

ILLINOIS SUPREME COURT COMMISSION

ACCESS

TO JUSTICE

EDUCATION. SUPPORT. EMPOWERMENT.

Illinois Supreme Court
Commission on Access to Justice

EST. 2012

Reflections

2012-2022



INTRODUCTION

In June 2012, the Illinois Supreme Court established the Access to Justice Commission with a charge to create and implement programs which would serve to assist self-represented litigants in our civil courts. In looking back on the past 10 years, I believe one early event reflects the history and essence of the Commission.



In October 2013, the Commission held a conference which was meant to bring attention to its goal of enhancing access to our courts and seek input and support from those in attendance. The conference gathered 300 individuals who were involved with the courts or had an interest in assisting court patrons. Then Chief Justice Thomas L. Kilbride (Ret.) spoke to the audience and pointedly observed that as to providing access to our courts for those litigants who are without legal representation, “let’s face it we can always do better.”

During the conference, the Commission presented a lifetime achievement award to the late Joseph A. Dailing, then Executive Director of the Illinois Coalition for Equal Justice. Mr. Dailing had championed the formation of the Commission. At the time the Commission was established, Mr. Dailing explained: “The idea behind the Commission and the reason we brought it to the attention of the Chief Justice is to propose innovative projects that will make the civil justice system more user-friendly and accessible for the growing number of people who are coming to the courts without lawyers.”¹

The keynote speaker at the conference was Bryan Stevenson, Executive Director of the Equal Justice Initiative in Alabama and author of the book *Just Mercy: A Story of Justice and Redemption*. He offered three principles to guide the Commission in reaching its goals and for attorneys who offer *pro bono* or legal assistance to vulnerable litigants. First, proximity is power. He expounded that if we wished to truly address access to justice issues, we must be committed to being close to the problems. Second, Mr. Stevenson advised us that

“being hopeful was key.” Despite the many problems and limited resources, we “need[ed] to have hope in order to help provide better access to justice to those who can’t afford representation or don’t understand the system.”² And finally, he cautioned that attorneys providing *pro bono* assistance must overcome their own discomfort and find their voices in order to make a difference.

Over the past 10 years and since this conference, we have continued to collaborate with our strategic partners—The Chicago Bar Foundation, Illinois Equal Justice Foundation, Lawyers Trust Fund of Illinois, and Illinois Bar Foundation—and many other groups and entities which are dedicated to the cause of access to justice. Under the leadership of the Supreme Court, the Commission, the Access to Justice Division of the Administrative Office of the Illinois Courts, our partners, and countless volunteers have sought to “do better” in enhancing access to justice. Together, we discovered our voices and developed the innovative projects envisioned by the Supreme Court at the time the Commission was established.



The Commission has done some higher-level but significant work including Illinois Supreme Court Policies on language access, plain language, use of cell phones in court, remote appearances in civil cases, and guidance to clerks and court staff regarding the delineation between legal information and legal advice. Additionally, we engaged in an in-depth study of family cases through Justice for All Grants from the National Center of State Courts. But we have also sought to be more proximate in our initiatives with for example, Illinois Court Help, Illinois Legal Answers for Appeals, Illinois JusticeCorps, self-represented litigant coordinators, certification of court interpreters, community outreach including listening tours and town halls, assistance in the creation of early resolution programs for divorce proceedings, and extensive education and training. Our standardized court forms suites and other resources are used by self-represented litigants throughout the state in a wide variety of case types and proceedings. In all, we believe that we have made a difference.

As proud as we are of our endeavors to date, the Commission looks to the future with great hope and the determination to do even better for those seeking to access our courts. We will continue to look to the Supreme Court for its leadership and call on our partners and faithful volunteers. The Commission expresses its appreciation to those who have supported our work to date and welcome those who wish to join us going forward.

JUSTICE MARY K. ROCHFORD
Commission Chair 2015 - present

1. Christopher Bonjean, *Supreme Court Announces Initiative to Ease Access to Illinois Courts*, Illinois State Bar Association, June 13, 2012, <https://www.isba.org/barnews/2012/06/13/supreme-court-announces-initiative-ease-access-illinois-courts>.

2. Bethany Krajelis, *Access to Justice Commission Hosts Conference; Keynote Speaker Says “Being Hopeful is Key”*, October 24, 2013, <https://cookcountyrecord.com/stories/510576950-access-to-justice-commission-hosts-conference-keynote-speaker-says-being-hopeful-is-key>.

1.

We asked our partners to reflect on the Commission's work over the last decade by answering a few questions. Their responses are featured throughout the magazine and have been lightly edited for clarity and length.

What role does the Commission on Access to Justice play in the Judicial Branch?

The Commission helps set the culture in the judiciary to be aware of “access to justice.” Judges are more aware than ever before, but we need to continue making it a more “ever-present” priority.

JUSTICE THOMAS L. KILBRIDE (Ret.),
Illinois Supreme Court, First Liaison to
ATJ Commission

“In the past decade, the Commission has successfully opened the doors of our courthouses to some of our most vulnerable citizens. The Commission has assisted self-represented, indigent, disabled, and limited English-speaking litigants in navigating our often complicated and confusing judicial system.

JUSTICE MICHAEL J. BURKE, Illinois Supreme Court

The Commission is a body which has played a critical role over the last 10 years in striving for our state's courts to make “equal justice for all” a reality for more people. The tireless work of our Commission is inspiring.

JUSTICE DAVID K. OVERSTREET,
Illinois Supreme Court, Current Liaison to
ATJ Commission

“Whether it be through providing language access services, standardized legal forms, or e-filing education, the Illinois Supreme Court's Commission on Access to Justice acts as an all-important bridge between those in need of justice and the court system. The Commission's insightful and dedicated work helps narrow the justice gap and offers real hope to those facing difficult periods in their lives.

JUSTICE LISA HOLDER WHITE,
Illinois Supreme Court

First and importantly, the Commission has brought issues to the forefront. Any discussion about the quality of justice in Illinois must be based on the research developed by the Commission. The Commission has also given voice to court users. Traditionally we have thought about courts led by judges and lawyers. Through the Commission's initiatives, the needs of the litigants are valued.

CHIEF JUSTICE MARY JANE THEIS,
Illinois Supreme Court



1. What role does the Commission on Access to Justice play in the Judicial Branch?

The Commission is the connective tissue between the Judicial Branch and constituent populations, including long-overlooked groups such as self-represented individuals and persons with disabilities or limited English proficiency. The Commission's work fills the vital role of ensuring, implementing, and improving access to the Illinois court system for everyone. Its programs and projects open courtroom doors for many in Illinois to assert and protect their statutory and constitutional rights and privileges, often for the first time. Without the Commission's work, those individuals would be denied benefits intended for all by the drafters of our state constitution and legislation.

JUSTICE ROBERT L. CARTER,
Illinois Supreme Court, Committee Member

“ The Commission has multiple roles within the Judicial Branch, including (1) serving as a voice to raise matters that negatively impact vulnerable at-risk court-users; (2) serving as a consultant to review, analyze, develop and recommend court practices and programs to enhance access to fair and equitable treatment for all within the court system; (3) serving as an overseer to monitor court practices and programs and alert appropriate entities of opportunities to make improvements; and (4) serving as an active partner to work and implement initiatives that advance equality in the justice system.

CAROLYN H. CLIFT,
Attorney at Law (Ret.), ATJ Commissioner,
Co-Chair of the Community Trust Committee

The Commission is the voice of an often-overlooked court stakeholder, the litigant. The Commission strives to bring that voice to the table to consider their needs and challenges and to find solutions.

JILL ROBERTS,
Deputy Director, ATJ Division, Administrative Office of the Illinois Courts

The Commission is central to increasing fair and equitable access by all Illinoisans to the Judicial Branch. It also plays a key role as a connector and communicator between the Judicial Branch, legal service providers, and litigants.

