

Minutes
Public Service and Trust Commission
Committee on Self-represented Parties
Workgroup of Subcommittee on Technology
Teleconference
January 12, 2009

Those in attendance: Hon. Raymond R. Norko (chair), Attorney Janice Chiaretto, Mr. Jeffrey Dowd, Hon. Stephen F. Frazzini, Mr. David Iaccarino, and Attorney Patricia Kaplan

The teleconference was called to order at 12:00 noon.

1. A status was provided regarding the Statewide Legal Services website. The workgroup discussed whether or not different material needs to be presented on the website for low income self-represented parties versus self-represented parties that are not low income. It was mentioned that if the material presented on the website is too complicated, it will not be of great benefit to self-represented parties. It was also stated that while there may be a way to assist self-represented parties with complex legal issues via the internet, it needs to be looked at very closely, so as not to provide poor advice.

The goal is to start off with a very simple Statewide Legal Services website. Since this website is being created with IOLTA funding, the resources provided will be dedicated to low income self-represented parties. Legal Services will know by March 2009 whether its website will provide interactive forms using Avatar technology.

2. The workgroup decided that one of its recommendations should include acquiring more funding to allow the Judicial Branch website to interface with the Statewide Legal Services website. A suggestion was made that instead of or in addition to allocating funds, the Judicial Branch could provide resources and personnel to assist in the development of the Statewide Legal Services website. Legal Services needs to speak with their consultant, Joyce Raby to determine if it is possible to make their website broader in order to interface with the Judicial Branch website. The subcommittee would like to have a telephone discussion with Joyce Raby regarding the Statewide Legal Services website.
3. The workgroup raised questions concerning whether any studies have been done to support the need and benefits of interactive websites dedicated to providing self-represented parties with assistance with legal issues. Attorney Chiaretto will be attending the Technology Initiative Grant (TIG) Conference on January 21-23 and upon her return, will report any findings concerning this matter to the subcommittee.

4. The workgroup decided to cancel the subcommittee teleconference scheduled for Tuesday, January 13, 2009.
5. The workgroup determined that it may be beneficial to contact Melissa Farley, Executive Director of External Affairs to see if she has any input or insight regarding the recommendations the subcommittee is seeking to submit to the Self-represented Parties Committee.
6. The workgroup decided that for its purposes, the need to provide information and services to self-represented parties goes beyond a party who wants to represent himself in court, but also includes parties that may have an attorney and are still interested in getting self-help.
7. The workgroup discussed what the \$100,000 funding for the Statewide Legal Services website is expected to provide. The funding should pay for the consultant who will in turn contact any stakeholders. Statewide Legal Services and its stakeholders need to choose between two platforms described in the Project Management Proposal by Joyce Raby, Open Source Template (OST) or LawHelp by Pro Bono Net (PBN). The website should be up and running by July 2009. It will initially include at least one form. The website is expected to be fully operating by sometime in 2010.
8. Attorney Kaplan will send the members of the subcommittee information regarding websites designed by other states that she has found to be helpful and instructive.
9. The workgroup identified issues that need to be considered such as: restrictions with IOLTA funding, dealing with complicated legal issues of self-represented parties, providing an internet service for self-represented parties while not taking away clients from the CT Bar Association, and whether the Judicial Branch wants to maintain ownership of its forms.
10. The workgroup considered that it may be beneficial to contact Judicial Information Systems, as they are familiar with firewalls and other technical issues that the subcommittee may not be aware of.
11. Attorneys Chiaretto and Kaplan provided the workgroup with background regarding how the idea of an enhanced and user-friendly Statewide Legal Services website came about. Attorney Kaplan will forward information to Judge Frazzini regarding any reports that came about as a result of these meetings held to discuss the website.
12. Judge Frazzini indicated that a priority goal of the Subcommittee on Technology will be to have the Judicial Branch become a team player in the work that Legal

Services is doing in order to create a user-friendly Statewide Legal Services website that has as broad of a use as possible.

13. The teleconference adjourned at 1:12 p.m.

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