
New York State Courts Access to Justice Program

**Delivering Legal Services, Assistance and
Information to the Public**



**Report to the Chief Judge
and the Chief Administrative Judge
of the
State of New York
2013**

New York State Courts Access to Justice Program 2013 Report

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Our Mission: To ensure access to justice in civil and criminal matters for New Yorkers of all incomes, backgrounds and special needs, by using every resource, including self-help services, *pro bono* programs, and technological tools, and by securing stable and adequate non-profit and government funding for civil and criminal legal services programs.

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MESSAGE FROM JUSTICE FISHER



This year the New York State Courts Access to Justice Program's 2013 annual report is presented with an eye toward describing the multi-faceted approach which the Access to Justice Program takes to deliver legal services, information and assistance to the public. With no right to counsel in civil legal matters and limited resources, the Access to Justice Program strives to offer different types and levels of legal assistance to unrepresented litigants that may fall short of full service legal representation. There is a continuum on which some legal matters can be resolved effectively by self-help or other forms of limited representation and assistance. As demonstrated throughout this Report, equal access to justice for unrepresented litigants is improved through court, community and internet-based programs and services, such as volunteer lawyer programs, court help centers and self-help tools.

The body of work detailed in this Report is only possible because of the vision and leadership of New York State Chief Judge Jonathan Lippman. Judge Lippman's efforts championing civil legal services funding and encouraging retired lawyers to volunteer their expertise through the Attorney Emeritus Program and his 50-hour *pro bono* service requirement for law students were instrumental in furthering the success of the Access to Justice Program's initiatives this past year. In 2013, our shared commitment was recognized at a national level when Judge Lippman and I were invited to the White House for a forum on increasing access to justice. In 2014, the Access to Justice Program will facilitate court-based volunteer opportunities for out-of-state corporate attorneys working in New York now that Judge Lippman has paved the way for their *pro bono* service. The Access to Justice Program will also expand the use of non-lawyers to assist unrepresented litigants in consumer debt and housing cases in New York City through a new court-based volunteer program. I am grateful to be able to work in a jurisdiction with such a champion of access to justice at its helm.

No doubt that without judicial civil legal services funding, thousands of litigants would be living very different lives. Yet, New Yorkers are still in crisis. Court statistics reflect the large volume of cases filed affecting basic human needs. There is still a long way to go before all civil litigants have adequate and dependable access to legal services. Until then, along with my extraordinarily dedicated and talented staff and the hundreds of partners, friends and court personnel that assist with our mission, the Access to Justice Program will endeavor to fulfill its task to ensure equal access to justice for everyone.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Fern A. Fisher".

Fern A. Fisher
February 2014

NYS COURTS ACCESS TO JUSTICE PROGRAM GOALS

Finding long-term solutions to chronic lack of civil legal assistance for people of low-income and modest means in New York including finding a permanent public funding stream for civil legal services.

Improving and increasing the availability of criminal defense representation to people facing criminal charges.

Gathering and reviewing statewide data on legal services delivery and needs towards increasing and improving civil and criminal legal assistance.

Coordinating efforts between courts, legal aid organizations and other legal and non-legal organizations, administrative agencies and lawmaking bodies to expand access to justice.

Analyzing, recommending and promoting proposed legislation, court rules, codes of conduct, policies and systemic changes that will open greater access to the courts.

Analyzing and addressing the collateral consequences of criminal convictions.

Fostering the development of new low-income and modest means income *pro bono* programs and supporting and improving the quality of existing *pro bono* programs both court-based, and outside the court, using lawyers, law students and other professionals.

Testing and developing delivery of legal assistance models both court-based and non-court-based, including limited scope representation delivery systems to improve and increase availability of assistance.

Expanding access to justice for unrepresented litigants by increasing the availability of self-help tools using a variety of methods including, but not limited to, technology, plain language forms and signs, and informational materials.

Providing cultural competent access to justice for litigants of diverse backgrounds and languages.

Addressing access to justice for individuals with special needs or social services needs by expanding social work and social services in the court system.

Providing more opportunities for justice via community empowerment using outreach, education and training of government officials and offices, neighborhood agencies and community members.

Fostering awareness of the needs of unrepresented litigants and litigants of diverse backgrounds and special needs and insuring high quality service by both judicial and non-judicial personnel via education, training and literature.

2013 HIGHLIGHTS

★ DELIVERY OF LEGAL SERVICES

- Volunteer Lawyer for the Day Program Housing Court expanded to Queens County
- Volunteer Lawyer for the Day Program Consumer Debt reaches milestone: 10,000 litigants served
- Electronic “Pre-filing” Advocate Family Offense Petition Program launched state-wide

★ DELIVERY OF LEGAL INFORMATION AND ASSISTANCE

- New York State DIY Form programs expanded to County Courts
- DIY Uncontested Divorce program pilot commenced in Kings County
- 7th Judicial District Help Center opened

★ DELIVERY OF SERVICES FOR PERSONS WITH DIVERSE NEEDS

- Training about mentally ill litigants conducted for New York City Housing Court Judges and Court Attorneys
- Poverty Simulations held for Queens County Criminal Court judicial and non-judicial personnel
- Assigned Counsel Project expanded to Bronx County

★ TRAININGS AND PRESENTATIONS

- Judge Fern A. Fisher presents at the White House Forum on Increasing Access to Justice
- Over 80 public trainings and nearly 30 personnel trainings held

**Please read further for all of the Access to Justice Program’s
2013 accomplishments**

INTRODUCTION

2013 marked the Access to Justice Program's fourth full year working to improve equal access to justice for unrepresented litigants in the New York State Courts. The Access to Justice Program's methods have proven to assist hundreds of thousands of unrepresented litigants with their legal matters and alleviate some of the challenges they face when navigating the court system. In addition to financial difficulties, unrepresented litigants are often overcome by the sheer complexity of the legal system and the intimidation of the process. Many litigants struggle with language and comprehension difficulties and the lack of helpful and consistent information. The Access to Justice Program takes these obstacles into consideration when developing and implementing its programs and resources.

As described in Part I of this Report, "*Delivery of Pro Bono Legal Services*," the Access to Justice Program recruits, trains and supervises volunteer lawyers in court-based legal services programs for the benefit of litigants who do not have an attorney. The court-based programs deliver legal services to the unrepresented litigants for only a portion of the case. Each delivery method is completely different; although each is effective in improving an unrepresented litigant's access to justice in the court system. The basics of how each program operates and the highlights of each program's 2013 accomplishments are summarized in Part I under the type of delivery method employed by the program. Each section highlights the benefits that the delivery method affords to the unrepresented litigant, the court system, the volunteer lawyer and the adversary, despite the lack of full service representation. Part I also explains the Access to Justice Program's recruitment and training protocols for all volunteer lawyers and the special emphasis directed at recruiting law students, law graduates, newly admitted lawyers, and retired attorneys through the Attorney Emeritus Program and various initiatives.

In addition to legal services, the Access to Justice Program also delivers non-lawyer assistance and information to the public in an effort to increase access to the court system and break down barriers to equal justice. Part II of this Report, "*Delivery of Legal Information and Assistance*," explains the various ways that information and assistance is offered at the courthouse, over the internet, or through the community. Whether the assistance is delivered via technology, social media, self-help tools, visual aids, written materials, or through one-on-one contact, each method of delivery has its own positive benefits for unrepresented litigants. Depending on the legal matter involved, an informed litigant is better prepared to meet the challenges that he or she may face when going to court. The Access to Justice Program seeks to furnish information, resources and tools to anyone with legal issues in the New York State Courts so they can continue their cases on their own feeling more prepared, confident, and less intimidated.

Unfortunately, not all unrepresented litigants can avail themselves of the self-help resources and tools that the Access to Justice Program makes available in the courts, in neighborhoods and on the internet. Many unrepresented litigants have physical or

mental disabilities or economic hardships that effect their ability to competently pursue their legal rights or defend against unjust claims. As explained in Part III of this Report, “[Delivery of Services for Persons With Diverse Needs](#),” the Access to Justice Program endeavors to ensure that the court is cognizant of the needs of this vulnerable segment of the public and employs a holistic informed approach in these cases.

The education and training component of the Access to Justice Program’s approach to improving access to justice is summarized in Part IV of this Report, “[Training and Presentations](#).” Part IV illustrates the importance of training the public, judicial and non-judicial personnel, and many others. The inequalities that exist in accessing the justice system can be addressed through heightening awareness and spiriting change. The available tools and programs that assist the unrepresented public are best utilized when properly promoted. For this reason, despite limited time and resources, the Access to Justice Program conducted 109 trainings and presentations for the public and court personnel in 2013. Appendices “A” and “C” contain brief details in chronological order of each training and presentation.

The Access to Justice Program’s trainings alone cannot succeed without the dedication of all the volunteers and partners who devote their time and expertise to helping the unrepresented public gain equal access to justice. Part V of this Report, “[Recognition Celebrations](#),” and the “[Partners and Friends](#)” section at the end of this Report, acknowledge the groups and people who assisted the Access to Justice Program in 2013. The names on the list of Partners and Friends grow longer every year.

In 2013, the Access to Justice Program delivered legal services, information and assistance to unrepresented litigants, targeting the areas where they have the greatest need. Until a permanent funding stream for civil legal services is established the Access to Justice Program will continue to look for innovative ways to deliver greater resources and assistance. This Report is a summary of the various delivery mechanisms and innovations employed this past year in an effort to meet the challenge of providing the most fundamental of all rights, equal access to justice.

PART I: DELIVERY OF *PRO BONO* LEGAL SERVICES

The Access to Justice Program strives to improve access to justice through the delivery of free legal services to unrepresented New Yorkers. Since providing legal representation from start to finish in every case is not possible at this time, the Access to Justice Program primarily employs a variety of “unbundled” legal service delivery methods to increase the availability of legal assistance to the public. Unbundled legal services is a practice where the lawyer performs only the agreed upon tasks, rather than the whole “bundle” of the work required in traditional full service representation. The litigant then performs the remaining tasks on his or her own. The Access to Justice Program concentrates its limited resources on providing court-based volunteer legal service programs in three general categories of unbundled or limited scope representation: advice only consultations, document preparation assistance and limited representation in court. Providing unbundled legal services programs enables the Access to Justice Program to assist many more litigants than would otherwise be possible with traditional full service legal representation. As explained in this Part, the court-based unbundled programs have proven to be beneficial for both unrepresented litigants and the court system.

The Access to Justice Program’s volunteer lawyer programs concentrate on case types where a large volume of litigants navigate the justice system on their own. The outcomes in these high volume case types, such as family, housing, consumer debt and divorce, often impact the most basic necessities of life, threatening the loss of homes and livelihoods. The unrepresented litigant faces a represented adversary in the overwhelming majority of these cases. Providing unbundled legal services helps to level the playing field.

Unlike most legal services and legal aid programs, the Access to Justice Program’s court-based volunteer programs do not income screen. The only threshold requirement for assistance is that the unrepresented litigant has a case in the New York State Courts. This enables the Access to Justice Program to assist litigants of modest means who do not qualify for legal aid, but do not have the wherewithal to afford traditional legal services.

Volunteer lawyers are required to attend substantive training prior to rendering legal services in a court-based unbundled program. The ethics of providing unbundled representation is part of every training course. All court-based unbundled legal services programs have an experienced supervising attorney available on-site to oversee the volunteers and answer questions. The training and supervision ensure the quality of the legal services provided. The supervision also extends the court’s indemnity to the volunteer lawyers. Every training program offers Continuing Legal Education (CLE) credits in exchange for minimum volunteer hours in the program. Additionally, all volunteer lawyers are eligible to receive *pro bono* CLE credit for their service hours in the court-based unbundled programs.

The Access to Justice Program, along with the Feerick Center for Social Justice, oversee the Attorney Emeritus Program where the lawyers volunteer in court-based programs as well as with legal services organizations throughout the state. The volunteer retired attorneys are able to assist with a greater array of legal issues and can perform unbundled or full service legal representation. The Attorney Emeritus Program (AEP) started by Chief Judge Jonathan Lippman has successfully seized upon New York's experienced senior attorneys and facilitated their *pro bono* service. Similarly, Judge Lippman's 50-hour *pro bono* service requirement for prospective lawyers has boosted the Access to Justice Program's law student and law graduate recruitment efforts.

The Access to Justice Program employs various volunteer lawyer recruitment methods aimed at increasing the pool of lawyers available to provide volunteer legal services. In addition to announcing volunteer opportunities in the courthouses and on the internet, the Access to Justice Program utilizes social media as a vehicle to recruit volunteers. In 2013, the Access to Justice Program used Twitter to provide information about volunteering in court-based programs (<http://twitter.com/NYCcourtsA2J>). YouTube was also used to attract volunteers by posting the Volunteer Lawyer for the Day Housing Program's recruitment video (<http://youtube.com/user/NYCcourtsA2J>). Most importantly, the Access to Justice Program's Volunteer Lawyer Program Facebook page gained considerable momentum as a place to share information with interested volunteers. The Facebook page provides one location for posting information for volunteers in multiple programs and is a wonderful mechanism to promote *pro bono* work in the courts and reach many more potential volunteers. For example, after announcing the expansion of the Volunteer Lawyer for the Day Housing Program to Queens, the posting had a total reach of 454 and visits to the page surged as much as 399% the day the posting appeared. "Likes" on the Access to Justice Program Volunteer Lawyer Program facebook page increased to 346, up from 251 in 2012, a 38% increase (www.facebook.com/NYCcourtsVLP).

In recognition of the many volunteers who go above and beyond in their service, the Access to Justice Program holds an award ceremony in their honor during National *Pro Bono* Celebration Week (see Part V). The dedicated efforts of the volunteer lawyers who share their time and expertise with the Access to Justice Program's volunteer programs increases access to justice for thousands of unrepresented New Yorkers. Below is an overview of the *pro bono* legal services programs.

ADVICE ONLY PROGRAMS

The Access to Justice Program oversees several unbundled volunteer lawyer programs that provide legal advice to unrepresented litigants in the New York City Civil, Family and Housing Courts. The Access to Justice Program recruits, trains and places admitted attorneys, law graduates, and law student volunteers in Court Help Centers where they assist unrepresented litigants with pending court



cases. Volunteers provide critical support without cost to thousands of individuals and families in order to help them preserve their homes, protect their rights as consumers and assist families with domestic controversies. Volunteer lawyers are supervised on site by experienced Help Center personnel. Help Center court personnel are available to provide legal information to unrepresented litigants, however, they are not permitted to give legal advice. Court personnel must remain neutral and cannot interpret the law or recommend a specific course of action. To the contrary, the volunteer lawyers provide legal advice, spend time reviewing court papers, notices, contracts, records, and other court-related documents, and are able to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the case. The volunteers explain how the court process works, the legal implications of a settlement, what options the unrepresented litigants have and how they should prepare and proceed with their cases. Volunteer lawyers also help fill out court forms and instruct the litigants how to serve and file court forms and what to expect on the court date. These programs are limited to advice only. The volunteer lawyers do not file legal papers or represent litigants in the courtroom.

Providing advice only, as opposed to full representation, allows these volunteer lawyer programs to assist a greater number of litigants who are representing themselves in court. Litigants can walk-in to the courthouse Help Center without an appointment and obtain legal advice about their pending cases and learn how to proceed so that they are empowered to continue on their own. A litigant is welcome to return to the Help Center at any time for additional advice. Litigants greatly benefit from the program by being better prepared for their day in court.

Better prepared litigants are a benefit to the Judge and the adversary because proceedings are conducted more efficiently. The advice provided by the volunteer lawyers spares Court Clerks from fending off requests for legal advice that they are prohibited from answering. Clerks benefit from having a valuable instant resource available to send a litigant in need. The Court also benefits because the litigant's awareness that free legal advice is available in the courthouse encourages the litigants' trust and confidence in the justice system.

The advice-only programs are an extremely attractive volunteer opportunity for lawyers because of the flexible time commitment. A lawyer can schedule volunteer hours at his or her convenience and volunteer at their own pleasure. At the same time, a volunteer lawyer is able to learn a new area of the law at a free CLE course and receive practical supervised experience while helping some of the hundreds of thousands of unrepresented litigants seeking advice in the New York City Civil, Family and Housing Courts.

Volunteer Lawyers Program - Consumer Debt

After completing the mandatory training program, volunteer lawyers provide legal advice and information to unrepresented litigants with consumer debt cases in the Volunteer Lawyers Program (VLP) - Consumer Debt program which operates in the Civil Court Help Centers in Kings and New York Counties. The volunteers are trained to demystify

the legal process for unrepresented litigants who are confused and overwhelmed. Many have already had their bank accounts frozen and their wages garnished. Volunteers assist with court forms and advise litigants on how best to represent themselves in court, providing unrepresented litigants with information about their legal rights and options. Volunteers utilize the Access to Justice Program's Consumer Debt Advocate document assembly program to prepare papers to vacate default judgments. Litigants learn about their rights in the areas of debt collection, credit reports and identity theft.

In 2013, the VLP - Consumer Debt program was offered in Kings and New York Counties at least three days per week. More than 1,200 unrepresented litigants received advice and assistance from the volunteer lawyers. Nine trainings were held and a total of 239 attorneys and law students were recruited and trained (see Appendix "A"). This is a nearly 46% increase over the number trained in 2012. The program maintains webpages for prospective and participating volunteers at <http://nycourts.gov/courts/nyc/civil/vlp.shtml> and for unrepresented litigants at <http://nycourts.gov/courts/nyc/civil/vlpselfrep.shtml>.

Volunteer Lawyers Program - Housing

The Volunteer Lawyers Program (VLP) - Housing program was designed to provide free legal information and advice to owners and tenants who do not have attorneys as they represent themselves in court proceedings. The VLP - Housing program runs five days a week during regular Help Center hours in the five counties in New York City, including the Harlem Community Justice Center. Volunteers provide assistance by explaining what the court process entails, how to prepare for a court appearance in a Resolution Part, or how to handle a hearing or a trial. They also guide litigants in preparing court forms needed to start or answer proceedings. Volunteers also help by instructing unrepresented litigants on how to file Orders to Show Cause to ask the court for appropriate relief.