COURTNEY KELLEDES,
Co-Founder and Managing Partner, Rights and Restoration Law Group, LLC, Committee Member

The Commission plays a critical role in examining our judicial systems and processes through the lens of accessibility and justice. The Commission fosters sustained and deep collaboration between Illinois jurists, court administrators, bar leaders, academics, and lawyers who serve underrepresented clients. The work of the Commission is well informed by a wide coalition of individuals who intersect with the Judicial Branch so that the expertise and insight of many can be included in our evaluation of the system and incorporated into any proposed programs or policies.

WENDY VAUGHN,
Clinical Professor, Northern Illinois University
College of Law, ATJ Commissioner



The Commission is instrumental to the proactive operations of the justice system in every jurisdiction.

TAMMY R. WEIKERT,
Circuit Court Clerk, Rock Island
County, ATJ Commissioner

1. What role does the Commission on Access to Justice play in the Judicial Branch?

The Commission represents “boots on the ground” for the Judicial Branch. It brings the judiciary real time information as to what is actually happening in the courts.

ROBERT G. MARKOFF,
Partner, Markoff Law, LLC,
Committee Member

The Commission builds the infrastructure for local courts to ensure court users have equitable access to the court system.

HEATHER DORSEY,
Assistant Director, Courts, Children and Families
Division, Administrative Office of the Illinois
Courts, Committee Member



The Commission plays a pivotal role in administering access to the courts for the most vulnerable of people in our state. It provides a mechanism to provide meaningful and lasting change within the judicial branch by listening to and responding to the needs of ordinary citizens.

KATHRYN HENSLEY,
Supervising Senior Program Manager, ATJ Division,
Administrative Office of the Illinois Courts



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The Commission advocates on behalf of self-represented litigants and those who work directly with them (self-help centers, legal aid attorneys, pro bono programs, etc.) to ensure all community members have meaningful access to the justice system.

SAMIRA NAZEM,
Former ATJ Division Staff, Principal Court
Management Consultant, National Center for
State Courts

**THE COMMISSION
ASSISTS SELF-
REPRESENTED
LITIGANTS AND
OTHERS NAVIGATE
THE COURT SYSTEM.**

CHRISTOPHER BONJEAN,
Director of Communications for
the Illinois Supreme Court and
Administrative Office of the
Illinois Courts

STANDARDIZED COURT FORMS PROJECT

FORMS HISTORY

In 2012, the Commission began the development of statewide standardized forms suites for areas of law and practice where there is a high volume of self-represented litigants. The suites include forms and orders which are necessary for the particular case and instruction sheets.

Supreme Court Rule 10-101 and M.R. 25401 requires that the standardized forms be accepted in all Illinois courts. As such, the Commission created a rigorous process to develop and finalize the forms suites, which includes drafting by subcommittees, user testing, public comment, and approval by the Commission's Forms Committee.

In 2014, when the Access to Justice Division was created within the Administrative Office of the Illinois Courts, the first dedicated Forms Officer was hired to oversee and expand the program. The Application for Waiver of Court Fees and Adult Name Change form suites were the first to be developed. Since the program's inception, 13 subcommittees consisting entirely of volunteer subject-matter experts have created a total of 55 forms suites - 39 for use in Circuit Courts, 12 for use in Appellate Courts, and 4 for use in the Illinois Supreme Court. The

forms suites cover various areas of law as eviction, expungement, family law, identity theft, protective orders, and small claims.

The project continues to expand in terms of volume and scope. Newly developed forms suites in guardianship, eviction, and appeals to the Illinois Supreme Court are forthcoming in 2023. The Commission and the Access to Justice Division have also recently engaged in a business process analysis to streamline and accelerate the forms development process.

FORMS REDESIGN

In October 2021, the Commission engaged Briefly, Inc., a design firm specializing in legal content, as a consultant. Briefly is assisting the Commission and the Access to Justice Division in redesigning the format and style of the forms. The new form design will be more user-friendly, easier to read, and less intimidating.

The new design will introduce icons and colorful elements, which will serve as visual cues for users and make the forms more approachable. The icons will also provide visual links between sections of the forms and the corresponding explanations in separate instructions documents.

Case Number _____

7. DEBTS
Money you and your spouse currently owe. You will be able to provide more detail later.

A. My spouse and I have **debts** from the time of the marriage/civil union that are still owed (either together or individually)
☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ I Don't Know

B. My spouse and I **have already divided the debts** from the time of the marriage/civil union that are still owed
☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ I Don't Know ☐ Not Applicable

8. PERSONAL PROPERTY
Bank accounts, furniture, TVs, cars, etc., you and your spouse acquired since becoming married or united. You will be able to provide more detail later.

A. My spouse and I own **personal property** and/or **bank accounts** obtained during the marriage/civil union
☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ I Don't Know

B. My spouse and I **already divided the personal property** and/or **bank accounts** obtained during the marriage/civil union
☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ I Don't Know ☐ Not Applicable

9. REAL ESTATE
Land or buildings you and your spouse own together or separately. You will be able to provide more detail later.

A. My spouse and I own, or are buying, real estate **together**
☐ Yes ☐ No

B. I own or am buying real estate **separately**
☐ Yes ☐ No

C. My spouse owns or is buying real estate **separately**
☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ I Don't Know

10. PENSION/RETIREMENT/MONEY for INJURIES
Other money or investments you and your spouse have including IRA, 401k, etc. You will be able to provide more detail later.

A. I have **pension or retirement accounts** (including IRAs)
☐ Yes ☐ No

B. My spouse has **pension or retirement accounts** (including IRAs)
☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ I Don't Know

C. I have a **claim for money for injuries or damages** that I have suffered (worker's compensation, personal injury, accident, etc.)
☐ Yes ☐ No

7. I am providing the following information about the care of the children:

a. There is another person, that is not Respondent or me, who claims to have an allocation of parental responsibility or parenting time (custody/visitation rights):
☐ Yes ☐ No
Information about the person claiming allocation of parental responsibility or parenting time:
Name: _____
Address: _____
City: _____ State: _____ ZIP: _____

b. I know of other court cases about the allocation of parental responsibility or parenting time:
☐ Yes ☐ No
Information about the other court cases:
Case Name: _____
Case Location: _____
Case Number: _____
This case is still ongoing: ☐ Yes ☐ No
The next court date is: _____

c. Allocation of parental responsibility:
☐ I have attached my **Parenting Plan** form to this **Petition**
☐ I will file my **Parenting Plan** form within 120 days of the date I file this **Petition**

8. I am providing the following information about all of the debts that Respondent and I have after the date we got married/united (both individually and as a couple):

a. Respondent and I have debts from the time of the marriage/civil union that are still owed (either together or individually):
☐ Yes ☐ No

b. Respondent and I have already divided the debts from the time of the marriage/civil union that are still owed:
☐ Yes ☐ No

9. I am providing the following information about all of the personal property including bank accounts that Respondent and I own (both individually and as a couple):

a. Respondent and I own personal property and/or bank accounts obtained during the marriage/civil union.
☐ Yes ☐ No

b. Respondent and I have already divided the personal property and/or bank accounts obtained during the marriage/civil union.
☐ Yes ☐ No

State of Illinois

Instruction Book for Dissolution of Marriage Court Forms

Sections 4-6C
Information about Children
CONTINUED

• The court can only order support for these children if they are still in high school or are disabled.

• The court can order payment for educational expenses for these children if they are in college or another type of education program.

Children Born or Adopted DURING the marriage but only to one of the spouses

• This includes adult or minor children that

• You gave birth to, but your spouse is not the other parent;

• Your spouse gave birth to, but you are not the other parent;

• You adopted, but your spouse did not; OR

• Your spouse adopted, but you did not.

