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2021 Report

IOWA ACCESS TO
JUSTICE



**The Iowa Access to Justice
Commission serves Iowans
by promoting and advancing
innovative strategies
for ensuring equal access
to justice.**

Members of the Commission



Anthony Allen, Dubuque
Justice Brent Appel, Chair, Ackworth
Steven Bradford, Muscatine
Marvin DeJear, Des Moines
Kristie Fortman-Doser, Iowa City
Brian Farrell, Toddville
Phil Garland, Garner
Glennay Jundt, Council Bluffs
Leslie Kilgannon, Davenport
Daniel Mart, Polk City
Kevin McKeever, Iowa City
Bob Oberbillig, Des Moines
Kevin Patrick, Des Moines
Christopher Patterson, Waukee
Carol Phillips, Des Moines
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Anjela Shutts, Vice-Chair, Des Moines
Steve Simmons, Prole
Carrie Slagle, Cedar Rapids
Chantelle Smith, Des Moines
Megan Srinivas, Fort Dodge
Jennifer Tibbets, Marion
Bruce Walker, Iowa City
Shelley Witcher, Council Bluffs

*The **mission** of the Iowa Access to Justice Commission is to find solutions that will best serve Iowans who may encounter barriers to or difficulties with fully accessing Iowa's civil justice system.*

“Justice depends on having a fair chance to be heard, regardless of who you are, where you live, or how much money you have. At minimum, a person should be able to learn about her rights and then give effective voice to them in a neutral and nondiscriminatory, formal or informal, process that determines the facts, applies the rule of law, and enforces the result.

That is access to Justice.”¹



¹ From the Justice Index website.

Purpose and Values



Purpose Statement

The Iowa Access to Justice Commission serves Iowans by promoting and advancing innovative strategies for ensuring equal access to justice.

Elevator Speech

The foundation of democracy is a fair system for resolving legal issues that is accessible to everyone. The Iowa Access to Justice Commission works to build awareness of the civil legal system and to identify barriers Iowans often face when accessing and navigating our courts. Barriers include financial, technological, and cultural obstacles. The Commission works to find ways to break through those barriers.

Commission Values Statement

Change agent

We motivate change, acting with vision and boldness to break down barriers that prevent access to the civil justice system.

Education

We identify barriers and promote solutions impacting access.

Collaboration

We respect all viewpoints and value the diverse perspectives and experiences of our commission members, partners, and stakeholders, recognizing that all persons should have a voice and deserve to be heard.

Equality of access

We promote equal access to civil justice for all.

Leadership

We act as the voice of equal access to civil justice for all, and hold ourselves accountable by measuring progress through established benchmarks.

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Introduction

The 2021 Iowa Access to Justice Commission Report highlights the Iowa Access to Justice Commission’s (Commission) fifth year of work towards improving the civil justice climate in the State of Iowa.

The Iowa Supreme Court established the Commission in 2016 to help address the unmet civil legal needs of Iowans. In the order establishing the Commission, former Iowa Supreme Court Chief Justice Mark Cady wrote:

The bedrock principle of our court system is that justice should be accessible to all persons. There are, however, longstanding and entrenched barriers to the access to justice for too many Iowans. To safeguard the fundamental right of access to justice requires a concerted, sustained, and strategic effort. To that end the Iowa Supreme Court, upon recommendation of The Iowa State Bar Association (ISBA), establishes the Iowa Access to Justice Commission. Iowa courts are seeing an increasing number of self-represented litigants, many of whom have no choice but to proceed without the

assistance of counsel. . . . Iowa must do more to assure meaningful and informed access to justice for all persons.

Chief Justice Cady’s words ring true this day as clearly as they did five years ago.

From when the Commission submitted its last report to the Iowa Supreme Court in August 2020, Iowans and the Iowa Judicial Branch together have navigated unprecedented challenges the Covid-19 pandemic wrought to maintaining court services in safe and effective ways. Despite such concerted,

sustained, and strategic efforts, the Covid-19 pandemic has caused serious problems for the timely delivery of justice, creating court backlogs that may endure well into the future.

World Justice Project. The access to justice problem is not unique to Iowa or the United States. The World Justice Project Rule of Law Index (WJP) measures the accessibility and affordability of civil justice systems for ordinary people in 128 countries. The overall civil justice ranking for the United States is number 36. Gauging whether people are able to access and afford civil justice, however, the WJP found the United States ranked a lowly 109th out of 128 countries. Measuring whether civil justice in the United

Iowa must do more to assure meaningful and informed access to justice for all persons.

Introduction

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States is free of discrimination, the WJP ranked the United States an even more abysmal 115th. Another WJP measurement considered the accessibility, impartiality, and effectiveness of the country's alternative dispute resolution mechanisms and ranked the United States number 43.

Iowa Access to Justice Commission members. Twenty-four Iowans, whom the chief justice has appointed, currently serve as members of the Commission. Iowa Supreme Court Justice Brent Appel continues to serve as Chair of the Commission, and Attorney Anjela Shutts continued to serve as Vice-Chair of the Commission and as liaison to the Iowa State Bar Association (ISBA) as its President-Elect. The Commission continues to work closely with the ISBA, which provides invaluable support to the Commission with financial assistance and conference facilities for Commission meetings. Timothy Eckley, Assistant Counsel to the Chief Justice, serves as Secretary to the Commission.



Commission meetings

The Commission held its regular quarterly meetings featuring educational programming, work group breakout sessions, and Commission-wide discussions.

August 7, 2020 meeting. The Commission held an initial special meeting to begin the 2020–2021 year on August 7, 2020, via the remote service GoToMeeting. The meeting included a review of the Chicago Bar Association/Chicago Bar Foundation Task Force Report on Sustainable Practice of Law and Innovation.

Members discussed and adopted the Commission’s Strategic Plan as a way to provide more overall structure to the Commission. The Strategic Plan is centered on three strategic goals: (1) create structure for the Commission’s longevity, which includes establishment of an Executive Committee for the Commission; (2) establish benchmarks for measuring Commission progress; and (3) develop an overall structure for communications.

First quarterly meeting. The Commission held its first 2020–2021 quarterly meeting remotely on September 25, 2020, via GoToMeeting. The meeting opened with Chief Justice Christensen addressing the Commission, and among other comments supportive of the Commission, emphasizing that particularly during difficult times such as the pandemic is the work of the Commission even more crucial. The educational component of this meeting included a presentation from Solutions

Law Firm & Mediation Services—attorneys Dawn Hernandez and Stella Roederer—and the firm’s successful methods for providing legal services to rural Iowa communities. Todd Nuccio, State Court Administrator, discussed the judicial branch pilot projects for online dispute resolution (ODR) for traffic citations, small claims money judgment cases, and landlord-tenant cases.

