

**APPROVED Minutes**  
Access to Justice Commission  
Workgroup on Libraries and Access to Justice  
Wednesday, February 26, 2014  
2:00 pm  
225 Spring Street, Room 204  
Wethersfield, CT

**Members present:** Atty. Jeffrey J. Dowd, Co-Chair; Krista Hess, Co-Chair; Ms. Dawn M. La Valle, Co-Chair; Ms. Aisha Banks; Atty. Nancy C. Boone; Ms. Heather Collins; Mr. Joseph DiBenedetto; Ms. Ann H. Doherty; Ms. Anne Rajotte; Mr. Christopher M. Roy; Mr. Jonathan Stock. Guest: Ms. Julie Styles.

**Members absent:** Atty. Jamey Bell; Atty. Cheryl Halford.

- I. **Welcome and Introduction of Workgroup members:** The Co-Chairs welcomed the members and asked each to introduce themselves and what organization/interest they are representing on the Workgroup. Co-Chair La Valle introduced a guest, Ms. Styles, the Professional Development Coordinator for the Division of Library Development for the Connecticut State Library.
- II. **Review of Workgroup Charge:** The members all read [the Charge](#) prior to the meeting. The Co-Chairs then led the group in a roundtable discussion on the elements of the charge and asked each member to share their experiences with respect to increasing access to justice for people via libraries. The group discussed the Charge element that requires it to provide a report to the [Access to Justice Commission](#) by the fall.
- III. **Discussion regarding past and current public library outreach by Workgroup representatives:** There was a lengthy discussion on the variety of activities that have taken place between [law libraries](#), [court service centers](#), public information desks, and public libraries including:
  - half-day programs wherein law librarians have conducted informational sessions on [legal information and research](#) with public librarians;
  - law librarians' reviews of public libraries' collections;
  - a site on the Law Libraries webpage that is dedicated to [information specific to public librarians](#);
  - a weekly pro bono program conducted by the [New Haven County Bar Association](#) at a public library in that city;
  - twenty-five Court Service Center/[Public Information Desk](#) staff have, whenever possible, begun doing informal outreach to the local libraries where they are working to let the local librarians know what resources are available at CSCs/PIDs for the public;
  - the law librarians answer questions seeking legal information (not legal advice) via the [online "Ask A Librarian" page](#);
  - outreach to community centers and other entities that serve the public on available legal aid programs; and a legal aid Live Chat program available from the [ctlawhelp.org website](#).

IV. **Discussion regarding future goals for outreach, collaboration and reciprocal partnership with public libraries:** A lively discussion was held on how the members can work with each other and their peers in the field to expand and improve the delivery of information and, possibly, pro bono services, to the public at times and places that are convenient to those folks. Suggestions included:

- Conducting a survey of public librarians would be an excellent way to determine what the immediate need is by PLs to help the public with legal information. Conversely, asking LL, CSC and PID staff what the most frequently asked questions they receive would provide insight into what training might be needed.
- Assessing the questions that are submitted to the *Ask A Librarian* online service would help drive the development of information.
- The members said that once the core elements of an education program is developed, it could be delivered via “Justice Fairs” for public and law librarians, CSC/PID staff, pro bono facilitators, legal aid providers, and other representatives of information for providers (as opposed to the public). Eventually, having ‘justice information’ booths at public library fairs is a possibility, much as local social service providers are represented in community service fairs.
- Face-to-face meetings between librarians, public librarians, and CSC/PID staff will help facilitate openness between the groups and further the mission of increasing access to justice.
- The public librarian members said that given the sheer number of PLs in Connecticut –169 main branches and another 50 or so local branches, community college libraries, etc.— developing video webinars that would allow librarians to access information at their convenience would be enormously beneficial to this movement.
- Assessment of PL legal collections: They’ve been done by law librarians at PL requests, but not for a while. There was a suggestion that developing a checklist of essential printed information which could be circulated among the PLs, saving time and travel, and ensuring, when possible, up-to-date collections.
- Equipment inventory: What sorts of technology is available to the public at libraries? Computers? Copiers? Scanners? What is the cost? Would it make sense to designate computer work stations solely to legal information and research, particularly in large libraries, and if so, who/what would provide funding?
- There was discussion of the popularity among libraries of conducting programs for the public; the group agreed that having the space to conduct programs, particularly at night and on the weekends when the Judicial Branch and most legal aid programs are closed, would be a boon to provide convenient access to justice for people from across the state.
- Pro bono program calendars: There is no centralized list; different bar associations or legal services providers have their own calendars, but there is no central, one-stop-shop calendar telling folks when and where they can get help. The librarians said they would be very happy to distribute such information via their list serve to their members who can post it on their individual community bulletin boards.
- Printed information is still valuable: While there is a focus on providing resources electronically, printed materials, such as guides, workbooks, forms, brochures and information cards are extremely popular in public libraries. The PLs said that if they were provided printed information in bulk, they can distribute it at no cost to the provider because they have an in-state delivery service.

- Awareness: Developing a sustained collaboration between public libraries, the Judicial Branch, legal services providers, and pro bono programs will take time, but the workgroup members agreed that developing some kind of logo or icon would help to spread the word and connect the public to those providers. This will continue to be explored.
  - There was also discussion about the need to identify public and community college resources. The public librarians said that they often work with community colleges, some of which offer paralegal programs and some of which serve as community resource centers, particularly in rural areas or areas where public library resources are limited in staff, hours, and collections.
  - The members agreed that the need to share information *now* is there, so they will send to the support staff (Ms. Collins) links or other information that they think will benefit the other members; Ms. Collins will then distribute that information via email.
- V. **Next meeting:** The next meeting will be Wednesday, April 9, at 2 p.m., and then on Wednesday, May 7, at 2 p.m. Both meetings will be at Spring Street, with Agendas forthcoming and posted on the Workgroup website.
- VI. **Adjourn:** The Meeting adjourned at 4:15 p.m.