• The court cannot make decisions about decision-making, parenting time, or order support for these children

• A Parenting Plan contains information about who will make decisions for the children and a schedule for when the children are with each parent. If you have completed the Parenting Plan by the time you are ready to file your case, you can attach it to your Petition for Dissolution of Marriage/Civil Union (Divorce with Children). If not, you must file it within 120 days of the date you file your Petition. Follow the instructions on the Parenting Plan for help in completing it.

Section 7(c): Parenting Plan

A Parenting Plan contains information about who will make decisions for the children and a schedule for when the children are with each parent. If you have completed the Parenting Plan by the time you are ready to file your case, you can attach it to your Petition for Dissolution of Marriage/Civil Union (Divorce with Children). If not, you must file it within 120 days of the date you file your Petition. Follow the instructions on the Parenting Plan for help in completing it.

Section 8: Debts

You must tell the court if you and your spouse have debts from the marriage that are still owed. If you and your spouse cannot agree on how to divide the debt, the judge will decide who is responsible for each debt.

Sections 9, 10, 11 & 12: Personal Property, Real Estate, Pension/Retirement Accounts & Money Claims

You must tell the court if you and your spouse own personal property (clothing/furniture), real estate, or pension/retirement accounts. If you and your spouse cannot agree on how to divide the property, the judge will decide who gets the property.

Section 13: Maintenance (also known as alimony)

Maintenance is money paid from one spouse to the other on a regular basis.

• To get maintenance, you must show the court there is a good reason such as a long marriage, poor health, or an inability to support yourself.

• The judge is not required to order maintenance.

Section J: Former Name

You must tell the court if you want to go back to using a former name.

• The judge can allow you to return to any name you have used before.

STEP 2: WHAT DO I DO AFTER I FILL OUT MY FORMS?

File your forms with the Circuit Clerk in the county where your court case should be filed.

• File your case in the county you live in or the county your spouse lives in.

• You must file the **Petition for Dissolution of Marriage/Civil Union (Divorce with Children)** with the trial court by the filing deadline that applies to your case.

• You must electronically file (e-file) court documents unless (1) you are an inmate in a prison or jail and you do not have a lawyer, (2) you have a disability that keeps you from e-filing, or (3) you qualify for an exemption from e-filing.

• You will qualify for an exemption if: (1) you do not have internet or computer access at home and it would be difficult for you to travel to a place where you could use a computer; (2) you have trouble reading or speaking in English, or (3) you tried to e-file your documents, but you were unable to complete the process because the equipment or assistance you need is not available.

• If you qualify for an exemption, fill out a **Certification for Exemption from E-Filing** found here: <https://www.illinoiscourts.gov/documents-and-forms/lawapproved-forms/>

• File the original and 1 copy of your forms and the Certification with the trial court clerk's office in person or by mail.

• To e-file, create an account with an e-filing service provider. Visit [e-file.illinoiscourts.gov/service-providers.htm](https://www.illinoiscourts.gov/service-providers.htm) to select a service provider. Some service providers are free while others charge a processing fee. For instructions on how to e-file for free with Odyssey eFileIt, see the self-help user guides here: [e-file.illinoiscourts.gov/self-help/how-to-e-file/](https://www.illinoiscourts.gov/self-help/how-to-e-file/)

• If you do not have access to a computer or if you need help e-filing, take your form to the Circuit Clerk's office where you can use a public computer terminal to e-file your forms.

Provide notice to your spouse.

There are 2 ways to give notice to your spouse:

1. Entry of appearance
If your spouse signs an **Entry of Appearance**, you do not have to have your spouse served by the Sheriff. You are ready to get a court date (skip to "Ask for a court date" below); OR

2. Serve your spouse with a **Summons** and **Petition** if you and the person you're sending the **Summons** and **Petition** to have an email address, you must send them by email or by notification through the e-filing system. If you or the person you're sending the **Summons** and

INTRO TO GETTING A DIVORCE IN ILLINOIS

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LANGUAGE ACCESS

To provide meaningful language access and prevent the injustice of ineffective interpreting, state courts across the country have built robust language access programs. The Commission on Access to Justice drafted a Language Access Policy (Policy), which the Supreme Court adopted in 2013 (updated September 2016). Per the Policy, the Administrative Office of the Illinois Courts (AOIC) recruits and trains interpreters, promotes the use of qualified interpreters in court proceedings through judge and court staff training, develops and maintains a certified interpreter Registry, maintains circuit Language Access Plans, and develops translated standardized court forms and resources.

The AOIC interpreter training and testing requirements reflect national best practices and rely on court interpreter exams created by the National Center for State Courts. Specifically, the AOIC’s Court Interpreter Certification Program is a three-step process that includes attending a two-day orientation, passing a written examination with an 80% or higher score, and then taking and passing either an oral exam or an oral proficiency interview (OPI).

Depending on oral exam performance, interpreters are placed into different tiers on the Registry.

The Illinois Interpreter’s Code of Ethics (updated November 2020) (Code) defines the proper scope of an interpreter’s role and responsibilities. The Code requires interpreters to interpret accurately without omissions or additions, not offer legal advice, maintain confidentiality for privileged communications, be proficient in both English and the foreign language, be impartial to all parties involved, and report errors and other serious communication difficulties to the court.

The Code seeks to ensure that interpreters:

- 1. Provide meaningful access to all courts and court services for Limited English Proficient persons;
- 2. Protect the constitutional rights of criminal defendants by providing assistance of court interpreters during court proceedings;
- 3. Safeguard due process in all phases of criminal and civil litigation for Limited English Proficient persons;
- 4. Provide equal protection of the law for Limited English Proficient persons;
- 5. Increase efficiency, quality, and uniformity in proceedings which involve a court interpreter; and
- 6. Encourage the broadest use of certified and registered language interpreters by all those in need of such services within the courts.

Before being placed on the Registry, interpreters who have passed the written and oral exam or OPI must take an oath to adhere to the Code and undergo a background check.

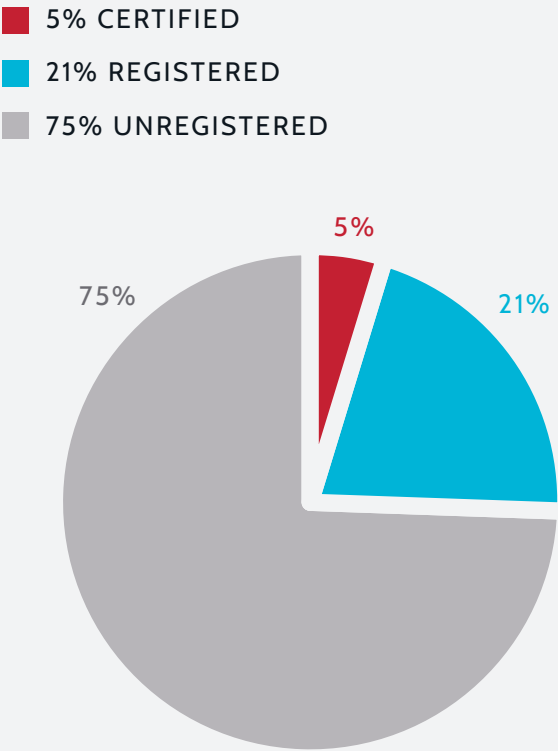
Interpreters on the Registry are available for in person and remote (by phone or video) interpreting. If a Circuit uses an interpreter on the Registry, the AOIC will reimburse all or part (depending on the interpreter’s tier) of the cost of the interpreter’s fee and travel costs.