The Commission has scheduled its quarterly meetings for the 2021-2022 year on the following dates:

- **Friday, September 24, 2021, in person at the Judicial Branch Building**
- **Friday, December 3, 2021, via remote technology**
- **Friday, March 4, 2022, via remote technology**
- **Friday, June 3, 2022, in person at the ISBA headquarters**

Christy Schreiner, a project manager for judicial branch IT, demonstrated the

Commission meetings



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interactive interview platforms the judicial branch continues to develop and implement.

The Commission discussed its work group configurations and determined to suspend the Strategic Planning Work Group and implement the Limited Licensure Work Group.

Second quarterly meeting. The Commission held its second meeting December 4, 2020, via the Zoom video conferencing platform. Justice Appel welcomed the meeting to order and presented a four-year review of the Iowa Access to Justice Commission. Work groups provided updates to their ongoing efforts. For educational programming, Jean Clausen, Legal Industry Advocate for ARAG, presented “The Legal Landscape, Reimagining Regulation,” exploring various methods of connecting those with legal needs to legal services.

Third quarterly meeting. The next Commission meeting was March 5, 2021, again via the Zoom video conferencing platform. Highlights of the meeting included Christy Schreiner, a project manager for judicial branch IT, demonstrating the branch’s ODR platforms, and the work groups provided updates on their projects. The educational component of the meeting included a panel of experts discussing alternative structures of legal practice: From the State of Washington, Renata Garcia, Chief Regulatory Counsel of the Washington State Bar Association and Steve Crossland, attorney and former Chair of the Washington Limited

License Legal Technician Board; from Utah, John Lund, Chair of the Utah Supreme Court’s first-in-the-nation regulatory sandbox for legal services; and from Minnesota, Paul Thissen, Justice of the Minnesota Supreme Court.

Fourth quarterly meeting. The June 4, 2021 virtual meeting featured a medical services panel discussion with Commission member Dr. Megan Srinivas moderating. Panelists included: Robb Gardner, CEO of Henry County Health Center; Dr. Tiffani Milless, Iowa Pathology Associates; and Dr. Russ Kridel, Chair of the AMA Board of Trustees.

The Commission work groups presented their reports. Shelley Whitcher presented the Community Outreach Work Group report. Brynne Howard presented the Corporate Involvement Work Group report. Mandy Easter presented the Libraries Work Group report. Bruce Walker presented the Limited Licensure Work Group report. Brian Farrell presented the Rural Access Work Group report. Judge Kevin McKeever presented the Veterans Work Group report. The Commission approved all work group reports, which are discussed in more detail in these pages. ⚖️

Strategic Plan



During the summer of 2019, with funding from The Iowa State Bar Association, BluOpal Consulting, LLC, facilitated the Commission’s August 5, 2019 meeting designated as a formal strategic planning session.

Commission staff worked with BluOpal consultants to provide a thorough understanding of the history and work of the Commission, from which the consultants designed a strategic planning session.

After the strategic planning session, BluOpal proposed a Commission Values Statement based on the meeting input and drafted a set of strategic goals and actions for the Commission. Working from these materials, and holding bi-weekly meetings, the Strategic Planning Work Group developed a Purpose Statement, a Values Statement, and an Elevator Speech for the Commission, which were presented to and approved by the Commission during its June 5, 2020 meeting, and which are set forth in the preliminary pages to this Report.

The Strategic Planning Work Group developed a 2020 – 2023 Strategic Plan and presented it to the Commission for discussion at its August 7, 2020 meeting. At that meeting, the Commission approved the strategic plan.

The Iowa Access to Justice Commission Strategic Plan establishes three strategic goals: (1) create structure for the Commission’s longevity, (2) establish benchmarks by which the

Commission’s progress may be measured, and (3) develop a structure for communications.

A key component of the first strategic goal is establishment of an executive work group, or Executive Committee. The Executive Committee is discussed in more detail in the next section of the Report.

The second goal of the strategic plan is to establish benchmarks for measuring Commission progress on its initiatives. For this reporting year, the work groups were to use the SMART criteria in building each group’s objectives. The SMART criteria include: Specific (simple, sensible, significant); Measureable (meaningful, motivating); Achievable (agreed, attainable); Relevant (reasonable, realistic and resourced, results-based); and Time bound (time-based, time and cost limited, time-sensitive).

The third goal of the strategic plan is to develop a structure for communications, which includes partnering with stakeholder communication teams to develop information, materials, and guidance for various Commission audiences, including law firms, corporate law departments, other lawyer groups, and nonprofit organizations and legal service providers. ¶

Executive Committee



The first strategic goal of the Commission's strategic plan called for establishment of an Executive Committee with the following action items:

- Establish an executive work group that plans and provides follow up and accountability for Commission meetings.
- Identify and appoint those who should be a part of the executive work group. The group should have no less than 5 and no more than 7 members, including the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Commission. Other executive work group members, including current and past members of the Commission, must be familiar with the Commission's structure, history, and activities.
- Create job descriptions and lists of duties for executive work group members. The duties should include providing the vision and developing the strategy of the Commission.
- The executive work group should set goals for the Commission and its work groups every 3 years, with an outline of goals to occur in year one, those to occur in year two, and those to occur in year three.
- The executive work group should include a recruitment subcommittee with responsibility for recruiting Commission members. The goal of the

recruitment subcommittee is to assure diversity in the make-up of the Commission, balancing continuity with fresh ideas.

Each work group would also be responsible for recruiting no less than two new work group members each year.

The Executive Committee has been holding regular monthly meetings. ⚖️

Executive Committee members

Justice Brent Appel, Chair, Ackworth
Brian Farrell, Toddville
Carol Phillips, Des Moines
Anjela Shutts, Vice-Chair, Des Moines
Steve Simmons, Prole
Megan Srinivas, Fort Dodge

Community Outreach



I. Community Outreach Overview

The Community Outreach Work Group (formerly known as Public Outreach) is working to promote access to justice as an Iowa value. Communication is a key element of the work group’s purpose and values. The pandemic has made the dissemination of information more challenging and at the same time has opened up new avenues of communication that were not widely accepted before the crisis. The work group has shifted its focus away from the traditional communications plan and has focused on a method of disseminating information concentrated in one platform to reach a wider audience.

The work group recognizes that community outreach may confront language and diversity barriers as well and strives to address those issues with this platform.

Many organizations, such as Iowa Legal Aid (ILA) and the American Bar Association, have substantial information resources. It is imperative that the work group focus on the circulation of the existing legal access options throughout the state, not on creation of more resources. The Commission should continue to research available resources and analyze the use of those resources to understand how best to educate the public about legal options.

II. Update from 2020 Commission Report

The Community Outreach Work Group has continued to explore available legal services resources, technological tools, and potential collaborative efforts to promote education and awareness of access to justice issues. The work group focused its attention on two main goals: (1) creation of a clearinghouse for legal access information, and (2) developing a virtual summit to educate service providers on legal options for their clients. Both goals are aimed at reaching diverse groups of individuals.

