

Minutes
Public Service and Trust Commission
Committee on Self –represented Parties
Subcommittee on Support Services
January 13, 2009

The Public Service and Trust Commission Committee on Self-represented Parties, Subcommittee on Support Services met at 20 Franklin Square, New Britain, CT in Courtroom 3G on January 13, 2009.

Those in attendance: Attorney Hugh C. Macgill (chair), Hon. Barry C. Pinkus, Attorney Anthony DiPentima, Attorney Norman Janes, Family Support Magistrate Christopher F. Olivera, Attorney Daniel B. Horwitch , Ms. Krista Hess and Ms. Priscilla Arroyo

Attorney Macgill called the meeting to order at 9:40 a.m.

1. The subcommittee reviewed and approved the minutes of the December 16, 2008 subcommittee meeting.
2. Attorney Dan Horwitch from the Judicial Branch’s Legal Services Unit offered insight regarding the use of non-judicial employees to support outreach programs. Non-judicial employees are not covered by the Branch’s insurance. The subcommittee reviewed statute 4.165, subsections A and E. The subcommittee reviewed Carrubba v Moskowitz and discussed how the findings of quasi-judicial immunity for Guardians Ad Litem in this case would not apply to the implementation of a volunteer attorney program. Subcommittee members agreed to propose an amendment of 4.165 to allow for quasi-judicial immunity for volunteer attorneys.
3. The subcommittee also reviewed New York’s Attorney for a Day Program which is limited to their Housing Court and their use of retainer agreements, specifically appearances and withdrawals. The issues of malpractice and liability were discussed. Subcommittee member Attorney Janes informed the subcommittee of the CBA’s “Retired Attorney Project” and the possibility of using some of the attorneys involved as volunteers.
4. The subcommittee reviewed their charge and discussed the use of dedicated dockets for self-represented parties. Utilizing input from John Greacen from National Center for State Courts, the subcommittee recommended that dedicated dockets be well staffed and the dockets be staggered. It was agreed that the results of a survey conducted by the Subcommittee on Training will be provided to members of this subcommittee to assist in identifying areas which are most problematic to self-represented parties. The conclusions will help to identify which areas might most benefit from volunteer attorneys or dedicated dockets.

5. The subcommittee discussed current mediation programs and services offered by the Branch and whether additional mediation services for self-represented parties were necessary. The subcommittee fully supports the Judicial Branch's current mediation efforts and recommends the Branch continue to promote its current mediation programs so that self-represented parties are aware of all available options.
6. Finally, the subcommittee continued their discussions regarding dedicated self-represented clerks at the trial court level, as well as the implementation of a courthouse greeter program. The subcommittee feels that both of these issues can be addressed through the expansion of Court Service Centers and Public Information Desks. Court Service Center Managers currently perform many of the functions a self-represented clerk would, and Center staff are familiar with court offices, functions and locations. The subcommittee recommended that every court location be equipped with a Court Service Center and/or Public Information Desk. In the absence of a Center or a Desk, such court locations should be equipped with a greeter to welcome and direct patrons as they enter the court facility.

No further meetings were scheduled.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:45 a.m.