

# MARYLAND ACCESS TO JUSTICE COMMISSION

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## MARYLAND ACCESS TO JUSTICE COMMISSION

*16 September 2013*

### SUMMARY OF COMMISSION MEETING

#### 1. Committee Reports.

- a. **Self-Represented Litigant Committee.** The limited scope rules remain pending before Rules Committee.

Several Circuit Court clerks have convened to discuss enhancing Circuit Court resources for the self-represented.

The Foster Care Improvement Project contacted the Commission to explore ways to serve the needs of parents in CINA and TPR cases.

- b. **Public Education Committee.** There are eight multimedia projects in development.

The Committee is exploring ways to reach moderate income Marylanders.

- c. **Definitions, Standards & Awards Committee.** The Nomination Packet for the 2014 Access to Justice Awards will be disseminated soon. Copies will be available at the October Bar Presidents' Conference.

- d. **Critical Barriers Committee.** The Commission resolved to draft a letter noting the gap in services for the incarcerated and urging the Department of Corrections to consider expanding its program to offer civil legal assistance that will enhance prisoner's ability to prepare for reentry.

The Committee is working on a white paper on the use of restraints in civil bench trials.

The Court Interpreter Program recently expanded to provide interpreters for court-ordered services.

The Commission's new brochure for undocumented persons has been released. The Spanish version will be available in the near future.

- e. **Access & Delivery of Legal Services Committee.** The fee waiver rules and pro bono practice rule are still pending before the Rules Committee.

The Commission joined the Standing Committee on Pro Bono Legal Service in sending a letter urging administrative judges to follow the current procedure for granting an automatic waiver of fees to clients of Maryland Legal Services Corporation (MLSC) grantees.

Members of the Committee provided a seminar on the Class Action Residual Funds Toolkit at the June conference of the Maryland State Bar Association.

## 2. **Old Business.**

- a. **Web Accessibility Grants.** A small committee has convened to review Web Accessibility Grant applications. The group will make grant awards by the end of September.
- b. **Task Force to Study Implementing a Civil Right to Counsel in Maryland.** Some members have been appointed, but the Governor's appointments have yet to be made. Robert Neall will chair the task force.

## 3. **New Business.**

- a. **Planning Process.** The Commission agreed to launch a strategic planning process to identify priorities for the next few years.
- b. **Quality Assurance.** There was discussion regarding how to assure quality legal representation in statutory right to counsel cases where price often drives the contract between providers and the State of Maryland. These matters may be further discussed within the Commission's strategic planning process.