III. Looking Forward

Objective one: *Communications plan*

Over the past years, the work group has developed and enhanced a communications plan. The pandemic brought new challenges and new opportunities, shifting the work group’s focus to the best ways to reach individuals through challenging times. The work group has added to that plan and, in an effort to provide information to a variety of groups using one resource, focused on a repository of centralized legal information. The work group joins the Libraries Work Group and the State Library of Iowa in the development of the People’s Law Library of Iowa. This single website will be a one-stop-shop—a clearinghouse with links to current legal information and services from a variety of sources. The work group will continue to collaborate with the Libraries Work Group to put this in place. This may include

Community Outreach

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submitting a joint request for funding to support the initial development and maintenance of the website. The People’s Law Library will be built to support those who need legal access as well as agencies who serve those in need of legal access—particularly those from underserved and marginalized communities (for example, communities of color, persons with limited English proficiency, deaf or hard of hearing persons, persons with disabilities, victims of abuse, the elderly, refugees or immigrants, veterans, and rural communities). The work group will assist with the aim of having the website up and running in six months. User analytics will be collected to help evaluate use of the Peoples Law Library.

Objective two: *Integrate communications strategies*

With the focus on promoting and advancing innovative strategies for ensuring equal access to justice, the 2020–2021 Community Outreach Work Group has focused on the creation of the People’s Law Library and a virtual summit, described in objective three. A vital component of this communications objective is the integration of the various Commission work groups with the People’s Law

The targeted audience for the Summit will be statewide, specifically including service providers and community leaders.

Library and the summit. Work group involvement and support will help ensure that the website will promote consistent access to legal information to all those in need of legal access, including service providers.

Objective three: *Reach beyond a public summit*

After much discussion of the next steps to better leverage public information and expand the reach of service providers, the work group has developed a plan for the People’s Law Library as well as a virtual summit to highlight several legal access resources and to announce the website. Using lessons learned from the pandemic, the summit will be provided virtually. Feedback from the original November 2017 summit,² as well as experience with virtual meetings in general, will direct the planning efforts. The

targeted audience for the summit will be statewide, specifically including service providers and community leaders. By targeting this group, the

information will be spread further and meet people where they are—each one, reach one. The work group will collaborate with the other Commission work groups to plan, implement, and advertise the summit. The summit will

such as family law, housing, elder law, and health care issues. The participants were surveyed after the summit, with 72% responding that the summit was excellent or very good.

² The November 2017 summit was successful, with 53 service group representatives attending the daylong session. The summit presented 16 speakers providing education on topics

Community Outreach

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be scheduled for late October or early November 2021.

Measures for attendance and feedback will be collected to help inform next steps to expand outreach efforts and perhaps future summits. There is little to no cost for this event, as many agencies have access to the virtual platform and there will likely not be presenter fees. Since the summit will be virtual, there will be no venue costs for space or food.

IV. Activities

The 2020–2021 Community Outreach Work Group has held monthly meetings virtually. During the meetings, the work group sets the action items and agenda for the next meeting. In addition to the work group members, Mandy Easter, Libraries Work Group Co-Chair, regularly attended meetings. Without her time and effort, the Community Outreach Work Group’s ideas would likely not be taking shape. ⚖️

Work group members

- Marvin DeJear, Co-Chair
- Shelley Witcher, Co-Chair
- Anthony Allen
- Kimberly Baxter
- Kristie Doser
- Glennay Jundt
- Leslie Kilgannon
- Jennifer Tibbetts
- Chantelle Smith
- Sarah Vandenberg

Corporate Involvement

I. Corporate Involvement Overview

The Corporate Involvement Work Group comprises members of the corporate legal community, the pro bono legal community, and the business community. The work group has three current objectives:

- **Educate** Iowa corporate counsel, business leaders, and industry groups on access to justice issues and how and why to provide access to justice solutions in Iowa.
- **Engage** business lawyers in pro bono and other access to justice initiatives and track engagement metrics.
- **Advocate** for access to justice by creating awareness and prioritization among legislative, judicial, nonprofit, and industry groups regarding resources for access to justice.

II. Update from 2020 Commission Report

In prior years, the Corporate Involvement Work Group produced two documents to address education and engagement: (1) the Access to Justice Corporate Playbook (Playbook), and (2) the position paper “Lack of Access to Affordable Legal Help is Hurting Businesses: What Business Leaders and In-House Counsel Can do to Help.” For the 2019–2020 Commission year, the work group implemented the Playbook through continuing education presentations and focused on some legislative objectives.

For the 2020–2021 Commission year, the work group focused on three new objectives: (1) creating new materials for outreach to the corporate in-house and executive audiences, (2) promoting corporate involvement in Covid-19 and disaster relief legal hotlines, and (3) supporting advocacy related to supreme court rules to clarify broader ability to perform pro bono services for attorneys registered in states other than Iowa.

III. Looking Forward

The overall goals of further education, engagement, and advocacy remain the Corporate Involvement Work Group’s focus.

Objective one: *Educate*

The work group will continue to educate Iowa corporate counsel, business leaders, and industry groups on how and why to support access to justice solutions in Iowa. The work group’s previous materials provided in depth information to engage corporate counsel and executives in access to justice initiatives. This year the work group developed shorter, more tailored versions of the document: “Lack of Access to Affordable Legal Help is Hurting Communities and Businesses” with graphics and ease of information flow designed for specified audiences. The goal of these materials is to facilitate the first conversation and provide a compelling leave-behind document. One is targeted at leaders of in-house legal departments, and the other is targeted at chief executives or

Corporate Involvement



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presidents of corporations or business units. The infographic designed for leaders of legal departments focuses on engagement opportunities for in-house teams, while the infographic designed for chief executives or presidents focuses on high-level community benefits and positions the “ask” of the legal team to engage in pro bono services.

The pandemic created a large obstacle to the work group’s continued outreach efforts last year as companies worked remotely, limited travel, and prohibited in-person meetings. This year’s objective will be to reinitiate work group education efforts. The work group will provide an additional “How to Start a Corporate Pro Bono Program” continuing education opportunity in the Cedar Rapids-Iowa City corridor as well as targeted programs at specific in-house legal teams (scheduled with Nationwide Insurance). The purpose of the educational program is to address the unmet education and training needs of corporate counsel to overcome perceived obstacles to providing pro bono service and informing corporate leaders regarding access to justice to provide support for in-house counsel commitment of time. The materials the group developed in the last year will further this objective and provide more follow-up potential.

Finally, as presentations were not held last year due to the pandemic, the work group will reignite its past objective to establish a follow-up program for the new and past educational

opportunities. The goal of the follow-up will be to bridge the gap of learning about the opportunity to providing actual services. It will also create a tracking mechanism for gauging the program’s impact.

