

Standing Committee on Self-Represented Litigants Minutes

December 11, 2014

2:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.

In Attendance: Judge Snowberger (Chair), Abby Brown, Ed Higgins, Erin Farris, Jim Taflan, Lisa Meckenberg Jackson, Randy Snyder, Pam Poon, and Kate Kuykendall.

All present announced themselves. Judge Snowberger opened the floor for public comment on non-agenda items; there were no comments.

Judge Snowberger asked that her name be spelled correctly in the minutes from September, 2014.

Lisa moved to approve the minutes from September 18, 2014 as corrected. Ed seconded the motion. The minutes were approved.

Self Help Resources and Tools Working Group

Erin reported that the group is working on updating the deskbook page with information about self help resources. A final product will be available by January. This information will be shared in an Ethics CLE as well.

Forms Sub-committee

Erin reported that the group is wading through comments on the Dissolution With Kids forms packet. The group has been meeting almost weekly, but will be taking a three-week break around the holidays. The process is slow, but the product is getting better.

The guardianship form is experiencing some significant revision, in part to keep language regarding termination of parental rights out. It will also be revised to include more information on guardianship generally.

Self-Represented Litigant Data Collection Project

Judge Snowberger introduced Lisa, who has worked on finishing up the report on this project. Lisa noted that she added a section to the report's conclusions, and made several other small changes.

Judge Snowberger asked if the Committee has had an opportunity to review the report. Judge Snowberger gave a brief summary of the history of the report.

Pam asked if there are things that came out of the report that would be new or surprising, or different from what people were expecting. She also asked whether the Committee will be creating recommendations based on the report.

Judge Snowberger replied that the information in the report was not surprising. It's data that is newer and from a more specific source than we've had in the past. Lisa noted that the report includes a section on recommendations, and suggested listing them as bullet points. Judge Snowberger reminded the Committee that the report has been presented in draft form to the

Law and Justice Interim Committee and the Access to Justice Commission. Erin noted that she will be happy to include it in the Equal Justice Briefs that will be developed in the spring.

Kate offered to include the report on the MJF website, and possibly to make it available through the MJF newsletter.

Judge Snowberger asked if there were any specific comments on the report or conclusions other than the minor formatting issues that have already been raised.

Randy moved to approve the report for publication with minor formatting adjustments. Abby seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Education and Training Work Group

Abby shared that the group met in September and October. The group is working on putting training on legal information vs. legal advice into a vehicle that can be shared widely. The group left its last meeting thinking it would try a Prezi presentation. The group drafted a mock presentation, but ran into a couple of problems. State employees aren't able to view the Prezi website, and the program is not as functional as the group would like. The group is looking for a good alternative, and is currently considering Adobe Illustrator. The group is also looking for funding possibilities to support the effort. The group has a goal of September 2015 to have its presentation finalized so that it can be shared at the next annual meeting of the State Bar. The group will meet again after the first of the year.

Abby added that the group has been using substantive information provided by Erin.

Erin shared that Kevin Cook at the Law Library could be a good resource for learning about what works on the state web system.

Collaboration and Communication

Lisa reminded the Committee that this is still a working group of only one person. She has been working on the report approved above. She is working on reducing the report to a short summary that can be easily digested and refer readers to the full report for further information.

Judge Snowberger asked those who are not on a working group if there are working groups they would like to join. There are two potential additions to the Committee that may step on to one of the working groups.

Legislative and Rule Changes

Lisa reported that there aren't any rule changes she is aware of, and that the group will be monitoring legislation that is coming out of the Law and Justice Interim Group. Lisa summarized the bills.

Access to Justice Commission Report

Judge Snowberger will report on the Committee's activities to the Access to Justice Commission. She asked if anyone on the Committee had information they would like to add to the report.

Pam asked if there is a time frame for piloting the new forms. Erin noted that the proposed forms are still on the website, and that the changes being made so far are not very substantial. There is currently no definitive release date.

The Committee discussed the forms revision process further. The Committee agreed that it might be useful to provide updates on the process publicly. The working group will come up with a plan for sharing its progress with the public.

New Business

Erin asked if there is any information available on the Court Help Program budget. Jim noted that Justice Baker will be giving an update at the Commission meeting tomorrow. Judge Snowberger shared that the Commission's agenda tomorrow includes a discussion of whether to pursue a filing fee adjustment in support of civil legal aid.

Erin shared that MLSA has been very successful in getting new grant money, and will be hiring several new attorney positions. MLSA has also been working with the Child Support Enforcement Division to develop an online child support calculator, which will change the experience of self-represented litigants. Judge Snowberger shared that MLSA is working on an automated version of the dissolution forms pursuant to a grant they received.

Next Meeting Date

The Committee set its next meeting for February 19th from 2:00 p.m. until 4:00 p.m.