In 2013, the program offered seven prerequisite CLE training programs as well as over 10 additional supplemental CLE programs to recent law graduates and admitted attorneys (see Appendix "A"). Volunteer lawyers contributed over 4,700 *pro bono* hours to the Program and were able to help more than 5,600 unrepresented litigants.

The Program maintains webpages for prospective and participating volunteers at <http://www.nycourts.gov/COURTS/nyc/housing/vlp.shtml> and for unrepresented litigants at <http://nycourts.gov/COURTS/nyc/housing/vlpselfrep.shtml>.

Volunteer Attorney Program - Family Court

The Access to Justice Program oversees the Family Court's Volunteer Attorney Program (VAP). Volunteer attorneys assist with initial pleadings in support, paternity, custody, visitation, family offense and guardianship matters. The availability of such services helps reduce delays, helps ensure a more efficient and fair outcome for

unrepresented litigants and empowers litigants to pursue their cases to final resolution. Given the complexity of Family Court cases and the critical rights involved, the program is important to ensure that unrepresented litigants understand their rights. Better preparedness and fewer delays motivate litigants to pursue their cases to final resolution rather than abandoning their actions in frustration and confusion as so many do.

Volunteer attorneys provide assistance to unrepresented litigants on a daily basis in the Family Court Help Centers of Kings, Queens, Bronx, Richmond and New York Counties. In addition to solo practitioners, VAP participants include many large law firms that have agreed to send associates on a regular basis. These firms include: Alston & Bird; Arent Fox LLP; Banco Popular North America; Cadwalader, Wickersham & Taft LLP; Citigroup; Colgate-Palmolive Company; Cooley LLP; Davis Polk & Wardwell LLP; Davis Wright Tremaine LLP; Debevoise & Plimpton LLP; Dechert LLP; DLA Piper LLP; Duane Morris LLP; Greenberg Traurig LLP; HSBC; Hughes Hubbard & Reed LLP; Kirkland & Ellis LLP; Locke Lord LLP; McCarter & English LLP; Mintz, Levin, Cohn, Ferris, Glovsky and Popeo, P.C.; Morgan, Lewis & Bockius LLP; Morrison Foerster LLP; Orrick, Herrington & Sutcliffe LLP; Paul, Weiss, Rifkind, Wharton & Garrison LLP; Pfizer Inc.; Proskauer Rose LLP; Ropes & Gray LLP; Shearman & Sterling LLP; Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom LLP; Stroock & Stroock & Lavan LLP; Thompson Hine LLP; UBS Financial Services; Watson, Farley & Williams LLP; White & Case LLP; Willkie Farr & Gallagher LLP.

"The structure of the program has allowed me to assist a large number of pro se litigants while keeping up with the demands of my caseload at my firm. It is truly rewarding to be able to help those in need, and I am continually impressed and inspired by the dedication of the staff attorneys who make a significant difference in the lives of others.."

-VAP Volunteer Attorney, Nov., 2013

In 2013, more than 3,400 litigants were assisted by volunteer lawyers in the New York City Family Courts. The program offered six CLE trainings and numerous additional trainings by DVD and a total of 165 volunteer attorneys were recruited and trained to provide assistance to unrepresented litigants in the New York City Family Court Help Centers (see Appendix "A").

LIMITED REPRESENTATION IN THE COURTROOM PROGRAMS

The Access to Justice Program offers unbundled representation in the courtroom through its Volunteer Lawyer for the Day (VLFD) Program. The Access to Justice Program runs the VLFD Program for unrepresented litigants in consumer debt and landlord-tenant proceedings. The VLFD Program recruits, trains, and supervises volunteer lawyers in New York City Housing and Civil Courts. Unlike



the advice only programs, the volunteer attorneys, law graduates and law students who participate in the VLFD programs meet their clients for the first time on the morning of the court appearance and sign and file a limited retainer agreement and notice of appearance. The representation begins and ends the same day. If a particular case is not resolved in a single appearance, the Program provides representation on adjourned dates by the same volunteer or by a different volunteer depending on availability. At each appearance, the volunteer and the client execute a new retainer agreement.

New York City residents sued in debt collection cases and housing nonpayment cases are overwhelmingly unrepresented by counsel and face major substantive and procedural obstacles to the fair adjudication of their cases. Unbundled representation during the settlement conference helps even the negotiating positions of the parties. Moreover, unrepresented litigants benefit from having assistance in discerning possible defenses and counterclaims that may never have been heard in court without the Program's involvement. Through the representation, litigants are provided with information about their case, educated about their rights, and, where applicable, referred to services to seek further assistance. The volunteer lawyer helps the litigant raise issues and assists the litigant in preparing to continue the case on their own, if necessary. Litigants feel empowered through the brief services they receive. The VLFD Program contributes to improving access to justice by providing free legal and practical support to litigants who would otherwise navigate the Court on their own. Not only does the volunteer enhance the litigant's understanding of the proceeding by breaking down the legalese and addressing any language difficulties, but the volunteer attorney also alleviates the litigant's nervousness by negotiating with the adversary in what is a typically adversarial and contentious exchange, communicating with court staff more effectively and by deftly arguing points of law and fact before the judge.

The court-sponsored VLFD Program promotes public confidence in the court system by improving perceptions of fairness and accessibility to justice. It demonstrates to the public the court's investment and concern about hearing and resolving the problems of ordinary litigants. The simple involvement of a volunteer often alleviates stress levels and contributes to a fairer or better experience with an adversary or the overall process.

Due to the high volume and legal complexity of cases scheduled on the court's calendar, it is difficult for court personnel to conference every single matter. Volunteer lawyers free up the court staff's time to attend to other cases and reduce courtroom employees' time required to answer litigants' questions or explain procedures thus improving courthouse efficiency.

As the Program is an unbundled legal service, which begins and ends the same day, it is an attractive *pro bono* opportunity for volunteers who are not willing to make the more substantial time commitment often required to follow a proceeding through to its conclusion. The volunteer's commitment is finite and manageable as delineated in the limited retainer agreement and notice of appearance. The Program provides an opportunity for non-litigators or volunteers interested in a new area of the law to learn new skills under the guidance of a seasoned attorney sanctioned by the court and for

those who merely desire to earn CLE credit or do *pro bono* work it gives them a way to do so without getting stuck in protracted litigation from which they would not be able to withdraw.

The foregoing structure allows the Access to Justice Program to train hundreds of volunteers and offer free CLE credit in return for a manageable *pro bono* commitment. Through leveraging volunteer resources to support this effort, the VLFD Program provides an invaluable community service at a difficult time for many New Yorkers.

Volunteer Lawyer for the Day Program - Housing Court

The Housing Court VLFD Program helps prevent the eviction of hundreds of New Yorkers every year with the *pro bono* help of volunteers who step in to represent New York City tenants who have been sued in nonpayment proceedings. It began as a pilot project in 2006 in New York County and now operates in New York County on Tuesdays (intake only) and Thursdays, in Kings County on Mondays and Wednesdays, in Bronx County on Wednesdays, and in Queens County, where the Program was expanded in 2013, on Mondays and Fridays. The Program is run in partnership with CUNY School of Law's CUNY School of Law Community Legal Resource Network (CLRN) and the participation of dedicated LaunchPad for Justice Fellows and other volunteers trained by the Access to Justice Program.

"It's so scary being here in court....I have no problem speaking a mile a minute but when I talk to the landlord's attorney I freeze up. Thank you for this program and for your help."

-VLFD Housing Litigant, Dec., 2013

In nonpayment cases involving rent-stabilized apartments, which are matters the Program focuses on, tenants are overwhelmingly unrepresented by counsel. They lack a fundamental understanding of their legal rights and defenses and often fail to raise issues that should be heard in court including legitimate defenses and claims relating to repair problems or the legality of their rent. Tenants are also typically inexperienced at negotiating and unschooled in settlement procedures, which can result in detrimental consequences to them when they agree to bargains they cannot uphold and fail to understand the legal implications of a Stipulation of Settlement.

The Program has a positive impact in getting more favorable outcomes by raising appropriate defenses and claims at the outset, negotiating fair agreements and avoiding the pitfalls of judgments where possible. Volunteer lawyers help tenants set themselves up to succeed in honoring settlements they can afford. In the event no agreement can be reached, the Program assists them in preparing for the trial.

Landlord-tenant proceedings in the New York City Housing Court are ideal for the lawyer for the day approach for a number of reasons. With no discovery as a right, the volunteer lawyer can read the Notice of Petition and Petition and Answer, interview the litigant and quickly ready him or her for the court appearance in the Resolution Part.

Every case is calendared in a Resolution Part to see if it can be settled. The majority of cases in Housing Court are settled in the Resolution Part and matters can be resolved during a first appearance. Accordingly, the litigant may never have to go to court unrepresented. In the event the next court appearance requires preparation, the client is advised of what steps need to be taken.

In 2013, the program offered nine prerequisite CLE training programs as well as over 10 additional supplemental CLE programs to recent law graduates and admitted attorneys (see Appendix "A").

The Program maintains webpages for prospective and participating volunteers at http://www.nycourts.gov/COURTS/nyc/housing/vlfd_housing.shtml.

Volunteer Lawyer for the Day Program - Consumer Debt

Begun as a pilot program in 2009, the VLFD - Consumer Debt Program has expanded to include almost daily programs in New York, Kings, Queens and Bronx Counties that helps thousands of financially distressed New Yorkers. New York City residents who have been sued in debt collection cases are overwhelmingly unrepresented by counsel and face major substantive and procedural obstacles to the fair adjudication of their cases.

"The lawyer couldn't have been better. I am just thankful for such an outstanding service."

*-VLFD Consumer Debt
Program Litigant, June 2013*

In consumer credit cases, where the defenses available to debtors can be complex, the gross disparity in representation means that defendants never raise the overwhelming majority of legitimate defenses. Creditors are able to obtain judgments against defendant debtors without ever needing to submit proof of the debt or amount owed. Many valid claims are lost because the unrepresented often do not present evidence or understand the law. This Program has a huge impact in assisting clients to favorably resolve these problems.

Civil Court consumer credit cases are particularly amenable to a lawyer for the day approach. Lawyers are able to achieve dismissals, both with and without prejudice, and settlements in approximately 55% of cases on the same day of representation. In these situations, the representation for the day is essentially equivalent to full representation. In the remainder of the cases, lawyers request discovery on behalf of clients or take other steps to both put the clients in a better position to defend themselves or at least provide clients with a better sense of their options.

This Program runs four days a week and is conducted in partnership with New York County Lawyers' Association - operating in the New York County Civil Court; New York Legal Assistance Group - operating in Bronx and Queens County Civil Court; and the Brooklyn Bar Association's Volunteer Lawyer Program – operating in Kings County Civil Court. Judiciary Legal Services funding received by program partners enabled the

program to continue and expand its services in 2013. Approximately 3,632 litigants were assisted by this Program in 2013. Using the lowest rate per case received by local legal services organizations, at \$1,200 per case, the value of legal services provided by the volunteers in one year was in excess of four million dollars. The Program also runs an additional day in the New York County Civil Court in partnership with the Lincoln Square Legal Services, Inc. at Fordham University School of Law (Consumer Debt Clinic).

In 2013, the program offered nine CLE training programs and recruited and trained a total of 239 volunteer attorneys and law students to provide limited representation to unrepresented consumer debtors in the Civil Courts of Kings, Queens, Bronx and New York Counties (see Appendix "A"). This represents a nearly 36% increase in volunteers trained in 2012. In addition, the VLFD Program marked a milestone of 10,000 Consumer Debt defendants served by program volunteers since its inception and honored program partners at a reception hosted at the New York City Civil Court (see Part V).

The Program maintains webpages for- prospective and participating volunteers at http://www.nycourts.gov/COURTS/nyc/civil/vlfd_civil.shtml.

ADVOCATE DOCUMENT PREPARATION PROGRAMS

Our legal system is built around written legal papers. Every action and proceeding is commenced with legal papers, relief is sought and granted based on legal papers and cases are resolved and finalized on legal papers. Unrepresented litigants face a myriad of challenges when completing legal papers for court, including language and comprehension difficulties. Accordingly, assistance with legal papers is one of the most requested and needed service for unrepresented litigants.

To combat these challenges, the Access to Justice Program offers assistance for litigants with the preparation of their court documents. Document assembly technology is employed for trained advocates to use to assist unrepresented litigants with completing court forms. With an advocate document assembly program, a trained advocate assists the otherwise unrepresented litigants with the preparation of court papers and is available to ensure that a *prima facie* pleading is produced and terms and concepts are explained. Currently, the Access to Justice Program oversees three advocate assisted programs in areas which have a high volume of unrepresented litigants: divorce, domestic violence and consumer debt. Two of these programs utilize document assembly programs created by the Access to Justice Program using HotDocs software. The third program licenses vendor software for use in court-based clinics.

This type of service delivery method is a sizable time saver for the court, the litigant and the advocate. When unrepresented litigants are assisted with document preparation the court papers produced are more complete and accurate, the unrepresented litigants

are better advised of their rights and court procedures and are more prepared for court and there is less rejection of papers. The programs greatly improve access to justice as well as court efficiency.

The advocates appreciate the document assembly programs because they provide a much faster method of interviewing a litigant and producing court papers. The document assembly programs can produce one or multiple court forms for the litigant, depending on which forms the advocate deems are required. Information only has to be input once regardless of how many times it may appear in the papers produced.

Uncontested Divorce Program

The Access to Justice Program's Uncontested Divorce Program helps unrepresented litigants with the preparation of uncontested divorce forms at clinics in the Supreme Courts of New York, Queens, Kings, Bronx and Westchester Counties. Thousands of New Yorkers file uncontested divorces each year without an attorney and the divorce forms and court process are complex and bewildering. The Program helps ensure that the divorce process is simply explained and the documents that litigants submit are complete and accurately prepared.

"They were very, very, helpful, kind, considerate. It made the process much easier."

*-Uncontested Divorce
Program Litigant, Queens Co.,
Oct. 2013*

The Program recruits, trains and supervises volunteer attorneys to assist unrepresented litigants. The Access to Justice Program licenses a document assembly program that generates legal documents and simplifies the drafting process, producing personalized court forms for litigants that are ready to serve and file in the Supreme Court. Unrepresented litigants receive free assistance from the volunteer attorneys with the preparation of all the documents required for an uncontested divorce where the parties have no children. Appointments are made through Court Help Centers and if there is space, walk-ins are sent to the Program.

In 2013, the Program ran on Tuesdays in New York and Queens Counties, Wednesdays in Westchester County, Thursdays (evenings) in Bronx County and Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays in Kings County. Benjamin N. Cardozo Law School students also staff Thursday day-time hours in the Bronx County Supreme Court. The Uncontested Divorce Program conducted ten CLE trainings and trained 311 attorneys and law students who were recruited to provide assistance to unrepresented litigants (see Appendix "A"). A total of 2,276 unrepresented litigants were assisted with their uncontested divorce proceedings. The Program also operated one additional day and one additional night in Queens County Supreme Court in partnership with St. John's Law School. These additional hours enable unrepresented litigants to complete their forms after working hours.

As part of this effort, the Program conducted trainings for Minority Bar Associations in the preparation of the divorce forms. After the training, the Access to Justice Program and the Minority Bar Associations held two uncontested clinics where the trained

members of these Bar Associations assisted unrepresented litigants with their uncontested divorce forms in communities in New York (Harlem) and Bronx County. The Minority Bar Associations that were trained included: Metropolitan Black Bar Association, The Association of the Black Women Attorneys, The Association of Ghanaian Lawyers of America, the Black Bar Association of Bronx County, the Nigerian Lawyers Association and the Westchester Black Bar Association.

Advocate Family Offense Petition Program

Approximately 68,000 Family Offense Petitions are filed in New York State Family Courts each year seeking orders of protection. Domestic violence has serious ramifications and the victims are in great need of advice and information to protect their safety. The New York State court system's Family Offense Advocate Program was designed to assist unrepresented litigants with completing the Family Offense Petition and Address Confidentiality Affidavit, if needed, while trained domestic violence advocates provide the guidance required in these delicate scenarios.

The document assembly program is available to any domestic violence advocacy group once they have been trained and approved by New York State court system personnel. Access to the program is only available through Pro Bono Net's Family Justice/DV practice area (http://www.probono.net/ny/family/fop_project/ membership and password required). Advocates must also join LawHelpInteractive to use the program, which is free. The program is not available for self-help to ensure that domestic violence victims get the support they need due to domestic violence's inherent safety dangers.

"We used to get a lot of victims who came at the end of the day when it was too late to file and we had to tell them to come back in the morning. Now, we can complete the online form any time, even at the end of the day. When they return the next day, they can go straight to the petition room and then right to the intake judge."

-Bronx Co. Family Offense Petition Program Advocate, May 2013

The data collected in the document assembly program is electronically transferred to the Family Court's Universal Case Management System. The petition is not filed until the litigant or the advocate brings the signed Family Offense Petition into court. The electronic transfer of data directly into the Family Court's case management system is a major improvement in courthouse efficiency and eliminates hours of data entry time.

Use of the Family Offense Petition program was piloted in January 2013 in Bronx County Family Court. By the end of August 2013, the program was expanded to the other four counties in New York City. By the end of 2013, the program was implemented in at least one Family Court in every Judicial District. Nearly 1,500 Family Offense Petitions created with the advocate assisted program were filed in the New York State Family Courts. The program is expected to be available to advocate groups in every county by the middle of 2014. Feedback indicates that this program equally

benefits the litigants, advocates and court system personnel. Moreover, litigant wait time has been substantially reduced.

In 2013, the Access to Justice Program made two modifications to the HotDocs document assembly program based upon requests from DV advocates and Court Clerks. First, the ability to prepare the papers required to obtain a temporary order of protection from the local criminal court on nights and weekends when the Family Court is closed was added to the program. This helps protect DV victims who are in immediate danger. Also, second, an option to generate the form used in the New York City Family Courts to request an appearance by telephone when the petitioner is mobility challenged, elderly, homebound or in an abuse shelter was added for those Courts. The program was also modified to reflect statutory changes that added identity theft, larceny and coercion to the list of offenses upon which a Family Offense Petition may be based.

The Access to Justice Program presented information about this program to access to justice advocates at a live training and a webinar. A presentation was also made to the court system's District Executives. (See Appendix "A" for more details about the trainings and Appendix "B" for sample slides from the PowerPoint presentation).

