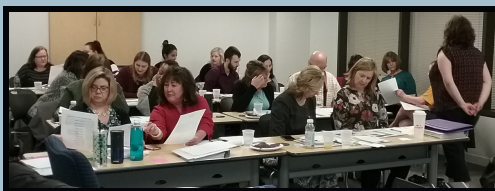
The program also relaunched at 26th and Cal with two part-time Fellows. Clarissa Todd is from Darien, Illinois and graduated in December 2017 from Truman State University with a B.S. in Psychology. Before joining JusticeCorps, Clarissa served a year-long fellowship with the Greater Chicago Food Depository. Clarissa will be pursuing a J.D. at the University of Arizona in the fall. Farzana Ahmed is from the Chicago, Illinois and graduated in December 2018 from Knox College with a B.A. in economics and international studies. Farzana speaks Hindi and Urdu as well as intermediary French and Japanese. She will be pursuing her J.D. at DePaul College of Law this fall.

Presentations and trainings

Presiding Judge Grace Dickler invited the ATJ Commission to attend the March **Cook County Domestic Relations Division's** monthly meeting to present on the development of its statewide, standardized divorce forms.

The ATJ Commission recently conducted training for the **elected circuit clerks** in all five Zones, the **Illinois Association of Court Clerks, Chicago Public Libraries**, and seven individual **county's clerk's staff** focusing on the distinction between legal information and legal advice.

In May, the **Self-Represented Litigant Coordinator Network** gathered in Chicago for training on a variety of topics including working with court patrons with mental illness, de-escalation, how to train others on information vs. legal advice, literacy, and plain language. Representatives from half of the judicial circuits in the state were in attendance sharing ideas about how to best serve SRLs in our courts.



Upcoming Events

May 16th at 3:00pm
Community Trust
Committee meeting

May 17th
Court interpreter
mock oral exam for
skill building purposes

June 20th
Court interpreter oral exam

July 17th
Community Trust
Committee presentation
to south suburban service
providers on legal referrals

July 17th
ATJ Commission Meeting

For more information, please contact
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