

AMERICAN BAR ASSOCIATION
COALITION FOR JUSTICE

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Road
maps

A “How-to” Series to Help the Community,
the Bench and the Bar Implement Change
in the Justice System

User-Friendly Courts
Customer Service in
the Courthouse

User Friendly Courts: Customer Service In the Courthouse

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INTRODUCTION

In recent years, judges and court personnel, those who study the workings of the courts, and those who seek to improve the court experience, have begun to employ the phrase “user-friendly courts.” The term refers to efforts underway to make courts, and their proceedings, more understandable and accessible to the countless individuals who each day walk into this country’s federal, state, county, and city courthouses. In this Roadmap, the expression has been used to describe numerous and various kinds of innovations, ranging from the simple and obvious to those dependent upon complex technology. An area that many courts have focused much of their attention on is providing better services for self-represented litigants. Efforts taken to address the needs of self-represented litigants is especially valuable for making courts more user-friendly, since many of the innovations and services implemented for self-represented litigants directly affect and improve the court experience for all users.

THE HEART OF THE MATTER — PUBLIC TRUST AND CONFIDENCE

Before examining particular projects and programs which strive to be more “user-friendly,” it is helpful to take a step back to consider why that trend is emerging, and why it should be emphasized.

“We must never forget that the only real source of power that we as judges can tap is the respect of the people.”

Justice Thurgood Marshall, U.S. Supreme Court

CUSTOMER SERVICE

Although the notions of customer service and customer satisfaction are well-established in the private sector, and even in certain areas of government, their application in the courts has been slow in coming and somewhat difficult to define. One threshold problem is determining exactly who a court's "customers" really are. The courts have various direct customers—which include litigants, lawyers, witnesses, jurors, victims, state and local agencies, public officials, and others—whose interests may be in conflict. For an analysis of the specific ways courts are seeking to improve jurors' experiences, see the Roadmap in this series entitled "The American Jury." A less obvious, but equally important constituency for the courts is the general public, who as taxpayers pay for much of a court's costs, and as observers often judge its outcomes. A group which must also be considered is courthouse personnel, whose own experiences and attitudes affect one another, judges and court administrators, and all those direct customers mentioned above.

One touchstone of customer service is an evaluation of satisfaction and an ongoing effort to use information gathered to make improvements. Unlike private businesses, the courts cannot easily look to objective outcomes such as sales figures or customer numbers to determine their progress. Individual courts must strive to create methods of feedback to provide this missing element. One solution to that dilemma is for courts to find more and better ways to involve the non-legal community in efforts to evaluate and improve the delivery of justice. For specific examples and methods of engaging the public in the process of court improvement, see the Roadmap in this series entitled "Community Involvement."

NATIONAL AND STATE INITIATIVES

At the national level, and in courts scattered across the country, methods of evaluation and feedback are being tested and utilized. On a large scale, there are the extensive surveys conducted by entities such as the ABA and NCSC, as well as within certain states. Individual courts are adopting evaluation methods such as surveys of court employees; focus group discussions; observation of proceedings by citizen volunteers and “court watch” groups; suggestion boxes in courthouses; exit surveys of jurors and litigants; and local or regional surveys of the general public. Many states have created systems for training and certifying court interpreters, listing rosters of certified interpreters online, and using technology to provide interpreters in rural courts by telephone or video conferencing.

- District of Columbia- The District of Columbia is in its final stages of Strategic Plan of the District of Columbia Courts 2003-2007 focusing on five strategic areas vital to the administration of justice; [1] Enhancing the Administration of Justice, [2] Broadening Access to Justice and Service to the Public, [3] Promoting Competence, Professionalism, and Civility,[4] Improving Court Facilities and Technology, [5] Building Trust and Confidence. Contact Associate Judge Ann O’Regan Keary of D.C. Superior Court, Co-Chair of the Strategic Planning Leadership Council, Moultrie Courthouse, 500 Indiana Ave., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20001; Tel. 202/879-1863; E-mail: strategicplanning@dcsc.gov
- Louisiana- The Louisiana Supreme court passed a resolution in 2007 dedicating the month of May to reaching out to schools to provide students with an opportunity to learn about the law, the role of a judge and the court system from members of the judiciary. The Court endorsed a handbook produced by the Louisiana District Judges Association, for judges entitled *Judges in the Classroom*, to provide a guide to assist judges in leading

classroom discussions with middle and high school students. Contact Honorable Charles Porter, President of Louisiana District Judges Association, 300 Iberia St. Suite 210, New Iberia, LA 70560; Tel. 337/369-4410; E-mail: cporter@16jdc.org

- Maryland- The Maryland Judiciary has become an innovative leader and a national model for Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) programs, offering free ADR programs for all cases filed in Maryland District Court. The state has also created community mediation programs with 22 centers in 21 counties, 15 volunteer civil mediation programs, and over 20 school-based initiatives ranging from elementary to college programs to increase awareness of ADR programs. Contact Lou Gieszl, Deputy Executive Director, Mediation and Conflict Resolution Office, 900 Commerce Road, Annapolis, MD 21401; Tel. 410/841-2260; Fax: 410/841-2261; E-mail: lou.gieszl@courts.state.md.us

The Maryland judiciary considers education and community outreach “vital to the court’s mission to build the public’s trust and confidence in the judiciary.” Therefore, the court created extensive education and community outreach programs, from children’s coloring books and an interactive children’s web site, to the “Choices” program, created by Chief Judge Ben C. Clyburn of the District Court, which provides lesson plans and visits schools to discover and discuss the consequences of making the wrong choices. The judiciary also helped produce “Branded D.U.I.”, a film which shares real-life experiences of teens with alcohol related driving offenses and is discussed with students by judges from across the state. Contact Court Information Office, 361 Rowe Boulevard, Annapolis, MD 21401; Tel. 410/260-1488; Fax: 410/974-5291; E-mail: cio@courts.state.md.us

- New Jersey- The New Jersey Judiciary has made available online an extensive collection of legal forms, kits, and brochures for pro se litigants at: www.judiciary.state.nj.us/prose/index.htm. The State Supreme Court also created an Ombudsman office at the state and vicinage levels to provide the

public with court information and receive public complaints about the judicial process. Ombudsman telephone directory is available online at: www.judiciary.state.nj.us/directory/ombudsman.pdf.

