

# **Access to Justice Commission Minutes October 10, 2014**

The Access to Justice Commission met at the Supreme Court Building on October 10, 2014. Those attending the meeting in person, by video, or by phone were Chief Justice Jim Burke, Justice Kate Fox, Senator Tony Ross, Judge Tim Day, Judge Shelley Cundiff, Amanda Roberts, Larry Wolfe, Walter Eggers, Ray Macchia, Angie Dorsch, Gen Tuma, Cathy Duncil, Dona Playton, Lauren Browne, Tenille Castle, Dan Fleck, Stuart Day, Brad Bonner, Joann Odendahl, Ronda Munger, and Becky Craig.

## **Introduction:**

Justice Fox, Chair of the Commission, welcomed the commission members and guests. She explained that the main purpose of the meeting was to discuss the 2014 Report to the Wyoming Supreme Court and Five-Year Strategic Plan for 2015-2020.

## **Provider Updates:**

**Wyoming Center for Legal Aid** – Angie Dorsch, Executive Director of the Wyoming Center for Legal Aid, reported the following:

- The Center continues to build resources to assist self-represented litigants; the Center’s website now has over 180 pages of legal information on many different areas of law; there are new forms and instructions to help pro se litigants navigate through the process more easily; the website had over 19,000 visits in the last four months.
- The Center has been holding monthly advice clinics in Cheyenne to enable self-represented litigants to obtain advice from *pro bono* attorneys. The clinics have been averaging between 12-14 clients.
- The first set of interactive forms (divorce without children) are now available on the Supreme Court’s website. The District Court Clerks have reported that the forms are being used by pro se litigants and they are working well. The Center plans to have the next set of interactive forms (divorce with children) completed before the end of the year and will continue to automate all of the Supreme Court’s pro se packets. Automation of a set of Wyoming’s pro se forms was chosen by the Chicago Kent Law School’s Technology and Justice Class as one of its projects. The class will be automating the forms for guardianship of a minor child.
- The Center launched its *Pro Bono* Portal in April. The portal offers forms and pleadings for *pro bono* attorneys, as well as how-to guides and archived CLE programs. Free CLE programs are provided monthly by webinar.
- The Center is working with the State Bar on the “I’ll Do One” campaign and the Veteran’s Assistance Program. The Center continues to use the five remote access sites and Skype clinics as a way to connect with clients in the rural areas of the state.

- The Center will be participating, for the second year, in National *Pro Bono* Week. There are projects and events planned around the state, and the Governor will be signing a *pro bono* week proclamation on Oct. 20<sup>th</sup>.
- Since the Center did not receive additional money in the last legislative session, it will be submitting a supplemental budget request in the next session for \$100,000 for grant purposes.
- The Center presented two different sessions at the Equal Justice Conference in Portland in May, and has been asked to present another session at the 2015 conference in Austin.

**Legal Aid of Wyoming** – Ray Macchia, the Executive Director of Legal Aid of Wyoming, reported the following:

- The Legal Aid hotline, which provides immediate free advice, forms, and help in completing forms, continues to be a huge success. To date there have been 3,912 cases closed as a result of the hotline, 300 of which were litigation cases. The expenses to establish the Rock Springs and Gillette hotlines came in under budget.
- The majority of Legal Aid’s cases are family law cases (72% of the cases in Rock Springs, 76% in Gillette, and 57% of the hotline cases).
- There is a need for pro se forms to be developed on additional topics. Video instructions would also be a useful tool to help pro se litigants navigate through the system.
- Additional funding is needed. Legal Aid of Wyoming is applying for a technology initiative grant (a minimum of \$50,000) through the Legal Services Corporation.

**Wyoming State Bar’s Initiatives** – Cathy Duncil, the Pro Bono Coordinator for the Wyoming State Bar, reported the following:

- The Wyoming State Bar, in participation with the Center, currently has 44 attorneys signed up for the “I’ll Do One” program. The “I’ll Do One” video, which was developed in collaboration with the Center for Legal Aid and the Supreme Court, was shown at the State Bar meeting and the new admittee reception. There are a total of 120 attorneys signed up for the volunteer lawyer program. The Bar and the Center for Legal Aid will give a presentation at the Laramie County Bar Meeting to recruit volunteers for *pro bono* initiatives.

**Teton County Access to Justice Center** – Lauren Browne, the Executive Director of the Center, reported the following:

- The Center is open 4 days a week in the Teton County Law Library from 1-5 p.m. to answer quick legal reference questions. The Center’s funds come from the WCLA, the Jackson Hole Community Foundation and the Wyoming State Bar Foundation. They will also be working with the Community Safety Network to provide funding to assist domestic violence and stalking cases.

- The Center has 18 contract lawyers on file, many of whom do reduced fee or *pro bono* services. There is one part-time staff attorney who handles most of the family law and landlord-tenant cases. In fiscal year 2014 there were 109 applications for legal assistance—a 9% increase from the previous year.
- The Center holds a weekly pro se forms clinic that enables pro se litigants in divorce actions to meet with an attorney.

### **Commission Initiatives:**

**Review of the Draft 2014 Report to the Wyoming Supreme Court & Five-Year Strategic Plan – 2015-2020** – Walter Eggers reviewed the report portion of the document and discussion was held. Discussion was then directed to the proposed targeted five-year strategic plan covering 2015-2020 and the issues and initiatives that the Commission will address. Suggested changes were reviewed and agreed upon. A proposal was made that a representative from the Circuit Court Clerks be added to the membership of the Access to Justice Commission, which would require that the Bylaws be amended. Discussion was held. Walter Eggers moved and Gen Tuma seconded a motion to recommend to the Supreme Court that the Bylaws and Rules of the Wyoming Access to Justice Commission be amended to include the President of the Clerk of Circuit Court’s Association, or his or her designee recommended by the President of the Clerk of Circuit Courts’ Association. Motion passed unanimously. Discussion was held on revising the Commission’s mission statement. The statement currently reads: “The mission of the Wyoming Access to Justice Commission is to promote fair and equal access to civil justice in Wyoming.” The consensus of the members was that the mission statement should remain as written.

Walter Eggers will prepare a revised version of the Draft 2014 Report to the Wyoming Supreme Court & Five-Year Strategic Plan – 2015-2020 and will circulate it by email to the Commission members for their review and vote.

### **Future Plans:**

The Commission will continue to support funding for legal services. It will continue to investigate additional methods of providing legal services to the citizens of Wyoming, and will work to identify and address any obstacles to access to justice.

Meeting was adjourned.