Objective two: Engage

This past year, the work group served as a pilot group of in-house volunteers and outreach members through its hotline legal services. Members of the work group as well as their in-house counterparts provided pro bono legal services through the Iowa Legal Aid and Polk County Bar Association’s Volunteer Lawyer’s Project hotline for legal services related to the derecho and Covid-19 crises. Members of the work group provided direct services, both through the Covid-19 hotline and through corporate department programs.

Next year, the work group will solicit new corporate law department participants to support statewide or regional efforts to address crises or other events driving increased need for legal services. The work group anticipates partnering with the Iowa Association of Corporate Counsel to identify in-house legal teams able to support those efforts.

This past year, the work group moved beyond the pilot phase of pro bono legal programs at volunteer corporate law departments. It established partnerships with the appropriate nonprofit (Iowa Legal Aid or the Polk County Bar Association’s Volunteer

Corporate Involvement

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Lawyer’s Project), creating a corporate plan for pro bono activity and commencing the volunteer legal work.

The work group will continue to broaden its outreach in the coming year. The work group will create a post-CLE program that offers engagement, ongoing support, and analysis of success on the creating of corporate volunteer opportunities. The work group will provide and track corporate counsel resources partnering with pro bono legal services organizations to measure success of the program.

Objective three: *Advocate*

Since 2019, members of the Corporate Involvement Work Group partnered with the Greater Des Moines Partnership and United Way of Central Iowa to highlight Access to Justice issues in each organization’s state legislative agenda. For example, the work group engaged with the Greater Des Moines Partnership in connection with the formulation of the Partnership’s annual state legislative agenda. The Partnership included “Access to Justice” in its legislative agenda in the 2019, 2020, and 2021 years. In 2021, “Judicial Access” was included as a “Business Climate” issue as follows:

The Partnership supports funding opportunities and programs that help ensure fair and equal access to the justice system. Access to justice initiatives include but

are not limited to adequately funding the judicial branch, supporting programs to promote efficient and fair access to the court and legal system, alternative methods to provide appropriate assistance from legal counsel, including legal aid programs, and various studies and task forces seeking ways to more efficiently and fairly ensure justice for all.

The work group will solicit new corporate law participants to address crises or other events driving increased need for legal services.

Additionally, the work group continued to engage in discussions with the Iowa Association of Business and Industry regarding access to justice. In 2021, the work

group will focus on continuing this advocacy, identifying additional industry, judicial, nonprofit, and legislative groups to advocate, and moving access to justice to a heightened level of attention on the policy agendas. The work group will create a strategy for each identified stakeholder and work to execute on the engagement and advocacy based upon that strategy.

The work group continues to engage discussions with the Iowa Supreme

Corporate Involvement



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Court and Office of Professional Regulation to review laws and rules that impact corporate counsel’s ability to impact access to justice. A charge to the Commission in the September 22, 2016 supreme court order is to “[i]dentify changes in court rules, procedures and policies that may reduce barriers to Iowa’s justice system.”

In 2021, the work group submitted a proposed revision to Iowa Court Rule 31.19 to enhance the ability of attorneys licensed in other states to provide pro bono legal services in Iowa. The intent is to engage additional in-house attorneys who may work in neighboring states but live in or have ties to Iowa as well as to engage attorneys of Iowa-based companies who may work in other states. The work group will continue to advocate for change to the court rule to clarify the ability of out-of-state licensed attorneys to provide pro bono legal services in connection with an Iowa legal organization.

For each objective above, the primary resource is Commission and work group members. The work group will search for an industry event for 2021 in which to invite a Commission member to speak and drive engagement. Otherwise, no substantial out of pocket costs are anticipated for the work group’s efforts. ⚖️

Work group members

Travis Sheets, Co-Chair
Angela Reier, Co-Chair
Steven Bradford
Kirstin Esche
Tony Farrell
Brynne Howard
Kevin Patrick
Sarah Smerage

Libraries

I. Libraries Overview

The Commission established the Libraries Work Group during fall 2019. The Commission recognizes the unique and ubiquitous role public libraries occupy across the State of Iowa. Iowa boasts 542 public libraries from some of its smallest towns to its biggest cities. For many persons, libraries offer their only access to internet services. Many Iowans, especially those who encounter access to justice barriers, rely on information resources that libraries provide.

A People’s Law Library of Iowa website will centralize legal information, services, and resources made available to the public at no cost.

As the assistance need of people without legal representation increases, disadvantaged communities across the state have relied on libraries for legal and referral information. As such, Iowa’s libraries are natural partners of the civil legal justice community.

II. Update from the Commission 2020 Report

When the coronavirus pandemic struck in March 2020, The Iowa State Bar Association (ISBA) co-sponsored People’s Law School live-streamed events in conjunction with the Covid-19 Legal Advice Hotline. Iowa’s libraries were shut down for in-person programming events.

The State Library of Iowa and the ISBA were in the midst of setting up Lawyers-in-Libraries events in 63

public libraries to celebrate Law Day in May 2020 when Covid-19 closed libraries indefinitely in March.

Libraries have been in various stages of shutdown since March 2020. Library directors are stressed, exhausted, and living under constant financial threats from their cities. For this project, the focus is shifted to a smaller number of participating libraries selected for their constituents’ demographics, and the pilot clinics will be conducted virtually rather than

in-person.

In 2019, the State Librarian agreed to fund the position of Content Coordinator to get the People’s Law Library up and running on the State Library’s website. Because all state agencies’ budgets were suddenly threatened by a “Covid economy” and potential reductions in state revenues, new spending was frozen and funding for the position was withdrawn.

III. Looking Forward

Objective one: *People’s Law Library of Iowa*

The Libraries Work Group, in collaboration with the Commission’s Community Outreach Work Group and the State Library of Iowa, is continuing its effort to assist in the building of an

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online plain-language legal information clearinghouse and referral website geared to Iowans' needs for clear explanations of legal subjects, resources about the law, and real information about how Iowa courts work to provide justice for all. The site will challenge a legacy of legal complexity, and move toward the goal of individuals having genuine access to legal information and the courts. The need to centralize and consolidate legal information in one digital location—as many other states have done—will only grow and intensify. Technology can help fill the gaps in our society's legal system.

The website will be an integrated approach to legal services for everyone—but especially for low- and moderate-income Iowans—helping people understand their legal problems, options, and possible remedies. For people with no alternative, the site will deliver a level of information and guidance that is far better than what is currently available.

While the People's Law Library website will be formatted for handheld devices, as well as desktop and laptop computers, and its algorithms will be optimized for search engines, public libraries across the state will supply access to residents who do not have any kind of computer. Heavily promoting the website to Iowa's 542 public libraries will greatly expand the reach of legal information in this state, targeting all Iowans who need legal

information, especially low- and moderate-income residents.

The dual information challenges of coordinating the sharing of similar content across institutions and organizing and promoting diverse content from many institutions are best served by a trusted partner that is understood to be neutral. The State Library of Iowa fits this role perfectly. The agency's new state-of-the-art website will debut in summer 2021 and there is a place on it for the People's Law Library of Iowa. The state library website is already compatible with mobile devices and equipped with a screen reader for visually-impaired users. The People's Law Library will be assigned a unique "url" so that users do not have to go through the state library's website to access it.