- North Dakota- In 2002, the North Dakota Court System adopted a vision statement identifying aspects necessary to make their courts more user-friendly. The vision statement states that the court strives, “to provide the people, through an independent judiciary, equal access to fair and timely resolution of disputes under law”.

PRO SE ASSISTANCE

As the numbers of cases handled by the courts have grown, so have the numbers of individuals who, by necessity or by choice, come to the court unrepresented by legal counsel. A study conducted by the New Mexico Access to Justice Commission, estimated that for every person who gets assistance for their legal problem, two others do not. Courts have often grappled with how to handle those pro se (in California pro per) litigants, and too often in the past have chosen to ignore them and let them struggle on their own. One reason for this neglect was a concern that courthouse personnel should remain impartial and therefore not give legal advice to any party. This is a legitimate consideration. Court employees should be cautioned to avoid practices such as giving information to only one side in a dispute or directly advising anyone that they should or should not pursue a particular claim. The distinction can and must be made between advice and assistance, however this concern should not prevent courts from examining ways in which they can provide much needed help to those trying to negotiate their way through a system which is often intimidating, always confusing, and sometimes thoroughly unintelligible.

Various methods for addressing this problem have emerged in local courts. In a growing number of jurisdictions, progress has been made toward the standardization and simplification of forms which can easily be used by those not represented by an attorney. In some areas, no forms existed except those buried

in books found only in legal libraries. One of the most frustrating experiences for a non-lawyer litigant is to find that different courts, or even different judges in the same courthouse, have different requirements and forms. In certain court districts forms are translated into various languages. The task of creating and/or simplifying forms can be undertaken by the court itself, the bar association, or other volunteer lawyers.

COURT AND BAR ASSOCIATION INITIATIVES

Bar associations are particularly valuable players in this effort, as they can also provide volunteers to help pro se litigants fill out and file forms and other pleadings. Some courts have established “Pro Se” or “Self-Help” Centers on the premises, where forms are available, a private work area is accessible, and attorneys and/or court personnel are on site to answer questions and guide the process. Much progress in the area of pro se services involves technological advances which are discussed below.

- Colorado- In Colorado, the Denver Bar Association has simplified court forms and established clinics and a collection of topical brochures to help pro se litigants with forms and procedures. Contact Carolyn Gravit; Pro Se Clinics & Public Legal Education, Denver Bar Association, 1900 Grant St., Suite 950, Denver, CO 80203, phone: (303) 824-5323, e-mail: cgravit@cobar.org.
- Idaho- In Idaho, Courthouse Assistance offices are located in each of the seven judicial districts to serve as clearinghouses and provide “one-stop shopping” for those seeking access to the courts. Contact Judge Michael Dennard, Director, Court Assistance Office Project, 451 W. State Street, P.O. Box 83720, Boise, ID 83720-0101; www.courtselfhelp.idaho.gov
- New York- In New York, the court created the Facilitating Access Training Program, which culminated with the publishing of a training manual for court employees in 2004. The program was developed to ensure that court staff have the knowledge, tools and resources to respond appropriately to the

public's questions. The training program is aimed at helping court staff to understand: what information can be provided, what is and is not legal advice, and appropriate responses to frequently asked questions. The training manual is published in two volumes, available in PDF: volume I at: www.courts.state.ny.us/ip/justiceinitiatives/pdfs/FATPVol1.pdf volume II at: www.courts.state.ny.us/ip/justiceinitiatives/pdfs/FATPVol2.pdf.

- Maryland- In Maryland, the state has created Family Law Self-Help Centers in all 23 of the state's counties as well as in Baltimore City. In addition to providing interactive online forms, a legal telephone help line is available to help users complete the forms online. Contact the Administrative Office of the Courts, Tel. 410/260-1580; www.courts.state.md.us/family/selfhelp.html
- Minnesota- In Minnesota, the judiciary worked with a "Plain English" expert to make family court forms easier to understand, and are developing videos to help litigants through the family court process. Contact John Kostouros, Communications Director, Court Information Office, 25 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard, St. Paul, MN 55155; Tel. 651/296-6043.

PRO PER ASSISTANCE IN CALIFORNIA COURTS

California is a national leader in restructuring the judicial system to meet the needs and expectations of today's society. California has become a leader in addressing the needs of self-represented litigants, including the development of self-help centers and other services designed to increase access to the judicial system. A goal of the California Courts is to have a self-help center in every court, and in an effort to achieve that goal, the Judicial Branch is trying to get self-help centers officially considered a core part of the justice program. In addition to developing staffed on-site self-help centers, the courts also provide access to information over the phone and through individual court web sites tailored to specific local issues as well as through the state courts online Self-Help Center at: www.courtinfo.ca.gov/selfhelp.

