

**Minutes**  
**Public Service and Trust Commission**  
**Self-represented Parties Workgroup**  
**March 31, 2010**

The Self-represented Parties Workgroup met on Wednesday, March 31, 2010, at 3:30pm in Room 204 at 225 Spring Street, Wethersfield, CT.

Those in attendance: Hon. Elizabeth A. Bozzuto (Chair), Hon. Henry S. Cohn, Attorney Johanna Greenfield, Ms. Krista Hess

Meeting was called to order at 3:45pm.

1. The minutes of December 29, 2009 meeting were approved.

2. Advice Day pilot project

Ms. Hess presented to the Workgroup a statistical pie chart representing the topics attorneys come across during the volunteer attorney advice day. Judge Bozzuto inquired as to what the “other” category entailed. Topics that are deemed “other” are not part of the initial list or outside the scope of family court. Judge Bozzuto would like to see a break down of what these topics are.

Overall the volunteer attorney program has had very positive feedback. One issue that remains is the survey that the judge fills out after the hearing. Wednesday was chosen to pilot this program because of the miscellaneous calendar but it was soon discovered that many people who participated in the volunteer attorney advice day did not have hearings on that day. They either heard about the program or were in the court for another reason and decided to participate. A discussion ensued on how to flag these files so the judge will know who participated in the program and fill out the survey. This is the final piece of statistical information to rate the success of the program. Judge Bozzuto suggested the attorney ask the self-represented party for a docket number and have a clerk mark the file with an orange sticker. Ms. Hess will talk with the clerk in Hartford.

3. Greeter pilot project

The greeter program is going very well. The greeter, Lori Badger, is available every Tuesday and Thursday morning to help the public find their way at the court house. This program has received positive feedback.

4. Status of remaining recommendations

Short Calendar one-page flier - Ms. Hess reported that everyone who gets a short calendar gets the flier. The flier goes out automatically through legal publications with the short calendar. The tri-folder brochure is almost completed.

Unbundling – Judge Cohn reported that the forms have been completed. Surveys were also done on other states where unbundling is permitted. The results from

the other states surveys and the statistics from the Volunteer Attorney Advice Day pilot will be incorporated in a proposal to the Rules Committee on unbundling once the Attorney Advice Day pilot is completed. Ms. Hess stressed the success of these programs will benefit the proposal for unbundling.

The Strategic Plan Implementation Monthly Status Report was reviewed to determine what other projects of high/medium priority can be started or completed.

- Create an effective marketing plan to better promote existing mediation programs so that self-represented parties are aware of available mediation options at the earliest possible stage.

What programs exist that can be marketed? Family and foreclosure?

Ms. Hess will research the existing ADR programs and speak with Robert Palmer, the manager of the ADR Programs, to see if we have any statistics on how widely used mediation programs are or if she has any suggestions for us regarding a marketing plan.

- Form a Probate Court workgroup with representatives from the Judicial Branch and Probate Court administration to create long term plans and improvements to new and existing Branch and Probate services.

Attorney Greenfield suggested this be put on hold until November, 2010 after the elections for Probate Court are over.

- Permit the Legal Services network to access the Judicial Branch website, and in turn, the Judicial Branch shall be permitted to link to the legal services' website.

According to Ms. Hess this is a long-term process involving the creation a website that will sync with our Judicial Branch website and resources.

- Convert the most commonly used Judicial Branch forms and publications to plain language, and expand access to these publications to include non-judicial facilities.

This initiative is on-going.

- Create a small number of brief "how-to" videos, accompanied by easy to follow checklists that will guide self-represented parties through some of the basic procedures in civil and family litigation.

Three scripts have been written for filing for divorce, uncontested divorce and filing for a restraining order, but the videos will not be completed on the 6/1/2010 date. The Workgroup hopes to have the videos completed by August 2010. They will be recorded in English, Spanish and Polish.

- Create, where applicable, plain language publications about new and existing mediation programs to be displayed in all Judicial District clerk's office, Court Service Center and law library locations, as well as in non-judicial facilities such as local libraries, senior centers and community centers.

5. Other Business

Judge Munro requested a comprehensive list of what this committee is doing that involves family for her to review. Judge Munro also voiced concerns with the grouping packages for family forms as it pertains to the "Do it Yourself Divorce Guide", but found no reference to the guide. Attorney Greenfield responded that there will be link to the divorce guide added.

The Grant application supplied by Steve Marhefsky, Grants and Contracts Specialist, was reviewed. Ms. Hess suggested that Category 2: Improving Court Communication may be an area that the volunteer attorney program may fit into the grant's requirements. Although this category refers to criminal, the volunteer attorney program could be adapted for the criminal unit. After much discussion the Workgroup agreed they would not apply at this time.

The Workgroup agreed to add Attorney Jeff Mickelson to the Workgroup. Attorney Mickelson would be an additional member, not a replacement for Attorney Loudon.

6. Future Meetings

May, 2010

7. Meeting adjourned at 4:45pm