Advocate Consumer Debt Vacate Default Judgment Program

The Access to Justice Program's advocate document assembly program is a HotDocs version of the Consumer Debt Vacate Default Judgment DIY Form program which prepares papers seeking vacatur of default judgments for failure to answer or appear in consumer debt cases. However, the advocate program helps New York City consumer debt attorneys prepare pleadings much faster when assisting a litigant. The advocate program does not contain explanatory screens and allows the user to view several fields of information at once. The program is password protected to prevent litigants from using the advocate program instead of the DIY Form version because the advocate version does not contain user friendly information about terms and procedures.

"The Court's HotDocs programs have allowed us to help more unrepresented litigants than before. By simplifying the process for consumer debt advocates we are able to reach more litigants and provide them with much needed assistance."

-Kings Co., Consumer Debt Vacate Default Program, Advocate, Dec., 2013

In 2013, the Access to Justice Program continued to share the link and password for this advocate assisted program with consumer advocate groups in the New York City Consumer Debt Consortium, as well as the Access to Justice Program's consumer debt advice program. The program's availability to consumer debt advocate groups was posted on Pro Bono Net's NYC Consumer Debt Defense Project practice area (<http://www.probono.net/ny/consumer/advocateforms/> membership required). Based upon feedback from the New York City Bar Association, the Program was modified to

clarify the distinction between moving under CPLR 5015(a)1 and (a)4.

ATTORNEY EMERITUS PROGRAM

An unprecedented number of lawyers are now reaching retirement age every year. Estimates suggest that about a quarter of the nation's 1.1 million lawyers are over 65 and by 2020 they will account for about half of the legal profession. The increased life expectancy of this group, coupled with their generally improved health, means that many experienced, able lawyers will have the option of considering a long period of public interest work. The opportunity to utilize the skills and abilities they accumulated over a lifetime, as well as providing urgently needed assistance to many vulnerable people, is being considered by many of these lawyers. A wide variety of research confirms what retirees are discovering – the importance of meaningful work to the individual's well-being, and that people are happiest when they feel they are being effective and contributing to socially valuable goals. Chief Judge Jonathan Lippman tapped into this potential by creating the Attorney Emeritus Program (AEP) in 2010. Since then, almost 800 lawyers over the age of 55 have committed to provide 60 hours of legal services assistance to some of the many individuals unable to afford an attorney to assist them with their urgent legal matters.



The opportunities in AEP include a wide variety of delivery systems – including one-on-one representation, clinical models (or unbundled legal advice) or mentoring or coaching others. Interested attorneys can search by location on the AEP website. All of the approximately 80 different opportunities around New York State involve a partnership with a significant civil legal services organization that provides training and supervision for each attorney. Those attorneys still actively practicing may also earn up to 15 of their 24 mandated CLE credits by doing the *pro bono* work. Information is available at <http://www.nycourts.gov/attorneys/volunteer/emeritus/rsaa/>.

The AEP Program has also benefitted from the involvement of law firms, which have signed "Statements of Participation" and pledged to lend logistical and staff support to AEP volunteers at their firms. The law firms include: Chadbourne & Parke, Clifford Chance, Davis Polk, Debevoise & Plimpton LLP, Hiscock & Barclay, Hughes Hubbard & Reed LLP, Kaye Scholer, Proskauer Rose, Simpson Thatcher & Bartlett, Skadden Arps, Sullivan & Cromwell, Weil Gotshal & Manges and Willkie Farr & Gallagher LLP.

Each time the 60-hour commitment is completed, recognition is provided by both the organization and Chief Judge Lippman, in the form of a personal letter of thanks for the important contribution that the lawyer has made to the effort to provide access to justice. The Access to Justice Program also recognizes AEP attorneys during National Pro Bono Celebration Week. (See Part V).

LAW STUDENT AND NEW LAWYER INITIATIVES

The Access to Justice Program involves law students, law graduates awaiting admission to the New York Bar, and new lawyers in public service early in their legal careers by encouraging their participation in court-based volunteer programs. The goal is to instill a life-long interest and dedication to *pro bono* work. The Access to Justice Program offers volunteer opportunities for law students to assist lawyers in making the transition from law student to law practice. This in turn benefits thousands of unrepresented litigants who are assisted by this energetic, enthusiastic expanded pool of volunteers.

In 2013, in order to facilitate law student and law graduate participation in court-based volunteer programs, the Access to Justice Program petitioned the Appellate Divisions of the First and Second Departments for renewal of Student Practice Orders. The renewed Practice Orders authorize a program of activities for law students and law graduates awaiting admission to the New York State Bar, as long as they act under the supervision of the Access to Justice Program.

The Access to Justice Program continued to target recruitment efforts at New York City area law school law graduate fellowship and law student internship public service programs. Fellowship and internship students participated from Benjamin N. Cardozo School of Law, Brooklyn Law School, CUNY School of Law, Fordham University School of Law School, New York Law School, Pace University School of Law, St. John's University School of Law and Touro Law Center. Students volunteered in all of the court-based unbundled programs. The Access to Justice Program also held its first training for LLM students from New York University Law School in consumer debt law and plans to expand recruitment of LLM students for all programs in 2014.

Through a 2013 judiciary legal services grant, a collaboration of four New York City law schools: Benjamin N. Cardozo Law School, CUNY Law School, St. Johns Law School and The Touro Law Center, jointly developed and expanded capacity and expertise for training and supervision of law students and recent law school graduates to provide *pro bono* civil legal services to low-income New Yorkers through the Access to Justice Program. Legal services are provided by law student and recent law graduates in existing court-based programs in the areas of uncontested divorce, landlord-tenant law and consumer debt law. In partnership with the Access to Justice program, law students and law graduates of the Touro Law Center provided services in uncontested divorce and housing law in Suffolk County; Cardozo's law students and law graduates provided assistance in Uncontested Divorce in the Bronx Supreme Court, and provided limited representation to Consumer Debtors in the New York County Civil Court; St John's provided assistance in Uncontested Divorce in Queens Supreme Court, and provided limited representation to Consumer Debtors in Queens County Civil Court; and CUNY law students and law graduates provided limited representation to tenants in Kings County Housing Court. Touro also provided services on the New York Legal Assistance Group's (NYLAG's) Mobile Legal Help Center. This initiative works with the

Access to Justice Program to coordinate training, recruitment and supervision of *pro bono* efforts across law schools enlisting significant numbers of law students and recent law graduates, and facilitates best practices for addressing areas of unmet need that are amenable to law students and recent law graduates that would be difficult for a single law school to match if acting in isolation. This initiative is especially important in light of the new 50-hour *pro bono* mandate for new lawyers announced by Chief Judge Lippman in 2012.

The Access to Justice Program offered its fourth and fifth Bridge the Gap CLE trainings in 2013 (see Appendix “A”). Through this free training law graduates are able to fulfill their CLE requirements, fulfill their 50-hour *pro bono* service requirements, and obtain supervised practical legal experience assisting unrepresented litigants in New York City Housing, Civil, Family and Supreme Court with their housing, family, consumer debt and uncontested divorce cases. The Bridge the Gap training is extremely popular and registration closed weeks before the training dates. Since the program’s inception over 600 recent law school graduates and newly admitted attorneys have signed up for this CLE series and provided *pro bono* service to more than 5,000 litigants. All participants in the court-based volunteer programs gain invaluable experience while helping some of New York’s most disadvantaged civil litigants obtain access to justice.

PART II: DELIVERY OF LEGAL INFORMATION AND ASSISTANCE

There are many ways to deliver legal information and assistance to unrepresented litigants that will greatly increase their access to the court system. On the spectrum, depending on the legal matter involved, there are resourceful litigants who may be able to adequately represent themselves after reading a plain language self-help publication, or surfing through legal and procedural information on the court's website, or visiting tables at a community fair. There are even litigants who greatly benefit from quiet lay assistance empowering them to speak up because they are just too intimidated by court proceedings to assert themselves. When developing non-lawyer assistance programs and informational resources, the Access to Justice Program tries to keep in mind the varying depths of need and the varied obstacles that unrepresented litigants often face when navigating the court system. These obstacles include: the complexity of the legal system in light of the litigant's lack of knowledge, language and comprehension difficulties, financial hardships and the litigant's inability to get to the courthouse during business hours.

The Access to Justice Program seeks to maximize self-help and non-legal assistance wherever possible through the many innovative ways it delivers legal information and assistance at the courthouse, over the internet and in the community. Although these measures come short of legal representation, an informed litigant is better prepared to meet the challenges that come his or her way. As reported in this Part, the Access to Justice Program's multifaceted delivery methods furnish information and tools to anyone with legal issues in the New York State Courts, making the promise of "justice for all" more meaningful.

DELIVERY OVER THE INTERNET

The Access to Justice Program employs technology-based resources and services as a means of disseminating information and assistance to a large segment of the population since the internet is the first place many litigants turn to find answers. The internet is also ideal for litigants who cannot easily visit a courthouse. With budget and time constraints, it is unrealistic for the court system to devote all available resources to services that require in-person court assistance; on-line delivery is far more cost-effective mechanism.

Self-help internet-based resources are proven effective tools to assist the ever increasing numbers of unrepresented litigants in need of information, but it is not a substitute for counsel. Rather it is part of a continuum in which some matters can be resolved effectively. The Access to Justice Program makes every effort to produce user-friendly, plain language internet-based resources that maximize a litigant's chance of success.

DIY Form Programs

Access to the justice system requires a litigant to prepare and file court forms.

NYS DO-IT-YOURSELF DIY Forms

This requirement creates a myriad of difficulties for unrepresented litigants who have no familiarity with law and procedure. Litigants who use the wrong form or cannot find the form they need will not obtain the relief they seek; litigants who leave out necessary information will not prevail; and litigants who do not know what to do after completing the form or are overwhelmed by the paperwork may just give up and never access the justice they seek. Litigants need information provided in a non-intimidating format to assist with language difficulties and comprehension, to know if they are using the correct form; to help properly complete the form, to locate missing information, and to understand next steps. The Access to Justice Program produces attractive, user-friendly document assembly programs, known as DIY (Do-It-Yourself) Forms, that address *pro se* needs and alleviate many of these challenges unrepresented litigants face when creating their court papers.

DIY Forms are designed as a free and easy method for unrepresented litigants to prepare the court forms and instructions they need to proceed in court. The programs ask the litigant questions then use the answers to generate a completed personalized court form, which is ready to print, serve and file. The DIY Form programs are available to unrepresented litigants over the internet and in many courthouse Clerks' Offices and Help Centers throughout the state. DIY Form programs are available for litigants in Family, Supreme, County, Surrogate's, District, City, Town, Village, New York City Civil and New York City Housing Courts. A list of the 24 available DIY Form programs is set forth on the Access to Justice Program's website:

<http://www.nycourts.gov/ip/nya2j/diyavailable.shtml>.

The Access to Justice Program develops document assembly programs for unrepresented litigants by using a combination of A2J Author and HotDocs software. Completed programs are hosted on Pro Bono Net's national online document assembly project, LawHelp Interactive (LHI). The overall design of the DIY Form program makes the litigant's experience far less intimidating. Every program has the same attractive graphic appearance of a guide walking a litigant step by step along a path that leads to the courthouse. Keeping low literacy users in mind, a limited amount of information is presented on each screen. The experience is personalized by having the litigant choose a gender and then placing him on the path with the guide. The programs also address the litigant by his or her first name once this information has been collected.

DIY Form programs maximize an unrepresented litigant's chances of succeeding at the courthouse in a variety of ways. "Pop-ups" explain terms and "Learn More" buttons provide additional information to help the litigant understand the question. To ensure that the litigant does not omit a necessary element of the application, programs prompt the litigant to enter information if the litigant attempts to continue without completing a mandatory screen. DIY Form programs screen litigants for eligibility and exit them out of the programs if they do not qualify. Litigants do not see questions unless they apply

to their situation and do not need to repeatedly input information as is required when completing paper forms. The programs generate as many court forms as the program determines are needed based upon the litigant's responses to the questions in the guided interview. This includes any proposed orders, supplemental pleadings and affidavits of service. Thus, the litigant does not need to worry about choosing the correct court form to complete. Personalized instructions and information are generated which can include: filing and service instructions; courthouse locations and hours; court costs and fee waiver information; courtroom procedures; what the adversary may do next; what to do if there is a default; and where to find additional required documents, information or low-cost legal assistance.

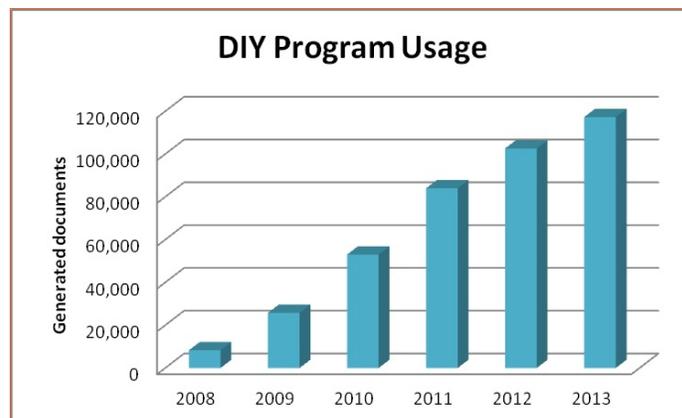
DIY Form programs also assist users with language and comprehension difficulties. Some programs provide pop-up text in other languages or audio to make it easier for users who do not read well or who understand better through listening. Some programs offer graphics or hyperlinks for additional assistance. All programs are sent to a plain language specialist to simplify the text for readers with poor reading ability.

Court forms prepared using this type of document assembly program offer an unrepresented litigant far better assistance than a paper form or a fillable court form. The Access to Justice Program has found that DIY Form programs are an immensely helpful tool for increasing access to justice.

DIY Form Program Usage

The Access to Justice Program tracks DIY Form program usage and reviews the data to determine where and how to follow-up with program changes and personnel training and outreach. The Access to Justice Program primarily relies on DIY Form program usage data collected from two sources: Law Help Interactive (LHI) statistics and DIY User Surveys. Both sources showed a clear improvement in usage in 2013.

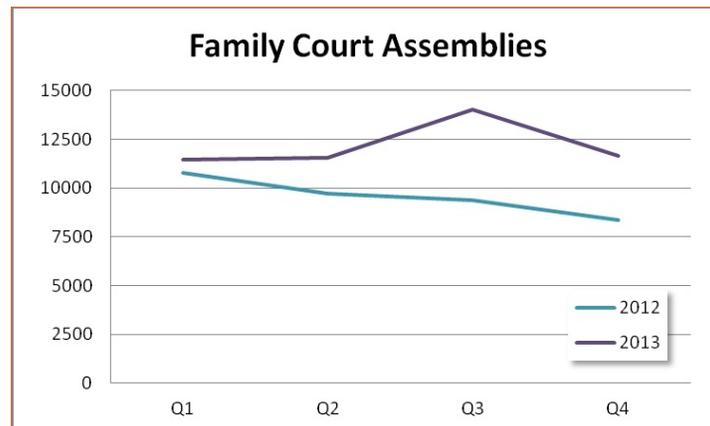
According to the LHI statistics, there were 117,283 assemblies, the second consecutive year where over 100,000 assemblies were generated.



The New York State courts again leads LHI in the number of assemblies for the year; in

fact, New York's assemblies comprised almost 28% of the total assemblies generated on the LHI server.

Family Court DIY Form programs in 2013 had an increase in assemblies of 27% from 2012. In particular, the two Custody/Visitation DIY Form programs, for modification and enforcement petitions, debuted in late 2012 and during its first full year of implementation in 2013 had almost 9,000 assemblies. The Support Modification Petition DIY Form program continued to be the most utilized Family Court program and was one of the top most downloaded resources on LawHelp.org/NY, a website that helps low income New Yorkers to solve legal problems.



A recognized pattern has emerged in the past four years: there is a marked decline in assemblies for all programs during the fourth quarter every year. The Access to Justice Program attributes this to the holiday season.

The User Survey data reviewed by the Access to Justice Program provides a wealth of feedback used to improve usage of the programs. A User Survey is generated every time a document is assembled from a DIY Form program. If the litigant chooses to fill it out it is returned to the Access to Justice Program by court staff. Through December 2013, the Access to Justice Program has collected data from 71,058 surveys since the programs began.

"Yes, it was helpful, especially the messages on the right to give you examples of what to include. Thank you for an easy way to fill out the forms, which could be confusing."

-DIY internet feedback, Dec., 2013

The anonymous User Survey consists of nine questions, plus two optional questions about age and income. The questions solicit information about the litigant's computer background, experience with the DIY Form program, how and where the litigant used the program and if the litigant has any suggestions or comments. The comments are overwhelmingly positive. Comments are used to identify problems that need to be fixed in the programs, as well as court facilities that provide stellar service or need changes in procedure to improve the litigant's experience.

In 2013, DIY User Surveys were returned from all but one of the 62 counties in New York State. Overall, 95% of users found that the DIY Form program saved them time. 65% of the litigants are between the ages of 25 and 44 and almost 38% have an income of less than \$20,000. Of the litigants who have an income of less than \$20,000, 42% of them used a public access computer in a court facility, such as a Help Center or Clerk's Office.

The court and its employees remain the first point of contact for litigants learning about DIY programs. Sixty-six percent of litigants used a DIY Form program in a court facility. Moreover, 70% of litigants said they were referred to a DIY Form program by a court employee. Many other litigants found out about a DIY program from an attorney, a public library or legal aid but also from sources as varied as social service agencies, banks, life insurance companies, churches, funeral homes, hospitals, nursing homes, and even the motor vehicle department.

All DIY Form programs are reviewed for plain language to ensure that litigants understand the screens and questions asked of them. The merits of the extra expense and time spent on plain language is reflected in the User Survey responses where 98% of litigants said that they understood the questions in the program.

The Access to Justice Program also collects usage data from the court system's Universal Case Management System (UCMS). Unfortunately, there is no data from the Supreme, New York City Housing, Town and Village Courts because they do not have UCMS installed. In 2013, recorded filings in the UCMS Family, Surrogate's City, District and Civil Courts continued to improve. The court system's Department of Technology programmed the new Consumer Debt Vacate Default Judgment DIY Form program into the City and District Courts' UCMS so that Court Clerks could record the DIY filings. Instructions were added to the intranet and Clerks were trained.

