

Access to Justice

Word cloud terms include: Social Justice, Legal Services for Persons with Disabilities Committee, Justice Reinvestment, Public Interest, RE-ENTRY COURT, PRO BONO PROGRAM, LAWYER, Legal Technology, L.A. Free Legal Answers.org, Pre-Trial Resolution, Collaboration, Criminal Justice Reform, RISK FORCES, Economic Impact Study, Social Justice, Legal Incubator, GAP ASSESSMENT, Live Legal Aid, Rule 6.1, Equality, and many others.

Access to Justice:

The Past, the Present and the Future

By Monte T. Mollere

Each day, thousands of attorneys dedicate themselves to ensuring the Louisiana State Bar Association's (LSBA) motto of "Serving the Public, Serving the Profession" is honored. Whether fighting for a corporate client or defending the rights of the homeless, these attorneys uphold the rule of law and serve the public. This special Access to Justice issue of the *Louisiana Bar Journal* is dedicated to the attorneys who help ensure that justice is provided to ALL Louisiana citizens, especially those who cannot otherwise afford to hire an attorney.

The LSBA has a long history of service to the public. However, it was 20 years ago this year that the LSBA demonstrated the significance of its commitment by devoting full-time staff and establishing the Access to Justice (ATJ) Program within the Bar. Ever since, it has played a leadership role in carrying out the ATJ Program's mission "to assure that every Louisiana citizen has access to competent civil legal representation by

promoting and supporting a broad-based and effective justice community through collaboration between the Louisiana State Bar Association, the Louisiana Bar Foundation, Louisiana Law Schools, private practitioners, local bar associations, pro bono programs and legal aid providers."

The mission hints at the hundreds of individuals and organizations required to begin to address this Herculean task of guaranteeing justice. Louisiana is fortunate to have a robust justice community and these last 20 years of collaboration have awarded us numerous advancements and successes. During this time, hundreds of thousands of poor individuals have been given redress for their legal needs. Whether it was obtaining custody of a child, saving a home from foreclosure, obtaining protection from financial fraud, or protecting a veteran's or elderly person's rights, the effect on the parties, children, families, communities and employers is real and the strongest proof that we all have a vital stake in ensuring access to the justice system.

We can be proud of our accomplishments! Yet, many still don't have the access to our legal system that everyone should be afforded. We have much more work to do, and the LSBA encourages you to take serious your responsibility under Rule 6.1 of the Louisiana Rules of Professional Conduct and provide your services and counsel pro bono to the poor.

In this issue of the *Louisiana Bar Journal*, Louisiana justice community

members (both private and public interest attorneys) will assess past efforts, but, more importantly, tell the story of today's Access to Justice Community and examine its future. The articles will explore the concept of "100% access" (where assessment of an individual's needs allow for a match with the most appropriate services), some services that may not include an attorney at all, and other services that may provide an attorney with financial reward.

Always of importance is the issue of funding justice. The Louisiana Bar Foundation has been an important part of all of these efforts and reports on its recent efforts.

While the Access to Justice Program has focused on *civil* legal justice, this issue also allows for the examination of new methods being used in our criminal justice system to decrease recidivism and initiatives aimed at reducing incarceration rates through pre-trial assessment.

The articles in this issue provide a good assessment of where we've been, where we are now, and where we want to be. Let's continue the discussion.

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