



Louisiana Access to Justice Commission

1:30 p.m. on Friday, February 19, 2021

Attendees:

Hon. Justice John L. Weimer, Chief Justice, Louisiana Supreme Court; Co-Chair
Jeff Coreil, NeunerPate; Co-Chair
Mary Barrios, Board Member, Southeast Louisiana Legal Services; Private Practitioner
Angela Bazile, Executive Counsel, Louisiana Supreme Court
Alan Brackett, Treasurer, Louisiana Bar Foundation; Mouldoux, Bland, Legrand & Brackett
Amanda Brown, Executive Director, Lagniappe Law Lab
Hon. Jeffrey Cashe, Judge, 21st Judicial District Court
C.C. Kahr, Executive Director, Pro Bono Project New Orleans
Christy Kane, Pro Bono Counsel, Entergy of Louisiana
Greg Landry, Executive Director, Acadiana Legal Service Corp.
Alainna Mire, LSBA President; City of Alexandria
Luz Molina, Clinic Professor, Loyola College of Law
Chris Ralston, Louisiana Bar Foundation, President-Elect; Phelps Dunbar
Dona Renegar, LSBA Past President; Veazey, Felder & Renegar
Deidre Robert, Secretary, Louisiana Bar Foundation; Executive Counsel for Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development
Veronica Sizer, Executive Counsel, Governor's Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness
Joseph Ventilong, guest of Hon. Lisa Woodruff-White, Intern at East Baton Rouge Parish Family Court
Sandra Vujnovich, Judicial Administrator, Louisiana Supreme Court
Adrienne Wheeler, Executive Director, Louisiana Appleseed
Hon. Lisa Woodruff-White, East Baton Rouge Parish Family Court

Staff:

Stephanie Beagh, Access to Justice Projects Counsel
Amy Duncan, Access to Justice Training and Projects Counsel
Jordan Maier, Access to Justice Assistant
Rachael Mills, Access to Justice Projects Counsel
Monte Mollere, Access to Justice Director

Minutes

- I. **Welcome and Introductions** – Jeff Coreil welcomed the group. Chief Justice Weimer gave opening remarks. He commended the partners present for jointly taking on the issue of access to justice, noting how much having an attorney can impact the outcome of a case.
- II. **Consent Calendar** – The consent calendar was unanimously approved as written.
- III. **Louisiana Bar Foundation Report**

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Report from Alan Brackett:

- LBF Grant and Loan Repayment Assistance Program applications for the 2021-2022 cycle are closed. The grants committee and the Board will meet on April 23 to approve final grants.
- In December, LBF took over operations of the Kendall Vick Public Law Foundation, now the Kendall Vick Public Law Fund. The foundation funded the LSU Loan Repayment Assistance Program and in its new form will continue to fund that mission. The LBF will undergo a 2-year process of unifying the organization's grant programs with their existing grants.
- This February and March, LBF staff, board members, and grantees are completing training on governance, communications, and diversity.
- The Economic Impact Study completed for 2019 shows that civil legal aid investments have resulted in a \$65 million positive impact in Louisiana, with a ROI of 918%.

Report from Deidre Robert:

- The LBF has shared the EIS results with fellows and grantees and is working with local and national news media to develop related human-interest stories. The full report is available on [their website](#).
- The LBF is hiring a Communications Design and Content Coordinator, who will start shortly.
- The LBF is seeking proposals from content creators for their Speak Out for Justice! Project. The project engages content creators to develop public awareness or research-focused projects to increase understanding of need for civil legal aid. The deadline for proposals is March 1.
- Finally, the 2020 Fellows have undertaken as their class project the Connecting Legal Needs to Education Project. The project's purpose is to educate the fellows class about unmet legal needs and the efforts being made to fill in these gaps in service.

IV. Access to Justice Projects, Issues, & Initiatives

a. Strategic Planning

Monte Mollere reported on the Justice For All (JFA) project. Currently in the implementation phase, the project team is brainstorming how to develop legal resource access points in areas of Louisiana termed "civil legal resource deserts" – areas of high poverty and limited access to internet where in-person resources such as civil legal aid offices, law libraries, and self-help centers are more than a 45-minute drive away. The team is partnering with public libraries, Entergy, Goodwill of North Louisiana, GOHSEP, Lagniappe, LBF, and others to identify localized solutions. The team is committed to working with local stakeholders and asks that any Commission members with connections in or around Concordia, Tensas, East Carroll, or West Carroll parishes who are interested in supporting the project reach out to Amy Duncan at Amy.Duncan@lsba.org.

Alainna Mire noted that the JFA project results were recently presented at the LSBA Disney CLE conference and will be presented to Supreme Court as well. The CLE is available as an hour of professionalism if any Committee member would like to host for their group.

- i. **SRL Committee** – Judge Jeffrey Cashe reported that the group met in January to discuss remote access to the courts. The Committee has identified several barriers to access for SRLs, including limited access to computers and limited access to smartphones with data plans (vs. prepaid phones). The Committee has decided to work with the LDJA to create a video guide on remote access to be used in courts throughout the state.

