

**Workgroup on Libraries & Access to Justice
Minutes of the
Workgroup on Libraries & Access to Justice
February 4, 2019, 10:00 a.m.
Room 204, 225 Spring Street, Wethersfield, CT**

Members in attendance: Atty. Jeffrey J. Dowd, Ms. Krista Hess, Ms. Dawn La Valle, Co-Chairs; Atty. Jamey Bell, Mr. Sam Bruder, Atty. Jan Chiaretto, Ms. Heather Collins, Atty. Tais C. Ericson, Atty. Joseph D. D'Alesio, Ms. Kate Frank, Ms. Ann H. Doherty, Atty. Cheryl Halford, Atty. Anne Rajotte, Mr. Christopher M. Roy

Members absent: Atty. Patricia Cruz Fragoso, Atty. Alexandra Gillett, Ms. Gaye Rizzo

Guests: Atty. Melissa Farley, Ms. Rhonda Stearley-Hebert – External Affairs Division

The meeting was called to order at 10:03 a.m.

I. Review and approval of draft minutes – October 25, 2017

The minutes of the October 25, 2017 meeting of the Workgroup on Libraries & Access to Justice were approved.

II. Workgroup Charge

Krista went over the revised workgroup charge and gave a short review and discussion of current and past workgroup initiatives. The survey identifies the top 3 legal needs as including Housing – Landlord/Tenant, Estate Taxes, and Divorce/Child Custody. Survey results show that some attorneys do not feel safe volunteering in public libraries because there is no metal detector. Would they feel inclined to communicate from their office via a video link? Waterbury does this with attorneys. Also being seen in courthouses by judges while volunteering is worth something to attorneys.

Jan Chiaretto from Statewide Legal Services said that CWEALF has had legal information days in public libraries under a special grant and did “pre-applications – intake” but ran into confidentiality, time, lack of expertise issues. Jan thought something more automated would be better. Also there was an issue of not enough patrons knowing that the project existed.

Jamey Bell from Greater Hartford Legal Aid said that in 2017 they spent about 2 hours training staff about the kind of legal issues that legal aid handles and also on CTLawHelp.org and free judicial branch resources. Intake was expanded to include 2 library branches but found that that was an ineffective way to deliver resources to people. Jamey recommended a large training of libraries from multiple branches.

Heather Collins recommended trying “low bono” or advertising incubators.

III. Presentation by Dawn La Valle, Director, Library Development – CT State Library

Dawn gave a quick summary of the strategic thinking of Cat Gemini’s Report. The 132 page report was done pro bono and was worked on by 25 consultants. It gives a deep analysis of the challenges faced by public libraries. The report goes over what it takes for public libraries to be sustainable, and gives strategic foresight including the persona of patrons walking into the public libraries looking 20-30 years down the line. While it does not go over objectives it alludes to a framework and guideposts we need to follow. It identifies long term needs and is aspirational.

Public librarians want to be educated on the parameters of what they can and cannot do with respect to requests for legal information. They need to have an awareness of patrons. An example is Maine's self-representation centers- in libraries there is a comfort level not found in courthouses.

IV. Public Service Announcement

Krista showed a public service announcement from the Edmonton Public Library page. Melissa suggested first coming up with the message and then external affairs could do some quick things right away like posters, brochures etc. eventually working up to videos, audio recordings etc.

Joseph D'Alesio wanted to know who the target audience was. Tais Ericson thought we should concentrate on communicating the resources that are available to the public.

Possible messaging: Where to go for resources.

Take the intimidation out of coming to court.

See what the patron is thinking in their mind. E.g. Cleveland clinic – clip on empathy

Telling people's stories on how library impacted their lives especially those who often are overlooked, marginalized. Vulnerable.

Public radio, commercial radio, Facebook. Juror's – captive audience 100,000 per year but don't want them doing research on trial. Jeff said we need to have a phone number or point of contact at the end of the ads so people can be referred to the right service.

Education – special ed

Housing – Landlord/Tenant

Family

Other – access, getting advice from someone that know what they are doing.

Kate said to think about what's the problem we are trying to solve.

Actions:

1. Dawn LaValle will send a copy of the Gemini report to Krista so Krista can email it to all of workgroup members.
2. Kate Frank will send Dawn LaValle a PDF of the CTLawHelp.org poster that Dawn will send out to the Conntech listserv so public libraries can print it on demand.
3. Heather Collins will send Dawn LaValle a PDF of a guide they use for the blind and visually impaired so Dawn can put out a simple survey on Conntech asking what type of information their blind and handicapped patrons need to have access to justice.
4. Workgroup members should communicate to Krista what they think the message should be.

V. Next meeting

The date of the next meeting is to be determined.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:42 a.m.