

Minutes
Access to Justice Commission
Workgroup on Video Conferencing & Access to Justice
August 7, 2014

The Workgroup on Video Conferencing & Access to Justice met on Thursday, August 7, 2014 at 2:00pm at 225 Spring Street, Wethersfield in Room 4B.

Those in attendance: Ms. Krista Hess, Co-Chair, Mr. Scott Rosengrant, Co-Chair, Atty. Anne Louise Blanchard, Atty. Thomas Chapman, Atty. Cheryl Halford, Mr. Matthew Mazur, Atty. Mark Nordstrom (via video conferencing), Chief Public Defender Susan Storey, Atty. Jennifer Robinson and Atty. Herman Woodard, Jr..

Mr. Lucio DeLuca, deputy director of technology, judge support services, was also in attendance.

The meeting was called to order at 2:05pm.

1. The Workgroup voted to approve the minutes of the June 25, 2014 meeting with the following amendment. Atty. Thomas Chapman, Atty. Mark Nordstrom and Chief Public Defender Susan Storey abstained.
 - In the third paragraph under number 2, the second sentence was revised to reflect: “Examples include follow-up communications ~~in the area of educational support services~~ **with clients living in remote locations.**”
2. Ms. Hess introduced guest speaker Mr. DeLuca, and invited him to share with the Workgroup his impressions on the use of video conferencing by judges. Mr. O'Donovan Murphy, director of judicial marshal services, was unable to attend.

Mr. DeLuca explained that video conferencing has been particularly well embraced in certain areas, such as family support magistrate matters, family matters, and matters with a Department of Correction (DOC) connection. He emphasized the benefit of being able to save time and money by using the technology. Mr. DeLuca also observed that judges may be more inclined to use video conferencing in the future if it was made easier and simplified. He noted that a video conferencing event often requires the intervention of information technology staff, and that many judges may elect to conduct events telephonically, due to the comparative simplicity.

Mr. Rosengrant brought up the distinction of operating more sophisticated systems versus a simple desktop system with Cisco Jabber, which is much easier to use and which all judges have available to them on their PCs. Mr. Rosengrant and Mr. Mazur emphasized that Jabber Client will help to even further simplify video conferencing communications, which Mr. DeLuca thought would be beneficial. Ms. Hess asked Mr. Rosengrant and Mr. Mazur if they had an

estimate of when this would be in place, and Mr. Mazur said that it will hopefully be coming soon.

Ms. Hess inquired of Mr. DeLuca whether there has been discussion about using video conferencing for training of judges. Mr. DeLuca explained that while video conferencing has been used for some conferences and meetings, the concern with using it for educational programming is whether judges would still be able to personally contribute. Given the nature of the technology, participants may end up inadvertently speaking at the same time, which could lead to stilted discourse. Mr. Rosengrant described how such hurdles could be overcome. Mr. Rosengrant also emphasized the importance of video conferencing being a regular part of training, just like the E-Research portal or any other application for judges. Ms. Hess expressed the hope for video conferencing to become a core function of the day to day business of the courts.

Ms. Hess shared with the Workgroup members the most recent draft of a proposed survey for judges, which would provide valuable feedback about their experiences with video conferencing. The survey will be reviewed within the Branch, and, if approved, Ms. Hess and Mr. DeLuca will work together to have it disseminated through judge support services. Atty. Storey mentioned that she may consider similarly reaching out to her staff at the public defender's office regarding their use of video conferencing and familiarity with the equipment's location.

Atty. Blanchard brought up the idea of interpreting and how judges would feel about using video conferencing to improve access. Atty. Storey mentioned how the public defender's office is now paying for interpreters for out of court services, which has not been easy. Mr. DeLuca and Mr. Rosengrant discussed a current pilot program in Derby for on-demand video interpretation, which began several months ago. Atty. Woodard inquired about the mechanism for managing documents, and Atty. Rosengrant explained how it can be accomplished through document cameras or the use of scanners. Mr. Rosengrant stated that the pilot's biggest challenge was getting everything to blend with the Branch's "For the Record" (FTR) digital equipment recording system. Ms. Hess asked whether there are plans for the expansion of the pilot, and Mr. Rosengrant indicated that hopefully it will continue and that it may be helpful for the Workgroup to engage deputy director Richard Loffredo. Mr. DeLuca emphasized the Branch's commitment to providing meaningful access to limited English proficient individuals who access the court system. The Workgroup also discussed members' experiences with telephonic language assistance services, such as those provided by Language Line, Inc.

Mr. Rosengrant asked Mr. DeLuca and the members of the Workgroup whether they believe that having on-site, dedicated information technology staff in every building could help increase the utilization of video conferencing, and everyone agreed that it would. Although budgetary constraints may ultimately prevent this

possibility, greater efficiency could be gained. Atty. Storey asked who presently sets up the equipment, and Atty. Robinson explained that she and Mr. Mazur generally assist clerk's office staff until they feel comfortable operating the equipment on their own, which can take a few times. Ms. Hess asked whether staff could benefit from additional training, and Atty. Robinson reiterated that it is a matter of staff being comfortable. Atty. Robinson emphasized that all staff have been trained, but that if there is no push to use the technology, skills do not remain sharp. Atty. Halford shared with the members that Atty. Robinson and Mr. Mazur have been going out into the field to provide refresher training to juvenile staff, which was a result of previous Workgroup discussions. Mr. Rosengrant offered to help in any way if Mr. DeLuca's staff feels that they would like more training, and Mr. DeLuca agreed that this would be beneficial. Ms. Hess mentioned the excellent IT support for a recent video conferencing event that Judge Marshall Berger, Jr. had in relation to a land use litigation docket matter. Atty. Storey inquired about the average lead time necessary for a video conferencing event, which Atty. Robinson stated is usually pretty short – ideally, one day's notice (particularly if coordination with DOC is necessary). Ms. Hess brought up that court notices in individual calendaring program (IndiCal) cases will have language directing the parties to notify the court no later than three days before a status conference event if they would like to use video conferencing.

Atty. Blanchard mentioned the prevalence and success of video conferencing in the federal court system. She offered to reach out to Robin Tabora, clerk of court for the United States District Court for the District of Connecticut, for further perspective, which the Workgroup very much supported. Atty. Blanchard will report back to the members on the outcome of her conversation.

3. Ms. Hess shared with the members a document summarizing the various video conferencing initiatives that have been proposed throughout the Workgroup's exploratory meetings. Ms. Hess observed that the initiatives generally fall within three broad categories: the core business of the courts; training avenues; and pro bono opportunities. Atty. Blanchard suggested that increased access through interpretation services should be added to the list. In terms of prioritization of the initiatives, Ms. Hess asked whether the members would like to begin discussions now or to allow for further time for reflection and meet again. The Workgroup agreed that everyone could review the initiatives and come back together for a telephone conference to discuss.
4. Once the Workgroup has assessed the prioritization of the proposed initiatives, it will commence work on developing an implementation plan.
5. The Workgroup will meet by telephone conference sometime before the next Access to Justice Commission meeting on September 16, 2014.
6. The meeting adjourned at 2:58pm.