

Access to Justice Commission
Self-Represented Litigant Committee
April 23, 2013
1:30 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.
Minutes

In attendance: Judge Ortley, Judge Snowberger, Judge Ortley, Robin Meguire, Ed Higgins, Patty Fain, Erin Farris, Phyllis Smith, Janice Doggett, August Swanson, Randy Snyder, Kim Dumon, Kate Kuykendall.

Call to Order: 1:42.

Judge Snowberger began by making introductions. The Committee welcomes public comment; there are no members of the public present.

The Committee discussed the addition of new members. Expanding the membership of the Committee was set aside for a future discussion after the Committee's direction is more clear, but the topic is open if the members want to address it.

Forms Sub-committee

Erin Farris gave an update on the work of the forms committee. Erin sent out a summary of comments she's received on the forms in the last two years. This is essentially her entire stockpile of forms suggestions. Phyllis has said she will have something to add. Erin will consider putting together a chart of suggestions that includes the comment, source of the comment, contact information, and tracking information.

The Committee discussed the progress of the Forms Sub-committee. Membership in the Sub-committee was unclear after the previous meeting. Erin Farris, Judge Ortley, Patty Fain, and Judge Snowberger met by phone to talk about a process for reviewing forms. A summary of that call was sent to the Committee as a suggested process for approving forms, taken from the former Commission on SRLs and modified slightly.

A question remains regarding the forms approval process. Does final approval rest with the full Access to Justice Commission? Judge Snowberger has a call in to Justice Baker regarding this issue. The Committee agreed that it would be good if the ATJC does not have to finalize all forms.

The Committee identified the following members to serve on the Forms Sub-committee: Judge Snowberger, Judge Ortley, Erin, Phyllis, Robin, August, and Ed.

The Committee discussed the general process for approving forms Judge Snowberger developed. Patty suggested using whatever methods are readily available to test forms in a practical setting. This might include distributing forms at appropriate venues and requesting feedback. Erin noted that a lot of feedback will happen naturally, and it might be efficient to make the forms as strong as possible and then distribute them, recognizing that regular

improvements will likely need to be made in response to feedback. Robin suggested a regular review process.

The Committee agreed that gathering information is a good idea, and that any efforts to do so need to be realistic. What will and won't work varies by county and courtroom. Some counties develop their own forms. Soliciting information from folks using the forms in their various capacities will be helpful.

Patty suggested compiling a short master questionnaire of one or two pages that will help users to compile the information they need to complete a variety of different common forms. This will allow them to have all the information they need in front of them when they are actually putting together their petitions, parenting plans, or other documents.

The Committee discussed the value of a master questionnaire, and agreed that it would be useful. The Committee also agreed that instructions for forms are important and will need to be considered in the forms approval process. Erin noted that there are several similar questionnaires that already exist and could work as a starting point for developing something more comprehensive.

The Forms Sub-committee will meet prior to the June 26 ATJC meeting. Kate will send out a meeting scheduler and the list of members on the Sub-committee.

Scope/Survey Sub-committee

Patty and Judge Ortley agreed to work on gathering data to clarify the scope of the Committee's work. The Committee discussed what form this work might take, and decided that it would be good to get some information on forms, and more broadly on the barriers for SRLs and other areas the Committee could work on to reduce those barriers. What areas can the Committee continue to work on, and what new areas are open to the Committee now? There is no previous agenda for this Committee.

Patty agreed to draft an initial survey and send it to the Committee for comment. She will have the draft done and ready for comment by May 10, and will aim for early June to have it distributed and responses collected.

The Committee discussed working on two separate surveys, one to judges and staff and one to non-court stakeholders. The Committee agreed that it would be good to get information from a variety of sources, and that the key questions should be designed to determine what problems people are experiencing, what they are doing to address the problems, and what the unfilled needs are. Randy identified local bar associations as a good source of this kind of information and agreed to speak with local bar association leaders in a one-on-one format.

Judge Ortley and Patty agreed to work together on compiling information for two surveys, and getting that information back to the Committee.

Judge Snowberger noted that it will be important to include perspectives from practicing lawyers who are not part of a local bar association. Patty suggested that State Bar Section Chairs might provide a conduit to these practitioners.

Judge Ortley asked for input from the Committee prior to drafting the survey questions. The Committee agreed that members would come forward with potential questions, forward them to Patty and Judge Ortley within 1 week, and Patty and Judge Ortley would develop the surveys from there. Patty agreed to put some thought into developing an exit survey for Self Help Centers.

New Business

The Courts of Limited Jurisdiction meeting is next week. The Curriculum Committee meets Monday at 10:30. Judge Snowberger will ask if the Committee can get an hour at the fall or spring conference to discuss its work, although the precise topic is unknown. She has spoken with Shauna Ryan already.

Judge Ortley agreed to contact the planning committee and ask to get on the agenda. He will see if Shauna can carve out time for the fall meeting. Judge Snowberger suggested a conversational format rather than a formal presentation.

The Committee agreed it would be good to get on the clerks of limited jurisdiction conference in the fall, and on the next meeting of the clerks of district court. Phyllis agreed to contact the clerks of district court.

Randy noted that the agenda for the State Bar's annual meeting isn't set yet, and that a discussion of SRLs would be a good addition to the CLE part of the meeting generally. If this consists of a lecture, the specific topic will need to be developed soon. The topic can be broader if it is in a roundtable discussion format. June or July is not too late.

Approval of Minutes

Robin noted a correction to the spelling of two names in the minutes of the prior meeting: Mike Cotter and Danna Jackson. Judge Snowberger clarified that the minutes do not need to include the name of each person who speaks; the discussion topics and results of the discussion will suffice.

Robin moved to approve the minutes of the prior meeting with the noted corrections. Janice seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

There were several comments on how the forms process needs to be more formalized and clear. Erin agreed to make the necessary changes, send the process to the Forms Sub-committee, and bring it back to the Committee in June. August and Ed asked to be added to the Forms Sub-committee; the Committee agreed.

Next Meeting

The Committee agreed to look at dates around June 11 at 1:30 for its next meeting. Kate will send out a meeting scheduler; Judge Snowberger will schedule the law library.

Meeting Adjourned: 2:52pm.