DIY Form Program Development and Implementation

DIY Form development takes a considerable amount of time to produce legally sufficient court forms and instructions that will be accepted in any court throughout the state. The Access to Justice Program follows the practices for form development outlined in its own Best Practices Guide at http://www.nycourts.gov/ip/ny2j/pdfs/BestPractices_courtsystemdocument_assemblyprograms.pdf, which was updated in June 2013. Before a DIY Form program is released to the public, developer groups, comprised of both judicial and non-judicial personnel, private attorneys and stakeholders in the community, provide input and feedback and conduct extensive testing. In addition, DIY Form programs are sent to a specialist to put the text into plain language to help users understand the information better and avoid confusion and misunderstanding. Once a DIY Form program is launched, it is continuously maintained and updated based upon user feedback, changes in the law, and technological advances. Additional language options and features are often added where feasible and practical.

In 2013, after a long and deliberate development process, the Access to Justice Program began testing of the new Uncontested Divorce DIY Form Program in the Kings County Supreme Court Help Center. This program is for unrepresented litigants with no children seeking a divorce on the grounds of irretrievable breakdown of the relationship (no fault). The DIY Form program greatly simplifies the process for completing the paperwork required in an uncontested divorce. The genesis of this program began in January 2012 with the recruitment of the BEAM (Brilliant and Expert Advisors on Matrimony) developer's group. The initial group was composed of 19 volunteers from all over the court system and 15 more volunteers were added during the course of development. Court Clerks, Court Attorney-Referees, divorce clinic supervisors and Help Center staff representing each of the 13 Judicial Districts contributed their time and expertise through emails, webinars and telephone calls. The group provided valuable information that shaped the logic of the DIY Form program, the screens where Popups and/or Learn Mores were useful, and the output of the generated documents. The program is a two-part process where the litigant gets the initiating paperwork with complete instructions during Part I. After service of the Affidavit of Defendant has been returned, the litigant revisits the program for Part II for the concluding papers, which includes the Request for Judicial Intervention and Judgment as well as complete instructions. If the litigant does not qualify for this program, an information sheet is printed directing the litigant to the Supreme Court Clerk's Office in his or her county for more information. The papers and instructions generated from the Uncontested Divorce DIY Form Program are personalized to the litigant and print only those papers and instructions applicable to his or her situation. Compared to the "paper" uncontested divorce forms and instructions, the papers generated from the Uncontested Divorce DIY Form Program prints on average 34 fewer pages. This program is expected to help thousands of litigants accurately complete their divorce paperwork themselves.

The Access to Justice Program also developed a statewide DIY Form program for an unrepresented litigant to use to make all the court papers needed to vacate a default judgment in a consumer debt case for failure to answer or appear. This one program works for cases in the Supreme, County, City, District, Civil, Town and Village Courts. The existing New York City Civil Court Affidavit to Vacate a Default Judgment Consumer Debt DIY Form program was merged into the statewide program and carefully modified since the defenses differ inside and outside New York City. The program will always produce an Affidavit in Support of the Order to Show Cause and an Affidavit of Service, information about defenses, instructions and a user survey. Depending on the user's responses and in which court the case is pending, the program may also produce a Request for Judicial Intervention, an Order to Show Cause and a Proposed Answer. This is the fifth DIY Form program available for unrepresented litigants in the City and District Courts, and the first program for County Courts.

In 2013, significant time and energy was concentrated on modifying existing DIY Form programs. Programs are never finished as they require perpetual maintenance to ensure they stay current with the law and any changes required in the instructions, such

as court hours, phone numbers or procedures. Audio and foreign language features must also be updated when changes are made. Most importantly, changes should be made to programs based upon user survey and court personnel feedback. For example, in 2013, due to staff and litigant feedback, a reminder to open documents in Word and a link to download WordViewer was added to the exiting screen of every DIY Form program to make sure that litigants retrieve their documents properly. Previously, this information was only provided on the programs' landing pages.

The New York City English and Spanish Tenant Answer DIY Form programs were updated based upon plain language changes to the answer form made by the simplification committee, as well as changes in the law. The Spiegel defense was deleted and other defenses were clarified. English and Spanish audio files were re-recorded to match the changes. Implementation of these changes will be made in 2014. In addition, appreciable changes were made to the New York City Civil Court Affidavit to Vacate a Default Judgment Consumer Debt DIY Form program based upon feedback submitted by the New York City Bar Committee on Civil Court. The change clarifies how a litigant can proceed under CPLR 5015(a)(4), CPLR 5015(a)(1) or both. Sizeable and extensive changes were also made to the New York City Minor Name Change DIY Form program in preparation for modifying the program for future statewide use. The program was altered to produce one petition for up to seven children instead of separate petitions to be bundled together. The program now covers three scenarios: where the other parent consents to the name change; where the other parent does not consent and the case must be calendared and a notice to the non-petitioning parent must be sent; and where the other parent can not be located. The notice to the non-petitioning parent section was added to comply with the law requiring notice to a non-petitioning, non-consenting parent. The program produces the Petition, as well as all affidavits, consents and notices.

The Access to Justice Program added a Spanish feature to the Surrogate's Court Safe Deposit Box DIY Form program for Spanish speaking unrepresented litigants. Every screen has "Español" links which open Pop-Up windows with the translations of the screen. These Pop-Ups assist lower English proficiency users, as well as help court staff and advocates when assisting foreign language speaking litigants. The program generates instructions and pleadings in English, with a Spanish copy of the instructions for the litigant.

The Family Court DIY Form Paternity Petition program and the New York City Tenant Affidavit to Restore to Calendar DIY Form program were also updated so that the programs have audio. The audio can be turned on and off by the user. The goal of the audio feature is to improve the DIY Forms' experience for unrepresented litigants with limited English proficiency and lower reading comprehension, as well as users who process information better from spoken rather than written words. Audio was also recorded and added to the Spanish version of the DIY Form Paternity Petition program to assist Spanish speaking litigants. All the audio was recorded by court employee volunteers.

The Access to Justice Program conducted extensive DIY Form personnel training and outreach in 2013 since this has proven to be the key to the success of the DIY Form programs. The User Surveys show that litigants are consistently directed to use the programs in courthouses and over the phone by court personnel. The majority of users complete the DIY Forms in a court facility such as a Clerk's Office or Help Center. Since court staff is the primary means that unrepresented litigants learn about the DIY Form programs and because the DIY Form programs are a resource intended to save staff time assisting these litigants, the Access to Justice Program focuses considerable time and energy on training staff on the programs. To keep training costs low, court personnel are primarily trained through webinars. Seventeen training webinars and three live trainings were offered to court employees, including law librarians, private court trainings and specific Judicial District Chief Clerks based on their particularized needs (see Appendix "C"). In addition, DIY Form presentations were made and materials distributed at the annual Family Court and City Court Chief Clerks conferences. The Access to Justice Program personnel trainings covered family, housing, consumer debt, name change, guardianship, and estate law DIY Form programs. These trainings increased usage of the programs. For example, after an exclusive webinar hosted in January 2013 for 7th Judicial District Family Court personnel, program usage went up every quarter and over 400% between the 2nd and 3rd quarters. In addition, the June Family Court DIY Programs' Showcase bolstered Family Court program usage by 8% throughout New York State.

Two trainings were also offered to all court employees to cultivate volunteer developers throughout the state. "Introduction to DIY Programming" focused on the actual software used to create the "front-end" of DIY Forms programs, its features and basic programming techniques. Volunteers then contribute to the development of the DIY Forms programs under the supervision of Access to Justice Program staff by programming, drafting instructions, verifying statutes and other legal information, testing logic, etc.

Seven DIY Form program presentations and trainings were held for the public, including trainings for Housing Court Answers in New York, Queens and Bronx Counties and RAP volunteers. Court officials from other jurisdictions and volunteer attorneys and law students were also trained. (See Appendix "A" and "C" for details about the trainings held). In total, 25 trainings were held for the public and court personnel, training nearly 400 individuals about various DIY Form programs.

The Access to Justice Program increased its outreach efforts to the Judicial Districts throughout New York State by contacting every District Executive to discuss the programs', usage statistics, troubleshoot areas of concern, and brainstorm ideas to increase staff and public awareness. The Access to Justice Program staff also contacted every Surrogate's Court Chief Clerk to get their impression of the DIY Form programs. Visits were made to the Riverhead and Islip Suffolk County Family Courts and Supreme Court Help Centers, the Westchester County Supreme, Family, Surrogate's Courts and Help Center, the Administrative Judge and District Executive of the 9th Judicial District, the Kings County Family and Housing Courts, the New York

County Surrogate's and Family Courts, and the Queens Housing, Supreme and Surrogate's Courts and Supreme Court Help Center. This personal contact put a face on the DIY Form programs and gave employees an opportunity to submit input and feel vested in the process. Personal visits were followed by private DIY Form trainings which encouraged employees to volunteer their time to assist in the promotion and development of the programs. Following a visit, one librarian from Suffolk County published an article in the November 2013 issue of the American Association of Law Libraries, Spectrum magazine entitled, "DIY Forms Programs: Helping unrepresented litigants navigate the court system in New York." The article praises the DIY Form programs as a great resource to assist unrepresented litigants:

<http://www.aallnet.org/main-menu/Publications/spectrum/Archives/Vol-18/No-2/diy-forms.pdf>.

To further build enthusiasm for the DIY Form programs, the Access to Justice Program posted a new staff testimonials page on the court's internal intranet. By reading their colleagues opinions and experiences with the programs, employees are able to learn how they benefit the public and increase court efficiency. Posting quotes from rural and urban counties from large and small courts demonstrates to the employees how these programs can improve access to justice for unrepresented litigants in any and every court. The Access to Justice Program also builds enthusiasm for the programs through its DIY Star Award given to recognize courts and court employees who make outstanding contributions to the DIY Form initiative. (See the DIY Star Awards section in Part V).

"I feel the DIY has taken a significant amount of pressure off of the clerical staff here at Queens Family Court. It has enabled us to see a greater number of people at an even faster pace than before."

-Staff Testimonial, June, 2013

The Access to Justice Program collaborated with several Judicial District Executives to increase the public's ability to find the right DIY Form program for their legal problem. Aside from CourtHelp, which is the DIY Form programs' main entry page, links were placed on the Third, Fifth, and Tenth Judicial Districts' webpages for unrepresented litigants to access the programs. In the Fourth Judicial District, a new Forms page with links was also created. DIY Form program links were added to the Help Center webpages in Bronx, Kings and New York County Supreme Courts.

In addition, to promote usage of the programs, printed plain language flyers, posters and promotional postcards for the DIY Form programs were distributed throughout New York to courthouses, Help Centers, public access libraries and to training and outreach participants. Mailings were specifically targeted based upon usage statistics and requests. Many more Town and Village Courts requested promotional materials in 2013. New postcards were updated for the District, City, Town and Village Courts to reflect the new Vacate Default Judgment Consumer Debt DIY Form program. A simplified plain language flyer on how to use Family Court DIY Form programs was designed by Suffolk County Family Court employees and made available statewide. A new flyer for the new Vacate Default Judgment Consumer Debt DIY Form program was

created for the Supreme, County, District, City, Town and Villages Courts. Court personnel can download flyers from the Access to Justice Program intranet site. Flyers are also available to the general public at <http://www.nycourts.gov/ip/nya2j/diyforms.shtml>.

CourtHelp

The Access to Justice Program maintains CourtHelp, the New York State court system's website for unrepresented litigants. With continuing budget shortages, the CourtHelp website is a central tool for responding to the growing number of litigants in need of information who do not have an attorney. It provides topical legal information, links to forms, information about the courts and useful links and is the main portal to the DIY Form programs. From its inception, CourtHelp has been designed to deliver information to the public in plain language, thereby increasing the likelihood of understanding. Moreover, because CourtHelp is a website, information is available wherever and whenever the litigant finds it convenient. In 2013, to make CourtHelp even more accessible, the Access to Justice Program began work on changing CourtHelp's programming to facilitate use from a mobile device. The new CourtHelp site will also contain more topical legal information.

Social Media

The Access to Justice Program has had a presence on YouTube since 2010. The unprecedented reach of YouTube makes it an ideal platform to deliver legal information in a significant and impactful way. Since 2010, 17 videos have been uploaded including three in Spanish and one in Russian and over 7,200 minutes have been watched. In 2013, there was an increase of over 57% in the number of views since 2012. The New York State Court's Support Modification DIY Forms video was uploaded in late 2012 and had almost 500 views in 2013. Also, for the first time in 2013, the YouTube channel was expanded to include a recruitment video for the Volunteer Lawyer for the Day Program in New York City Housing Court and several video interviews produced to commemorate the New York City Housing Court's 40th Anniversary. The "New York City Housing Court at 40: Controversies, Challenges and Prospects for its Future" video garnered 608 views in 2013. The video about the New York City Housing Court's Resolution Part was also updated. The Access to Justice Program's YouTube channel is located at <http://youtube.com/user/NYCourtsA2J>.

The Access to Justice Program has also utilized Twitter since 2010 to notify the public about available resources, tweeting a total of 257 times in 2013. This includes 91 tweets about the availability of DIY Form programs, 17 about community events, 53 for the mobile legal help center, and 71 tweets about where to find free legal advice and information. The twitter page is located at <http://twitter.com/NYCourtsA2J>.

Publications

Topical publications are ideal for consolidating all the information a litigant needs in one

place. The Access to Justice Program posts its publications on the internet on CourtHelp, as well as various local court websites. All publications are written in plain language so that litigants with lower reading comprehension can understand them. Efforts are made to avoid “legalese” and employ simple explanations of legal terminology. In addition, the Access to Justice Program strives to provide publications in other languages to accommodate non-English speaking litigants. In 2013, the Access to Justice Program published a Spanish version of the New York City Tenants: Questions & Answers About Housing Court publication, entitled, “Inquilinos en la Ciudad de Nueva York: Preguntas y Respuestas relacionadas con el Tribunal de Vivienda.” The publication is available at http://www.nycourts.gov/courts/nyc/housing/housing_spanish/pdfs/tenantsguide.pdf.

DELIVERY IN THE COURTHOUSE

The Access to Justice Program works on programs and resources to provide legal assistance and information at the courthouse. As the primary hub of all case activity, the courthouse is the ideal location and opportunity to offer services that assist unrepresented litigants. Going to court can be a very intimidating, bewildering and nerve-racking experience for anyone unfamiliar with the workings of the court system. Delivering Information and assistance at the courthouse is a more immediate means to address these needs. The Access to Justice Program offers one-on-one assistance at the courthouse through Court Help Centers and the New York City Housing Court Resolution Assistance Program. In 2013, in addition to the flyers, posters, postcards, and publications that the Access to Justice Program produces for distribution in the courts, new plain language slidehows were developed for unrepresented landlords and tenants to view while waiting for their court cases to be called. Taking advantage of litigant down-time during court appearances, or blank space on courthouse walls, in order to disseminate information is a low-cost method of increasing access to justice that can reach large numbers of litigants.

Court Help Centers

Every year nearly 2.3 million New Yorkers navigate their way through the New York State Courts without an attorney. Most have little to no legal knowledge or idea on how to proceed or how to educate themselves about their rights and remedies. Without this knowledge, these unrepresented litigants lack equal access to the justice system. In an effort to level the playing field, the Access to Justice Program oversees the 24 New York State Court Help Centers located in Family, Surrogate’s, Supreme, and Civil Courts, throughout the state. Court Help Centers are a place where unrepresented litigants can go to meet with a trained court employee and obtain free legal information. Help Centers are open on a first come, first served basis to any unrepresented litigant with a pending court case, regardless of income. Court Help Centers provide comprehensive information on special proceedings, matrimonial, family, consumer, guardianship, estates, housing,



foreclosure and other civil matters.

Help Centers are staffed by Court Attorneys or Court Clerks, and Administrators. Help Center staff review court paperwork prior to filing, explain orders, and distribute free sample forms, informational packets and publications. Help Center staff also provide legal service to the public by educating and informing them of various court and social service support agencies, and by making referrals to *pro bono* legal service providers for full representation. Many Help Centers offer free internet for legal research, access to the DIY Form programs and provide access to consultations with volunteer lawyers.

In Help Centers litigants learn what their paperwork means, what their options are, and how to fill out their court forms so that they are empowered with the tools, information and confidence they need to continue their cases on their own. Help Centers provide the information unrepresented litigants need to protect their rights in court, even if they do not have the means to afford an attorney. The assistance helps unrepresented parties move more easily through the court system and also helps court staff, judges, and attorneys function more efficiently and effectively. New York State Court Help Center locations can be found on CourtHelp at <http://www.nycourts.gov/courthelp/helpcenters.html>.

The Access to Justice Program conducted two Help Center staff meetings via webinar in 2013. These meetings provide an opportunity for staff throughout the state to brainstorm on how to improve services to the public, troubleshoot issues, and share resources. The Help Center staff meetings further foster team building and communal support, thereby making Help Centers better equipped to serve the public. Out of these meetings came the idea to create a private shared cloud-based resource for Help Centers staff to upload publications they find or create, to announce upcoming trainings, to post queries and list outside resources that members believe would be helpful to other Centers. This resource is planned to launch in early 2014. In addition, the Access to Justice Program conducted a two-day Facilitating Access Training for the Help Center Staff. Help Center Court Attorneys, Court Aides, Administrators, and Clerks attended the program via webinar to reaffirm how court staff should assist the public, without providing legal advice (see Appendix "C").

In 2013, New York State Court Help Centers assisted over 112,000 litigants. In the New York City Civil Court Help Centers over 25,000 unrepresented litigants received individual consultations with Help Center staff to assist with civil and housing matters. This is an increase of 19% over litigants seen in 2012. The New York City Civil Court Help Center brochure which describes all the services the Help Center provides, other court programs that operate out of the Help Centers, available resource materials and internet services was revised. The New York City

"Even though it's a short moment to you, you left an amazingly big impression on me. Your kindness and willingness to help was magnificent. I really love how you welcomed us, asked us questions, and guided us step by step patiently. Thank you so much"

*-8th JD Court Help Center Litigant,
Fall, 2013*

Supreme & Surrogate Court Help Centers assisted over 58,000 litigants with filing divorce paperwork, article 78 proceedings, correcting or amending birth certificates, foreclosures, and a variety of other issues.