Planned action steps for the project include: forming a committee to articulate a vision, write a mission statement, and formulate a five-year plan; engaging partners such as the Iowa Judicial Branch, Iowa Legal Aid, the ISBA, Drake University Law School, the University of Iowa College of Law, and others; recruiting a network of volunteers for sporadic assistance and input; identifying possible funding sources; and developing a strategy for promoting the website.

Experiences of other states with similar projects indicate that it may take six months setting up the website and an additional six months to build it. The work groups and the State Library of

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Iowa have a goal of summer 2022 for completion of an operable site.

Success will be measured by the number of “hits” on the site, as well as the quantity and quality of positive comments from stakeholder partners and the public.

The Libraries Work Group is collaborating with the Community Outreach Work Group to assist in finding funding for this project. The groups have asked for a \$100,000 grant from the American Rescue Plan Act federal funding the state library received, which would cover a one-year \$65,000 contract for a content coordinator, a one-year \$15,000 contract for “back-end” technical support, and \$20,000 for a language-translation service. Awards will be made in July. If the grant request is denied, the groups plan to apply for funding from other sources.

Objective two: Printed resources for outreach efforts

It will be necessary to alert Iowans to the existence of the new People’s Law Library of Iowa. The website must be marketed to the general public, as well as to partners and service providers with clients who could use the information, including private organizations, libraries, and courthouses. States with similar websites suggest that brochures do *not* create any measurable uptick in use—the public wants business card-sized advertisements they can keep in their

wallets. Libraries have success with bookmark-sized handouts, too. The public wants to see one website address with minimal information on the rest of the card or bookmark. “QR” codes printed on the cards or bookmarks—leading users of smart phones or handheld devices directly to the website—are also popular. These items will be designed, printed, and distributed, with templates made available for reprinting by interested parties. A visible reminder of how to access authoritative plain-language legal information quickly and conveniently at any time removes many barriers to justice for low- and moderate-income people, indeed for all Iowans, with legal problems and who may need to use the legal information and resources on the People’s Law Library website.

The State Library of Iowa’s Communications Director, along with the members of the Commission’s Libraries Work Group, Community Outreach Work Group, and Rural Access Work Group, will provide input on the design and branding of the cards and bookmarks. The State Library of Iowa has the ability and the resources to print and distribute initial shipments of cards and bookmarks to public offices, the 99 county courthouses, and all 542 public libraries in the state. The State Library can also electronically post the digital templates so that entities wishing to print more of their own can simply download them. The cards and bookmarks can also be distributed at key conferences, such as

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the Iowa School Counselor Association's annual meeting.

Implementation of this project will take place at the same time the website is being developed so that the finished products are printed and ready for distribution when the website is launched.

Success will be measured by the number of "hits" on the digital templates, as well as the quantity and quality of positive comments from our partners and the public.

At this time, the State Library of Iowa plans to provide the necessary resources and bear any costs associated with implementation of this initiative. If for some reason that changes, Commission work groups could assist in applications for grants to promote the website.

Objective three: *Limited-scope virtual legal advice clinics in public libraries*

In this pilot project involving the Libraries Work Group, the State Library of Iowa, the ISBA, Iowa Legal Aid, the Polk County Bar Association, and the Polk County Bar Association's Volunteer Lawyers Project, volunteer attorneys are recruited to provide free 15- to 20-minute one-on-one limited-scope virtual advice sessions to Iowans who preregister for clinics hosted by select public libraries across the state.

Legal aid and pro bono resources are perpetually exhausted. As the number

of people without legal representation increases, disadvantaged communities across the state have relied on libraries for legal and referral information. As such, Iowa's libraries are natural partners of the civil legal justice community. To meet the needs of those without access to attorneys, this initiative will provide much needed assistance to Iowans who have legal questions or problems, especially people in counties in which there is very limited access to private attorneys. The clinics will be open to all who are interested; services will not be restricted to low-income participants.

This initiative targets adult Iowans, especially those who are hesitant to contact attorneys because of the perceived high cost or because of the scarcity of legal professionals in certain parts of the state.

The work group will coordinate between volunteer attorneys and libraries to carry out this pilot project. Training, guidance, promotional materials, instructions, policies, procedures, intake waivers, and other resources for libraries, volunteer attorneys, and participants will be developed.


Planning for the project is expected to take four to six months.

Detailed statistics will be collected and analyzed. Success will be measured by the quantity and quality of positive feedback received from all parties

Libraries

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involved, as well as the levels of participation.

The State Library, the ISBA, Iowa Legal Aid, the Polk County Bar Association, the Polk County Bar Association's Volunteer Lawyers Project, and individual host libraries can provide the necessary resources and bear costs associated with this pilot initiative, including malpractice insurance for participating volunteer attorneys. 

Work group members

Mandy Easter, Co-Chair

Dan Mart, Co-Chair

Dustria Relph

Virginia Sipes

Carrie Slagle

Limited Licensure

I. Limited Licensure

Overview

There is a sense among some stakeholders and observers of legal processes that alternative forms of providing legal services will continue to be explored and to expand. Several states have been experimenting with forms of providing legal services different from the traditional law firm structure.

The Limited Licensure Work Group was newly formed by the Commission in fall 2020. The first task of the team was to survey the states that have adopted limited licensure status to see what has been done in the past and try to determine what has worked for other states.

Several very informative education components of Commission meetings this past year were directly on point:

- Solutions Law Firm & Mediation Services—attorneys Dawn Hernandez and Stella Roederer.
- Jean Clausen, Legal Industry Advocate for ARAG, presented “The Legal Landscape, Reimagining Regulation.”
- A panel of experts discussing alternative structures of legal practice: From the State of Washington, Renata Garcia, Chief Regulatory Counsel of the Washington State Bar Association and Steve Crossland, attorney and former Chair of the Washington Limited License Legal Technician Board; from Utah, John Lund, Chair of the Utah Supreme Court’s first-in-

the-nation regulatory sandbox for legal services; and from Minnesota, Paul Thissen, Justice of the Minnesota Supreme Court.

- A medical services panel discussion with Commission member Dr. Megan Srinivas moderating. Panelists included: Robb Gardner, CEO of Henry County Health Center; Dr. Tiffani Milless, Iowa Pathology Associates; and Dr. Russ Kridel, Chair of the AMA Board of Trustees.

II. Looking Forward

Objective: *Continued study of alternative forms of legal service*

The work group consensus is that the Arizona, Utah, and the District of Columbia plans probably require further study before a recommendation can be made on what plan, if any, should be adopted as is or as modified for Iowa.

It is apparent that in other states if the bar association was not involved, the system will fail. In addition, it is apparent that if the bar association did not become involved, the legislature or the judicial system might adopt a plan without requiring input from the bar association.