In 2002, the California Legislature implemented five, pilot self-help centers designed to collectively address four major challenges local courts said they faced in meeting the needs of self-represented litigants. The five models chosen underwent a comprehensive evaluation over two and a half years looking at the strategies they designed and implemented, and the outcome of their programs. The results released in 2005 identified a number of strategies that are highly effective in providing services to self-represented litigants that can be adopted by courts throughout the state, since all materials and information created for the model centers were designed to be used state-wide. A valuable result of the program is the data collected during the evaluation period. This included interviews with users before and after hearings, as well as interviews with staff providing a comprehensive view of the challenges and successes from each program. This collection of data and experience can be used by other courts, by looking at aspects of each of the five programs, and then choosing the particular aspects that address their courts needs.

Key findings from the pilot program showed that self-help centers are a valuable way for providing services to people who need access to legal education and information, as well as for improving the quality of justice for those litigants. In addition, the self-help centers improved court efficiency by increasing the accuracy of forms completed by litigants, fewer interruptions to court staff by litigants asking for help, and more responsive declarations filed giving the judicial officer more information on which to base an order. The direct benefits of the self-help center translate into increased public confidence and trust in the court system overall since direct experiences with the courts have the strongest effect on shaping overall public perceptions.

For additional information and results from California's Model Self-Help Pilot Program, contact: Judicial Council of California, Administrative Office of the Courts, 455 Golden Gate Avenue, San Francisco, CA 94102-3660; Tel. 415/865-4200.

PRO SE ASSISTANCE IN MARICOPA COUNTY, ARIZONA

Since 1995, the Superior Court of Arizona in Maricopa County, (metropolitan Phoenix) has brought self-service to a new level in various ways. Collaborators in that effort included the Court itself, the State Bar of Arizona, local lawyers, and other community agencies. Grants for the start-up of the project, known as the Self-Service Center, were received from the State Justice Institute and the Arizona Supreme Court. This Court, one of the largest trial courts in the country, serves approximately 70,000 unrepresented litigants each year.

The Self-Service Center has walk-in facilities inside four of the Superior Court courthouses in Maricopa County. They provide customers with a wide array of services for pro se litigants, including distribution of more than 1,450 consumer-friendly forms, instructions, procedures, and resource lists of lawyers, mediators, and community services. The Center distributes these forms in both English and Spanish. These locations serve more than 125 customers every business day. In addition to the court locations, the Self-Service Center also provides access to its services using additional technologies.

The Self-Service Center provides 24-hour access to recorded information through its automated telephone system. By calling (602) 506-SELF, customers have access to a wide range of court topics, including general information about the Court such as the types of cases heard, the various court departments, and detailed information about specific areas of law. The telephone system currently serves more than 575 callers each week.

Additionally, all of the services of the Self-Service Center are available online through the Center's Web site, at www.superiorcourt.maricopa.gov/ssc/sschome.html. The Web site offers free access to all of its forms and instructions for downloading in two electronic

formats. Or users can request the forms be printed out, for a minimal printing charge, and then either mailed to the user or picked up at one of the four Self-Service Centers.

COURTHOUSE ENVIRONMENT

Lawyers, judges, and court personnel who regularly roam the halls of a courthouse may not fully appreciate the experience of an average citizen who is dragged into the midst of what seems to be a never-ending ordeal of confusion and contentiousness. There are many ways in which the court and the lawyers can improve that experience for litigants, jurors, witnesses, and observers.

OPTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT INFORMATION DESKS AND HELPFUL SIGNAGE

What would seem to be an obvious solution is often overlooked. Few courts, but most airports, banks and hospitals have information desks, brochures, or maps available in their lobbies. The ABA survey revealed that less than one-quarter (24%) of active participants reported receiving any information about the court or its procedures, whether by pamphlet, video, or written instructions, and most of those who did receive material of some type were jurors. This oversight leaves most visitors with their only option being reliance on the kindness of a passing harried lawyer or preoccupied security guard. An additional benefit of locating Self-Service Centers in a courthouse is that many of the questions users have upon entering the courthouse, can quickly and easily be answered by Service Centers, reducing distractions to security guards. Many courts have created volunteer positions within the courts to help answer questions and quickly direct users to the appropriate location. Improved signage and clear, consistent language used on signs can also assist in this regard. Providing multilingual signs is a cost effective way for courts to begin addressing the needs of a diverse population. Insiders must realize that the terms “chambers” or “intake” or even “bench” may be unfamiliar to many who enter the premises and seek direction.

In addition to improved and increased signage throughout courthouses, many new courthouses are considering ease of user access in the design of new/renovation of existing courthouses as well. New York has taken a new approach to courthouse design and the impression of the physical courthouse. The new Bronx County Hall of Justice, which opened in the fall of 2006 is a nine story, two city block long, glass courthouse. The courthouse was designed to give the judicial system an image of openness and transparency, rather than the opaque, closed feeling of a traditional courthouse. The approach to the design of the Bronx County Hall of Justice shows the variety of innovations that courts are experimenting with to improve public trust and confidence in the courts.

EASIER ACCESS, FROM TELEPHONE SYSTEMS TO PARKING LOTS

A few important matters come into play even before a visitor reaches the courthouse steps. Consider how the court is listed in the phonebook. Does a potential caller have to flip back and forth through various colored pages and possible designations before (it is hoped) happening upon the proper listing? Once that hurdle is overcome, is the harried caller transferred a dozen times before being connected with the appropriate employee? Additionally, the parking situation for many courts is difficult at best. Many times an individual is frustrated and exhausted by the time she reaches the courthouse door. Moreover, she may have already developed resentment for the judges and district attorneys, who seem to be the only ones able to park within miles of the building. Serious thought must be given to these issues and their possible solutions.