Outside New York City, the Erie County Help Center in the 8th Judicial District assisted approximately 5,009 people: 71% were assisted in person, 26% were helped over the phone, and 3% received assistance via email.

In the 10th Judicial District, the Nassau County Help Center staff assisted approximately 16,280 litigants. Of those assisted 45% were assisted in person, 3% had their issues addressed by email, and 52% were assisted over the phone. The two Suffolk County Help Centers assisted more than 7,810 patrons, a 29.54% increase from litigants seen in 2012. The Central Islip Law library assisted 6,140 patrons and the Riverhead Law Library assisted the remaining 1,670.

One new Help Center was opened in the 7th Judicial District. Working with the Access to Justice Program, Administrative Judge Craig J. Doran orchestrated a partnership between the Courts, the Volunteer Legal Services Project of Monroe County, Inc., the Monroe County Bar Association, the Telesca Center for Justice, and the Center for Dispute Settlement. Located in the Rochester City Court, the Help Center provides free walk-in legal and procedural information to litigants who are not represented by an attorney. In May, 2013, the 7th JD Court Help Center received the New York State Bar Association's *Pro Bono* award. The Center was lauded for making "access to justice a reality."

In July, 2013, the Bronx County Family Court reopened its state-of-the-art Help Center, thanks to the vision of New York City Family Court Administrative Judge Edwina Richardson-Mendelson, Bronx Family Court Supervising Judge Monica Drinane and Clerk of the Court Michael J. Williams. In the Help Center, unrepresented litigants create and file petitions, meet with Volunteer Attorneys, receive copies of court orders, and appear before a Court Referee, allowing many of their needs to be addressed right when they file. The Help Center is also outfitted with 10 DIY Form computer terminals in the waiting area.

The Access to Justice Program worked with Presiding Justice Karen Peters and former Administrative Judge Thomas E. Mercure of the 3rd Judicial District to open two new Help Centers in 2014. These Centers will be the first in the District and will undoubtedly increase access to justice.

The Resolution Assistance Program

The Access to Justice Program's Resolution Assistance Program (RAP) recruits, trains and supervises college students, law students and other approved volunteers to provide non-legal in-court assistance to tenants and owners, who are parties to nonpayment proceedings and are appearing without an attorney



in the New York City Housing Courts. The RAP helps unrepresented litigants have a productive experience by providing support, raising awareness of available resources so litigants can better advocate for themselves, and giving litigants the confidence to discuss their claims or defenses before a Court Attorney or a Judge.

The most common type of proceeding filed in the Housing Court is a nonpayment proceeding. In a nonpayment proceeding the landlord sues a tenant to collect unpaid rent. Over 99% of tenants and 15% of landlords involved in such proceedings appear in court without representation. The majority of the litigants who appear in these types of cases without an attorney are unaware of their rights, and lack knowledge of the resources available to them. Nonpayment proceedings involve peoples' homes and livelihoods, therefore it is important for unrepresented litigants to be able to utilize the resources available to them within the courthouse and the community at large; that is where RAP volunteers are most helpful and necessary. Litigants who come to court are often unfamiliar with the process, and uncomfortable speaking up for themselves. RAP volunteers can report any inappropriate behavior or communication by an adversary and raise awareness about available resources including places where litigants can seek free legal information and/or advice, and apply for social services, which can help them become current with their rent, keep a roof over their heads, or relocate where necessary.

The Program promotes better access to justice by helping litigants better prepare for their court appearance. Volunteers help litigants understand court procedure, take notes, assist in arranging papers, communicate with the unrepresented litigant about issues the litigant may want to raise in court, and may quietly accompany the litigant during hallway negotiations and with the court's permission during court appearances.

RAP volunteers may play an instrumental role in helping a litigant alert the court about an important point of fact or law, which may have ramifications in the outcome of the case. The Program thereby boosts public confidence in the court system by improving perceptions of fairness and accessibility to justice.

The Program connects New Yorkers who wish to offer their time and skills to members of their community in need of assistance and support as they navigate the court system. In return, volunteers are provided with training, supervision and a unique opportunity to make contacts, and learn about courthouse procedures. The Program attracts college students with an interest and focus on legal, paralegal or social work studies who may want to pursue further studies or a career in that field. It is also a great environment for law students interested in housing law. The Program provides an ideal springboard for these law students into other Access to Justice Program initiatives including the VLFD and VLP

"...I didn't know what to expect. We thought we were going to lose the case because we came to court without representation. However, two guardian angels who are RAP volunteers ... not only assisted us in our defense, but they genuinely and compassionately helped us."

-RAP Litigant, Oct. 2013

programs by preparing them to deal with the complex regulations, laws and procedures of landlord and tenant proceedings. Students often volunteer to fulfill their school's community service or *pro bono* requirement, and some serve in exchange for class credit. And, all participants are eligible to get a Certificate of Service in recognition and appreciation of their service and participation in the Program upon completing their 30-hour commitment.

Through their participation in the Program, all participants become keenly aware of the needs of the vulnerable populations who come to Court without representation, which in turn brings light to the importance of doing *pro bono* work, and sparks a greater commitment towards a deeper and longer involvement in doing volunteer service. Webpages for prospective and participating volunteers are maintained at <http://www.nycourts.gov/COURTS/nyc/housing/rap.shtml>.

In 2013, RAP conducted seven trainings throughout the year and trained a total of 112 volunteers (see Appendix "A"). The Program recruited volunteers from St John's University School of Law; Benjamin N. Cardozo School of Law; The City College of New York, Skadden Arps Honors Program in Legal Studies; the New York City Paralegal Association; Berkeley College; and the Office of the Mayor of the City of New York's NYC Service. In 2014, RAP will be expanded and modified and will be known as the Court Navigator Program.

Courthouse Slideshows

Courthouse slideshows are an excellent means to deliver information in an eye catching manner. Each slide of Access to Justice Program slideshows displays a small bite of information so litigants are not overwhelmed. Each slide is written in plain language for litigants with language and comprehension difficulties. Each slide employs colorful graphics as picture clues to help litigants understand. Some slides present information in Spanish. In the past, the Access to Justice Program created slideshows to promote usage of the DIY Form programs for courts with the ability to play slideshows in public areas. In 2013, the Access to Justice Program expanded upon this method of delivering information in an effort to educate *pro se* litigants in Housing Court.

In general, when unrepresented tenants and landlords appear in court, they are unfamiliar with legal procedures, where to find helpful resources and how to navigate their way around the courthouse. For many it is their first interaction with the legal system. This means that legal procedures, terms of art, and definitions are unfamiliar. In the New York City Housing Courts all landlord-tenant cases are initially calendared in Resolution Parts. Unfortunately, litigants sometimes sit for hours waiting for their cases to be called. To take advantage of this "downtime" the Access to Justice Program created a colorful silent informational 35 minute slideshow for the New York County Housing Court to play the 182 slides on a continuous loop on large flat screen televisions in its Resolution Part courtrooms. (See Appendix "D" containing sample slides from the slideshow presentation). The extensive slideshow familiarizes litigants with common court words and phrases such as "*pro se*" or what is an "answer." The

slideshow also directs the litigants to additional court services, such as the Help Center and the Volunteer Lawyers Program.

The informational slideshow equally benefits court staff and unrepresented litigants. By explaining terms and answering questions before they are even asked, litigants are provided with the knowledge they need and court staff spend less time answering questions. Settlement conferences and allocutions are more comprehensible when the unrepresented litigant is more informed. Since this delivery method is easily replicated, in 2014, the powerpoint slideshow will be personalized and expanded to every county in New York City and installed in every Resolution Part, as well as the Clerk's Offices for litigants to watch while they wait on line to file papers.

Court Tours and Visits

The Access to Justice Program oversees the Court Tours program In New York State. Court Tours are an excellent opportunity for the public to become familiar with the court system by observing the jury and trial process, learning about different types of cases and careers in the courts and by touring a courthouse. Visiting a court in session and having an opportunity to ask questions helps demystify the justice system, lessen apprehension that lay people sometimes experience and promote public confidence in the judiciary. On a court tour, written information, instructional materials, and promotional items are distributed. Information on requesting a court tour is available on the Access to Justice Program website:

http://www.nycourts.gov/ip/nya2j/Courts_Community_Center/index.shtml#courttours.

In 2013, the Court Tour's program continued to receive a high volume of requests for tours from various groups including, elementary, middle and high schools, colleges, law schools, summer youth programs, internship programs and community organizations. More than 10,000 students toured the New York State Courts.

In addition, international groups from all over the world requested tours of the New York State Courts. In 2013, delegations included the Korean Ministry of Justice, University of Malaga, Spain, Zambia Ministry of Justice, Judges and lawyers from Brazil, Mexican Judicial Officials, law students from Norway and England and groups from the Netherlands, China, and the Dominican Republic.

"Right now, we are in the middle of a mock trial, and the students are applying some of the procedures and principles of rules of evidence that they observed in the arraignment sessions to the mock trial...it really was a productive day for the students."

-Court Tour attendee, Constitutional Law Teacher, Manhattan Center for Math and Science High School, Dec. 2013

DELIVERY IN THE COMMUNITY

Bearing in mind that not everyone is comfortable seeking help at the courthouse or over the internet, the Access to Justice Program delivers legal information and assistance directly into the communities it serves. Familiar surroundings can lower anxiety levels and assist a litigant's ability to digest and process information. Services brought directly into the community also accommodates those litigants who are homebound or disabled, or can not afford the trip to the courthouse.

Mobile Legal Help Center

The Mobile Legal Help Center was created through a partnership between NYLAG and the Access to Justice Program. The Mobile Legal Help Center is New York's first-ever legal services office and courtroom on wheels. Aboard the Mobile Legal Help Center, unrepresented litigants receive information, unbundled advice and counseling, assistance with document preparation, and direct representation without leaving the vehicle. A video link with the courts enables access to judges for emergency hearings, including domestic violence and eviction cases. The vehicle is equipped with high-speed internet and state-of-the-art technology. The Mobile Legal Help Center has three private meeting areas so attorneys and clients consult in a confidential and comfortable setting.

The Mobile Legal Help Center travels throughout New York City, Long Island, Westchester and Albany, focusing on hard to reach areas with limited public transportation. The attorneys on the Mobile Legal Help Center assist all New Yorkers regardless of age, income, ethnicity, or sexual orientation. With the Mobile Legal Help Center, geographic location, limited mobility, health, and childcare are no longer an obstacle to getting legal information and assistance because the services are being brought into the community. Information on the vehicle's schedule can be found by visiting NYLAG's website or the Access to Justice Program at http://nycourts.gov/ip/nya2j/Courts_Community_Center/mobilelegalhelpcenter.shtml.

In 2013 the Mobile Legal Help Center regularly parked in front of the Richmond County Family Court, which does not otherwise have space for a Court Help Center. In addition, the Mobile Legal Help Center assisted litigants in the Nassau County District Court and Queens County Family Court. NYLAG staff assisted unrepresented litigants with the following legal issues: family law, housing, public benefits, advance planning, and immigration. More than 3500 people were provided with legal services and legal information.

Community Law Day

Every year on the first of May, the United States celebrates the legal system and the freedoms that Americans enjoy. In honor of Law Day, the Access to Justice Program sponsors and hosts annual Community Law Day celebrations designed to provide

social and legal information to the public. Government and social service agencies participate by staffing resource tables with written material to inform and educate the public about available services. In addition to educational resources, food, refreshments, and entertainment are offered, making Law Day a festive event. More information can be found on the Access to Justice Program's website at http://www.nycourts.gov/ip/nya2j/Courts_Community_Center/lawday.shtml.

In 2013, celebrations were held in New York and Queens Counties. The New York County Community Law Day was cosponsored by the NYS Court Officers Association and The New York City Bar Association's Legal Referral Service. The event was held outside of the Civil Court. This prime location attracted residents of the community, jurors, court employees and litigants appearing in court. More than 35 agencies participated from various bar associations, social service agencies, government agencies, and court employee fraternal organizations, including; Manhattan Legal Services, Legal Aid Society, Housing Court Answers, New York Asian Women's Center, Taxpayer Advocate Services, The Committee for Hispanic Children and Families, Inc., NYC Commission of Human Rights, The Cervantes Society and MFY Legal Services. Approximately 200 people stopped by to obtain information.

The Queens County Community Law Day was sponsored by the New York County Bar Association, in conjunction with the Queens Bar Association. Many other legal services, community organizations and government agencies participated by providing resources at information tables. This informative event provided a great service to approximately 100 Queens County residents who attended.

Community Leaders Roundtables

The Access to Justice Program periodically holds roundtable discussions with New York City community leaders to provide information for participants to bring back to members of their community, senior citizen centers, community-based organizations, religious congregations, and local officials. The roundtable discussions are an important resource to community leaders and the court system and an excellent means of disseminating information to assist unrepresented litigants and improving access to justice. When people have questions and are in need they often turn to their community leaders for assistance. The Roundtables educate the community leaders about available tools and resources. The Roundtable discussions also provide community leaders with a forum to share their concerns of their constituents.

In 2013, The Access to Justice Program partnered with the Interfaith Center of New York to host four Community Leaders Roundtables in courthouses throughout New York City, on "Finding Free and Reliable Legal Assistance: Tips for Working with an Immigrant Population." Access to Justice Program staff presented information about various court services at each of the Roundtable events, which were well attended (see Appendix "A").

Speakers Bureau

The Access to Justice Program oversees a Speakers Bureau made up of Judges, non-judicial personnel and members of social service agencies who are available to speak to groups in the community. When requests are made for a speaker the Access to Justice Program endeavors to provide the person best versed in the requested topic. Speakers appear in person and free of charge at local senior citizen centers, schools, special needs facilities, television and radio talk shows, public libraries, conferences, or government and community agencies. This is an excellent means to deliver the legal information that the community wishes to learn. Speakers provide legal information, information about court procedures and services, and distribute resource materials about the court. In 2013, the Access to Justice Program sent numerous speakers to make presentations, including the following: presentation about the courts to Kings County Public School Special Education class; Kings County Intermediate School Law Day Speaker; presentation about the courts to a Kings County Church Youth Ministry; presentation for adults with disabilities in New York County; presentation for parents and teachers at a Kings County school on the courts and how to obtain legal information; and a presentation at a college in New York County about the courts which included a mock trial held at the courthouse.

Community Information Fairs

The Access to Justice Program assists communities with local information fairs. Depending on the needs of the community, outreach assistance includes staffing tables, providing organization assistance, providing tables and chairs, donating promotional give-away items, distributing information about court services or arranging for the Mobile Legal Help Center to be present. In 2013, the Access to Justice Program attended these Information Fairs: a Health and Wellness Fair held in the Bronx County Family Court; a "Night Out Against Crime" Fair in Kings County; a Housing Fair sponsored by Congressman Jose E. Serrano and New York State Senator Gustavo Rivera held in Bronx County; and a Wellness Fair at the Queens County Family Court.

Public Librarians' Program

The Access to Justice Program extends information and assistance into the community beyond the courthouse through its Public Librarians' Program which conducts training and outreach to public library systems. Public libraries and librarians play an essential role in promoting and ensuring access to justice as they are often the first contact the public turns to for information about legal matters. Many libraries offer free internet access to their patrons, which is essential to unrepresented litigants seeking information outside the courthouse, but do not have internet access in their homes. The Public Librarians' Program conducts training to educate librarians about the access to justice resources which can be shared with

"Great presentation, full of important information."

*-Public Librarian,
Westchester Co. March,
2013*

library patrons. More information about the Public Librarians' Program is available on the Access to Justice Program's website: http://www.nycourts.gov/ip/ny2j/Courts_Community_Center/publicLibrarians.shtml. In 2013, the Access to Justice program conducted a half day public library training in Westchester County for librarians from 15 different libraries. The Principal Law Librarian for the Westchester County Supreme Court conducted a presentation on the law library. Promotional materials were distributed. (See Appendix "A" for training details).

PART III: DELIVERY OF SERVICES FOR PERSONS WITH DIVERSE NEEDS

The Access to Justice Program is dedicated to providing fair and efficient justice for individuals with diverse backgrounds or special needs. Toward this end, the Access to Justice Program oversees a number of programs and initiatives aimed at assisting litigants who, due to age, physical or mental impairments, financial or other limitations are unable to meaningfully avail themselves of court-based programs or self-help. It is the responsibility of the justice system to ensure that everyone who comes to and before the court is treated respectfully, fairly, and equally.

In 2013, the Access to Justice Program focused its energies on GAL and judicial and non-judicial personnel education, and increased social work and advocacy assistance to facilitate the Judges and GALs' ability to be responsive to the needs of litigants with mental or physical impairments who are in danger of eviction. The Access to Justice Program also continued its efforts to foster awareness of the difficulties faced by litigants living in poverty, by conducting Poverty Simulation training and education. The programs described in this Part strive to equalize the playing field for all litigants by staying mindful of the myriad of difficulties that these litigants face, which are often the very root of their legal problems. This holistic approach greatly improves access to justice for this vulnerable segment of the public.

GUARDIAN AD LITEM PROGRAM

The Access to Justice Program oversees the operation of the NYC Housing Court Guardian Ad Litem (GAL) Program. The GAL Program recruits, trains, supervises and maintains a pool of GALs for Housing Court Judges to appoint on behalf of people facing a Housing Court proceeding who are disadvantaged due to age or disability. Such impairments place the litigant at a disadvantage because they are not able to fully participate in resolving their New York City Housing Court case. Instead, they might be more likely to enter into unrealistic agreements, forego viable defenses, agree to unfavorable terms, fail to explore all options, or may not follow through with the terms of the agreement entered into, thus heightening their risk for eviction.



Once appointed, GALs attend every court appearance, work to secure One-Shot-Deals to pay for arrears owed, set-up heavy duty cleanings to render an apartment safe, reinstate lost entitlements or secure new ones, or connect the litigant to services to prevent court recidivism. Litigants who are appointed a GAL do not have to pay for these services; they are free of charge. Litigants greatly benefit from the appointment of a GAL. GALs provide the needed assistance to litigants who are unable to advocate for themselves due to a physical or mental impairment.

