



Judicial Council of Georgia Access to Justice Committee Meeting

February 16th, 2022
12:00 p.m. – 2:00 p.m.

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://georgiacourts-gov.zoom.us/j/83228284007?pwd=WmFPZ0JmZ2EyNHhvQUQ4MTg4ak5ldz09>

Meeting ID: 832 2828 4007

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Welcome and Introductions – 10 minutes Justice Verda Colvin

Written Reports- Summary of November 10th, 2021

SAVE THE DATES – Upcoming Events

Upcoming A2J Committee Meetings Dates: May 11th, August 31st and November 9th, 2022

Access to Justice Retreat in Montgomery, AL on March 9th, 2022

2022 Equal Justice Conference in Minneapolis, Minnesota, May 12-14th, 2022.
(Pre-conference beginning May 11th)

A2J Committee Project and Community Updates

- I. **A2J Landlord Tenant Working Group Update** - 10 minutes, Judge Cassandra Kirk
- II. **CALER Committee Update** – 5 minutes Tabitha Ponder
- III. **SRL Forms Working Group Update** -10 minutes, Vicky Kimbrell
- IV. **Deaf and Hard of Hearing Working Group Update** – 5 minutes, Will Simmons
- V. **Law Library Model Project**- 10 minutes, Nancy Long
- VI. **Legal Record Restriction Clinic** - 3 minutes, Tabitha Ponder
- VII. **Old Business** – 5 minutes
- VIII. **New Business A2J & State Bar’s ATJ joint retreat**-Justice Colvin



Judicial Council of Georgia
Access to Justice Committee
Meeting Minutes
November 11, 2021

Attendees:

Judge Clark; Judge Cassandra Kirk; Judge Cynthia Adams; Judge Leisa Blount; Judge Bill Adams; Judge Sara Doyle; Jill Travis; Belinda Edwards; Chief Judge Brendan Murphy; Judge LaTisha Dear Jackson; Judge Davis Angela Davis; Judge Clarence Cuthpert; Karlise Grier; Sherry Edenfield; Jill Travis; Tabitha Ponder

Guests: Vicky Kimbrell; Nikki Vaughn; Terica Ganzy; Nancy Long; John Botero; Jessica Farah; Tracy Johnson; Noelle-Lagueux-Alvarez; Cynthia Clanton; Michelle Barclay; Tynesha Manual; Latoinna Lawrence

A motion for the minutes from the August 31, 2021, committee meeting was brought to order. There were no objections, the minutes were approved. The tentative dates for the 2022 calendar year are February 16th, May 11th, August 31st, and November 9th, 2022.

Annual Statewide Combined Pro Bono meeting

The Annual Statewide pro bono meeting was held October 22, 2021, as a hybrid meeting. It was a combined meeting with Georgia Legal Services or The State Bar. Two years ago, there was a hybrid meeting held in Savannah GA. There were conversations from Albany, Fulton, Macon, DeKalb and Athens. Judge Katherine Salinas would like to work more closely together with the Judicial Council, State Bar Access to Justice Committee. A discussion regarding a retreat in the spring of 2022 was discussed. Montgomery, Alabama at the National Memorial Peace of Justice could be a great location for the retreat.

A2J Landlord Tenant Webinar

On Friday, November 5, 2021, the Landlord Tenant Working Group presented a webinar on Emergency Rental Assistance Resources for the court. Over 30 magistrate judges from across the state joined. Justice Colvin opened with remarks and Chief Judge Murphy navigated the conversations with Department of Community Affairs and the former Chief Magistrate Judge Daphne Walker. The state of Georgia has \$900 million in rental assistance, only 9 million has been spent. Judge Walker made it clear that there are resources on the state's side so courts will not be taxed with additional resources and clerks and judicial administrative assistants. We can call a dedicated person in each judicial district to get the status of a rental assistance application. There are two programs, the emergency rental assistance one and emergency rental assistance two. This is one application, so the DCA money is available statewide. This applies whether you are in metro Atlanta and received funding directly from the federal

government, or from when you're with the rest of the state and did not receive that direct assistance. If you can show a COVID related hardship, the money that will be dispersed will come out of one federal pot of money called ERA one. If you do not have a COVID related hardship, but you have any hardship that occurred during the COVID period, which relates back to March of 2020, those rental assistance dollars are still available. Judges should apply with one portal, and then DCA will qualify people in one or the other way. Landlords or tenants can initiate an application as well. Essentially both sides must agree to participate. There's some exception for monies being dispersed directly to tenants.