PERSONNEL TRAINING

Another important element of an improved court environment is the proper training of employees. The actions and attitudes of court personnel are major pieces of what court users perceive to be the operation of justice. Courts should establish improved training for all personnel to assure that everyone with whom they come in contact is treated with courtesy and respect from the time they enter the building until the end of their court experience. This applies at all levels,

from housekeeping personnel to the judges themselves, and every staff member along the way.

Many states such as New York, South Dakota, and Iowa have instituted formal state-wide guidelines for training court staff. One crucial aspect of the training is teaching all employees how they should, and how they legally can respond to questions. The real issue of remaining neutral and not giving legal advice, yet being able to respond and assist court users seeking answers is a crucial part of all employee training programs, especially given the rise in self-represented litigants appearing in court. The New York Judiciary created and published *Facilitating Access Training Program: Reference Manual* in 2004 (see link in reference section) specifically addressing the need for training employees how to respond to legal and non-legal questions from court users. Having a Self-Help Center in the courthouse provides employees with a great resource, especially when asked a difficult question because they know there is a location in the building where they can confidently send the user to find an answer.

CHILD CARE

Parents with small children face another obstacle when they come to court. It is often inappropriate or even forbidden for children to enter a courtroom or attend a particular hearing. However, many moms and dads have no child-care options when they are subpoenaed to appear at a trial, summoned for jury duty, or simply have business to conduct within the building. As is true with other businesses and agencies, some courts have begun to recognize and deal with this problem by providing on-site child care, not only for court employees but for visitors as well. The sight of a room full of children playing can put a smile on the face of a passerby, and the chaotic atmosphere of a courtroom full of traffic offenders waiting to be called to the bench can be greatly improved by the absence of crying babies and mischievous toddlers.

“CHILDREN’S ROOM”, SIXTH MUNICIPAL DISTRICT COURT, MARKHAM, ILLINOIS

The Cook County District Court in Markham, Illinois boasts a bright spot in a building usually filled with anxiety and dissension. The “children’s room” in this modest suburban courthouse south of Chicago is a playroom for youngsters whose parents must be present elsewhere at the Court.

The center accepts children ages 2 to 12, and is meant to protect them from the harsh realities of courtrooms rife with crime and rancor. This option also relieves parents who may already be burdened with an unexpected or unpleasant trip to court. Moreover, the distraction of bored and restless children is eliminated from courtrooms where judges and bailiffs are striving to maintain order.

Funds for construction of the room were provided by the county, and the facility is operated by a nonprofit foundation. The surrounding community—its citizens and businesses—donated toys, games, furnishings and services of all kinds. There is no charge for the service. The professional staff is not equipped to change diapers or serve food. When families enter, parents complete a form which includes their address, telephone number, and destination within the courthouse. On particularly busy days, parents and their children are outfitted with matching wrist bands for identification.

The success of the project depended on the united efforts of many people and entities. These included the energies of the then Presiding Judge, Sheila Murphy, the backing of the county and the court system, the overwhelming support of the community, and the generosity of many donors.

- *K.C. Conlon Children’s Room*, Sixth Municipal District Court, 16501 South Kedzie Parkway, 1st Floor, Markham, IL 60428; 708/210-4282, www.cookcountycourt.org/services/services/rooms.html.

- *A Place for Children*, was established to provide free child care for children up to age 14 while their care givers appear in court or serve jury duty. Orange County Courthouse. Orange County Courthouse, 425 North Orange Avenue, Room 270, Suite73, Orlando, FL 32801; 407/836-2108, www.ninja9.org/courtadmin/PlaceForChildren.htm. html
- *Child Care Center*, in the D.C. Superior Court, Moultrie Courthouse provides free on-site child care to children ages two through twelve years old while their parent or guardian has an appointment in court. Staffed by a full time director, an assistant director, and trained volunteers. Contact Dorothy Coleman, Center Director, Moultrie Courthouse, 500 Indiana Avenue, N.W., Room C-185, Washington, D.C. 20001; Tel. 202/879-1759; www.dccourts.gov/dccourts/superior/special_ops/childcare_center.jsp

SCHEDULING

One of the most often repeated criticisms made by individuals who come into court is their belief that their time is being wasted and not valued, as they frequently spend hours waiting for something substantive to happen. Although there are unique circumstances which sometimes make it difficult to time matters precisely, courts must be more sensitive to this problem and strive to improve their scheduling processes. Judges and lawyers can contribute to this endeavor by making every effort to be prompt and ready at the time a matter is scheduled, so that citizens do not feel ignored and unimportant. Some courts have experimented with staggered settings and other innovative methods to address this common complaint. Many courts now include access online to court schedules, as well as updated information regarding time changes and the room location for each scheduled appearance. Alaska updates their online trial calendar every hour on the hour, as well as providing online access to the case record through *CourtView* program. The Alaska calendar is available at: www.state.ak.us/courts/trialcts.htm#cal.

TECHNOLOGY

Technological innovations have rapidly found their way into every aspect of life. Many Americans have become increasingly dependent upon the convenience and efficiency of ATM outlets, automated telephone systems, e-mail, and computerized access to shopping, banking, investing, and more. The courts cannot afford to be left behind as their users' expectations of instantaneous results in all facets of their lives continue to grow.