Recently, the Committee also met with JFA consultant Tara Veazey to update their strategic plan to dovetail with JFA project. The following goals were identified:

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1. Pursue annual mandatory access to justice training for judges and court staff.
 2. Increase the availability of self-help kiosks in courthouses and community gathering spots, like libraries, in civil legal resource deserts.
 - a. This will likely involve collaboration with the Supreme Court Technology Commission, which Justice Weimer noted is considering using CARES Act money to approach a minimum level of access in each district in Louisiana.
 - b. Luz Molina suggested that the kiosks should have language access options and that the Office of Language Access should be included to identify the most commonly spoken second language in each community.
 - c. Create plain-language forms with instructions, available through a central access point, and encourage acceptance by all courts.
- ii. **Technology Committee** – Amanda Brown reported that the Technology Committee is coordinating with ALSC and SLLS to gather content and build modules for Statewide Learning Management System. Both firms will share the same substantive law materials to ensure that training is uniform across the state. This is expected to be a multiyear project, with onboarding materials completed within first half of this year.

The Committee is also continuing to expand the Civil Legal Navigator. They are working with Luz Molina and the Employment Justice Project to expand the employment law content on the Civil Legal Navigator; also working with Ranie Thompson on creating modules for name and gender marker changes.

The Committee is collaborating with the Supreme Court Technology Commission and the Suffolk University Law School to adopt a document automation system created by the law school students. The in forma pauperis form is automated and ready for feedback. If possible, the document automation system will be rolled into the Civil Legal Navigator.

Finally, the Technology Planning Summit is scheduled for March 23 and will focus on public-facing tech solutions as well as internal procedures that can streamline workflow within civil legal aid providers.

- iii. **Language Access Committee** – Professor Luz Molina reported that in coordination with the Louisiana Supreme Court’s Office of Language Access (OLA), the Language Access Committee drafted a brochure explaining how to request an interpreter. OLA is distributing the brochure to courthouses throughout the state and translating into 5 languages.

The Committee is also working with direct service providers to create a list of vital documents to be translated into different languages. These documents are not meant to substitute for the use of English documents in official court proceedings; rather, they are intended to help litigants understand and participate in the court process.

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Additionally, the Rules Subcommittee is working with OLA to review state laws and court rules that may impact language access to the courts, especially in light of 28 U.S. Code Section 1827, which details how interpreters are to be appointed at the federal level. The Subcommittee is trying to determine what procedure should be followed when a certified interpreter is not available.

Finally, the Committee is also devising new long-term goals now that implementation of a statewide Language Access Plan is underway.

- iv. **Modest Means Committee** – Amy Duncan reported that the Limited Scope Representation (LSR) Toolkit has been approved by the LSBA ethics counsel. The Toolkit is a guide for attorneys offering limited scope representation and includes rules governing LSR, FAQs, forms, agreements, and checklists. The Committee will also release a CLE 1-hour ethics on LSR and the Modest Means Directory to accompany the toolkit. Feedback on the toolkit was requested from Commission members, with the goal of finalizing the document for publication before June.
- v. **Funding Committee** – Chris Ralston gave Committee updates. In light of the pandemic, LSC requested a \$500 million earmark to increase services. The Committee is watching census results, which may have a negative impact on the federal appropriation. In last two years, the state appropriation for civil legal aid has been restored after 10 previous years of no state funding. In particular, the governor included civil legal aid in his budget, which is an important step to permanently instituting funding. At a recent meeting with Commissioner Jay Dardenne, Adrienne Wheeler, Chris, and Valerie Bargas noted that Louisiana is not up to par with surrounding states in terms of funding.

This session, Haynie & Assoc. have suggested focusing on House Appropriations Committee, which is comprised of several new legislators who may not be aware of the importance of supporting civil legal aid. If any Commission member knows any member of the Appropriations Committee and is willing to contact them on behalf of the Funding Committee, please contact Rachael Mills at Rachael.mills@lsba.org or 504-619-0104.

- vi. **Building Bridges Committee** – Adrienne Wheeler shared a presentation outlining the work that the Building Bridges Committee has done to integrate legal needs into the Department of Corrections' risk/needs assessment tools. Current tools do not account for the legal needs and risk factors that would make someone exiting custody immediately vulnerable to recidivism.
 - Phase 1: The Committee assembled reentry partners to share knowledge.
 - Phase 2: The Committee drew on the Justice and Accountability Center's client needs survey to identify reentry-related issues that providers are seeing in each needs assessment category (public benefits, family, housing, and consumer law). Subject matter experts then further classified which issues were directly vs. indirectly related to reentry.
 - Phase 3: The Committee has identified legal needs/risks that are most

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immediately tied to recidivism and is working with DOC to integrate these needs into the individual Reentry Accountability Plans (ReAP) and TIGER risk/needs assessment tool. The Committee will also be developing educational materials to train DOC staff on how to identify these legal needs.

b. COVID-19 Response by the ATJ Community – Monte Mollere reported that the Disaster Response Subcommittee has been in active disaster response mode for nearly a full year. The Subcommittee is evaluating possible changes to response methods in light of new, non-weather-related disasters.

i. Notarial Services by Clerks of Court for Domestic Violence Survivors – Adrienne Wheeler reported on the ongoing project to require Clerks of Court to use their notarization powers to notarize domestic violence petitions on site. She is in the process of seeking an opinion from the Attorney General as well as support from clerks who are already following this practice.

V. Adjourn

a. Next meeting: Friday, May 14, 2021 at 10:00 a.m. is expected to be virtual.