

Minutes
Annual Meeting of the
Advisory Board on the Americans with Disabilities Act
10:00 a.m., Wednesday, March 15, 2023
Remote via Teams, Archived at
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1ZqDqr4K8XQ>

Members present: The Hon. Judge Elizabeth A. Bozzuto, Chief Court Administrator, Chair, Atty. Carl D. Cicchetti, Ms. Deanna Dorkins, Ms. Kathleen Gensheimer, Ms. Kristin Giantonio, Atty. Paul S. Hartan, Mr. Michael Hines, Ms. Laura Jovino, Mr. Michael Knapp, Ms. Sandra Lugo-Gines, and Atty. Deirdre McPadden. Absent: Atty. Lee Ross.

Others present: Judge Anna M. Ficeto, Atty. Lori Petruzzelli, Atty. Stephen N. Ment, Atty. Richard Loffredo, Mr. Matthew Cunningham, Esq., Ms. Heather Collins, Mr. Christopher Pritchard.

I. Welcome: Board Chair, Chief Court Administrator Judge Elizabeth A. Bozzuto: Judge Bozzuto called the remote annual meeting to order at 10 a.m. and welcomed the members and guests. Judge Bozzuto has assumed the Chair following the retirement in early 2023 of former Chief Court Administrator Judge Patrick L. Carroll III. On behalf of the Board, Judge Bozzuto thanked Judge Carroll for his 12-year leadership of the Board and his advocacy for the Branch's ongoing compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act's requirements and in furtherance of the spirit of the Act. She noted that Judge Carroll's leadership was instrumental in the Judicial Branch once again being ranked at the top of the [Justice Index](#) in 2022 by the National Center for Access to Justice at Fordham Law School for access to justice in court accessibility for people with disabilities.

Judge Bozzuto also thanked departing Board members Charles Epstein and Atty. Brittany Kaplan for their contributions to the Board.

II. Approval of the Draft Minutes of the March 2022 Meeting: Sandra Lugo Gines moved that the members approve the Minutes, which was seconded by Laura Jovino. The Minutes were unanimously approved.

III. Discussion and Approval of the Draft 2022 Report of the ADA Advisory: The Board members received the Draft, and division representatives reported out:

- Ms. Lugo Gines, the Centralized ADA Office Program Manager in Superior Court Operations, reported on the Branch's expansive ADA training efforts and opportunities. She noted that all 140 Local ADA Contacts receive training along with hundreds of other Branch staff and interns. Ninety-one ADA Contacts received Advanced Training, she said, and noted that new Branch staff are required to complete the Nuts and Bolts of the ADA within 6 months of hire. Additionally, 140 interns in the External Affairs Division's Experiential Learning program completed the Nuts and Bolts, remotely, in 2022. In 2022,

410 Branch staff from all Divisions completed the Nuts and Bolts. Another 255 employees completed the online Service Animal 101 program. Judicial Marshal Services trained 108 new and existing staff on a variety of ADA-related topics, including Service Animals, Nuts and Bolts, and hidden disabilities. The Branch also offers remote training from the New England ADA Center, and some 60 employees completed those trainings, which include an overview of the ADA. Ms. Lugo Gines further noted that the Centralized ADA Office has trained several dozen new employees with the Branch's Call Center on the basics of the Act and how to provide assistance to callers. The Branch also reinstated its remote interactive training Speaker Series: Interacting with Respect is Everyone's Job. A session was held in September featuring residents of a Farmington-based disability housing community. The session was very well-received, with the residents sharing with employees their personal experiences and offering guidance on how to best serve those with disabilities. The Centralized ADA Office also attended training, via remote attendance at various sessions of the National ADA Conference. Judges and Magistrates also received pre-Bench training in 2022. Going forward, revisions to the Branch's Request for Accommodations under the ADA process will necessitate training for all Judges, Magistrates, and staff in 2023, Ms. Lugo Gines said. Additionally, a training for appellate level ADA Contacts will be developed.

- Mr. Mike Hines, a Deputy Director III in the Court Support Services Division said some 300 CSSD employees took ADA-related training, including the Nuts and Bolts, Fair Housing, Clients with Hidden Disabilities, and a staff-developed and presented training, "Autism and Criminal Justice: When Two Worlds Collide." This training was developed by an Adult Probation Officer and provides an excellent overview of the Autism spectrum, the necessity for an individualized approach to accommodations for people with autism based on its very unique and individual presentation; and suggestions on how to appropriately accommodate not only the person with Autism, but the often-necessary involvement from family/caregivers. Mr. Hines noted too that retirements have impacted the Division resulting in the replacement of Local ADA Contacts, who have received training from the Centralized ADA Office.
- Ms. Laura Jovino, Director of the Administrative Division's Facilities Unit, told the Board that the Unit has continued its extensive ADA building assessments of dozens of Branch facilities including courtrooms, Juror Assembly areas and bathrooms. Some 23 court locations were assessed by architects and engineers, including the Supreme Court and the Litchfield JD, for ADA compliance. There are 10 courthouses remaining to be assessed in 2023. Facilities is dividing the recommended modifications into three groups: Work that can be completed in-house; minor work to be contracted out; and larger, capital improvement projects. Work includes making wheelchair accessible spaces in courtroom galleries by removing some bench areas and installing signage. A staff architect is working with staff at 920 Broad Street (Juvenile Court) in Hartford to address in-house work. Further, elevator modernizations are now including audio enunciators and signage installment. So far, two have been completed in New Britain, Middletown, and design is underway in Hartford followed by Bridgeport.

- Ms. Kristin Giantonio, a Program Manager in the Information and Technology Division's Development and Support Unit, reported that the Division, over the last year, has been working with the Appellate division and others to create an online accessible version of the Practice Book which can be read by computer programs for viewers with vision disabilities. Additionally, she said, ITD is working with other divisions to ensure that accessible electronic versions of printed materials are available on the website. ITD is also working with developers to train them to use an open-source tool, focused on external websites, which provide an index of accessibility issues to help them use their best practices to improve the quality of web pages. The tool also provides developer resources on how to remediate identified accessibility issues.
- Additional future initiatives: Ms. Lugo Gines said the Branch is going to develop a brochure for members of the Bar on the accommodation request process in 2023, following revisions to that process. Additionally, forms and webpages, including FAQs, will be updated, and some information will be translated into Spanish, Portuguese, and Polish in 2023.
- Following discussion of the initiatives and updates, Judge Bozzuto entertained a motion made by Ms. Lugo Gines to approve the ADA Advisory Board's 2022 Annual Report to the Chief Justice. The motion was seconded by Mr. Hines, and the members unanimously approved the Report. After it is accepted by the Chief Justice, the Report will be posted on [the Board's website](#).

IV. **Next Meeting:** Judge Bozzuto and the members agreed to meet again in the Spring of 2024 with a date to be circulated later this year. Judge Bozzuto thanked the members and their divisions for their ongoing commitment to ensuring access to justice for people with disabilities. The meeting was adjourned at 10:25 a.m.