There may well be unauthorized practice of law currently occurring in Iowa. There is a recent push by Iowa Legislators to allow unlicensed “navigators” to serve clients in small claims cases. Minnesota is an example of the judicial system adopting a limited licensure scheme when the bar

Limited Licensure

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association failed to act.

In gauging potential push back from various interested sources, the team has consulted with the Young Lawyers Division of the ISBA, the Office of Professional Regulation, and the Commission’s Rural Access Work Group.

Concerns that have been expressed, which will need consideration, are as follows:

- (1) What is driving the need for limited licensures?
- (2) What sort of work will licensures perform?
- (3) What will be the value received from the licensures? Will limited licensure increase access to justice?
- (4) How will the limited practice be monitored or supervised to avoid the unauthorized practice of law?
- (5) How will the licensures be regulated?
- (6) Will there be a way for existing practices to receive certification for experience?
- (7) How much attorney supervision will be required?
- (8) Will insurance or a fund be established to deal with mistakes?
- (9) Should Iowa collaborate with other states?

The Limited Licensure Work Group is aware of keen bar association interest in these topics, as well as interest within the legislative branch. The work group will continue to monitor

developments in and gain feedback from other states and jurisdictions that are experimenting with or have established alternative forms of providing legal services.

Among the charges to the Commission in the September 22, 2016 supreme court order is to “[p]ropose recommendations on innovative ways of promoting access to justice for individuals who cannot afford legal counsel or who choose to represent themselves in civil cases.” The work group proposes further study of alternative forms of providing legal services with the aim of providing recommendations. ¹

Work group members

Bruce Walker, Co-Chair
 Brian Farrell, Co-Chair
 Carol Phillips, Co-chair
 Bill Boyd
 Kyle Fry
 Bob Oberbillig
 Anjie Shutts

I. Rural Access Overview

The Rural Access Work Group met via Zoom prior to each quarterly Commission meeting and communicated by email as needed. Work group members engaged in conversations with various stakeholders, including The Iowa State Bar Association (ISBA) leadership and committees, the Iowa Judicial Branch, the National Center for State Courts, academic researchers, and community partners. Some objectives identified in the work group's 2020 report were deferred due to the disruption of the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic. At the same time, the work group observed that many temporary measures the judicial branch implemented to address the pandemic had potential impact on access to justice, and it identified opportunities to gather data on the success of these measures.

II. Update from 2020 Commission Report

The first four of the following five objectives are consistent with those the work group identified in its 2020 report. Each includes a summary of activities and updated timeframes.

III. Looking Forward

Objective one: *Innovative delivery of legal advice and representation by private attorneys*

Attorneys are the key provider of legal advice, and encouraging private attorneys and legal services entities regarding innovations in the delivery of legal services can increase the availability of legal information, advice, and representation for individuals, particularly in rural areas where a lack of resident attorneys, distance, and economic conditions can present additional barriers to access to justice.

Professional associations such as the ISBA, county bar associations, and the state's law schools should continue to educate lawyers about rural needs and alternative practice models that can provide economic opportunities for attorneys while increasing access to justice through closer-to-home legal advice and representation. The Commission can take an active role in this effort by facilitating discussion among stakeholders and highlighting successful models, for example, hosting a conference to highlight innovative approaches. These practice models might include: (1) low bono or sliding scale representation, (2) limited scope representation, (3) remote or virtual representation, and (4) for-profit clinics in underserved communities.

A unique opportunity exists for stakeholders and attorneys to consider how changes the judicial branch initially made in response to the Covid-19 pandemic—for example, greatly expanded use of videoconference technology—might be valuable on an ongoing basis.

Rural Access

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Success of this objective can be quantified by: (1) communication with stakeholders, (2) development of a plans by or in conjunction with stakeholders, (3) number of educational events or initiatives conducted by stakeholders, and (4) completion of a conference. Broader success could be quantified through a survey of practitioners to determine how many have adopted new practice models.

This initiative requires work group and Commission time to communicate these ideas. It requires stakeholder time and resources to coordinate CLEs and other means of reaching law students and practitioners. Iowa Supreme Court endorsement of such efforts would greatly assist in rallying these resources to participate in the effort.

Due to the pandemic, the work group postponed its goal of hosting a conference but continued to seek and share information on innovative practice models. Work group members engaged with faculty and students at both of the state’s law schools, participated in the Commission’s new Limited Licensure Work Group, and engaged in presentations on delivery of legal services. The pandemic led many attorneys to rely on technology they might not have utilized previously.

The work group will engage in further communication with stakeholders in the next year. It will also explore the possibility of organizing or co-hosting an in-person or virtual conference in the next year.

Objective two: *Potential new programs to provide pro bono advice and representation*

A second initiative of the Rural Access Work Group is to explore ways to make pro bono advice and representation more available to rural Iowans.

New initiatives to deliver pro bono advice and representation to the rural public.

The initiative targets pro bono attorneys and entities such as the ISBA and Iowa Legal Aid (ILA) capable of collaborating on new initiatives to deliver pro bono legal services, ultimately increasing the availability of pro bono advice and representation to the rural public.

The strategy includes the following: (1) engage in discussions with the ISBA and ILA about interest in and potential funding for new rural pro bono approaches such as a mobile clinic or legal services provided in conjunction with rural health clinics; (2) encourage the expansion of free legal advice clinics following models successfully implemented in Des Moines, Iowa City, and Fort Dodge, including partnerships with local colleges and schools to assist with translation; (3) identify opportunities for grant funding through organizations focused on legal services or rural issues; and (4) identify pandemic-related innovations that might be leveraged to further extend

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existing pro bono capacity—for example, attorneys in urban areas providing remote pro bono advice.

Success for this objective is quantifiable by: (1) communication with stakeholders, (2) identification of potential funding sources and grant applications submitted or received, and (3) development or expansion of existing pro bono capacity through minimal-cost initiatives such as free legal advice clinics and remote assistance.

This initiative requires Commission and stakeholder time and effort. It relies on contributions from stakeholders but is ultimately dependent on the availability of new sources of funding via grants.

Work group members have explored direct action to create a legal and medical clinic partnership, but no further steps have been taken due to the pandemic. Over the past year, work group members have continued to gather and share information on successful models to expand pro bono representation. Attorneys and legal services providers have grown more reliant on and comfortable with technology that can be used to expand pro bono capacity.

The work group will communicate with stakeholders in the next year to identify potential funding sources and develop a plan for applications by June 2023. In addition, the work group and its partners will continue to share and promote successful pro bono models on an ongoing basis.

Objective three: A campaign to educate rural public on availability of legal information, services, and dispute resolution resources

A third work group objective is to make rural residents aware of the availability of sources of legal information, advice, representation, and judicial and nonjudicial dispute resolution resources. The objective is aimed at rural Iowans and referral entities such as schools, health care providers, social services providers, government entities, and libraries.

