



NEW ATJ WEBSITE LAUNCHED

The ATJ Commission is pleased to announce the launch of both its website atjil.org and its new brand. This is a first step towards a targeted effort to ensure our resources reach those who most need them, particularly court users and court stakeholders. Designed with the needs of these two separate groups in mind, each will find tailored resources available to them in several places throughout the website.

Website landing page preview:



Please add atjil.org to any resource geared towards self-represented litigants. Feel free to share, repost, and be in touch with any questions. We are always looking to improve and would love to hear your feedback. At the present moment, many links on the site will bring you back to content on the Illinois Courts website but expect more changes and modifications as our roll-out continues.

Brand guidelines, including a logo (at the top of this newsletter), typeface, and color scheme, create visual continuity and will result in a recognizable and consistent face for the Commission.

Complimentary color scheme:



Shortened logo:



Check out the new website and keep your eyes peeled for materials with our logo!

By: *Alison Spanner*

VIRTUAL HELP DESK FOR CIVIL APPEALS LAUNCHED

On September 1st, the Illinois Supreme Court Commission on Access to Justice, Administrative Office of the Illinois Courts, and Public Interest Law Initiative launched the first-ever virtual help desk for civil appeals in Illinois, **Illinois Free Legal Answers for Civil Appeals**. The platform is open to both low-income appellants and appellees who can submit questions about a civil appeal to a lawyer through the platform. The litigant and pro bono lawyer can additionally exchange messages back and forth until the litigant has the information needed to move forward with their appeal. The litigant can also submit attachments, such as copies of final orders, through the portal. The help desk is entirely virtual – no in-person meetings or telephone calls.



The initiative fills a significant need with respect to the number of self-represented litigants who are attempting to resolve complex issues in our court system. Recent data collected by the AOIC reflects a significant percentage of self-represented litigants in the Appellate Court. In Fiscal Year 2019, a total of 3239 civil appeals were filed statewide and, of that total, 1330 were appeals filed by self-represented litigants, representing 41% of the total civil appeals filed during that time period.

The program is overseen by the ATJ Commission through an Advisory Board comprised of numerous stakeholders, including appellate justices, appellate lawyers, clerks, and representatives from bar associations. The Advisory Board has been instrumental in laying the foundation for the program, setting forth outreach efforts, and establishing a training program for volunteer lawyers.

This help desk represents an unprecedented opportunity for self-represented litigants to receive guidance from an appellate lawyer about their appeal throughout the state of Illinois. The program also presents a new pro bono opportunity for lawyers to utilize their experiences to help self-represented litigants in civil appeals. The program is currently recruiting volunteer lawyers with appellate experience. To read more about the program and to sign-up, lawyers should complete the registration form on PILL's [website](http://www.pill.org).

By: *Kathryn Hensley*

NEWLY PUBLISHED FORMS SUITES

Forms Committee and Subcommittee members continued to work towards fulfilling the Illinois Judicial Conference's initiative of developing and publishing certain plain language legal forms this year. During the month of August, the Forms Committee approved and published the following forms suites:

- Eviction Complaint,
- Small Claims Complaint,



- Motion to Appoint Special Process Server, and
- Revisions to the Circuit Court, Appellate Court, and Supreme Court "Certification for Exemption from E-Filing" form consistent with amended Illinois Supreme Court Rule 9.

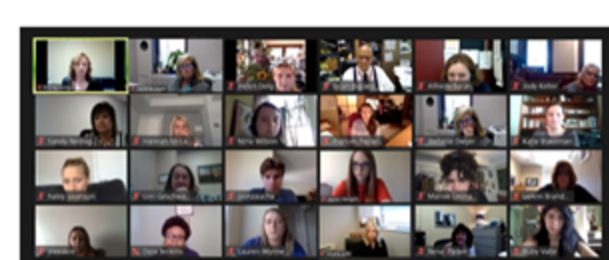
The publication of these forms will aid self-represented litigants in understanding complex legal processes, which will, in turn, increase transparency in the Illinois court system. All forms can be found at <http://illinoiscourts.gov/Forms/approved/default.asp>.

By: *Hayley Yussman*

COURT NAVIGATOR NETWORK LAUNCHED

This year, in order to fulfill a major goal of the Illinois Judicial Conference's strategic agenda, the ATJ Commission expanded the existing programs of Illinois JusticeCorps and SRL Coordinator grants to create the Court Navigator Network (Network). It encompasses representatives in all 24 Judicial Circuits. This Network of clerks and court staff based in courthouses throughout the state of Illinois serves as a bridge to develop new resources and establish programs for assisting SRLs, particularly in light of the realities of COVID-19.

Click [here](#) to read about all the Network participants including JusticeCorps fellows and SRL Coordinator grant recipients.