Courts are adapting and embracing this technological revolution. Internally, a growing number of courts have fully computerized their own filing and storage of documents and overall case management. In some courtrooms, computer monitors on the bench give judges instant information about the case before them. Telephone systems in many courts have been updated to provide information and automatic connection to related agencies, current status information to jurors and jury pools, and better routing to appropriate personnel for assistance and action.

Computerized kiosks emerged in the last decade as a means of better delivering court services to the public. These touch-screen monitors are often accessible around the clock, much like the familiar ATM, and can be located not only in or immediately outside courthouses themselves, but also in libraries, shopping malls, and other public locations. Many Kiosk based programs have since shifted to include web-based systems allowing greater access to information online at significantly lower costs.

In addition to the standardization and simplification of forms described earlier in this Roadmap, many courts provide access to forms online. Online interactive programs such as the program begun in San Mateo County Superior Court called "EZLegalFile" has been embraced by more than 30 Superior Courts in California and now provides services in Michigan and Florida as well. "EZLegalFile" helps self-represented litigants complete form pleadings by asking

questions, the answers to which complete the required forms. “EzLegalFile” and other form completion programs such as “I-Can!”, which is used in Colorado, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Oklahoma, and New Mexico, pose great opportunities for serving self-represented litigants, especially non-English speaking persons as many programs offer instruction in multiple languages. Form completion programs allow users to complete forms electronically and then either print them out to be filed in court, or in some cases users are able to file completed forms electronically. A lower tech, and less costly method being used by many courts is the use of web-based PDF forms that can be completed online, which users can then print, sign, and file with the court. Maryland has made many forms available online in this format covering criminal, civil, domestic violence, and housing issues.

In addition to court forms, court web sites provide information of all kinds to the public, everything from directions to the building, schedules of hearings, to court policies and procedures. Interactive web sites provide not only general information, but also allow direct access and case-specific information to individuals dealing directly with the court. Court web sites have replaced many kiosks located outside the courthouse as more individuals have access to the Internet at home, work, library, or school. Providing kiosks for use in courthouse buildings remains a valuable, cost effective means of providing information in a format that many users have become accustomed to from experiences in other areas of life, from airport self-service kiosks to buying movie tickets.

Many courts also utilize their websites to help inform and educate the public about the court system, including demonstration videos to help demystify the workings of the court so individuals have a better idea about what to expect. A user-friendly resource that has been available online from the Arizona Supreme Court since June 1999, is a calculation program that can be used by attorneys, courts, or persons representing themselves to compute child support according to state guidelines. The calculator clarifies the application of child support guidelines and simplifies the mathematical computation allowing parents,

who are already in a stressful situation, to easily and correctly compute a child support amount. The hope is that by allowing parents to independently verify the computation of support, the court can eliminate prolonged conflict over the financial support of the children and facilitate settlement. The success of Arizona's child support calculator has led to similar online programs being implemented by other courts.

The ways in which technology can be used to make courts more effective and efficient are limited only by the imagination. Courts must be aware of this ever-changing frontier and strive to remain at the forefront of those innovations and improvements that can enhance the court experience for all of its users.

- Iowa- In Iowa, Domestic Violence forms across the state have been standardized, allowing for easy completion by victims and allowing forms to be submitted and recognized in any courthouse across the state. In addition the state has linked the filing of the domestic violence forms so that once a form is submitted in court, it is automatically filed with other courts and the police departments across the state. Using technology to automatically make court filed forms available to police statewide is especially important in domestic violence cases where the victim often ends up changing locations or moving suddenly, especially after filing papers in court.
- Maryland- In Maryland, the court has implemented software allowing civil, traffic, and criminal case records to be available online as well as providing interactive court forms in English, Spanish, and Korean.
- New York- In New York, the Department of Technology is working to add Wireless Fidelity (Wi-Fi) systems to courthouses so that visitors can use their personal computers to go online. Initially public areas will be targeted, such as law libraries, jury areas and rooms where attorneys, litigants, and other courthouse users gather. Under a pilot program, Wi-Fi has already been installed in a courthouse in Buffalo, Binghamton, and White Plains, as well as the Bronx Housing Court. Adding Wi-Fi to the Westchester County

Courthouse annex corrected a public safety issue, where previously cell phones and court officers' police radios did not work. New Mexico- New Mexico has implemented many reforms in a very successful attempt to make it a leader in the user-friendly court movement. The New Mexico Supreme Court has mandated customer service training for all court staff emphasizing the Court's public service philosophy, techniques for providing good customer service in person and over the phone, and methods for dealing with difficult customers. Completed Phase III of their Video Arraignment project and now have 25 counties with the capacity for cross county arraignments and video conferencing.

Many courts have established Web sites to provide easy access to information and resources.

NOTABLE COURT WEB SITES

[California Courts: www.courtinfo.ca.gov/index.htm](http://www.courtinfo.ca.gov/index.htm)

[Connecticut Judicial Branch: www.jud.state.ct.us](http://www.jud.state.ct.us)

[Delaware Municipal Court: www.municipalcourt.org](http://www.municipalcourt.org)

[Hamilton County, Ohio: www.courtclerk.org](http://www.courtclerk.org)

[Iowa Judicial Branch: www.judicial.state.ia.us](http://www.judicial.state.ia.us)

[Maryland Judiciary: www.MDCourts.gov](http://www.MDCourts.gov)

[New Jersey Judiciary: www.NJCourtsOnline.com](http://www.NJCourtsOnline.com)

[Ninth Judicial Circuit Court of Florida: www.ninja9.org](http://www.ninja9.org)

