



## Judicial Council of Georgia

### Standing Committee on Access to Justice

Wednesday, August 16<sup>th</sup>, 2023

12:00 p.m. – 1:30 p.m.

Administrative Office of the Courts

Ratley Training Room 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor

244 Washington Street, S.W., Ste 300 Atlanta, Georgia 30334

#### Conference Call Information

<https://georgiacourts-gov.zoom.us/rec/share/rxDAmxQjib-55Mi0JHKlfQhJ1MZQcjz1B6OfOxmqdm-T0pTveZH4gh19lUXB7V6.sTiROWpyUHVJ7Fdd>

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**In-Person Attendees:** Justice Verda Colvin, Judge Tabitha Ponder, Judge Belinda Edwards, Judge Clarence Cuthpert, Noelle Lagueux-Alvarez, Latoinna Lawrence, Deonte Mayfield

**Online Attendees:** Judge Jana Edmondson-Cooper, Judge Cynthia Adams, Judge (R) Bill Adams, Judge Jason Thompson, Anne Kirkhope, Sarah Anderson, Lashawn Murphy, Jessica Farah, Andrew Zoll, Nancy Long, Herbert Gordon

#### Written Reports

A motion for the minutes from the May 10<sup>th</sup>, 2023 committee meeting was brought to order. There were no objections, the minutes were approved. The tentative dates for the 2023 calendar year are February 1st, May 10th, August 16th, and November 15th, 2023.

#### White Paper/Carl Vinson Study Update

Justice Colvin reports on the progress of the White Paper and Carl Vinson Study. An emergency meeting was held in July for the A2J committee to vote on the original proposal for the \$250,000 Self-Help Center Study conducted by Carl Vinson. That vote resulted in renegotiations with Carl Vinson for a more specific study at a lower cost. Carl Vinson returned with a new proposal along the requested guidelines at a cost of \$60,935. A motion was made to vote on the cost, and the vote passed. The contract will be signed by Chief Justice Boggs and the estimated return of the study is to be early December. The objective of this study is to give the Chief the adequate data he will need to make the appropriations request to fund legal self-help centers through the state legislature.

### **CALER Committee Update**

Herbert Gordon gives the update on the CALER Committee. The CALER survey was dispersed to all law libraries and legal self-help centers in each of the 10 Judicial Districts. The data collected from the survey provided insight to the available resources for pro-se litigants. Resources like multilingual interpreters, computer stations, legal information, and referral networks were analyzed to assess the status of our current law libraries. Law libraries like the one in Dougherty County have become model examples for other Judicial Districts to follow. This subcommittee plans to collaborate with active law libraries and push for more support within the resources for pro se litigation.

### **SRL Forms Working Group Update**

Judge Cynthia Adams reports on the progress of this working group. The Southern Circuits legitimation packet is serving as our template for the statewide legitimation forms. One issue that was encountered with this packet was the plaintiff's affidavit, but with the assistance of the judges in this working group this issue was resolved. We have received feedback from the Council of Magistrate Judges regarding on Landlord-Tenant Forms. We will make the requested edits and send it back to the council for more feedback and approval. Vicky Kimbrell continues her work on the custody forms. All three forms - Landlord Tenant, Legitimation, and Custody Forms – are being finalized for public use. Forms will be shared with the committee for feedback and input before distribution to our courts.

### **Deaf & Hard of Hearing Working Group Update**

Judge Jana Edmondson-Cooper shares update on the progress of this working group. The Chief Justice Commission on Professionalism awarded the AOC a grant to conduct the Deaf & Hard of Hearing Training. A 4-part series of CLE webinar classes was offered in March - April. Consultant Instructors were hired as contractors to instruct members of the bar and bench on proper accommodation and communication. Our semi-annual grant report was submitted in July and follow up work continues for this project. An administrative error occurred in this project requiring us to rerun Class 1 of the series. Once finalized, all training materials will be sent to ICJE & ICLE

### **Landlord-Tenant Early Resolution Working Group Update**

Deonte Mayfield presents update on progress of Landlord-Tenant Early Resolution Working Group. The National Center for State Courts was accepting applications for the Eviction Diversion Initiative Grant Program. This working group, Landlord Tenant Early Resolution working group, submitted a proposal for the grant program by the April 21<sup>st</sup> deadline. The proposal involved a partnership with the AOC, Georgia Office of Dispute Resolution, and three Magistrate Courts: Clayton, Cobb, and Fulton County. We were selected for a site interview where Chief Judge Kirk, Chief Judge Murphy, and Chief Judge Wright-Hill

presented the proposal in more detail. Unfortunately, our proposal was not awarded the grant funding due to the advisory council's hesitancy towards our proposed facilitator role in 3 county courts. We are currently seeking funding for our proposed program through the Atlanta Community Foundation. Also, the AOC submitted a request for a graduate student intern from GSU to help offer alternatives to the high rates of evictions in our state.

### **Law Library Project Update**

Nancy Long shares update on the Southwest Georgia Law Library Project. A recent Anniversary Reception was held at the center in celebration of its 5<sup>th</sup> year anniversary. The center raised over \$2000 from this event. The Fundraising working group for this center is planning to kick off a fundraising letter campaign in October. The letters are to be signed by attorneys only and distributed to a variety of potential donors. The working group is planning to showcase the center's first annual fundraiser event around Law Day in May.

### **A2J Webinar Series Update**

Judge Tabitha Ponder shares update on A2J Webinar Series. All webinar classes have been produced and uploaded to the YouTube page. We partnered with the GSU Access to Justice Center to discuss with members of the bar, bench, and courts on access to justice issues and solutions. The classes are listed as follows: *How to be a Part of the Solution*, *Legal Information v. Legal Advice*, *Show Me the Money pt. 1 & 2*, *The Role of the Faith Community Improving Justice*, *Let's Talk about Record Restriction*, and *The Crucial Role of Libraries*.  
[\(149\) Webinar Series: Minding the Justice Gap - YouTube](#)

### **New Business**

Retired Judge Bill Adams shares with the committee an invitation to the Taste for Justice Fundraiser Event. This fundraiser will be October 12<sup>th</sup>, 2023, at the Luther Williams Field in Macon, GA. Tickets are \$45.

Sarah Anderson extends an invitation to committee members to join the GLSP Pro Bono Conference in Athens. The conference is October 11<sup>th</sup> – 13<sup>th</sup> at the University of Georgia Law School. Registration is free.

**Meeting Adjourned at 12:47 p.m.**