At present, the Registry has 124 certified interpreters in 13 spoken languages, 103 sign language

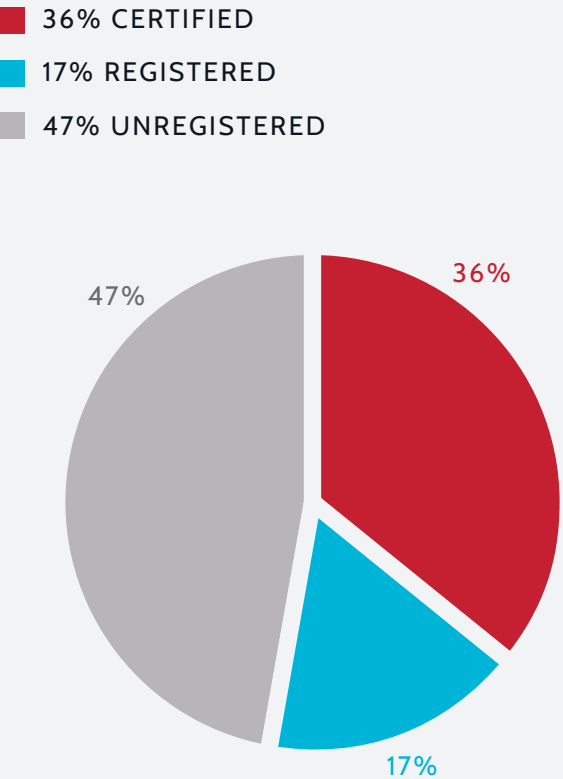
interpreters, 40 registered interpreters that have scored at least 60%, and 227 interpreters that are preparing to pass the oral exam and are eligible to sign-up for one. The AOIC supports interpreters as they prepare for the exam through subsidized skills building trainings and local and regional training programs.

Below are snap charts of data from 2015 and 2021 that shows the percentage of unregistered interpreters used then and now. Unregistered interpreters are interpreters that have not had their language skills and/or interpreting skills tested.

% of Interpretations by Interpreter Type 2015



% of Interpretations by Interpreter Type 2021



What initiatives have made the biggest difference in the first decade of the Commission on Access to Justice's existence?

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Its commitment to continuously seek to improve “the diverse and evolving needs of court users.” Because our world is changing at a dramatic pace, the courts in Illinois must innovate and rethink quickly, especially since the onset of the pandemic. Fortunately, the Commission has been at the forefront of seeing that our courts adapt, so the vulnerable have the same access to justice as everyone else. Without the Commission, that would have been a slower and less efficient process.

JUSTICE MICHAEL B. HYMAN.
First District, Appellate Court, Committee Member

It has given the Clerk's Office many tools and resources to provide to self-represented litigants, alleviating stress and frustration with the process.

TINA SCHILLACI,
Chief Deputy Clerk, First District,
Appellate Court, Committee Member

Creating a statewide court navigator network to share ideas, troubleshoot problems, and encourage consistency among the circuits as it relates to self-represented litigants.

FRANCES PAPARIGIAN,
SRL Coordinator, Nineteenth Judicial
Circuit Court, Committee Member

The creation of the Illinois Supreme Court Language Access Policy. The Policy sets guidelines for the use of certified court interpreters as well as the interpreter certification process. It is very important to have qualified individuals interpreting in the court, especially when an individual's liberties are on the line.

NOOR ALAWAWDA,
Senior Program Manager, ATJ Division,
Administrative Office of the Illinois Courts



2. What initiatives have made the biggest difference in the first decade of the Commission on Access to Justice's existence?

The Commission has done a wonderful job in helping our circuit help self-represented litigants by assisting us to develop a resource room in four of our five counties. It has helped provide technology such as computers, scanners, printers, copiers, easy forms and instructions and continues to provide valuable services such as Illinois Court Help.

LEANN BRANDENBURG,
Trial Court Administrator, Fifteenth Judicial Circuit Court

“ HAVING UNIFORM STATEWIDE FORMS. CREATION OF STEP-BY-STEP EASY TO READ INSTRUCTIONS FOR PRO SE PEOPLE.

BRANDON WILLIAMS,
Supervising Attorney, Cabrini Green Legal Aid, Committee Member



The tools and resources to make access to justice a reality. For example, language access and disability rights, JusticeCorps and SRL Coordinators, ATJ grants, the plethora of SRL resources including forms, Illinois Court Help, trainings/seminars, bench cards and resources, amendments to Supreme Court Rules related to ATJ, contributions to Supreme Court Policies such as the Safe Harbor and Plain Language Policies, fee waivers, promoting remote access to our courts.

JUDGE JORGE L. ORTIZ,
Circuit Court Judge, Nineteenth Judicial Circuit Court, ATJ Commissioner, Co-Chair of the Community Trust Committee

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THE CONTINUED AND TIRELESS WORK ON STATEWIDE STANDARDIZED FORMS AS WELL AS INCREASING ACCESS TO THE COURTS FOR LITIGANTS WITH LIMITED ENGLISH PROFICIENCY STAND OUT AS SOME OF THE MOST IMPORTANT INITIATIVES FROM THE COMMISSION IN ITS FIRST DECADE.

CORTNEY REDMAN,
Director of Court Advocacy, The Chicago Bar Foundation, Committee Member
Management Consultant, National Center for State Courts

Implementing Illinois Court Help as a free service that provides information and resources related to procedural expectations.

SCOTT BLOCK,
Statewide Behavioral Health Administrator, Administrative Office of the Illinois Courts

2. What initiatives have made the biggest difference in the first decade of the Commission on Access to Justice's existence?

Simplifying forms for litigants who are not lawyers. It is crucial that a self-represented litigant is easily able to (1) locate the information or documents they need; (2) be able to easily respond to questions on available forms; and (3) easily ascertain what is needed with simplified explanations. I have seen a tremendous change in the ability of self-represented litigants to maneuver the litigation process with greater ease.

JUDGE ROSSANA P. FERNANDEZ,
Circuit Court Judge, Circuit Court of Cook
County, Committee Member

Leveraging AmeriCorps funding to create Illinois JusticeCorps. Engaging with students and recent grads to assist in courthouses across Illinois provides valuable service opportunities for students, diversifies court staff and services, and helps people without lawyers. But above all of these individual (major) accomplishments, I think the biggest accomplishment has been the Commission bringing together so many groups—bar associations, law schools and colleges, the Conference of Chief Judges, appellate courts, other Supreme Court Commissions and Committees, the Illinois Judicial College, the Statutory Fee Task Force—and so much more to expand access to justice. When done well, collaboration is very hard work, and the Commission does it so well.

DANIELLE HIRSCH,
Former Director of ATJ Division, Interim
Court Services Director, National Center for
State Courts



The Commission has provided invaluable assistance to countless homeowners faced with the risk of losing their homes to foreclosure. Foreclosure cases can be difficult for self-represented litigants to navigate because they must file appearances, formal answers, and often motions to vacate default judgments. Through the work of the Foreclosure Forms Subcommittee, fill-in-the blank court forms are now available for these homeowners so they can file the necessary paperwork to avoid default judgments and ensure they have time to explore all available mitigation options.

JUSTICE MATHIAS W. DELORT,
First District, Appellate Court, Chair of the Mortgage Foreclosure Forms Subcommittee



2. What initiatives have made the biggest difference in the first decade of the Commission on Access to Justice's existence?

“ After the creation of the Commission, this work was brought directly under the Supreme Court's umbrella. The Court appointed members of the bench, bar, and justice partners to the Commission to focus on these issues and make continual recommendations. The Court appointed one of its members as a liaison who could take issues directly to the Court for consideration. This helped break logjams on issues that had festered for years. The Court, the Commission, and justice partners all embraced this new role for the betterment of the system of justice in Illinois almost immediately. As a result, the Commission ensures that changes and improvements to the judicial branch focus not only on the needs of lawyers and judges, but on the needs all people who seek justice.