[North Dakota Supreme Court: www.court.state.nd.us](http://www.court.state.nd.us)

[Northern District of Texas: www.txnd.uscourts.gov](http://www.txnd.uscourts.gov)

[Pennsylvania: www.courts.state.pa.us](http://www.courts.state.pa.us)

[Rhode Island: www.courts.state.ri.us](http://www.courts.state.ri.us)

Texas: www.courts.state.tx.us/

U. S. Bankruptcy Court, Minnesota: www.mnb.uscourts.gov

Washtenaw County Trial Court: www.washtenawtrialcourt.org/

ABA PROGRAMS

ABA PROGRAMS INVOLVED IN USER-FRIENDLY COURT ISSUES

ABA DIVISION FOR BAR SERVICES

This Division of the ABA produces a periodic inventory of state and local bar activities. Included in these activities are projects, programs and/or bar committees designed around the issue of making courts easier for the user to navigate. Since the Division is the principal communications link between the ABA and bar associations nationwide, it is a good source for groups interested in learning what has been successful in courts around the country. The *2005 Bar Activities Inventory* is available through the ABA Web Store at (800) 285-2221; E-mail: orders@abanet.org; www.abanet.org/abastore/index.cfm ABA Judicial Division

The ABA's Judicial Division was established in 1913 to "improve the administration of justice." The impetus for its establishment was to facilitate maximum judicial representation consistent with the best interests of both bench and bar. The Division's Committee roster includes a Court Technology Committee and a Judicial Outreach Network, both working toward a more user-friendly court system. Among the Division's many goals are to make the judicial system more understandable, accessible and affordable and to educate the public concerning the administration of justice.

Contact: Gilda Fairley, Diversity & Outreach Manager, ABA Coalition for Justice, 321 N. Clark Street, Chicago, IL 60654; 312/988-5689;

E-mail: fairleyg@staff.abanet.org; www.abanet.org/jd/home.html

ABA COALITION FOR JUSTICE

The mission of the Coalition for Justice, is to build public trust and confidence in the justice system, and in the legal profession, through partnerships with the public in justice reform. In pursuing this daunting task, it addresses broad national issues concerning the justice system, including civil

and criminal justice system improvements, underfunding of the justice system, and racial and ethnic bias. It is composed of members of the ABA, leading public figures and members of national public interest organizations, such as the League of Women Voters and the American Association of Retired Persons. This diverse composition reflects the view that the combined commitment and participation of lawyers and non-lawyers is essential to make meaningful progress in ameliorating some of the more distressing problems of our society. Contact: Gilda Fairley, Diversity & Outreach Manager, ABA Coalition for Justice, 321 N. Clark Street, Chicago, IL 60654; 312/988-5689; E-mail: fairleyg@staff.abanet.org; www.abanet.org/justice.

ABA POLICIES ADOPTED ON THE TOPIC OF USER-FRIENDLY COURTS

RESOLVED, That in recognition of the fact that the United States is a diverse and multicultural society, the American Bar Association urges the federal government and the states, territories and possessions to commit sufficient resources to all courts and administrative agencies to enable them to provide qualified live, in-person language interpreters to ensure that all parties and witnesses may fully and fairly participate in all proceedings, and

FURTHER RESOLVED, That courts and agencies should provide live in-person interpreters in all cases, except that in brief, preliminary proceedings or in other matters involving an urgent need for the protection of life and safety, the imminent removal of persons or evidence from the jurisdictions, or in other cases involving similar emergent circumstances when an in-person interpreter is not available, a qualified interpreter who is employed by a telecommunications or other technology-based interpretation service may be provided. 04/2002

Electronic Access to Information. Recognize that the coherent, integrated electronic provision of information relating to the legal system, including the judicial system, in a way that makes full use of the capabilities of existing technology, will provide significant benefits and efficiencies for governmental entities, the bar and the public. Urge: (1) the provision of public electronic access to governmental information through the Internet at no cost to the user and to forego the required use of proprietary networks for such access; (2) the provision for electronic filing and retrieval of appropriate documents through the Internet using open data interchange standards; and (3) the development of a uniform approach to the electronic provision and exchange of public information, including within the respective jurisdictions. 8/98

ABA POLICIES ADOPTED FOR PRO BONO & PUBLIC SERVICE

RESOLVED, That the American Bar Association urges all federal, state, local, and territorial courts to develop programs, in collaboration with state, local and territorial bar associations and pro bono programs and legal services offices, to encourage, facilitate and recognize pro bono representation of indigent parties in civil cases.

FURTHER RESOLVED, That the American Bar Association urges courts to provide opportunities for their lawyer employees to participate in pro bono and public service activities consistent with applicable federal, state, local and territorial laws and regulations and applicable rules of professional conduct. 8/2006

Waiting Rooms for Children. Encourage state, local and territorial governing bodies and court systems, in conjunction with bar associations, to support and assist in the organization and implementation of waiting rooms for children in every appropriate courthouse. 8/96

RESOURCES/CONTACTS

The following organizations and individuals should be contacted for further information on user-friendly court issues.