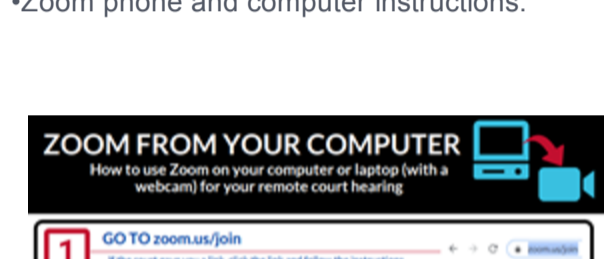
In August, the whole Court Navigator Network met via Zoom for orientation to cover topics such as information vs. legal advice, during crisis bias, and surviving and thriving in public. The Network will continue to receive training throughout the year and will have opportunities to collaborate and share resources with their cohorts across the state about helping SRLs.

By: *Jill Roberts*

REMOTE APPEARANCE & INTERPRETER RESOURCES

Since May, the Commission has promoted the new rules and policy on expanded remote appearances by distributing the following materials:

- Judicial bench card on best practices for remote appearances,
- Two-page summary of the Policy on Remote Court Appearances in Civil Proceedings,
- Remote appearance courthouse sign,
- One-page tip sheet for self-represented litigants, and
- Zoom phone and computer instructions.



These resources can be found on our new [website](#) by clicking Court Stakeholders and filtering by Remote Proceedings. The courthouse sign, SRL tip sheet, and Zoom instructions are also available in Arabic, Chinese, Korean, Polish, Russian, and Spanish.

For litigants appearing remotely who need an interpreter, the AOIC is currently offering limited funding through InLingo and Interprenet. These two companies provide remote interpreting, either by video or phone, as well as in-person interpreting. They also focus on hiring certified and qualified interpreters, many of whom are listed on the AOIC Court Interpreter Registry, available at:

<https://publicapps.illinoiscourts.gov/apex/?p=303:25>

The funding applies to all local court proceedings and both companies will invoice the AOIC directly until funding is depleted. Thus, there is no need to contract with InLingo and/or Interprenet to begin working with them. Additionally, InLingo and Interprenet will provide training for judges, clerks, and court staff on how to use their services. For more information please contact:

- InLingo, Alessandra Campana, 866-346-5464 or acampana@inlingo.com, or
- Interprenet, 312-928-1188 or info@interprenet.net.

By: *Sarah Song & Noor Alawawda*

ATJ STAFF UPDATES

Goodbye This year, we've had to say goodbye to two ATJ Division staff members.

Sophia Akbar started working at the AOIC before Access to Justice was even a division. She was charged with creating and implementing a Language Access program. In her time, she succeeded in creating an orientation, examination, and registration system for court interpreters. Prior to Sophia's efforts there was no way to be tested and certified as competent as an interpreter in Illinois, leaving litigants and the courts uncertain of the quality of interpretation. In the first year of running the registry, only one-third of interpreter events involved an interpreter on the new state's registry. By 2019, that amount has doubled. Sophia also impacted and furthered access to justice in many other ways beyond language access and her dedication and enthusiasm for this work will be missed.

Kathleen Callahan took over the statewide standardized forms project in early 2019. She worked diligently with 8 subcommittees and staffed the Forms Committee. During this time, she was able to shepherd through the publication of the Eviction, Small Claims, and Special Process Server forms suites and oversaw the translation of many suites translated into Spanish and other non-English languages. Kathleen's experience working at CARPLS was an asset to her forms work, but it has now called her back to resume providing direct client service.

Hello This year we've welcomed two new staff members.

Sarah Song joined the ATJ team in May. While her hire was in development long before the pandemic, her expertise and focus has never been more in demand. She will work with other entities to coordinate current technology related initiatives, such as e-filing, remote appearances, and online dispute resolution, and will identify and develop new technology initiatives as they relate to self-represented litigants and limited English proficient litigants in collaboration with other court stakeholders.

Sarah recently completed a fellowship at Northwestern Pritzker School of Law's Bluhm Legal Clinic where she partnered with Northwestern's Innovation Lab to develop tech-based tools for use in eviction court. Previously she was a Senior Attorney at Legal Aid Chicago. She is a graduate of Northwestern University and Columbia University School of Law.

Lekisha Gunn is joining the AOIC to oversee the language access program and community trust work while also developing a program to respond to the needs of court users with a disability.

Lekisha comes to us most recently from Northwestern University following a career in federal government with the U.S. Department of State as a U.S. Diplomat. She has over ten years of experience in government, non-profit leadership, and academia. She graduated from the University of Alabama and Duke University's Sanford School of Public Policy.

For more information, please contact Alison Spanner at aspanner@illinoiscourts.gov

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