ADAM VAUGHT,
Partner, Kilbride & Vaught, LLC

Elevating the voice and experience of people without lawyers (who increasingly represent a bigger and bigger number of the court's customers) and ensuring that the courts are accessible to Illinoisans who cannot afford lawyers.

TERI ROSS,
Executive Director, Illinois Legal Aid Online, Strategic Partner

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The standardized forms program has enabled hundreds of SRLs to achieve their legal goals like getting a divorce. I also think the Commission's emphasis on training court staff/volunteers to work with SRLs has built a critical mass of SRL allies within the court system, so folks without lawyers always have a friendly ear and somewhere to turn.

NINA WILSON,
Court Guide, ATJ Division, Administrative Office of the Illinois Courts

The development of standardized statewide forms in various legal areas and several languages and the creation of the Illinois Court Help program. Also, the Commission quickly and efficiently responded to the Covid-19 pandemic by proposing changes to the Illinois Supreme Court Rules to assist attorneys and litigants in accessing courts remotely.

JUDGE CLARE J. QUISH,
Circuit Court Judge, Circuit Court of Cook County, Committee Member



2. What initiatives have made the biggest difference in the first decade of the Commission on Access to Justice's existence?

Having worked on the Forms Committee I might be biased, but I do think that the initiation of statewide standardized forms has had a significant impact on the court system. It might seem odd that fillable forms can be a game changer, but in reality, I think the forms are. For example, when a hard-working mom receives a lawsuit for an unpaid bill and is instructed to file an appearance, having a form with instructions that explains what an appearance is and how to file her appearance gives that working mom an opportunity to participate in the court system. Also, the Court Navigator Network and Illinois Court help are two initiatives making a big difference in the court system in Illinois. Both programs give SRLs the opportunity to get live help from seasoned professionals who answer questions about court processes and procedures. These navigators and guides have become invaluable resources in the court.

JUDGE CATHERINE A. SCHNEIDER,
Circuit Court Judge, Circuit Court of Cook County, Co-Chair of the Forms Committee



In 2020, the Administrative Office of the Illinois Courts, Illinois Supreme Court Commission on Access to Justice, and the Public Interest Law Initiative partnered to create the first-ever virtual legal advice clinic for civil appeals in Illinois using Illinois Free Legal Answers. Since its launch, through this program pro bono volunteers have answered over 250 questions from self-represented litigants about their civil appeals.

BRENT PAGE,
Senior Program Manager, ATJ Division, Administrative Office of the Illinois Courts



2. What initiatives have made the biggest difference in the first decade of the Commission on Access to Justice's existence?

The combination of (1) an ever-growing plethora of standardized, plain-language court forms that are tech-integrated and easy to use and (2) a network of enthusiastic, knowledgeable folks in courthouses statewide to coordinate help for people navigating the courts! Not only do these two initiatives help countless individuals, but they also provide an ongoing pipeline of ideas for new reforms, informed by those who are seeing where the need is most.

ANGELA INZANO,
Policy and Advocacy Strategist, ACLU of Illinois, Committee Member

“ The forms and instructions. As a judge, I see self-represented litigants use these every day. It is so much easier for them to start and complete cases using these forms. The availability of state-wide approved forms and instructions greatly expands the number of people that can successfully do their own case. The addition of Illinois Court Help improves the usability of these forms because users can get information and help to assist in understanding the forms and instructions.

JUDGE MICHAEL A. FIELLO,
Associate Judge, First Judicial Circuit Court,
Co-Chair of the Forms Committee

Both tools and guidance. The “tools” are best exemplified by the Commission’s standardized forms, and their accompanying instructions, which have broken down the barriers of jargon and legalese that previously were so overwhelming to non-lawyers. Now, to meaningfully participate in any of the most common civil actions, a litigant has only to print the appropriate form and follow the plain-English instructions. And for “guidance,” the Illinois Court Help line is an invaluable resource, to which we refer litigants almost daily. The idea that litigants would have such ready access to trained guides who could walk them through our legal system was completely unthinkable just a few years ago. The Commission made it happen and made it work.

JEFFREY H. KAPLAN,
Court Clerk, Second District, Appellate Court, Committee Member



ILLINOIS COURT HELP

The groundbreaking Illinois Court Help service marked its one-year anniversary in May 2022. Born out of the pandemic, this innovative program provides court users with timely access to information and assistance with court processes, court forms, e-filing, and more. The response from court users has been an overwhelming thumbs up from all corners of the state.

Court users contact Illinois Court Help by phone, text message, and email to get help navigating the court system. Anyone can call or text 833-411-1121 or visit ilcourthelp.gov to send a message, which is answered by a team of eight trained court guides. English and Spanish speakers are connected immediately to someone who can assist them, while people who speak other languages are connected with an interpreter.

The most frequently asked questions are about court processes, court forms, e-filing, and how to find legal help. For example, some people seek instructions and forms to start a small claims case or respond to a divorce summons, while others are looking for guidance with crises like domestic abuse or eviction. Many people reach out for help more than once as their case progresses.

A recent court user who filed for divorce as a self-represented person in DuPage County spoke with

4 different court guides at various stages of their case to get the required forms, learn about service of process, receive assistance with e-filing court documents, and get help scheduling a court date. They commented that Illinois Court Help guides were “Very helpful! Would have been very hard to navigate representing myself in my divorce without their help!”

In the first 16 months of the service, the Illinois Court Help team logged over 22,000 interactions with 12,600 individuals in 101 (of 102) Illinois counties. We are still waiting for a call from Hardin County! One-third of all interactions have been with people who have a court case or legal problem in Cook County, with the next highest volume number of requests coming from St. Clair, Macon, DuPage, Sangamon, and McLean counties.

Illinois Court Help uses a technology-enabled customer support platform to offer various communication channels, however, users have shown a marked preference for talking by phone with a court guide. Over 70% of all interactions are by phone, with the remaining interactions evenly split between text messages and email channels. As more people have learned about the service, the volume of requests has steadily increased. Currently over 100 calls a day are received between 9:00 am and 2:00 pm, when the phone hotline is open. Court guides spend an average of 9 minutes on the phone per call.

The vast majority (86%) of people who connect with Illinois Court Help are self-represented individuals. Family and friends of people with legal problems

and members of the public made up 7% of the interactions, and nearly 2% were with lawyers and legal professionals.

Over 88% of all interactions related to a civil court case, while nearly 4% related to criminal cases and 2% to traffic cases. Just over 2% of interactions related to appeals. Of the civil cases, the most prevalent types were small claims, divorce, eviction, family, and probate, in that order.

Feedback received from court users has been overwhelmingly positive, with over 93% of users who responded to a customer satisfaction survey rating their experience as 👍 (good). Court guides have been described by many users as patient, kind, knowledgeable, and as lifesavers!

Future expansion plans for the service include adding a chat message channel and increasing the phone hotline hours. Soon court users will be able to chat with a court guide in real time from our website, ilcourthelp.gov. Expanding the phone hours will allow court guides to help more callers. The bright outlook for Illinois Court Help is continued growth and excellent service to more court users.