Judges who are made aware of the need for a GAL appointment can request names of GALs who are willing to accept appointments in their county through the Access to Justice Program's GAL Program. GALs are trained by a panel of experts in the fields of legal and social work advocacy and landlord-tenant law. Attorneys attending trainings receive CLE free of charge. To safeguard the interests of the population served, GALs must undergo a background check and successfully complete an interview and reference check before being invited to participate in the Program. This results in a highly qualified select group of people being added to the list. Given the increased need for *pro bono* work city-wide, prospective GALs must also agree to accept at least three *pro bono* appointments per year. Many GALs accept cases well beyond this number and are recognized by the Access to Justice Program for outstanding *pro bono* service rendered in the Court (see Part V).

The GAL Program's Special Counsel plays an active role in advocating for GALs facing unique challenges in resolving their wards' court cases by acting as an intermediary in securing information for GALs and facilitating communication between GALs and outside organizations that play an instrumental role in the resolution of a ward's Housing Court case. Without such advocacy, GALs encounter a multitude of bureaucratic obstacles in obtaining documents needed to effectively advocate and protect their wards from needlessly becoming homeless. The Program's advocacy results in the successful resolution of countless cases, protecting tenants and remaining sensitive to the pressures experienced by GALs and impaired litigants alike.

Information on the GAL program for prospective and participating GALs, landlords, and tenants is available at <http://nycourts.gov/courts/nyc/housing/GAL.shtml>.

In 2013, approximately 60% of the number of litigants appointed a GAL were facing a nonpayment proceeding, 39% involved holdover proceedings, and 1% HP proceedings. More than 42% of the judicial requests for GALs were made due to concerns that the litigant was mentally impaired, 21% were due to physical impairment concerns, while 47% were due to both. In addition, over 63% of the people appointed a GAL were age 60 and above. The need for *pro bono* service was identified in more than 43% of the requests submitted.

The GAL Program provided a variety of training programs for the public as well as judicial and non-judicial staff in 2013 with the goal of rendering GALs and judicial staff more effective in their efforts to safeguard the rights of the vulnerable litigants they serve.

As is detailed in Appendix "A," many trainings were offered to GALs. Two free general trainings to become a GAL in Housing Court were held. A total of 20 GALs were trained. The GAL Program also conducted supplemental CLE trainings, which

"One of the best parts of serving as a GAL is realizing the value of our work. Not all cases are equally rewarding ... but when actions you have taken make the difference between homelessness and longevity in familiar surroundings, your efforts have paid off."

-Guardian Ad Litem, Oct. 2013

increased the number of GALs able to serve at a NYCHA administrative hearing by 22% and heightened their ability to preserve the record in the event of an appeal. In addition, the GAL Program offered CLE workshops to enhance the GALs' ability to provide quality services to their wards, expand their knowledge-base, and learn new ways to place their ward in a position of strength. The workshops were specifically tailored to address patterns of concern expressed by GALs and the Court alike that are not completely addressed in the initial GAL training. Throughout the year, the GAL Program also conducted lay GAL training for family members of physically or mentally impaired litigants in need of a GAL as a means of preparing such lay GALs to effectively advocate for their family members. In 2013, a total of 14 lay GALs were trained to better assist their impaired family members in court.

As set forth in Appendix "C," the GAL Program also conducted training for the New York City Housing Judge and Court Attorneys on mental illness. Out of all the litigants who received a GAL in 2013, more than 42% were appointed due to concerns that the litigant had a mental impairment. While the symptoms of mental illness are sometimes obvious, at times symptoms can go unnoticed by non-mental health providers. In the context of Housing Court, this may lead to non-compliance with provisions of a stipulation, continuous delays, and an exacerbation of the litigant's court troubles. In-house training was conducted to prevent this.

In 2013, the GAL Program re-established its partnership with the Wurzweiler School of Social Work, Yeshiva University, to supervise a social work intern. The partnership had been previously discontinued due to budget cuts in the court system. The social work intern, working under the supervision of a Special Counsel with an MSW, assists GALs with securing needed resources or services in particularly difficult cases. GALs who are having trouble finding a service for a ward or linking a ward to assistance that would be helpful upon resolution of the case can enlist the assistance of the social work intern who not only has more time to research what is available, but also has specialized knowledge in social work advocacy, programs, and resources. Similarly, the social work intern assists litigants who may be in need of a GAL, helps them navigate the court system, and alerts the Court of the possibility of the need for a GAL appointment. Housing Court litigants with mental or physical impairments are thus able to receive comprehensive help and follow-up, to avoid any future risk for eviction.

"I want to bring to your attention the excellent work which Mr. [P] recently completed as a Guardian Ad Litem for my uncle, [JS], in a complicated and difficult case. Mr. [P] is a true professional who was sensitive to the needs of my uncle as he worked to resolve the long standing dispute in a very fair & equitable way ... what makes him outstanding is his personal commitment & caring approach."

-Ward's Family Member, Oct. 2013

INTEGRATED PART

Often summary proceedings in Housing Court can work to the disadvantage of tenants whose unique difficulties may be overlooked. There are many litigants with physical and mental disabilities who undermine their own best interests. With these litigants in mind, the Access to Justice Program oversees the New York County's Integrated Guardianship/Landlord Tenant Part, known as Part I. Part I is a Special Part physically located in the Civil Court of the City of New York, that handles cases where the tenant is the subject of both a Housing Court case and a Supreme Court Article 81 Guardianship case. Both cases are adjudicated together by the same Acting Supreme Court Justice. The Housing Court eviction proceeding is stayed during the pendency of the Supreme Court guardianship proceeding and in the event a Guardian is appointed, the stay is continued for an additional sixty to ninety days to allow the Guardian to begin resolving the issues involved.

The goal of the Integrated Part is to resolve the cases keeping the litigant's court history, unique circumstances and needs in mind. The Part eliminates the need for an often physically or mentally fragile litigant to go before two different courts, lessening the stress the litigant may be facing. The Judge is able to take a holistic approach to fashion real solutions that aim to address the root cause of the existing legal problems and prevent recidivism. For example, the Court may facilitate obtaining rental arrears from DSS, charities and family members, or reach out to persons in the government and private sector to find affordable housing solutions, or realize landlord access for repairs and removal of hazardous conditions. This innovative program protects and empowers vulnerable tenants and gives them a voice in their own care and treatment giving them confidence in the justice system and leveling the playing field. Part I is also well-regarded by landlord practitioners, GALs, the NYC Human Resources Administration, and Court staff due to its efficient handling of cases. The judge remains sensitive to the needs of the population served and the litigants' best interests despite the challenges and limited resources available. More information is available at <http://www.nycourts.gov/ip/nya2j/diverseneeds.shtml#nycountyintegratedpart>

In 2013, including motions and conferences, Part I handled approximately 333 court appearances; an increase of 33%. The number of dispositions also increased by 32%.

ASSIGNED COUNSEL PROJECT

The Access to Justice Program, continues its partnership with the Department for the Aging (DFTA) to provide free legal and social work services to seniors facing eviction or owners or tenants whose safety is threatened by a tenant or roommate. Seniors facing New York City Housing Court proceedings often live in apartments that are rent controlled or rent stabilized, have Section 8 subsidies, or are the recipients of entitlements such as SCRIE. Under these protective laws and subsidies, seniors are able to afford rent payments notwithstanding limited income. Yet, with increased age, many seniors find themselves in a position where, due to their deteriorating health, they

are no longer able to manage their responsibilities in the same way, at times resulting in a Housing Court proceeding being brought against them.

Established in 2005, the Assigned Counsel Project (ACP) provides eligible seniors with an attorney and social worker, or social work intern, who work as a team to help seniors resolve their Housing Court cases. Seniors must be sixty years of age or older, have an identifiable social service need, and a pending Housing Court case in order to be assisted by the Program. Legal representation is provided by the following sub-contracted legal service providers: MFY Legal Services, Inc., Brooklyn Legal Services of NY, Brooklyn Legal Aid Society, JASA Queens Legal Services for the Elderly, and Bronx Legal Aid Society. More information on the program can be found at <http://www.nycourts.gov/courts/nyc/housing/services.shtml>.

The Access to Justice Program's Special Counsel conducts overall program coordination and advocacy, and facilitates communication between the partners; ensuring that Judges refer seniors to the ACP and that seniors are aware of the existence of the ACP. The Special Counsel, an MSW as well, also supervises a social work intern who takes on ACP cases and works with the assigned attorney in resolving the Housing Court case and addressing any unmet social service needs. The Civil Court Housing Court Attorneys conduct initial screening to determine if a senior is appropriate for services and to coordinate with DFTA and the legal service providers so that seniors are successfully linked to an attorney and social worker once their referral is accepted. The Partners also continue to work diligently to connect those who are not accepted by ACP to other available resources for help. Seniors who may otherwise find it challenging to obtain help in the processing of renewal applications or delivery of information necessary to remain in their apartment are assisted through informal but effective advocacy efforts.

The ACP is able to serve a total of 511 seniors, per fiscal year, facing Housing Court proceedings in New York, Kings, Queens and the Bronx, which was officially added in 2013. The partnership with the Wurzweiler School of Social Work, Yeshiva University, which was severed following the 2011 budget cuts, was re-established. The Access to Justice Program is once again able to play a direct role in the provision of social work assistance and advocacy for seniors facing eviction.

POVERTY SIMULATIONS

The percentage of New York's poverty rate is at 15.1%, which is up from 14.2% from the 2010 Census. Although New York has the 25th highest poverty rate in the United States, in actual number of individuals living in poverty New York ranks fourth. Now more than ever it is especially important for the legal community to recognize the limitations those in poverty have when interacting with the courts. Many litigants lack the resources to access transportation to the courthouse and social services agencies, let alone fully deal with their cases when they appear in court. To better serve New Yorkers below the poverty level the Access to Justice Program conducts public and

private poverty simulations. The goal of the training is to teach and encourage the legal system as a whole to provide services in a more understanding and respectable manner. For more information on the Poverty Simulation visit the Access to Justice Program's website at <http://www.nycourts.gov/ip/nya2j//PovertySimulation.shtml>.

In 2013, poverty simulation trainings were held for court system personnel as well as law students. The fifth Access to Justice Program poverty simulation personnel training was held for Queens County Criminal Court judicial and non-judicial staff. This training gives court personnel opportunities to work together in new ways by encouraging them to think outside the box. The training improves cooperation and team building while increasing understanding and awareness of the issues faced by New Yorkers living in poverty (see Appendix "C"). A poverty simulation was also held for Brooklyn Law School. The hope is that educating and sensitizing law students to the effects of poverty will inspire them to create a more equitable future to the benefit of all litigants (see Appendix "A").

"As someone who going into the simulation knew about some of the difficulties associated with poverty, I really had no concept of the time crunch: how long it takes to fill out paperwork and wait in line; how you have to work but you are worried about your family; how you have to work, but then you can't play with your kids; how you have to work and file for benefits, but the benefits office is not open when you leave work."

-Student Participant, Oct. 2013

PART IV: TRAININGS AND PRESENTATIONS

A key component of the Access to Justice Program's work throughout the year is training lawyers and law students, members of the access to justice community, legal services providers, advocate groups, bar associations, public officials, community leaders, librarians, and court system personnel about access to justice initiatives. Education is necessary to increase and strengthen awareness of the inequalities that exist in accessing the justice system and to provide the tools for assisting the unrepresented public. Education and heightened awareness of the obstacles that unrepresented litigants face can promote change and support for measures that level the playing field for the 2.3 million New Yorkers who must navigate their way through the court system on their own. To that end, the Access to Justice Program conducts various educational programs both inside and outside the courthouse. A variety of training methods are employed; live training programs with the opportunity for discussion, or hands-on use of technology are ideal. However, to keep costs down, and reach a greater audience across the state, the majority of in-house trainings are conducted via webinar and many volunteer trainings are conducted via video replay. A summary is set forth below and a more detailed chronological listing of the trainings and presentations conducted by the Access to Justice Program in 2013 is contained in Appendices "A" for public trainings and "C" for personnel trainings.

VOLUNTEER TRAINING

A significant part of the Access to Justice Program's training regiment is devoted to educating volunteers in court-based programs so that they are fully prepared to assist the unrepresented public. As is previously noted in this Report, the Access to Justice Program regularly recruits volunteers and conducts trainings which offer free CLE to volunteer lawyers who participate in the court-based unbundled legal services programs where they are supervised by experienced practitioners. Completion of training is a pre-requisite to program participation. The substantive legal training and supervision help ensure the quality of services provided. The Access to Justice Program offers frequent training sessions in order to keep up the cadre of qualified volunteers who give up their free time to help relieve the unrepresented in crisis. Training dates and details for the VLFD, VLP, RAP, GAL, VAP, and Uncontested Divorce Programs are contained in Appendix "A." As can be seen, a number of Programs (GAL, VLP Housing and VLFD Housing) also offered additional trainings and workshops to existing volunteers to supplement the basic education and further hone skills. The majority of the training is conducted in the New York County Civil Court. In 2013, a number of trainings were hosted by participating area law firms and corporations, including, Paul Hastings LLP, Duane Morris LLP, Ropes and Gray LLP, and Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom LLP & Affiliates. The trainings were conducted by a combination of court staff, program directors and volunteer attorneys from private practice or government agencies. Guest presenters graciously shared their expertise and time without compensation. (2013 presenters are listed at the end of this Report under "Partners and Friends").

An appreciable number of hours is devoted to preparing law students, law graduates and newly admitted attorneys to participate in the court-based unbundled legal services programs and impart the foundation needed to continue on with their legal careers. The Access to Justice Program partners with several participating law schools through a judicial civil legal services grant, to teach law students the skills needed to assist the unrepresented public. The Access to Justice Program also offers a multi-day, multi-program Bridge the Gap training series, twice a year, which emphasizes education of law students and new lawyers and encourages continued participation in volunteer programs. In 2013, for the first time, the Access to Justice Program conducted its Poverty Simulation Training for Brooklyn Law School students to give them an understanding of life in poverty. (Law student and new lawyer trainings are detailed in Appendix “A”).

PERSONNEL TRAINING

Equally important to the Access to Justice Program’s training agenda is education of judicial and non-judicial court system employees. The importance of training court personnel cannot be overemphasized. The men and women who tirelessly work in the notoriously short-staffed New York State court system are the public face of the court. They must be properly educated and provided with the tools needed to assist the confused and bewildered unrepresented litigants that come through the courts on a daily basis, many of whom are intimidated by the legal process. The Access to Justice Program offers a variety of training programs for court personnel throughout the year. Trainings are conducted for Help Center personnel, Court Clerks, Public Access Law Librarians and Judges and Court Attorneys. In 2013, a training was presented to Housing Court Judges and Court Attorneys on mental illness, Facilitating Access Training on the roles of court employees when assisting *pro se* litigants was conducted for Court Help Center staff and Poverty Simulation Training was given to judicial and non-judicial personnel. Considerable time was spent on training court employees about the DIY Form programs since this is the prime factor in the success of the DIY Form programs. The more court system personnel are educated about the DIY Form programs, as well as other court resources, the greater the benefit to access to justice and courthouse efficiency. (See Appendix “C” for a listing of personnel training conducted in 2013).

PUBLIC PRESENTATIONS

Public presentations are another important component of the Access to Justice Program’s training efforts. Presentations about the Access to Justice Program’s initiatives and current access to justice topics of concern are vital to spread the message about injustice and promote discussion and brainstorming of ideas to facilitate increased access to justice. Judge Fern A. Fisher and Chief Counsel Rochelle Klempner sit on many committees and panels, both national and in New York that work to address litigant challenges, provide assistance to other jurisdictions and plan in-person and webinar trainings on access to justice issues. In 2013, Judge Fisher and

Access to Justice Program staff presented at numerous conferences discussing various topics, including; unbundled legal services, the Access to Justice Program's available services for the public, consumer debt issues, the use of technology to support access and law student *pro bono* work. Judge Fisher addressed both law professors and law students, and Access to Justice Program staff spoke with community leaders to pass information into the communities for those who cannot easily come to the courthouse and look to their community or religious leaders for assistance. Most prestigiously, Justice Fisher was invited to participate in a panel discussion in Washington D.C. at the White House on increasing access to justice through technology. The video of this forum can be watched at <http://www.vimeo.com/64651435>.

TRAININGS FOR OTHER JURISDICTIONS

The Access to Justice Program also conducts training for other jurisdictions in an effort to provide guidance for court systems contemplating or undertaking replication of some of the Access to Justice Program's initiatives. In 2013, the Access to Justice Program presented information about the DIY Form programs and other services to officials who visited from Texas and Florida State Courts. A Churchill Fellow, Julie Grainger, from the Victorian Civil And Administrative Tribunal in Australia also met with the Access to Justice Program to learn about the DIY Form programs and assess whether the programs could be replicated in the Australian tribunals. Information about this meeting is posted on Ms. Grainger's blog at <http://juliegrainger.wordpress.com/2013/07/31/justice-fern-fisher-deputy-chief-administrative-judge-for-new-york-city-courts/>.

TRAIN THE TRAINER PROGRAMS

"Train the trainer" programs are utilized to save costs and reach a greater number of people. The Community Leaders Roundtables and Public Librarians' Programs are examples of train the trainer programs. They are conducted with the idea in mind of providing community leaders and librarians with the competencies to enable them to effectively pass knowledge and skills to their patrons. The train the trainer method is also used at times for personnel training by bringing in the upper lever Court Clerk training with the expectation that they will train staff who work at different levels. The Access to Justice Program believes that the time dedicated to educational programs is invaluable and works to enhance access justice.

PART V: RECOGNITION CELEBRATIONS

The Access to Justice Program's volunteer programs could not assist thousands of unrepresented litigants each year without the commitment of hundreds of volunteers. The law firms, solo-practitioners, in-house corporate counsel offices, government attorneys, non-profit organizations, law schools, non-attorneys, and court personnel who give so much of their time and energy are essential for providing assistance and improving access to the courts for litigants who do not have counsel. It is important to spotlight the difference volunteers make in peoples' lives and to acknowledge the partnerships that form the basis for many successful *pro bono* efforts. From time to time, volunteers who are integral to the success of the court-based programs, and who go above and beyond and extend themselves on behalf of others, are acknowledged for their *pro bono* service at recognition celebrations held in deep appreciation for their contribution. Volunteers are also featured on the Access to Justice Program Facebook page: www.facebook.com/NYCcourtsVLP. In 2013, the Access to Justice Program held several events in appreciation of volunteer service.