CALER Committee

They are working on different projects. One project was to deploy a survey related to law libraries. They shared the survey with all the executive directors from the different counsel of courts. They also received a multitude of different information related to the forms that are used by different libraries throughout the state. This survey was created with the help of Mercer Law School. They are also working on creating a directory of law libraries. Lastly, Tabitha and John Botero began conversations regarding questions related to asking for information about the finances of different law libraries. Once this is completed, they will share with the two co-chairs, Justice, Bethel, and Judge McBurney. When completed and approved by the co-chairs, they will share with Mercer so their law students can get on the phone and start calling and gaining as much information as possible. Billy Joe Kaufman, a librarian from Mercer Law School and a professor as well, as one of the students, Ariel Newman, are amazing to work with.

SRL Forms Working Group

This group worked very diligently on developing a packet of divorce forms. They are working to make a set of user-friendly forms. They also completed a video with instructions and a checklist. Everything is loaded onto the judicial portal and is available to the public. There are 159 counties in Georgia and each county has their own set of divorce forms. They developed a set of forms, to get judges statewide, a set of forms. GA Legal Services is working on conducting outreach, the next steps. Judge Dear Jackson added she sent the forms to the Council of Superior Court Judges Access to Justice Committee, they voted for the Executive Committee. They are working on getting that disseminated amongst our counsel. They received the script for the Divorce with Children forms and a video is in the works.

Deaf and Hard of Hearing Working Group

The goal for this working group is to try to create a teaching module for both judges and attorneys. The ADA recently stated that lawyers have legal ethics for lawyers to effectively communicate with persons who are deaf or hard of hearing. They are going to the State Bar to see if they can work with the professionalism committee to see if they can get this module done, however they currently do not have the funds. They have been working with Dr. Will Simmons, who is the District Chair Administrator. Dr. Simmons found a few devices and transported them between courts. The devices cost around \$1500 to \$3,000 each. Michelle Barclay may have identified a possible funding source. Before they conduct

any more seeking of funds for hearing device, which is just one part of what is needed to improve Access to Justice, that may be no longer needed, because they have other funds that will allow equipment to be purchased, due to COVID.

Law Library Model Project

They held a meeting with the commissioners in Dougherty County, and they have their support for the self-help center, and they have partnered with the public library. They are going to see how they can turn around and share services because they have bigger facilities. They partnered with Albany Works which is with the municipal court in the building. They are always serving the people for self-help. One of their attorneys John Carbo, resigned as the chairman of the self-help center board. Soon they will get hire a new board member. Unbundled services were discussed, they need an example of a disclaimer of unbundled services.

Landlord Tenant Working Group and Survey and Webinar

An approved survey was emailed out to all Magistrate Judges and a response PDF document was created. 78% of our 51 respondents indicated that they had a backlog of landlord tenant cases, but only 31% attributed that backlog to the CDC moratorium. 52% of our courts use remote technology and those that did not, said the impediment to technology would be concerns about accessibility with internet and or computer access. Most judges responded they had a handle on what they are going to do with the backlog of cases, although 74% of them said they would be interested in suggestions and best practices.

Legal Record Restriction Clinic

The last record restriction clinic was in Gainesville, GA with Nikki Vaughn and team. About 70 registered for the town hall meeting, which was a good response for virtual attendance. As the COVID restrictions lift, we plan to start back in a hybrid fashion, then hopefully back into in person.

Old Business

Grant Updates

The record restrictions grant was approved, thanks to the Commission on Professionalism and the CLCC. They submitted a proposal to them to continue this work, along with Access to Justice and Tabitha Ponder. They also submitted a second proposal to the Commission on Professionalism to continue the expungement clinics, which are record restriction clinics, and they received both. They have requested state funds for continue to work with Tabitha Ponder.

New Business (Vote for 2022 A2J Committee Meetings)

A vote for the dates for 2022 A2J Committee Meetings was conducted. There were no oppositions, the future dates stand. Judge Kirk reported on a brief announcement. Two years ago, Fulton Magistrate Court looked at ways to figure out how to have a consumer clinic. Fulton County handles about 80,000

cases, they have a lot of people attempting to represent themselves. On October 13, 2021, they hired a staff attorney that is going to help staff their Reach Clinic, which is the Rapid Educational Assistance, Court Help. It is a self-help legal clinic that will be in their Justice Resource Center. They are in the process of training law students from Emory University.



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These forms have been approved by the Council of Superior Court Judges Forms Committee for use in Georgia Courts.

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