A promotional graphic for IL Court Help. At the top, a woman is looking at her smartphone. Below her is the text "Do you have questions about court?". Underneath that, it says "Illinois Court Help connects you to the information you need to go to court. It's a free service from the Illinois Courts." followed by "Call or Text (833) 411-1121". A purple box contains four bullet points: "Find up-to-date information for the steps in your case", "Find the latest COVID-19 updates and how to attend court by phone or video", "Get specific answers to your questions about the court process, like how to file court documents", and "Get connected to legal aid and community resources to help you solve your problem". At the bottom, it says "Visit ilcourthelp.gov to find more information" and includes the IL Court Help logo and tagline.A promotional graphic for IL Court Help in Spanish. At the top, a man is talking on a phone. Below him is the text "¿Tiene usted preguntas acerca del tribunal?". Underneath that, it says "Illinois Court Help le conecta con la información que usted necesita para ir al tribunal. Este es un servicio gratuito de los Tribunales de Illinois." followed by "Llame o Textee al (833) 411-1121". A purple box contains four bullet points in Spanish: "Encuentre información actualizada para tomar los siguientes pasos en su causa judicial", "Encuentre las últimas noticias sobre COVID-19 y cómo comparecer en tribunal por teléfono o video", "Reciba respuestas específicas a sus preguntas, por ejemplo: cómo presentar los documentos en el tribunal", and "Conéctese con los organismos de ayuda legal y recursos comunitarios para ayudarle a resolver su problema". At the bottom, it says "Visite ilcourthelp.gov para más información" and includes the IL Court Help logo and tagline.

COURT NAVIGATOR NETWORK

Illinois JusticeCorps is a partnership between the Commission, Illinois Bar Foundation, and The Chicago Bar Foundation through the federal AmeriCorps program. JusticeCorps has been a part of the Commission’s work since 2012; it started in 2 counties and now serves 12 counties.

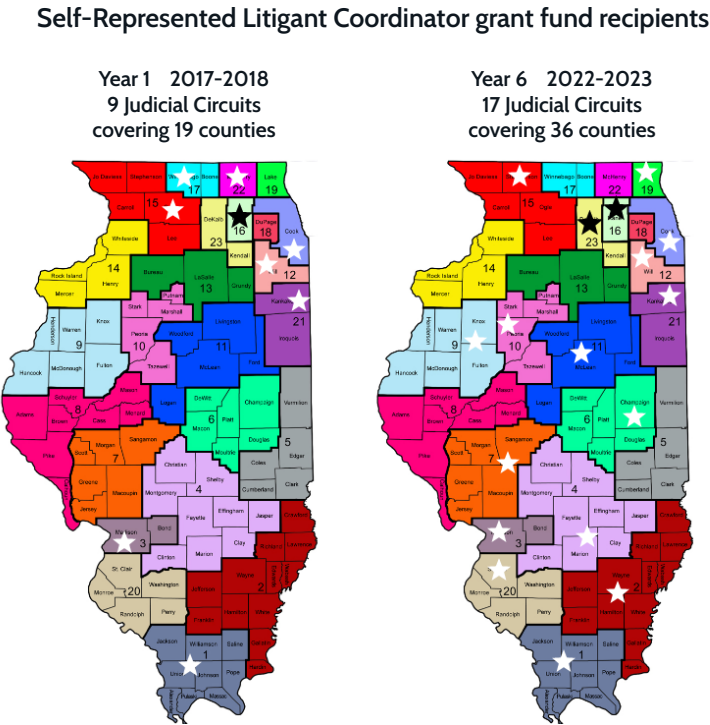
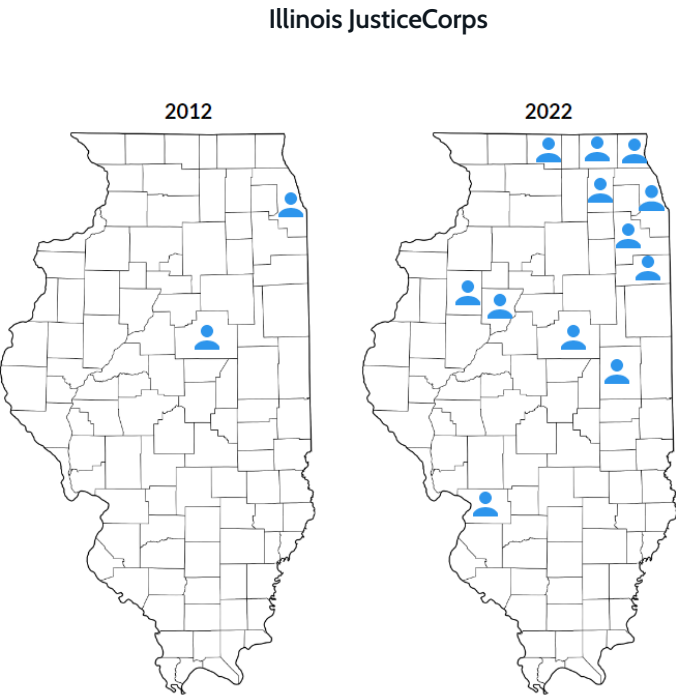
Subsequently, in late 2017, the Commission launched the Self-Represented Litigant Coordinator grant program, which identified individuals in local courts who would develop resources and personally assist self-represented litigants. In the first five years of the program, the Commission has awarded over \$750,000 in grant funds to local jurisdictions whose staff and volunteers have helped nearly 250,000 self-represented litigants. Utilizing grant funds, coordinators have developed innovative projects, which include repurposing courthouse spaces for

help desks or Zoom stations and creating early resolution programs which assist in resolving divorce cases more efficiently. In the first year of the program, the ATJ Commission awarded grant funds to 9 judicial circuits. The program now awards grant funds to 17 judicial circuits.

To fulfill a major goal of the Illinois Judicial Conference’s 2019-2022 strategic agenda, the Commission combined these existing programs to create the Court Navigator Network. The Network

has expanded to include more court staff and circuit clerks across the state. The Network members develop new resources, establish programs for better assisting self-represented litigants, and receive specialized training.

The Network covers nearly all corners of Illinois and has 100 members representing all 24 of the current judicial circuits covering 52 counties.



Since 2017, the ATJ Commission has provided SRL Coordinator grant funds to 20 Judicial Circuits covering 45 counties

3.

What goals should the Commission on Access to Justice set for the next decade? What would you like to see the Commission celebrating 10 years from now?

I WOULD LIKE TO SEE CONTINUED EFFORTS TO WELCOME THOSE WITH UNMET LEGAL NEEDS.

CHIEF JUSTICE MARY JANE THEIS,
Illinois Supreme Court

“ The successful integration of the next generation of technological advances into its programs, the establishment of a deeper sense of trust and partnership between our courts and all Illinois litigants, and recognition as a national leader for its innovative and effective strategies and programs benefitting all Illinois litigants, particularly those in marginalized and disadvantaged groups. In addition to its numerous past successes, the Commission's continual focus on innovation and incremental improvement based on feedback and a willingness to re-think fundamental structures can result in improvements that make our courts truly accessible to all.

JUSTICE ROBERT L. CARTER,
Illinois Supreme Court, Committee Member



Stronger emphasis on building community trust and demystifying court procedures.

LESLIE CORBETT,
Executive Director, The Illinois Equal Justice Foundation, Strategic Partner

“ **CONTINUED REVIEW OF RULES/LAWS/PROPOSALS TO ENSURE ACCESS FOR NON-REPRESENTED LITIGANTS; CONTINUED ONLINE ACCESS; MORE KNOWLEDGE ABOUT WHAT WE DO/WHAT IS AVAILABLE.**

JENNIFER T. NIJMAN,
Partner, Nijman Franzetti, LLP, ATJ Commissioner,
Chair of Strategic Planning Committee and Remote Appearance Committee

3. What goals should the Commission on Access to Justice set for the next decade?
What would you like to see the Commission celebrating 10 years from now?

**STATEWIDE COLLABORATION
IS VITAL TO MEETING THE
CHALLENGES OF ILLINOIS' RURAL
AND URBAN COMMUNITIES.**

SCOTT BLOCK,
Statewide Behavioral Health Administrator,
Administrative Office of the Illinois Courts

Goals for the next decade
should include:

1. Continuing to build bridges
between the courts and the
communities they serve;
2. Continuing to provide resources
for self-represented litigants; and
3. Developing law school and
MCLE course material, and
judicial training programs to
advance professionalism, and
fair and equitable treatment of
all court-users.