RECEPTION IN HONOR OF 10,000 CONSUMER DEBT DEFENDANTS SERVED BY VLFD PROGRAM

In May 2013, the Access to Justice Program hosted a reception at the New York City Civil Court to celebrate the milestone marked by the Volunteer Lawyer for the Day Consumer Debt Program representing 10,000 consumer debt defendants since its inception. The event included remarks by Chief Administrative Judge A. Gail Prudenti.



The reception was held to thank the hundreds of attorneys who provide legal representation through this program. Over 100 of the program's volunteer attorneys were able to attend. The event also honored the Access to Justice Program's four partner organizations: New York Appleseed, Brooklyn Bar Association Volunteer Lawyers Project, New York County Lawyers' Association, and New York Legal Assistance Group. Without the efforts of countless volunteers from these organizations, the VLFD Consumer Debt Program would not have been able to provide access to justice for so many thousands of litigants.

NATIONAL PRO BONO CELEBRATION WEEK VOLUNTEER AWARDS

Pro Bono Celebration Week is a national event that takes place every year in late October with events all over the country acknowledging the extraordinary contributions of volunteer attorneys. During the fifth annual *Pro Bono* Celebration Week, the Access to Justice Program, the New York State Bar Association, the New York County Lawyers' Association (NYCLA) and the Office of the Mayor co-sponsored a *pro*



bono volunteer recognition event on Thursday, October 24, 2013, at NYCLA. The program included remarks by Barbara Moses, President, NYCLA; Glenn Lau-Kee, President-elect, New York State Bar Association; David B. Goldin, Administrative Justice Coordinator, Office of the Mayor of the City of New York; and, Fern A. Fisher, Deputy Chief Administrative Judge for New York City Courts and Director, New York State Courts Access to Justice Program. During this event, a Volunteer Opportunity Expo was held for attendees to learn about the Access to Justice Program's volunteer programs.

Special recognition was given to some of the outstanding attorneys and programs that assisted Superstorm Sandy survivors as well as the *pro bono* contribution of Emeritus Attorneys. The Access to Justice Program honorees included Stroock & Stroock & Lavan LLP; Roger Hawke, Attorney Emeritus; Sandra Lee Laumann; Svetlana Gloukhova Krishnan, Tina Chan; Amir Rasoulpour; Della L. Dekay; Thomas Giles; Jennifer K. Brown; Bryant Cherry-Woode; Jesse Maniff; Juanita Lasprilla; and, Tracy Flynn. In addition, 347 volunteers were recognized for their work in the Access to Justice Program's Consumer Debt, Uncontested Divorce, Housing, Family Law and Guardian Ad Litem programs. Three court employees, Yosef Seigel, Dahyana Grullon and Bo Burnstein were also honored for their contributions to the DIY Form programs. All of the honorees performed over 50 hours of *pro bono* services in a court-based program throughout 2013. A full list of people who were recognized for their outstanding *pro bono* service is available at <http://www.nycourts.gov/ip/nya2j/pdfs/2013-ProBono-Awards-Complete-List.pdf>.

DIY FORM PROGRAM STAR AWARDS

The Access to Justice Program recognizes court system personnel and courts who have made exceptional contributions to the successful development and implementation of the DIY Form programs through the presentation of the DIY Star Award. Quarterly statistical information, litigant User Surveys and nominations by fellow employees are reviewed to choose the winners. The DIY Star Award applauds the individuals or courts whose actions are critical in creating lasting change in court culture and work environment. The DIY Star Award also boosts employee morale and fosters court competition which improves the success of the DIY Form programs. DIY Star winners earn large touchscreen monitors and computers for their courthouses to use as public access terminals. The computers are customized for ready access to the DIY Form programs. The touchscreen monitors enhance the user experience. Only DIY Star Award winning courts have these monitors. More information about the DIY Star Awards is located at <http://www.nycourts.gov/ip/nya2j/diyawards.shtml>.



In 2013, DIY Star Award ceremonies were held in April and August recognizing the Suffolk County Surrogate's Court staff, New York County Family Court Help Center staff and individual personnel, and Administrative Judge of the New York City Family Court

Edwina Richardson-Mendelson.

Suffolk County Surrogate's Court

The Suffolk County Surrogate's Court Staff was awarded the DIY Star Award because of their outstanding usage and promotion of the Surrogate's Court Small Estate, Guardianship and Safe Deposit Box DIY Form programs, increasing access to justice for unrepresented litigants. In honor of their achievement, an award ceremony was held in the courtroom of the Suffolk County Surrogate's Court in Riverhead, New York. Access to Justice Program Director Judge Fern A. Fisher, 10th Judicial District Administrative Judge C. Randall Hinrichs, Suffolk County Surrogate Judge John M. Czygier, Jr., and Access to Justice Program Chief Counsel Rochelle Klempner, all spoke about the recipients' outstanding efforts furthering equal access to justice. The ceremony was also attended by County Court Judge Stephen L. Braslow, 10th Judicial District Executive Director Warren G. Clark, Esq., and Former Acting Surrogate Gary J. Weber. Numerous court staff came to congratulate the DIY Star winners.

The Suffolk County Surrogate's Court staff headed by Chief Clerk Michael Cipollino, includes: Associate Surrogate's Clerk Ray Palumbo, Surrogate's Court Clerk Gerri Zambito, Sr. Court Office Assistant Lisa Garstka, Management Analyst Cindy Voehl, Sr. Court Office Assistant Dawn Moore, and Sr. Court Office Assistant Gina Sahin.

New York County Family Court

Assistant Deputy Chief Clerk Nicholas Rapallo, Court Assistant Juntel Sheard, and the New York County Family Court Petition Room and Help Center staffs received the DIY Star Awards for their hard work and effort in successfully implementing and promoting DIY Form programs in the New York County Family Court. The Star Awards were presented at a ceremony held at the New York County Family Court in Manhattan.

Judge Fern A. Fisher, Administrative Judge for the NYC Family Court Edwina G. Richardson-Mendelson, Court Clerk Specialist Michael McLoughlin, Supervising Judge of New York County Family Court Douglas Hoffman, New York County Family Court Clerk of Court Evelyn Hassanoeddin and Chief Counsel to the Access to Justice Program Rochelle Klempner, all spoke about the recipients' outstanding efforts furthering equal access to justice for unrepresented litigants. Judge Fisher presented the awards. American Sign Language Interpreter Sandy Rand translated the speeches throughout the ceremony. Following the award presentation, guests were treated to a light lunch and coffee and cake courtesy of Family Court staff members who raised the funds to cater the event through home-made food sales.

Administrative Judge for the NYC Family Court Edwina G. Richardson-Mendelson

Edwina G. Richardson-Mendelson, Administrative Judge of the New York City Family Court, was surprised with a DIY Star Award presented at the DIY Star Award ceremony

for the New York County Family Court. Judge Richardson-Mendelson received the award for her outstanding contribution to the effectuation of the DIY Form programs in the New York City Family Courts. Judge Fisher presented the DIY Star Award and spoke about how leadership comes from the top on down and how Judge Richardson-Mendelson's efforts to make the implementation of DIY Forms a priority is evidenced by the fact that over the past three years, four New York City Family Courts have won DIY Star Awards for their assistance to unrepresented litigants through the use of the DIY Form programs. In addition to the New York County Family Court 2013 winners, the Queens County Family Court received the award in 2011 and the Bronx and Kings County Family Courts earned awards in 2010. The award is open to all courts and employees throughout the state. Judge Fisher stated, "Administrative Judges like her [Judge Richardson-Mendelson] make my job easier."

APPENDIX A: PUBLIC TRAININGS AND PRESENTATIONS

January

- **Association of American Law Schools Annual Meeting**

Judge Fern A. Fisher spoke on access to justice issues in consumer debt cases at the 2013 annual meeting of the AALS. A law review article entitled, “Ensuring Justice: The Role of State Court Systems in Responding to the Consumer Debt Crisis” based on the presentation was published in the Georgetown Journal of Poverty Law and Policy’s issue on consumer protection.

- **Lay GAL Training**

Free specialized training was provided for one court-appointed GAL family member of a physically or mentally impaired litigant. This training is an abbreviated version of the training provided to those seeking to be on the Housing Part GAL list. Family members view a 5.5 hour video replay of the most recent live GAL training. The training was held in New York County Civil Court.

- **Brooklyn Law School Poverty Simulation Training**

A half day poverty training was conducted at Brooklyn Law School for students with their faculty playing the roles in the simulation. The training educated the law students about how economic privilege effects the justice system.

- **VLFD Housing Program Training**

A CLE program was held at the law offices of Paul Hastings LLP. The session was offered to both recent law graduates awaiting admission to the New York Bar and admitted attorneys who took the training to become eligible to represent litigants in certain nonpayment proceedings in the Housing Court VLFD Program. The three and a half hour VLFD training includes a CLE on Nonpayment Proceedings (2 CLE credits), Negotiating and Drafting Stipulations of Settlement (1 CLE credit), and a segment on Ethics for Volunteer Attorneys (.5 CLE credit). The training was offered in exchange for 2 days of volunteer service in the Resolution Part.

- **RAP Training**

A training was given for 15 prospective RAP volunteers at the New York County Civil Court in exchange for 30 hours of volunteer service in a Resolution Part of the Housing Court. The two hour session, which included both a video replay of role play scenarios with commentary and a training on the One Shot Deal as well as a live segment, provided an overview of the Housing Court with a focus on issues arising out of nonpayment proceedings.

- **Combined VLFD Housing and VLP Housing Training**

An 8.5 hour CLE credit two-day video-replay training was offered at the New York County Civil Court to eight recent law graduates and admitted attorneys including three CUNY School of Law LaunchPad For Justice Fellows. The training included a CLE on Nonpayment Proceedings (2 CLE credits), Negotiating and Drafting Stipulations of Settlement (1 CLE credit), Introduction to the Help Center (1 CLE credit), Holdover Proceedings (3 CLE credits), HP Actions and Harassment Law (1 CLE credit) and a segment on Ethics (.5 CLE credit). VLFD Program training attendees committed to volunteer two days within three months in exchange for this training except for the

fellows who signed up to serve 50-hours within six months of the training, and VLP Program participants pledged to give free legal advice for 12 hours in one of the Housing Court Help Centers within three months of the training.

- **Uncontested Divorce Training**

Uncontested Divorce Program live training was conducted at St. John's Law School for 11 law students and their Supervisor in conjunction with the Law Student Initiative Consortium. The 1.5 hour training provided an overview of uncontested divorce law and a demonstration of the Drafting Libraries Uncontested Divorce software program. In exchange for the training, students perform 20 hours of *pro bono* assistance in the Uncontested Divorce Clinic in the Queens County Supreme Court. This training staffed another day and evening each week for the Program.

- **Uncontested Divorce Training**

On two dates, live trainings were conducted for a total of 10 law students at the New York County Civil Court in conjunction with Benjamin N. Cardozo Law School and the Law Student Initiative Consortium. The training prepared the student volunteers to assist unrepresented litigants in the New York and Bronx County Supreme Court Uncontested Divorce Program. These trainings staffed an additional day once a week for the Program.

- **Uncontested Divorce Training**

A live training was conducted for 19 law students at Touro Law Center in conjunction with the Law Student Initiative Consortium. The two hour training provided an overview of uncontested divorce law and a demonstration of the Drafting Libraries Uncontested Divorce Software program to be used by the student volunteers to assist unrepresented litigants with their uncontested divorce matters in Nassau and Suffolk Counties. The students assist the litigants at the Touro Law Center.

- **Uncontested Divorce Training**

A live training was conducted for seven attorneys at the New York County Civil Court. The 2.0 hour training included presentations on the Issues and Pitfalls in Uncontested Divorce, Interviewing Litigants, and an overview and demonstration of the Drafting Libraries Uncontested Divorce Software program to be used by the volunteers in the Uncontested Divorce Program. In exchange for the two CLE credits awarded for the training, attorneys provide 20 hours of *pro bono* assistance to unrepresented litigants in the Uncontested Divorce Program.

- **Combined VLFD Consumer Debt and VLP Consumer Debt Training**

A video replay training was conducted for five law students and one alumni attorney at the New York County Civil Court in conjunction with Benjamin N. Cardozo Law School and the Law Student Initiative Consortium. The 4.5 hour training provided an overview of Consumer Debt Law, including ethics (3 CLE credits) and instruction on Courtroom Skills and Settlement Negotiation (1.5 CLE credits). Attendees must provide at least 20 hours of *pro bono* assistance in the Help Center or limited representation in the courtroom in the court-based unbundled consumer debt programs.

February

- **CLARO Buffalo Opening**

Judge Fern A. Fisher made the keynote speech at the official launch of CLARO

Buffalo. Her remarks included high praise for CLARO's work to even the playing field for unrepresented litigants in crisis facing consumer debt cases.

- **Lay GAL Training** (see January)

One court-appointed GAL family member was trained.

- **Combined VLFD Consumer Debt and VLP Consumer Debt Training** (see January)

A video replay training was conducted for four law students at the New York County Civil Court in conjunction with Cardozo Law School and the Law Student Initiative Consortium.

- **Community Leaders Roundtable**

A Community Leaders Roundtable presentation and discussion was held in the Queens County Supreme Court on "Finding Free and Reliable Legal Assistance: Tips for Working with an Immigrant Population." The Access to Justice Program presented information about various Housing Court volunteer and community outreach programs. A total of 35 people attended.

- **Best Practices in Pro Bono: "The 50-Hour Rule"**

Judge Fern A. Fisher was a panelist in a New York City Bar Association presentation on Best Practices in Pro Bono: "The 50-Hour Rule."

March

- **New York City's Housing Court at 40: Controversies, Challenges, and Prospects for its Future**

This conference was held to commemorate and reflect on the New York City Housing Court as it reached its fortieth year. The Association of Housing Court Judges, The Furman Center for Real Estate and Urban Policy at NYU, and the New York City Bar Association co-sponsored this CLE all day event held at the New York City Bar Association. Judge Fern A. Fisher was a panelist on the Housing Court and Access to Justice Panel. Rochelle Klempner presented on the Housing Court and the Use of Technology session. Reflective video interviews on the Housing Court were conducted for this event and posted on the Access to Justice Program's YouTube channel.

- **Pro Bono Institute Annual Conference**

Judge Fern A. Fisher presented on "The Ethics of Unbundled Legal Services" at the Pro Bono Institute annual conference. Judge Fisher discussed how the Access to Justice Program complies with applicable ethics rules while providing legal services in the court-based volunteer programs.

- **Lay GAL Training** (see January)

One court-appointed GAL family member was trained.

- **Supplemental VLFD Housing and VLP Housing Training**

An optional video replay training on Introduction to "NYCHA Administrative Hearings and Article 78 Proceedings" was held at the New York County Civil Court for 16 volunteers. The training was offered in exchange for 2.5 free CLE credits and either 6 hours of volunteer service in a Housing Court Help Center (VLP), or 1 day of representation in the VLFD Program to be completed within 6 months.

- **Supplemental VLFD Housing and VLP Housing Training**

An optional video replay training on "Basics of the Family Eviction Prevention

Supplement (FEPS)” was held at the New York County Civil Court for 18 volunteers. The program earned attendees 1 free CLE credit and was made available in exchange for 3 hours of volunteer service in a Housing Court Help Center (VLP), or 1 day of representation in the VLFD Program to be completed within 6 months.

- **Combined VLFD Consumer Debt and VLP Consumer Debt Training**

A video replay CLE training was conducted for six attorneys at the New York County Civil Court. The 4.5 hour training provided an overview of Consumer Debt Law, including ethics (3 CLE credits) and instruction on Courtroom Skills and Settlement Negotiation (1.5 CLE credits). In exchange for the CLE credits awarded for the training, attorneys agree to provide 30 *pro bono* hours of limited representation in the VLFD Consumer Debt Program.

- **VAP Family Court Training Level 2**

A live training was conducted for 19 attorneys at the offices of Colgate Palmolive. The 2.0 hour CLE training taught by Support Magistrates on child support law included the following topics: Support of Other Children, Admissibility of Documents, Failure to Pay/Willfulness, Shared/Split Custody and School Attendance. In exchange for CLE credits awarded for the training, attorneys provide *pro bono* assistance in the Family Court Help Centers.

- **Public Librarians Training**

A live 3.5 hour training was conducted for 29 public librarians from 15 different libraries in Westchester County. Topics included: Access to Justice Program Objectives, Community Outreach Initiatives, VLP, AEP and DIY Form Programs, and an Overview of the 9th Judicial District Law Libraries. A demonstration was also conducted of the DIY Form Programs.

April

- **White House Forum on Increasing Access to Justice**

Judge Fern A. Fisher was a panelist on this Forum held at the White House and co-hosted by the Legal Services Corporation. Judge Fisher spoke about the use of technology to advance access to justice.

- **RAP Training** (see January)

A training was given for 14 prospective RAP volunteers at the Bronx offices of Community Action for Safe Apartments (CASA), a project of New Settlement Apartments.

- **Community Leaders Roundtable**

A Community Leaders Roundtable presentation and discussion was held in the Kings County Civil Court on "Finding Free and Reliable Legal Assistance: Tips for Working with an Immigrant Population." The Access to Justice Program made presentations on Help Centers, DIY Form programs and outreach programs and distributed resource materials. A total of 40 people attended.

- **RAP Training** (see January)

A RAP training was conducted for 17 volunteers at the New York County Civil Court.

- **Supplemental VLFD Housing and VLP Housing Training**

An optional live CLE training on “Legal Issues Arising out of the Section 8 Program” was designed to provide volunteers an overview of the in-house and voucher Section 8

Program. The training program, held at the New York County Civil Court, covered the practicalities of adding people to the household composition, reporting income changes, and dealing with in-house Section 8 representatives. The presenter also focused on current case law, and discussed the termination of tenancy and appeal procedures. A total of 26 volunteers were trained.