- Self Help Support, 757/259-1549, Madelynn Herman, Project Director, E-mail: mherman@ncsc.dni.us, www.selfhelpsupport.org
- American Bar Association (ABA), 321 N. Clark Street, Chicago, IL 60654, www.abanet.org
- ABA Coalition for Justice, Gilda Fairley, Diversity & Outreach Manager, Tel. 312/988-5689; E-mail: fairleyg@staff.abanet.org; www.abanet.org/justice.
- ABA Criminal Justice Section, Jack Hanna, Director, Tel. 202/662-1510; E-mail: hannaj@staff.abanet.org; www.abanet.org/crimjust/home.html
- ABA Division for Bar Services, Roseanne T. Lucianek, Director, Tel. 312/988-5344; E-mail: lucianekr@staff.abanet.org; www.abanet.org/barserv/
- ABA Division for Legal Services, E-mail: legalservices@abanet.org; www.abanet.org/legalservices/
- ABA Division for Public Education, Mabel McKinney-Browning, Director, Tel. 312/988-5731; E-mail: mckinneyb@staff.abanet.org; www.abanet.org/publiced/home.html
- ABA Judicial Division, 312/988-5705; www.abanet.org/jd/home.html
- American Judicature Society, Seth S. Andersen, Executive Vice-President, 2700 University Avenue, Des Moines, IA 50311; Tel. 515/271-2281; www.ajs.org

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- Center for Law and Public Policy (CLASP), 7600 Flower Avenue, Takoma Park, MD 20912; Tel. 301/891-4572; Fax: 301/891-4576; E-mail: info@sdalaw.org; www.sdalaw.org/
 - Center for the Study of Social Policy, 1575 Eye St., N.W. Suite 500, Washington, DC 20005, 202/371-1565; www.cssp.org
 - Conference of State Court Administrators, Shelley Rockwell, c/o National Center for State Courts, 300 Newport Ave., Williamsburg, VA 23185; Tel. 800/877-1233; <http://cosca.ncsc.dni.us/>
 - Council for Court Excellence, June B. Kress, Executive Director, 1111 14th Street, N.W. Suite 500, Washington, D.C. 20005; Tel. 202/785-5917; E-mail: office@courtexcellence.org; www.courtexcellence.org/
 - Institute for Court Management, 300 Newport Ave., Williamsburg, VA 23185-4147, Tel. 800/616-6160; Fax: 757/564-2100; , E-mail: icm@ncsc.dni.us; www.ncsconline.org/D_ICM/icmindex.html
 - National Center for State Courts, Mary C. McQueen, President, 300 Newport Avenue, Williamsburg, VA 23185-4147; Tel. 800/616-6164; Fax: 757/564-2022; www.ncsconline.org
 - National Legal Aid and Defenders Association, Jo-Ann Wallace, President & CEO, 1140 Connecticut Avenue N.W. Suite 900, Washington, D.C. 20036; Tel. 202/452-0620; Fax: 202/872-1031; E-mail: jwallace@nlada.org; www.nlada.org
 - State Bar Presidents, Presidents-elect and Executive Directors: names and addresses are available through: American Bar Association, Division for Bar Services, Roseanne Lucianek, Director, Tel. 312/988-5344, www.abanet.org/barserv

- State Court Administrators and Chief Justices: names and addresses are available through: National Center for State Courts, , Knowledge and Information Services (KIS) help desk, Tel. 800/616-6164;
www.ncsconline.org/D_KIS/index.html
- State Justice Institute, Janice Munsterman, Executive Director, 1650 King St., Suite 600, Alexandria, VA 22314, Tel. 703/684-6100;
www.statejustice.org

PUBLICATIONS

American Bar Association publications are available through ABA, 321 N. Clark Street, Chicago, IL 60654. To order by fax or phone with VISA, MasterCard or American Express: Fax 312/988-5850, Phone 800/285-2221 or 312/988-5522, or use the order form on the ABA Web site at www.abanet.org

- *Access, Fairness, and Trust in the North Dakota Court System*, Sally Holewa Institute for Court Management (2007).
www.ncsconline.org/D_ICM/programs/cedp/papers/2007.asp
- *California Conference on Self Represented Litigants*, Judicial Council of California (2007).
www.courtinfo.ca.gov/programs/equalaccess/2007Materials.html
- *Self-Represented Litigants in Family Law Cases in Jackson County, Missouri*, Cynthia Cook, Institute for Court Management Court Executive Development Program (2007).
www.ncsconline.org/D_ICM/programs/cedp/papers/2007.asp
- *Best Practices in Court-Based Programs for the Self-Represented: Concepts, Attributes and Issues for Exploration*, by Self-Represented Litigant Network (2006).
www.ncsconline.org/WC/Publications/KIS_ProSeBestPracticesSRLN.pdf

- *Future Trends in State Courts 2006*, edited by Carol Flango, Chuck Campbell, and Neal Kauder for the National Center for State Courts, (2006). www.ncsconline.org/WC/Publications/KIS_CtFutu_Trends06.pdf
- *Innovations in the District of Columbia Courts*, (2006) www.dccourts.gov/dccourts/docs/Innovations2006-09.pdf
- *Opening Technology Supported Help Centers for the Self-Represented In Courts and Communities*, Wayne Moore, Bonnie Hough, Richard Zorza, Sherna Deamer, Allison McDermott, and Gigi Amateau, for SelfHelpSupport.org (2006). www.ncsconline.org/WC/Publications/KIS_ProSeSHOManual.pdf
- *Pro Se Statistics Memorandum*, Madelynn Herman, National Center for State Courts (2006). www.ncsconline.org/WC/Publications/Memos/ProSeStatsMemo.htm
- *Trust and Confidence in the California Courts: Phase II: Public Court Users and Judicial Branch Members Talk About the California Courts*, by Public Agenda and Dole Research Associates for the Judicial Council of California (2006). www.courtinfo.ca.gov/reference/documents/Calif_Courts_Book_rev6.pdf
- *Future Trends in State Courts 2005*, edited by Tracy Peters, Carol Flango, Chuck Campbell, and Neal Kauder for the National Center for State Courts, (2005). www.ncsconline.org/WC/Publications/KIS_CtFutu_Trends05.pdf
- *Model Self-Help Pilot Program: A Report to the Legislature*, Deana Piazza, Deborah Chase, Bonnie Rose Hough, & Don Will for the Judicial Council of California (2005). www.courtinfo.ca.gov/programs/equalaccess/documents/Self-Help_full.pdf

