

# **MONTANA ACCESS TO JUSTICE COMMISSION STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

1. **Standing Committee on Self-Represented Litigants**, created by Order of the Supreme Court, May 22, 2012, and responsible for reviewing the potential access strategies related to self-represented litigants;
2. **Standing Committee on Law School Partnerships**, recommended by the ATJ Commission, November 25, 2013, and responsible for reviewing strategies related to law school and law student pro bono as well as other strategies for expansion of pro bono and student involvement in access to justice efforts;
3. **Standing Committee on Communications and Outreach**, responsible for reviewing strategies a) related to education of the legislature, judiciary, lawyers and law students, as well as the general public, regarding access to justice issues and the need for a strong civil legal assistance system, and b) related to networking and coordination among providers, Native American communities, and other pertinent entities to foster a statewide, integrated civil legal aid delivery system; and
4. **Standing Committee on Policy and Resources**, charged with reviewing strategies related to a) resource development, and b) potential policy changes calling for legislation, regulations or rules, including potential reforms to reduce reliance on judicial decision-making to resolve problems.

Each Standing Committee will have the following responsibilities in reviewing the proposed strategies:

- To review each strategy
- To prioritize among strategies
- To recommend which committee should be responsible for implementing each proposed strategy
- To estimate the resources required to carry out the strategy and consider sources
- To consider a potential timetable for completing the strategy.

## **STANDING COMMITTEE ON SELF-REPRESENTED LITIGANTS**

- Study and make recommendations regarding the following:
  - Gathered and available data;
  - Causes of increase in number of SRL litigants;
  - Cost to the court system of unsupported SRLs;
  - Cost to the courts and state when SRLs do not obtain results they need or to which they are entitled;
  - Recommendations for changes in court rules and operations to accommodate SRLs;
  - Value and feasibility of various means of supporting SRLs.
- Formalize process and create mechanism for ongoing form development and revision.
- Continue support for the Court Help program.
- Study potential changes in the code of Judicial conduct and ethical rules to accommodate SRLs.
- Study potential value in creating a Division of SRL Services within the Judicial Branch.
- Update materials and renew training of court clerks.
- Host a retreat for Court leadership teams.
- Inventory resources, materials, and support currently available to SRLs and make appropriate recommendations.
- Update SRL Handbook for judges.

## **STANDING COMMITTEE ON LAW SCHOOL PARTNERSHIPS**

- Work with partners to develop a signature program to pair MT attorneys with law students to work on Rule 6.1 pro bono matters.
- Work with partners to develop and implement an ongoing program to expand and support pro bono opportunities for students, and make appropriate recommendations to the Commission.
- Support adoption of appropriate changes to Rule 6.1 to accommodate law student pro bono practice.
- Coordinate with the Justice Initiatives Committee to support its strategies aimed at increasing participation by pro bono attorneys.

## **STANDING COMMITTEE ON COMMUNICATIONS AND OUTREACH**

- Review Gaps and Needs Study to identify populations, needs, and geographic areas that are disproportionately underrepresented in access to the courts and legal services. Recommend responsive strategies.
- Review Gaps and Needs Study to identify unmet legal needs, and convene a planning group to consider responsive strategies, including seeking funding.
- Convene a statewide forum to bring broad spectrum of key decision-makers together to discuss access to justice and the needs of the legal services delivery system.
- Study and report on the importance of civil legal assistance to the efficient operation of the Judiciary.
- Study and report on the impact of civil legal assistance on the economic health of Montana.
- Sponsor a statewide conference on access to justice issues to garner public attention and support networking among providers.
- Host Town Hall hearings on access to justice issues.

## **STANDING COMMITTEE ON POLICY AND RESOURCES**

- Coordinate with the Mediation Subcommittee of the Justice Initiatives Committee to study the viability and feasibility of increasing resources for mediation and other forms of ADR.
- Study potential for reforming and streamlining laws with attention to areas of law that give rise to high volumes of SRLs to reduce reliance on judicial intervention.
- Begin a direct campaign with the Legislature for funding of civil legal assistance. This strategy will include a credible study describing the role of assistance in increasing the efficiency of the judiciary and its positive effect on Montana's economy.
- Work with the Standing Committee on SRLs to obtain permanent funding for the Court Help Program.
- Work with the Montana Justice Foundation to study and recommend ways of increasing Cy Pres awards.
- Examine the potential for Montana to adopt a Pro Hac Vice with proceeds dedicated to legal services.
- Monitor fundraising in Montana to assure coordination.