CAROLYN H. CLIFT,
Attorney at Law (Ret.), ATJ Commissioner,
Co-Chair of the Community Trust Committee

“ A fee and assessment free
court system. The court system
benefits us all, even if we do not use
it personally, because it provides
a way to deal with crime and civil
disputes in an organized and, it is
hoped, fair way. This societal benefit
should be paid for by the society
as a whole and not by the users
through fees and assessment. Fees
and assessments limit access by
setting up monetary barriers and by
burdening the least able to pay with
financial obligations that long outlast
their court case.

JUDGE MICHAEL A. FIELLO,
Associate Judge, First Judicial Circuit Court,
Co-Chair of the Forms Committee



Process improvement and simplification for areas of the court where
individual Illinoisans most often interact with the system, a consumer-
friendly culture throughout the system. In planning and carrying out
the next ten years, regularly assessing and pivoting as needed so that
the Commission is focused on those areas where it is best situated to
make an impact in the larger access to justice landscape (i.e., those
that necessitate court action) and then promoting and supporting the
Commission's other partners in other key areas of access to justice.

BOB GLAVES,
Executive Director, The Chicago Bar Foundation,
Strategic Partner

The Commission should prioritize
digital access to our courts across
the state with an emphasis on
our rural communities. These
communities have fewer attorneys
and are difficult for legal aid to
serve. Providing digital access to
the courts is one way to improve
access to both the courts and legal
representation.

ANDREW M. WEAVER,
Deputy Director of Program Operations,
Land of Lincoln Legal Assistance
Foundation, ATJ Commissioner



3. What goals should the Commission on Access to Justice set for the next decade?
What would you like to see the Commission celebrating 10 years from now?

The biggest problem the system of Justice faces is sheer numbers, particularly in urban areas. The increasing numbers of unrepresented litigants in debt collection courts, housing courts, and other venues represent the greatest challenge. A true celebration in 10 years would be civil Gideon—representation by quality lawyers in areas threatening the livelihood and wellbeing of all people.

JEFFREY D. COLMAN,
Of Counsel, Jenner & Block, First Chair of the ATJ Commission

“Initiatives related to addressing the racial inequities in our court system, making sure all 102 counties can seamlessly conduct hybrid court proceedings so that users can choose the method they would prefer to participate, ensuring all courthouses across the state are sufficiently trained and staffed to accommodate court patrons with disabilities, and recommitting to providing the highest level of customer service to all court patrons.

SARAH SONG,
Supervising Senior Program Manager,
ATJ Division, Administrative Office of the
Illinois Courts



The Commission is doing such important work, the passion of the members of the group is absolutely inspiring. Bravo on past achievements! The foundation is now established for more good work and the sky is the limit!

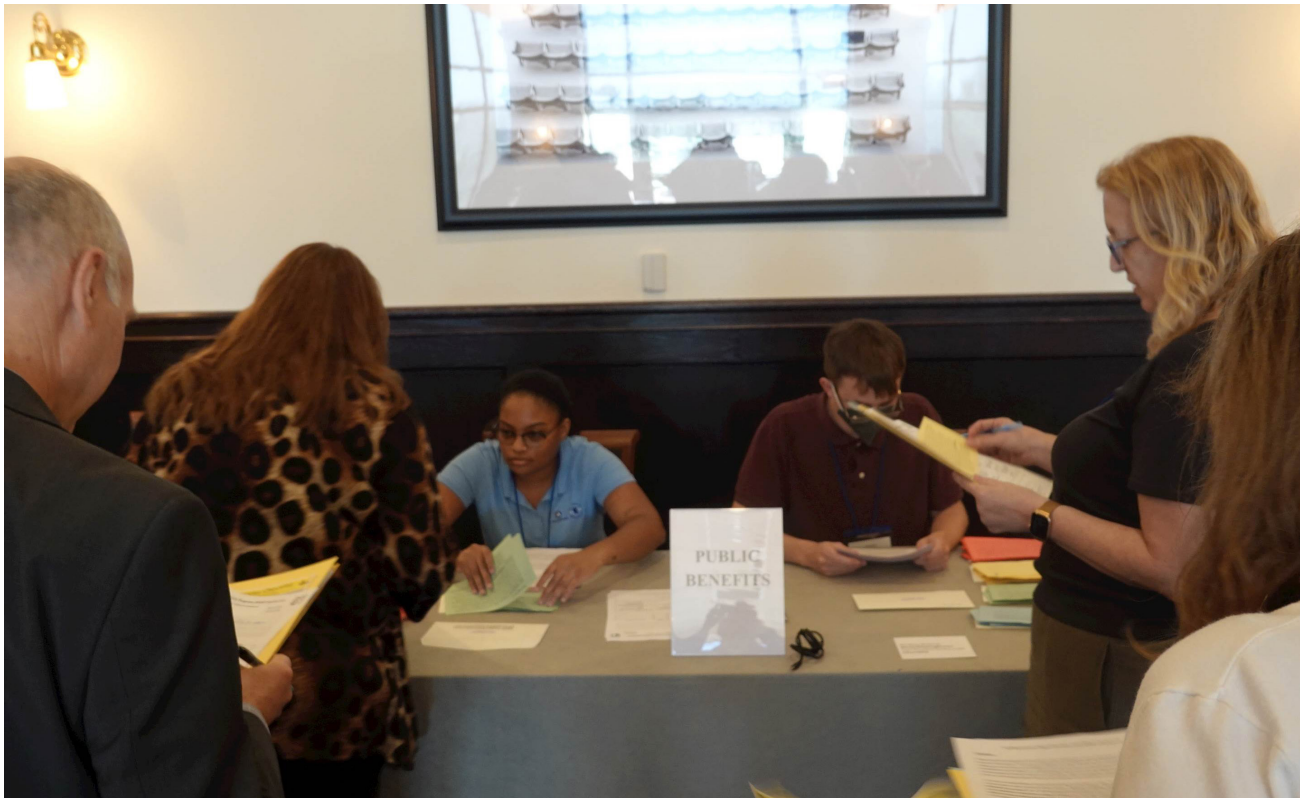
JUDGE ELIZABETH ROCHFORD,
Associate Judge, Ninetieth Judicial Circuit Court,
Committee Member



**3. What goals should the Commission on Access to Justice set for the next decade?
What would you like to see the Commission celebrating 10 years from now?**

The Commission should be celebrating the system's continued improvements to make it easier for people to access the legal system. The old system can't exist as it has and won't work moving forward. The Commission should also serve as the watchdog, so people know where to go when the system starts backsliding into comfortable and familiar ways of how business was always done. That only benefits the stakeholders, not the public.

BETH JOHNSON, Managing Partner, Rights and Restoration Law Group, LLC, Committee Member



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1. Spearhead an increase in the use of courtroom technology so court users can easily participate in their court cases without having to travel, pay for childcare, and miss work to attend court in-person.
2. Expand virtual and in-person courthouse assistance programs so all self-represented people can get the help they need to successfully navigate their court cases.
3. Support the expansion of free legal assistance for cases with high volumes of self-represented people.

LISA COLPOYS,
Supervising Senior Program Manager, ATJ Division, Administrative Office
of the Illinois Courts

The Jeffrey D. Colman Access to Justice Award

The Illinois Supreme Court Commission on Access to Justice is pleased to announce recipients of the Jeffrey D. Colman Access to Justice Award. The recipients have made significant contributions toward achieving the goal of enhancing access to our civil court system.

The Commission was scheduled to begin the annual presentation of the Jeffrey D. Colman award in the summer of 2020 but the plans were delayed because of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Commission is now presenting this honor for years 2020, 2021, and 2022.



