

Minutes
Public Service and Trust Commission
Committee on Self-represented Parties
Subcommittee on Support Services
February 24, 2009

The Subcommittee on Support Services met on February 24, 2009 at 225 Spring Street, Room 133, in Wethersfield, CT.

Those in attendance: Dean Hugh C. Macgill (chair), Ms. Priscilla Arroyo, Attorney Anthony DiPentima, Ms. Krista Hess, Attorney Norman K. Janes and Hon. Barry C. Pinkus.

Dean Macgill called the meeting to order at 3:01 p.m.

1. The Subcommittee reviewed and approved the minutes of the January 18, 2009 Subcommittee meeting.
2. The Subcommittee reviewed their summary of recommendations to determine what additional information was required to finalize the recommendations for presentation to the Committee on Self-represented Parties.

The first recommendation the subcommittee reviewed was the implementation of advice days. The Subcommittee agreed to create a pilot program in a family court location to be determined on short calendar or case management days. The Subcommittee discussed Proposed Bill no. 724, "An Act Concerning Immunity for Certain Volunteers," and agreed to propose amended language to specifically provide immunity for attorneys and other individuals who participate in the Judicial Branch's advice days pilot program by voluntarily providing legal advice to self-represented parties. Dean Macgill will contact Senator Harris who introduced the bill to confirm whether or not it was intended to also provide immunity for attorneys and other individuals who may volunteer to provide legal advice to self-represented parties.

A discussion was held regarding the Connecticut Bar Association's Emeritus Project. The goal of the Emeritus Project is to encourage experienced attorneys who are considering reducing the time they spend in their practice to voluntarily use their skills and knowledge to assist those who cannot afford legal services. The Subcommittee will consider the Emeritus Project as a possible source of volunteers for the advice days pilot program. The Subcommittee agreed that training and support for volunteer attorneys participating in the advice days pilot program is imperative.

The Subcommittee also discussed the recommendation of dedicated dockets for self-represented parties. The Subcommittee agreed that the recommendation

should include the opinion of Mr. John Greacen of the National Center for State Courts, which stated that absent optimal staffing conditions, dedicated dockets could prove to be a complete disaster. Ms. Hess will prepare a draft recommendation for dedicated dockets which will include Mr. Greacen's criteria for implementing successful dedicated dockets.

The subcommittee agreed the current language of its recommendation of dedicated self-represented clerks at the trial and appellate level is fine as it is and does not need to be modified.

Regarding the recommendation to expand the Court Service Centers, the subcommittee decided that they will not request to have courthouse greeters at the Court Service Centers. The language of the recommendation regarding Court Service Centers will be amended to include the Public Information Desks.

The subcommittee discussed its recommendation regarding mediation. Dean Macgill will contact Mr. Bill Logue to determine if the subcommittee would benefit from meeting with him to determine if his mediation program would be a good model for mediation programs provided by the Judicial Branch. Ms. Hess will circulate Mr. Logue's report to the subcommittee. Attorney Janes will contact Mr. Charles Pillsbury of Fair Haven Mediation to find out what services his program currently provides, as well whether the Judicial Branch would benefit from duplicating any part of this program. Ms. Arroyo will find out who is providing mediation for criminal cases in Hartford.

3. Ms. Hess will prepare a draft of the subcommittee's final recommendations and distribute it to the subcommittee prior to the meeting with the Committee on Friday, February 27, 2009.
4. The meeting was adjourned at 3:59 p.m.