The work group will work with providers of legal information and legal services, such as the ISBA, ILA, the State Library of Iowa, and the judicial branch, to determine primary resources of relevance to rural Iowans, including the following: Iowa Free Legal Answers, the State Library of Iowa, the ISBA Find-a-Lawyer service, Iowa Legal Aid, the Volunteer Lawyers Program, clinics at the law schools, judicial branch forms and online dispute resolution tools for unrepresented persons, and limited scope representation. The effort will involve working with rural Iowans and referral entities to assess the best way to create greater awareness of these resources, develop plans to publicize this information through a campaign that specifically targets rural residents, and seek funding to support various tactics.

The work group will communicate with other Commission work groups to ensure a coordinated approach to the campaign, including supporting

Rural Access

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development of a legal resource website by the State Library of Iowa and other stakeholders.

Success for this objective can be quantified by: (1) completed communication with legal services and rural stakeholders and referral entities, (2) identification of potential funding sources and grant applications submitted or received, and (3) updating and disseminating existing compilations of legal resources.

This initiative requires work group and Commission time. It also relies on contributions from stakeholders and the availability of funding.

The initial timeframe was postponed due to pandemic-related disruptions. In the meantime, work group members have continued to assess the current availability of information and to encourage the development of an Iowa legal resources website. Work group members are working with the Executive Committee to update the Commission’s past compilation of legal resources document.

The work group will assist in updating the legal resources document this summer. The full Commission should have an active discussion and formulate a plan for assisting in development of an Iowa legal resources website over the next year or the People’s Law Library website. The work group will communicate with relevant legal information and legal services stakeholders in the next year to discuss an informational campaign and to

recommend applications be made for funding.

Objective four: *Enhance access to judicial processes in rural areas*

A fourth work group objective is to increase access to courts and other dispute resolution means for rural residents, primarily through the judicial branch, with benefits accruing to rural Iowans.

The work group will assess recent judicial branch initiatives and support continued innovation. In particular, the work group would: (1) review Lessons Learned Task Force recommendations once released and discuss implications for rural access; (2) recommend administration of a separate survey of relevant actors, for example, parties, judges, attorneys, and reporters regarding the efficacy of Covid-19 pandemic measures from an access to justice perspective, and recommend corresponding action to adopt or maintain successful measures; and (3) monitor and request updates on online dispute resolution (ODR) pilot projects in Carroll, Black Hawk, and Story Counties.

Success for this initiative is measurable by a completed review of recommendations and work group communication with the Commission and judicial branch regarding survey and ODR pilot projects.

This initiative requires time from work group members and judicial branch personnel. An opportunity exists for collaboration with an existing research

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initiative by the National Center for State Courts (NCSC) and the University of Illinois.

In light of the pandemic, this objective became the work group's primary focus over the past year. The work group proposed and has maintained communication with the Commission's Executive Committee and the judicial branch regarding the possibility of a survey of court personnel, attorneys, and parties to determine the efficacy of temporary measures. The supreme court established its Lessons Learned Task Force on April 28, 2021, to review temporary measures, but the task force was not given an express mandate regarding access to justice and may not receive significant feedback from litigants, especially unrepresented litigants. At the same time, a work group co-chair has connected with researchers at the National Center for State Courts and the University of Illinois who are willing to adapt their national survey of attorneys, court personnel, and litigants to collect Iowa-specific data. Finally, the work group was pleased to learn of the judicial branch implementation of distinct Online Dispute Resolution pilot projects in three counties.

The work group will review the Lessons Learned Task Force report once available and discuss at a meeting shortly thereafter. The work group recommends the Commission and judicial branch immediately pursue the opportunity to adapt the NCSC survey and administer it within the next six

months. The work group would request updates on the ODR pilots as they become available and will discuss at a meeting shortly thereafter.

Objective Five: *Support and incentivize rural practice*

The work group supports legislative implementation of a program to promote placement of new lawyers in rural communities similar to a model implemented in South Dakota. The effort would involve contacting lawyer legislators, rural legislators, or both through the ISBA to encourage consideration of the idea. Success is easily measured by successful engagement with legislators and concrete steps by the legislature toward adoption of a program.

This objective requires minimal time and effort on behalf of the Commission and ISBA. Funding for such a program would come from the legislature.

This is a recent work group objective and involves only preliminary discussions to date. Work group members will communicate with legislators via the ISBA prior to the beginning of the next session. ⚖️

Work group members

Phil Garland, Co-Chair
 Brian Farrell, Co-Chair
 Kristie Fortman-Doser
 Christopher Patterson
 Dustria Relph
 Megan Srinivas

Veterans

I. Veterans Overview

The Veterans Work Group continues to identify the primary unmet legal needs of Iowa’s veterans, existing legal resources, ways to disseminate information regarding those resources to veterans in need of legal assistance, and ways to provide contextual or “cultural-sensitivity” training to attorneys who are interested in providing legal assistance to veterans. The work group is working to identify ways to refine the use of limited resources by relying on statistical data and other research and to identify partnership opportunities with key organizations.

Members of the work group have consulted with state and county veteran’s service officers, the Iowa Attorney General’s Office, officials from Iowa Workforce Development, and county bar associations.

II. Update from 2020 Commission Report

During the 2020–2021 Commission year, the work group utilized the data obtained through research, and gained additional data as a result of the experience of holding several clinics. The work group concluded that it was imperative to understand the legal needs of veterans before attempting to address said needs. From its research, the work group determined that the most likely areas of civil legal need for veterans fit into one of five different categories: (1) eviction and foreclosure,

(2) driver’s license restoration, (3) child support issues, (4) outstanding warrants and fines, and (5) discharge upgrades. Thus far, the practical experience obtained during the clinics support the information gained through the group’s research. Accordingly, the work group should be able to focus its efforts on the legal issues that represent the greatest need among veterans.

III. Looking Forward

Objective One: *Identify the veterans in need of legal assistance*

The first specific task in support of the objective of identifying veterans in need of legal assistance is to identify each of the organizations and agencies across the state that serve veterans, have contact with veterans, or have contact with the families of veterans.

Identifying where veterans access information or can be provided information will allow the information to get into their hands, as well as serve as an indication of how many veterans are in need of legal assistance. Once there is relative confidence regarding how many veterans need help and what type of legal issues need to be addressed, this knowledge will inform what legal resources are required in order to adequately meet the need. The strategy is to identify the organizations, agencies, and others that have contact with veterans and develop partnerships with those organizations, agencies and groups. Identification of veterans in need will allow providers to more

Veterans

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effectively and efficiently target veterans in need and veterans will have greater access to services.

The next step is to create a list of agencies and organizations. The work group should enlist the help of the VA and other significant stakeholders, legal and social service providers, as well as veterans themselves.