2021 AWARDEE

HALLE COX

Kane County's Law Library and Self-Help Director receives the award for her creation of Kane County's Lawyer in the Library program, repeated participation in the Commission's Court Navigator Network as a Self-Represented Litigant Coordinator, supervision of an Illinois JusticeCorps Fellow, and development of innovative and valuable legal resources which assist litigants in Kane County.



2020 AWARDEES

Judge Michael Fiello & Judge Catherine Schneider



Co-Chairs of the Commission's Standardized Court Forms Committee are honored for the countless hours which they devoted to the development of statewide court forms and instructions. Under their stewardship, the Forms Committee has finalized 52 form sets in areas including family, criminal records, mortgage foreclosure, civil procedure, and eviction.



2022 AWARDEE

MELISSA PICCIOLA

Director of Pro Bono & Community Partnerships at Legal Aid Chicago is lauded for her work in connecting self-represented litigants to legal advice, particularly in the area of criminal records relief and eviction. In her role, she has vastly expanded the network of legal aid opportunities available to pro bono attorneys. As a result, more litigants than ever received legal assistance during the pandemic when the need for such services was at its peak.

What else would you like to mention about the Commission?

Congratulations and much thanks to the many individuals who have worked so hard to improve the quality of justice in our state. And a special acknowledgement to former Chief Justice Thomas L. Kilbride who had the vision to create the Commission.

CHIEF JUSTICE MARY JANE THEIS,
Illinois Supreme Court

“The Commission, its volunteers, and the top-notch staff at the ATJ Division are moving mountains one procedural boulder at a time. Their quiet, strategic advocacy is truly changing the world.

LESLIE CORBETT,
Executive Director, The Illinois Equal Justice Foundation, Strategic Partner

The dedicated commissioners, staff, and volunteers of the Access to Justice Commission have educated, supported, and empowered thousands of individuals to meaningfully participate in the court process. I want to congratulate the ATJ Commission on its 10-year anniversary and wish it all the best as it continues to enhance equal access to justice.

JUSTICE LISA HOLDER WHITE,
Illinois Supreme Court

When people think about the judicial branch of government, they typically think about court and the penalties that are imposed. However, the judicial system also provides hope. Pablo Picasso once said, “The meaning of life is to find your gift. The purpose of life is to give it away.” The Illinois Supreme Court Access to Justice Commission and the programs and initiatives it has developed and implemented over the last 10 years, are gifts that have provided hope to many. The Commission’s efforts to make our courts more accessible to all, particularly self-represented litigants, have increased fairness and restored trust. I congratulate the Commission on all its accomplishments.

JUSTICE ANNE M. BURKE,
Illinois Supreme Court

In just ten years, the Commission has become a central element of the work of the Court and is interwoven with every aspect of how the court functions. I am very proud to have been part of that work and I hope everyone who has been involved can take stock of how much has been accomplished and find inspiration for a more equitable court system in the future!

STACEY JONAS WEILER,
Program Operations Director, Illinois JusticeCorps,
Illinois Bar Foundation, Committee Member



4. What else would you like to mention about the Commission?

“

AS AN ILAO STAFF MEMBER, IT HAS BEEN A PLEASURE AND AN HONOR TO WORK WITH VARIOUS MEMBERS OF THE COMMISSION. THANKS FOR YOUR VALUED PARTNERSHIP AND TIRELESS EFFORTS TO MAKE ACCESS TO JUSTICE A REALITY FOR MORE AND MORE PEOPLE EACH YEAR.

MATT NEWSTED,
Associate Director of Legal Tech, Illinois Legal Aid Online,
Committee Member

I wish to congratulate the Commission on a successful decade of service to the citizens of our state and offer my sincere appreciation to the past and present committee members and staff.

JUSTICE MICHAEL J. BURKE,
Illinois Supreme Court

The ATJ Commission and its staff provided invaluable assistance during my tenure as Clerk of the Supreme Court. Staff were more than willing to brainstorm an issue and think outside of the box to develop a process to better assist SRLs or the public in general. The ATJ Division within AOIC touches all aspects of the Judicial Branch and should continue to be consulted on major initiatives.

CAROLYN TAFT GROSBOLL,
Former Illinois Supreme Court Clerk (Ret.), Committee Member

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As a result of the Access to Justice Commission, the Nineteenth Judicial Circuit has a full-time SRL Coordinator. In the first several years of the SRL program we established programs to better assist SRLs, including the creation of a dedicated space in the law library for JusticeCorps. We also established an Early Resolution Program and an SRL family division Courtroom. We then took the success of those programs to the County Board and asked for an additional employee position to be dedicated to SRLs. The Board approved. As part of the SRL program we received grant money to establish a workspace for the JusticeCorps fellow. When COVID began and we realized court would shift for a significant time to remote, we used the JusticeCorps space as a template for Zoom stations. We were able to turn our Law Library and Self-Help Center into a Zoom Center. SRLs were able to come to the courthouse to Zoom into court. We were able to help those without computer, wifi, or the technological understanding to make their court appearances and keep them safe at the same time. These initiatives prepared us for COVID without knowing COVID was coming. We were able to easily transition our assistance to SRLs in a meaningful and productive way.

ELIZABETH BOGIE,
Staff Attorney, Nineteenth Judicial Circuit Court

The Commission provides essential work in bringing the realities of the court system to the attention of those entrusted with its care and guidance. It plays an important role in guiding policies that will bring our courts into the modern world!

ROBERT G. MARKOFF,
Markoff Law, LLC, Committee Member

Working to improve the court process so it can serve the public as the institution was truly intended is immensely satisfying. Sometimes addressing its challenges feels like pushing an enormous rock up a steep mountain face, but working with the Commissioners, staff, and volunteers is ever rejuvenating.

ALISON D. SPANNER,
Director of Access to Justice and Strategic Planning, ATJ Division, Administrative Office of the Illinois Courts

4. What else would you like to mention about the Commission?



The sheer amount of work that the Commission and its partners have devoted to its cause—the time, the dedication, the pure selflessness—is everything that’s good and right about our system of justice. I’m proud to have played a small role in it.

JEFFREY H. KAPLAN,
Appellate Court Clerk, Second District,
Appellate Court, Committee Member

The Commission’s work improves institutions, systems, and processes in ways that make tangible, demonstrable, and meaningful differences in the lives of thousands of people every year. That fact is easy to forget in the press of reading reports, scrutinizing budgets, and attending meetings. But it matters. On some level it is the only thing that matters. And it should never be forgotten and should motivate us all to push forward and do more.

MARK MARQUARDT,
Executive Director, Lawyers Trust Fund of Illinois, Strategic Partner

The Commission has been an incredible and effective force for good. Illinois truly stands out as a national leader due to the tireless work of the Commission and the ATJ Division. Thank you for all that you do!

SAMIRA NAZEM,
Former ATJ Division Staff, Principal Court Management Consultant, National Center for State Courts

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The outstanding volume of work by the ATJ Commission, completed under the guidance of the Supreme Court and in collaboration with the Administrative Office of the Illinois Courts, is reflective of wonderfully productive relationships that have resulted in tangible advances toward making Illinois courts more accessible to all.

MARCIA M. MEIS,
Director, Administrative Office of the Illinois Courts

AS A CAREER-LONG PUBLIC INTEREST LAWYER, I AM PERSONALLY THANKFUL FOR THE COMMISSION AND ITS WORK. AS AN ORGANIZATIONAL PARTNER IN THE WORK OF THE COMMISSION, WE COULD NOT ASK FOR A BETTER PARTNER.

MICHAEL BERGMANN,
Executive Director, Public Interest Law Initiative, Strategic Partner

THE ILLINOIS SUPREME COURT COMMISSION ON ACCESS TO JUSTICE:

ATJ COMMISSIONERS

Hon. David K. Overstreet,
Supreme Court Liaison

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ILLINOIS SUPREME COURT COMMISSION



EDUCATION. SUPPORT. EMPOWERMENT.