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MARYLAND ACCESS TO JUSTICE COMMISSION

19 September 2011
9:30 a.m.
Annapolis, Maryland

SUMMARY OF COMMISSION MEETING

- 1. Media Projects.** The Commission viewed the new *Maryland Courts* video produced by Commission staff and the Office of Communications & Public Affairs. The video provides general information to the public and will orient new court staff. The video will be posted online (<http://mdcourts.gov/video/mdcourtsystem.wmv>) and can be made available on DVD.

The Commission's staff has worked with the AOC's Human Resources Department to develop a one-day course for non-judicial court staff on *What Can I Do to Help You? Distinguishing Legal Advice from Legal Information in Serving the Public*. A video has also been produced, with the assistance of the Office of Communications & Public Affairs as a part of the course.

- 2. Legislative Initiatives.**
 - a. Civil Right to Counsel.** Members of the Commission have been holding preliminary meetings with House and Senate leadership to determine if this idea will have support.
 - b. Fee-Shifting Bill.** Members of the Commission will meet with the Conference of Circuit Judges later today to brief them on the proposal. The Legislative Committee will decide this Fall whether to include the proposed bill in the Judiciary's legislative package.

3. Committee Reports.

- a. **SRL Committee.** The District Court Self-Help Center added two full-time attorneys to the staff to support the rollout of the “virtual self-help center.” The Center recently launched its live chat service and served over 140 individuals in less than 2 full days of operation (<http://mdcourts.gov/district/selfhelpcenter/home.html>). He also reported that Center staff were instrumental in identifying a pattern of “sewer service” – and have been able to aid litigants in addressing service of process problems from several process servers. The limited scope rules are still pending with the Rules Committee.
 - b. **Public Education Committee.** The committee is following up on the production of a number of podcasts and has a possible source for “voice talent.” The committee concluded that it was not feasible to pursue advertising to support our educational campaign at this time.
 - c. **Definitions, Standards and Awards.** The deadline for the 2012 Access to Justice Awards is next Spring.
 - d. **Critical Barriers.** The Committee has continued to meet with advocates and representatives from several key groups. The group met recently with senior advocates and will be discussing what it learned in order to make recommendations. The District Court recently had a number of forms translated.
 - e. **Access & Delivery of Legal Services.** The Committee expects to have input on the fee waiver proposal and class action residual funds proposal from various stakeholders.
4. **Announcements.** Judge Raker, Wilhelm Joseph, and Pam Ortiz will be participating in a panel with the DC Access to Justice Commission at the upcoming conference of the National Legal Aid & Defender Association (NLADA) in December.