- *The Future of Self-Represented Litigation: Report From the March 2005 Summit*, This publication provides a wide range of papers describing several innovative solutions to meeting the needs of pro se litigants as well as providing various statistics. funded by State Justice Institute and organized by National Center for State Courts (2005).
www.ncsconline.org/WC/Publications/Res_ProSe_FutSelfRepLitfinalPub.pdf
- *Trust and Confidence in the California Courts: Phase I: A Survey of the Public and Attorneys*, David B. Rottman, for the National Center for State Courts (2005).
www.courtinfo.ca.gov/reference/documents/4_37pubtrust1.pdf
- *Facilitating Access Training Program: Reference Manual, Volume One*, Hon. Ann Pfau and Hon. Juanita Bing Newton, for the New York Unified Court System (2004).
www.nycourts.gov/ip/justiceinitiatives/pdfs/FATPVol1.pdf
- *Facilitating Access Training Program: Reference Manual, Volume Two*, Hon. Ann Pfau and Hon. Juanita Bing Newton, for the New York Unified Court System (2004).
www.nycourts.gov/ip/justiceinitiatives/pdfs/FATPVol2.pdf
- *Statewide Action Plan for Serving Self-Represented Litigants*, by the Judicial Council of California, Task Force on Self-Represented Litigants (2004). www.courtinfo.ca.gov/programs/cfcc/pdffiles/Full_Report.pdf
- *Committed to Justice in the Nation's Capital: Strategic Plan of the District of Columbia Courts 2003-2007*, for the District of Columbia Courts,
www.dccourts.gov/dccourts/docs/strategic.pdf
- *Perceptions of the Courts in Your Community: The Influence of Experience, Race and Ethnicity*, David Rottman, Randall Hansen, Nicole

- Mott, and Lynn Grimes for the National Center for State Courts (2003).
www.ncsconline.org/WC/Publications/Res_AmtPTC_PerceptionsPub.pdf
- *Developing CCJ/COSCA Guidelines for Public Access to Court Records: A National Project to Assist State Courts*, Martha Wade Steketee & Alan Carlson, for the National Center for State Courts (2002).
www.courtaccess.org/modelpolicy/18Oct2002FinalReport.pdf
 - *Law and the Courts, Volume III: Juries*, American Bar Association Division for Public Education (2001), ISBN: 1-59031-013-6
www.abanet.org/abastore
 - *Making the Court System Work Better for Children: 25 Things Your Court Can Do*, by the Judicial Council of California, Center for Families, Children & the Courts. (2001).
www.courtinfo.ca.gov/programs/cfcc/pdffiles/25things.pdf
 - *Law and the Courts, Volume I: The Role of Courts*, American Bar Association Division for Public Education (2000), ISBN: 1-57073-619-7
www.abanet.org/abastore
 - *Judicial Outreach on a Shoestring: A Working Manual*, Fruin, Judge Richard, American Bar Association Judicial Division (1999), ISBN: 1-57073-638-3 www.abanet.org/abastore
 - *National Action Plan: A Guide for State and National Organizations*, by National Conference on Public Trust and Confidence in the Justice System (1999).
www.ncsconline.org/WC/Publications/Res_AmtPTC_NatlActionPlanPub.pdf
 - *Perception of the U.S. Justice System*, by M/A/R/C Research for the American Bar Association (1999).
www.abanet.org/media/perception/perceptions.pdf

- *Law and the Courts, Volume II: Court Procedures*, American Bar Association Division for Public Education (1998), ISBN: 1-57073-646-4 www.abanet.org/abastore
- *Twenty Years of Courthouse Design Revisited*, American Bar Association Judicial Division (1993). ISBN: 0-89707-760-1 www.abanet.org/abastore
- Roadmaps series: “Judicial Selection,” “Community Involvement,” “Funding the Justice System,” “Independence of the Judiciary,” American Bar Association Coalition for Justice.

WEB SITES

- Alliance for Justice www.afj.org
- American Bar Association www.abanet.org
- American Judicature Society www.ajs.org
- Bureau of Justice Assistance www.ojp.usdoj.gov/BJA
- Conference of Chief Justices <http://ccj.ncsc.dni.us/>
- Council for Excellence in Government www.excelgov.org
- *CourTools*, A set of ten trial court performance measures that offers court managers a way to measure those factors that form peoples’ perceptions about the court, by National Center for State Courts.
www.ncsconline.org/D_Research/CourTools/tcmp_courttools.htm
- Forum on the Advancement of Court Technology (FACT) <http://fact.ncsc.dni.us/>
- Institute for Court Management, Court Executive Development Program Papers; www.ncsconline.org/D_ICM/programs/cedp/papers/2007.asp

- Justice at Stake Campaign www.faircourts.org
- Justice Management Institute www.jmijustice.org/Home/PublicWeb
- Justice Served www.justiceserved.com
- National Center for State Courts www.ncsconline.org
- Self Help Support; A Clearinghouse of information relating to self-representation, www.selfhelpsupport.org