

MINUTES
Connecticut Judicial Branch
Access to Justice Commission
June 4, 2020
2:00 p.m.
Convene Through Web Meeting

The Access to Justice Commission met virtually on Thursday, June 4, 2020 utilizing Microsoft Teams.

Members in attendance: Justice Maria A. Kahn, Judge Bright, Judge Leo Diana, Judge Gerald Harmon, Deputy Dean Muneer I. Ahmad, Atty. Janice J. Chiaretto, Assistant Dean Karen DeMeola, Atty. Tais Ericson, Atty. Jennifer Ferrante, Dean Timothy Fisher, Atty. Patricia Cruz Fragoso, Ms. Krista Hess, Ms. Dawn LaValle, Atty. Chris R. Nelson, Atty. Moy N. Ogilvie, Dean Brad Saxton, Atty. James P. Sexton

Also in attendance: Judge Elizabeth Bozzuto, Mr. Lucio DeLuca

- I. **Welcome:** Justice Kahn welcomed Commission members and guests to the virtual meeting.
- II. **Review/Approval of the Draft Minutes from the February 4, 2020 meeting:** The draft minutes for the February 4, 2020 meeting were approved.
- III. **Discuss Workgroup Challenges Experienced and Innovations Implemented in Response to COVID-19**
 - A. **Workgroup on Appellate Pro Bono:** Justice Kahn thanked all who participated in testing Appellate virtual hearings including Atty. James Sexton for all the work he has done to assist in moving remote oral arguments forward in the Appellate and Supreme Courts.
 - B. **Workgroup on Libraries and ATJ:** Mr. Jeffrey Dowd reported that the libraries public service announcement (PSA) has been pared down from 60 seconds to 30 seconds. The final script has been approved and translated to Spanish, Portuguese and Polish. Once recorded, a press release will be prepared by External Affairs and provided to the media. Mr. Dowd also reported that the Speaker's Bureau Brochure proposal is complete. Those interested in having a Judicial Branch staff member speak on a court related subject will be able to submit an online request. Ms. Dawn Lavallo provided an update on the status of municipal and state libraries. Libraries have been closed to the public but most have provided some level of service including drive up service and digital programming. Libraries are included in the June 20, 2020 reopening phased plan provided by the Executive Branch.

- C. **Workgroup on Modest and Moderate Means and ATJ:** Attorney Chris Nelson reported the workgroup is planning their next meeting. The new Director of the Hartford Incubator program, Eva Jacobson, has started. Attorneys in the Bridgeport and Hartford Incubator programs are still conducting business in spite of challenges. The Bridgeport facility is shut down preventing attorneys from meeting with clients on site. Many clients lack access to the technology needed to facilitate electronic communication. Reliance on written and mailed communication has delayed the process. The Incubators are unsure what impact COVID will have on the hiring and onboarding of new attorneys. They may experience increased interest by new graduates due to the poor job market. Justice Kahn asked the workgroup to consider ways to increase collaboration between attorney and client.
- D. **Workgroup on Law Schools:** Dean Ahmad shared an update on the work performed by the Yale Clinic since the health crisis began. The Clinic worked with incarcerated people and participated in many different forms of advocacy to get individuals released to reduce community transmission in prisons. Teams of students also represented hospitality and food workers unions by setting up a hotline for members who are having trouble accessing unemployment. The Clinic provided outreach to small businesses to provide assistance with applying to the CARES Act, contract negotiations, and other areas to help small business weather the health pandemic. Students also identified frequently asked questions on foreclosure and developed “Know Your Rights” materials for housing. The greatest ongoing challenge is determining how to provide legal services while maintaining social distancing. Judge Diana shared information about the collaborative divorce model that is being run by the Law Center. Dean Fisher reported on the ways UConn is meeting the challenge COVID presents. The Hartford Incubator program is accommodating recent grads by having them assist with cases while awaiting the Bar Exam. Dean Fisher also shared an update on UCONN’s fall teaching plan. UConn will have a hybrid learning approach this year. First year students will meet in person, second and third year students will meet remotely. The new Law School Dean will start in July. Justice Kahn thanked outgoing Dean Fisher for his service, innovation and creativity.
- E. **Workgroup on General Pro Bono:** Judge Harmon provided a report on the workgroup’s new initiative, CBA Pro Bono Connect. Volunteer attorneys can sign up to receive automatic referrals in their areas of interest. Attorneys must commit to accepting at least one case in that discipline. As part of the program, participants can attend various free webinar on important legal topics. Free training is available in several areas. Attorney Ogilvie added that workgroup members have been working hard to get CBA Connect off the ground and ask that information about the program be shared with as many attorneys as possible. Attorney Gillett reported that the Judicial Branch will find ways to include information about the program on its website.

- F. **Workgroup on Video-Conferencing and ATJ:** Judge Bozzuto provided an update on the Branch's new technology initiatives and the many ways the Branch is working to expand operations, including through the use of a new virtual platform, Microsoft Teams. The Branch is also identifying ways to hold jury trials.

IV. **Measures Undertaken by the Judicial Branch:**

Judge Bozzuto presented on the measures undertaken by the Branch to continue the work of the Superior Courts across the various divisions including: civil, criminal, family; and housing. The Supreme Court suspended its 7th term. The 8th term began on time virtually. The aim is to hear Supreme Court cases in September. The Appellate Court ended its May term early due to the health pandemic.

V. **Other Efforts:**

The ABA/NLADA Equal Justice Conference, scheduled to be held in Georgia May 2020, will be conducted virtually on a date to be determined. Justice Kahn will be presenting. Access to Justice Commission and workgroup members are encouraged to attend.

VI. **New Business / New Items:**

Justice Kahn thanked those who assisted with completed the completion of the National Access to Justice Survey.

VII. **Schedule Next Meeting:**

The next Access to Justice Commission Meeting will be scheduled in the fall 2020.

- VIII. **Adjourn:** The meeting adjourned at 4:54 p.m.