Objective Two: *Identify legal service options available to veterans*

The objective is to complete a comprehensive statewide assessment of all of the available legal resources. The workgroup is aware of several efforts that are already in place to provide legal services to veterans. Some examples include the following: the Drake Law School clinic that provides legal services to veterans; lawyers in Cedar Rapids who engage in an annual volunteer effort called “Operation Stand Down,” at which they hold a clinic to provide legal services to veterans; a judicial branch veterans treatment court in Woodbury County; and Iowa Legal Aid clinics in various parts of the state addressing the legal needs of veterans.

The specific task that will support the objective includes creating a list of available legal service options for veterans in need. This list will include the types of services offered, the legal areas supported, the number of veterans who can be helped by these

The work group continued its initiatives to identify veterans in need of assistance, encourage attorney volunteer help for veterans, identify available legal service options, and ensure veterans are connected with available legal services.

services, and the times, dates and locations these services are to be offered. Once a comprehensive list of available services is created, it can be compared to the need and the services can be assessed for adequacy.

Objective Three: *Encourage volunteer efforts to provide additional legal services to veterans*

In order to support this objective, the work group will continue to conduct outreach to various legal groups. In supporting this objective, the work group will be able to maintain a viable number of legal professionals who are willing to donate their time, skill, and expertise to assist veterans with their legal issues. Research and experience shows that there is a shortage of legal volunteers based on the comparative number of veterans in need of legal assistance.

The specific task that will support this effort includes reaching out to legal associations across the state in order to gain volunteers and secure legal training for the volunteers. Furthermore, the work group recognizes the value of the time, expertise, and skill of volunteers. Accordingly, once volunteers are secured, they must be kept engaged and provided an opportunity to make the best possible use of their time.

Veterans



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Objective Four: *Ensure Veterans in need of legal assistance are connected with available legal services*

In order to support this objective, the work group must ensure that the veterans in need identified pursuant to objective one are successfully paired with the available legal services identified pursuant to objective two. This will involve two key tasks: providing information and utilizing partnerships.

One key partnership in connecting the available services with the veterans in need continues to be Iowa Legal Aid. From May 28, 2020, to May 28, 2021, Iowa Legal Aid opened 1,066 cases for veteran clients, veteran-specific issues, or where veterans were part of the household. Of these cases, 152 did not meet Iowa Legal Aid's guidelines and were rejected. Ninety cases were rejected due to the caller being over Iowa Legal Aid's very low income guidelines. Another 20 cases were rejected due to the type of legal issue being a noncritical issue that falls outside eligibility criteria.

During this same time period, Iowa Legal Aid closed 750 cases for veteran clients, veteran-specific issues, or where veterans were part of the household. This includes full representation, limited scope representation, advice-only, and cases sent to the Volunteer Lawyers Project

Due to the pandemic, Iowa Legal Aid has not held in-person outreach events for veterans during this time period,

but there are plans to hold two veteran-specific outreach events in 2021 (in-person or virtual).

Iowa Legal Aid has offered one veteran-specific CLE during the time-period to encourage volunteer attorneys to serve veterans through limited-scope representation.

Five volunteer attorneys have donated eleven hours of their time to assist veterans through the Pro Bono Limited Scope Veterans project.

Another specific task in support of this objective will be to disseminate information to veterans, partners, and volunteers in order to ensure veterans are aware of the available services and can avail themselves of those services. The work group must identify options for distributing information regarding legal services to veterans. Information about legal services options will allow veterans to get help. The strategy is to identify those who have contact with veterans and their family members so they may more directly share the information with veterans in need.

Two key partnerships providing support for the task of information dissemination continue to be the Veteran Service Officers and Iowa Workforce Development. There is a Veteran Service Officer in each county in Iowa. Members of the work group will actively participate in training with the Veteran Service Officers on October 13, 2021, in support of the task of information dissemination. Iowa Workforce Development has individuals across the state who focus their work

Veterans

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on veterans. This fall, members of the work group will be involved in meeting with key members from Iowa Workforce Development in order to support the task of information dissemination. ⚖️

Work group members

Kevin McKeever, Co-Chair

Chantelle Smith, Co-Chair

Anthony Allen

Daphney Daniel

Phil Garland

Bob Oberbillig

Current Highlights

The Iowa Access to Justice Commission works closely with or in tandem with a number of key stakeholders including, but certainly not limited to, The Iowa State Bar Association, Iowa Legal Aid, the State Library of Iowa, and of course the Iowa Judicial Branch.

By work group, the Commission takes this opportunity to highlight certain Commission efforts and activities for the next year.

Community Outreach Work Group

- Service providers summit, discussed at pages 8-9 of the Report.
- The People’s Law Library of Iowa, discussed at pages 7-8 of the Report.

Corporate Involvement Work Group

- A court rule amendment to clarify broader ability to perform pro bono services for attorneys registered in states other than Iowa, discussed at page 13 of the Report.
- Continued corporate outreach and education, discussed at pages 10-12 of the Report.
- The Corporate Involvement Work Group’s pro bono commitment, discussed at pages 11-12 of the Report.

Libraries Work Group

- The People’s Law Library of Iowa, discussed at pages 14-16 of the Report.

Limited Licensure Work Group

- Continued study of alternative forms of legal service discussed at pages 19-20.

Rural Access Work Group

- A rural access campaign specifically targeting delivery of legal services to rural Iowans, discussed at pages 21-22 of the Report.
- Explore adaptation of the National Center for State Court’s survey of court users and to administer it within the next six months, discussed at pages 24-25 of the Report.

Veterans Work Group

- Continued efforts to address veterans access issues and a comprehensive statewide assessment of all of the available legal resources directed at veterans, discussed at page 27 of the Report.

Conclusion

Early in its fifth year, the Commission, pursuant to its strategic plan, assessed the structure of its work groups and with a strategic plan in place, decided to disband the Strategic Planning Work Group and establish the Limited Licensure Work Group. The Commission's rationale for this structure change included recognition that alternative forms of providing legal services are on the horizon and likely approaching Iowa. Such innovations, if studied and adopted responsibly and deliberately, could positively impact efforts to overcome barriers to access to justice that persist for so many Iowans.

The Iowa Judicial Branch response to unexpected vagaries the Covid-19 pandemic imposed on court services has highlighted the value that new and innovative approaches can bring to existing processes, some of which are longstanding.

The Commission begins its sixth year with the nation and Iowa working to establish footholds on the return from the pandemic to (a probably new) normalcy. Perhaps now more than ever, as Chief Justice Christensen has noted, the State of Iowa needs its Access to Justice Commission to continue working towards fulfilling its purpose: to serve Iowans by promoting and advancing innovative strategies for ensuring equal access to justice.

As in years past, an overriding goal of the Commission has been to continue to broaden the umbrella of stakeholders committed to working with the Commission and work groups on access issues. The Commission will have a slate of new members replacing a number of members whose service has ended with term limits.

The members of the Commission wish to thank the Iowa Supreme Court for the opportunity to serve in this important undertaking. ⚖️