- **Bridge the Gap Training**

A comprehensive live basic training for the VLP and VLFD Housing and Consumer Debt Programs and the Uncontested Divorce Program was offered at the New York County Civil Court over three days. In return for CLE training, participants were required to complete a 50-hour supervised *pro bono* practicum assisting litigants in NYC Housing, Civil and Supreme Courts within six months of training, assisting litigants with housing, consumer debt and uncontested divorces in the Access to Justice Program's unbundled court-based legal services programs. Over 100 recent law graduates and attorneys were trained on each day. This training fulfills the first or second year mandatory CLE requirements for recent law graduates and newly admitted attorneys.

- **Uncontested Divorce Program Training for Minority Bar Associations**

A live training was conducted for 30 attorneys from the following bar Associations: Metropolitan Black Bar Association, The Association of the Black Women Attorneys, The Association of Ghanaian Lawyers of America; the Black Bar Association of Bronx County, the Nigerian Lawyers Association and the Westchester Black Bar Association. The training was held at the New York County Civil Court. The 1.5 hour training provided an overview of uncontested divorce law and a demonstration of the Drafting Libraries Uncontested Divorce Software program to be used by attorney volunteers providing *pro bono* assistance to unrepresented litigants with uncontested divorce matters in minority communities.

May

- **New York City Housing Court DIY Form Program Training**

Private live tutorial on the six landlord-tenant New York City DIY Form programs for the Housing Court Answers' Bronx Community Task Force. Eight attendees were trained to provide assistance to unrepresented litigants at terminals near the Task Force table located in the Queens County Housing Court.

- **Pro Bono Institute Presentation** (see March)

Judge Fern A. Fisher participated in a Pro Bono Institute webinar reprising the "The Ethics of Unbundled Legal Services" presentation given earlier in the year at their annual conference.

- **"Pre-filing" Family Offense Petitions in the NYS Family Courts**

Judge Fern A. Fisher gave a live presentation on the Form's Committee's Ignite Session, at the Self-Represented Litigation Network's pre-conference in St. Louis, Missouri about the New York State court system's advocate document assembly program. The powerpoint presentation explained how the data collected in the program is sent directly into the court's case management system.

- **Attack of the Killer Law Students! – Addressing Fears and Hopes in the Wake of the New York Pro Bono Admission Requirement**

Judge Fern A. Fisher presented at the Equal Justice Conference in St. Louis, Missouri on a panel discussing the implications of New York's *pro bono* admission 50-hour rule requirement.

- **Pro Bono Strategies for Access for the Self-Represented**

Judge Fern A. Fisher presented at the Equal Justice Conference in St. Louis, Missouri on a panel exploring the variety of *pro bono* collaborations with self-help programs and the advantages for *pro bono* attorneys.

- **Uncontested Divorce Program Training**

A live training was conducted for 16 law students at the New York County Civil Court. The two hour training provided an overview of uncontested divorce law and a demonstration of the Drafting Libraries Uncontested Divorce Software program to be used by the law student summer interns to assist unrepresented litigants in the Uncontested Divorce Program in the Supreme Courts.

- **Combined VLFD Consumer Debt and VLP Consumer Debt Training**

A video replay training was conducted for 14 law students at the New York County Civil Court. The five hour training provided an overview of Consumer Debt Law, including ethics and instruction on Courtroom Skills and Settlement Negotiation. The law student summer interns provided *pro bono* limited representation in the VLFD Consumer Debt Program.

- **Florida State Court Administrator Training**

This two-day training held in New York City was given to three Florida State Court Administrators to provide an in-depth overview of the Access to Justice Program's DIY Form programs. The Florida State Court received a grant from the National Center for State Court's Center on Court Access to Justice for All. The goal of the training was to provide an overview of the Access to Justice Program's best practices which could be replicated in the Florida courts. The first day of the training consisted of presentations and discussions about the development and implementation process, along with an introduction to DIY Form programming session. Brief presentations were also made on other access to justice initiatives. The second day, the Administrators was taken on a guided tour of the Bronx Housing, Family and Surrogate's Courts.

- **Community Leaders Roundtable**

A Community Leaders Roundtable presentation and discussion was held in the Richmond County Supreme Court on "Finding Free and Reliable Legal Assistance: Tips for Working with an Immigrant Population." The Access to Justice Program presented information about community outreach programs. A total of 25 people attended.

June

- **GAL General Training**

The GAL Program offered free live training to prospective GALs in the New York County Civil Court. The GAL Program training consists of 7.5 hours of training including "Introduction to Housing Court/What is a GAL (1.0)," "Housing Court Nonpayment and Holdover Proceedings (1.5)," "Adult Protective Services and GAL Work (1.0)," "Advocacy and Negotiation in Housing Court Nonpayment and Holdover

Cases (1.0),” “Short Guide to Emergency Assistance in New York (1.0),” “Overview of Mental Illness and Engagement Strategies (1.0),” and “GAL Practical Issues (1.0).” Attorneys are provided with free CLE credits (including 1 Ethics credit) upon completion of the training. All new GALs are expected to accept three pro-bono appointments over the course of the first year following training. Although many applied, ten people successfully interviewed, completed background checks and reference checks and attended the training and were added to the GAL list.

- **New York City Housing Court DIY Form Program Training** (see May)

Private live tutorial on DIY programs for Housing Court Answers’ Queens Community Task Force. Ten participants were trained.

- **Combined VLFD Housing and VLP Housing Training** (see January)

A comprehensive video replay basic training for both the Housing VLP and VLFD Programs was offered at the New York County Civil Court to 12 CUNY School of Law LaunchPad for Justice Fellows. The training was offered to the Fellows in exchange for 50-hours of *pro bono* service in the VLFD Program.

- **Supplemental VLFD Housing and VLP Housing Training**

An additional three hour video replay training on “Traverse Hearings,” “How to Analyze Rent Breakdowns,” and “How to Conduct Intake in VLFD Cases” was given to 12 CUNY School of Law LaunchPad for Justice fellows as part of their basic training program. An additional 18+ volunteer lawyers who previously completed the VLP or VLFD Housing basic training also attended. In exchange for each hour of CLE credit earned, volunteer lawyers committed to serve either four hours in the Help Center or one day of representation in the courtroom.

- **Supplemental VLFD Housing and VLP Housing Training**

An additional three hour video replay training on the “Basics of the Family Eviction Prevention Supplement (FEPS)” and the “One Shot Deal” was given to 10 CUNY School of Law LaunchPad for Justice fellows as part of their basic training program. An additional 18+ volunteer lawyers who previously completed the VLP or VLFD Housing basic training also attended. In exchange for each hour of CLE credit earned, volunteer lawyers committed to serve either four hours in the Help Center or one day of representation in the courtroom.

- **RAP Training** (see January)

A RAP training was held at the New York County Civil Court for eight volunteers, including a Skadden, Arps Honors Program in Legal Studies fellow, a law student, a CUNY Launchpad for Justice fellow who was a law student.

- **Supplemental RAP Training**

Seven RAP volunteers attended a one hour live DIY Form program training with a focus on the six DIY Form New York City Housing Court programs. The training habilitated the volunteers to assist unrepresented litigants with the DIY Form programs in Housing Court Clerk’s Offices.

- **Community Leaders Roundtable**

A Community Leaders Roundtable presentation and discussion was held in the Bronx County Supreme Court on “Finding Free and Reliable Legal Assistance: Tips for Working with an Immigrant Population.” The Access to Justice Program presenters spoke about Consumer Debt, Family Court and Uncontested Divorce Volunteer Lawyer Programs and community outreach programs. A total of 30 people attended.

- **Texas Supreme Court Meeting**

Judge Fern A. Fisher and her staff met with Chief Justice Wallace Jefferson and his General Counsel to discuss access to justice issues. The Access to Justice Program demonstrated the DIY Form programs.

July

- **Lay GAL Training** (see January)

One court-appointed GAL family member was trained.

- **Combined VLFD Consumer Debt and VLP Consumer Debt Training** (see January)

A video replay training was conducted for nine law students at the New York County Civil Court in conjunction with Benjamin N. Cardozo Law School and the Law Student Initiative Consortium.

- **VAP Family Court Training**

A live training was conducted for 21 attorneys and law students at the offices of Ropes and Gray. The 2.5 hour CLE training provided an overview of the basics of paternity and child support law, with topics including: "Introduction to Family Court," "Introduction to Family Court Paternity" and "Introduction to Family Court Child Support. In exchange for 2.5 CLE credits awarded for the training, attorneys provide *pro bono* assistance in the Family Court Help Centers.

- **VAP Family Court Training**

A live training was conducted for 18 attorneys and law students at the offices of Duane Morris LLP. The 2.5 hour CLE training provided an overview of child custody, visitation and family offense. In exchange for 2.5 CLE credits awarded for the training, attorneys provide *pro bono* assistance in the Family Court Help Centers.

- **Meeting With Australian Churchill Fellow**

Judge Fern A. Fisher and her staff member met with a Churchill Fellowship recipient to discuss access to justice program that could be replicated in the Australian tribunals. The presentation focused primarily on the DIY Form programs and how they are used to assist unrepresented litigants. A brief demonstration of the development software was also conducted.

August

- **Lay GAL Training** (see January)

Three court-appointed GAL family members were trained.

- **Combined VLFD Housing and VLP Housing Training** (see January)

An 8.5 hour CLE credit two-day video-replay training was offered at the New York County Civil Court to 9 recent law graduates and admitted attorneys.

- **RAP Training** (see January)

A RAP training was held at the New York County Civil Court for 10 prospective volunteers.

- **RAP Training** (see January)

A RAP training was conducted at St John's University School of Law for 14 law student

volunteers.

- **VAP Family Court Training** (see July)

A live training was conducted for 10 attorneys at the offices of Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom LLP & Affiliates. The 2.5 hour training provided an overview of paternity and child support law.

- **Combined VLFD Consumer Debt and VLP Consumer Debt Training** (see January)

A video replay training was conducted for nine law students at the New York County Civil Court in conjunction with Benjamin N. Cardozo Law School and the Law Student Initiative Consortium.

September

- **California Western School of Law**

Judge Fern A. Fisher visited California Western School of Law in San Diego and spoke on access to justice issues to the students.

- **Lay GAL Training** (see January)

Two court-appointed GAL family members were trained.

- **Uncontested Divorce Training** (see January)

Uncontested Divorce Program live training was conducted at St. John's Law School for 18 law students to assist unrepresented litigants in Queens Supreme Court.

- **Housing Court Training for NYCHA**

The Access to Justice Program presented information about Housing Court to New York City Housing Authority case workers and managers. The training was held in New York County.

October

- **Supplemental GAL Training**

A 2.5 hour video replay training entitled "GAL NYCHA Administrative Hearing Advocacy" was held for 15 GALs in the New York County Civil Court as a means of expanding the list of GALs prepared to accept appointments to represent impaired tenants facing NYCHA administrative proceedings.

- **Supplemental GAL Training**

A two hour live CLE training entitled "NYCHA Administrative Hearings: How to Preserve the Record" was held for 23 GALs in the New York County Civil Court. In addition to basic GAL training, attendees were required to have completed "GAL NYCHA Administrative Hearing Advocacy" training before attending this class.

- **Lay GAL Training** (see January)

Two court-appointed GAL family members were trained.

- **Supplemental VLFD Housing and VLP Housing Training** (see June)

A comprehensive four day basic training was offered at the New York County Civil Court to 19 CUNY School of Law LaunchPad for Justice Fellows. The training included the basic VLFD and VLP Housing training and "Traverse Hearings," "How to Analyze Rent Breakdowns," "How to Conduct Intake in VLFD Cases," "Basics of the Family Eviction Prevention Supplement (FEPS)" and the "One Shot Deal." The basic and

additional training was offered to the fellows in exchange for 50 hours of *pro bono* service in the VLFD Program.

- **RAP Training** (see January)

A RAP training was held at the New York County Civil Court for 34 prospective volunteers.

- **Bridge the Gap Training**

In honor of National *Pro Bono* Celebration Week, a comprehensive live basic training for the VLP Housing, Family and Consumer Debt Program and the VLFD Housing and Consumer Debt Program, and the Uncontested Divorce Program was offered at the New York County Civil Court over four days. In return for the full CLE training, participants were required to complete a 60-hour supervised *pro bono* practicum assisting litigants in NYC Housing, Family, Civil and Supreme Courts within nine months of training, assisting litigants with housing, consumer debt and uncontested divorce, and family law matters in the Access to Justice Program's unbundled court-based legal services programs. This training fulfills the first or second year mandatory CLE requirements for recent law graduates and newly admitted attorneys.

- **VLFD Program Training** (see January)

A CLE program was held at the law offices of Paul Hastings LLP. The Ethics for Volunteer Attorneys CLE segment was redesigned and taught live to the 16 participants.

November

- **Until Civil Gideon: Expanding Access to Justice**

Judge Fern A. Fisher presented on the concluding plenary at the Until Civil Gideon: Expanding Access to Justice Conference at Fordham University School of Law Urban Law Center.

- **Until Civil Gideon: Expanding Access to Justice**

Rochelle Klempner presented at the Until Civil Gideon: Expanding Access to Justice Conference at Fordham University School of Law Urban Law Center on the Access to Justice Program's unbundled court-based volunteer lawyer programs.

- **Supplemental GAL Workshop**

A 1.5 hour live CLE workshop was held at the New York County Civil Court on "GAL Best Practices" for 12 GALs. This workshop was taught by a stellar GAL, Della L. Dekay, who has been recognized repeatedly for outstanding *pro bono* service. The presenter shared insights, practical suggestions, and useful information to aid GALs in understanding their role in challenging situations and effectively advocate for their wards.

- **Supplemental GAL Workshop**

A two hour live CLE workshop was held at the New York County Civil Court on "Understanding Article 81 Guardianship in the Context of the Integrated Part (Part I)" for 12 GALs. The workshop was taught by Judge Tanya Kennedy, who sat in the Integrated Part. The presenter discussed factors considered in making determinations, difficult/borderline cases, and patterns of cases coming to PART I from Housing Court.

- **Lay GAL Training** (see January)

One court-appointed GAL family member was trained.

- **VAP Family Court Training Level 2** (see March)

A live training was conducted for 10 attorneys at the offices of Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom LLP & Affiliates.

December

- **GAL General Training** (see June).

A video replay of the GAL Program basic training was offered in New York County Civil Court. Ten people who successfully interviewed, and passed background and reference checks attended the training and were added to the GAL list.

- **New York City Housing Court DIY Form Program Training** (see May)

Private live tutorial on DIY Form programs for Housing Court Answers' New York Community Task Force. A total of 25 attendees were trained.

- **Combined VLFD Housing and VLP Housing Training** (see January)

An 8.5 hour CLE credit two-day video-replay training was offered at the New York County Civil Court to 15 recent law graduates and admitted attorneys including one CUNY School of Law LaunchPad For Justice Fellow.

- **“Pre-filing” Family Offense Petitions in the NYS Family Courts** (see May)

Judge Fern A. Fisher gave an update and reprisal of her presentation on the Family Offense Petition advocate document assembly program previously given in-person at the Self-Represented Litigation Network's (SRLN) pre-conference. The webinar was hosted by the SRLN Form's committee.

- **Combined VLFD Consumer Debt and VLP Consumer Debt Training** (see March)

A video replay training was conducted at the New York County Civil Court for three attorneys who are LLM students in conjunction with the French American Bar Association.

APPENDIX B: FAMILY OFFENSE PETITION PROGRAM EXCERPT POWERPOINT SLIDES



How It Works

- Advocates only HotDocs interview
- Creates the Petition, Address Confidentiality Affidavit & instructions.
- Data collected in program is transferred from LHI to Court's "E-Share Wizard"
- Litigant goes to Court Clerk to sign and file
- After Clerk review, data transferred to Court's case management system

Applications

Types of abuse	Types of Domestic Violence Relationships
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Physical• Sexual• Emotional• Economic• Psychological• Social• Spiritual	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Intimate Partner/Dating• Elder• Teen• LGBT• Immigration• Spousal

Benefits: Litigants

- Less time spent in Court to file and be heard
- More detailed legal papers
- Domestic Violence support
- Reduces waiting time for all litigants
- More detailed information goes directly to the Police

Benefits: Advocates

- Easily prepare detailed Petitions
- Faster processing
- Better service to clients
- Saves time
- Strengthens relationship with Court

Benefits: Court

- Legible Court forms
- Saves hours of data entry time
- Faster adjudications
- Streamlined process
- Can handle more cases per day

APPENDIX C: PERSONNEL TRAININGS

January

- **7th Judicial District Family Court DIY Form Program Showcase**

Exclusive webinar presentation held for the 7th Judicial District's six Family Court Chief Clerks highlighting the six DIY Form programs for Family Court. This intimate session provided a question and answer period and discussed program implementation protocols in the courthouses.

February

- **Queens County Criminal Court Poverty Simulation**

Criminal Court Interpreters, Judges, Court Analysts, Clerks, and Court Attorneys participated in two half-day trainings. The 56 employees who participated were assigned a fictitious identity, family and financial situation in order to simulate four weeks of time in their assigned role. Group follow-up discussion provided an opportunity for staff to foster innovation and interact in new ways.

April

- **Surrogate's Court DIY Form Programs Showcase**

This live webinar showcased the three DIY Form programs for Surrogate's Courts and presented the new Spanish language Pop-Ups in the Safe Deposit Box DIY Form program. The webinar was attended by Surrogate's Court employees, Help Center staff, and Public Access Law Librarians. A total of 32 employees attended the training.

- **Help Center Court Attorney Training**

A live CLE training on "Legal Issues Arising out of the Section 8 Program" was presented to New York City Civil Court Help Center Court Attorneys to provide an overview of the in-house and voucher Section 8 Program. The training program, held at the New York County Civil Court, covered the practicalities of adding people to the household composition, reporting income changes, and dealing with in-house Section 8 representatives. The presenter also focused on current case law, and discussed the termination of tenancy and appeal procedures. A total of 14 New York City Help Center Court Attorneys were trained.

- **Introduction to DIY Form Programming**

This live webinar training was offered to all court personnel. It highlighted the actual software used in creating the front-end of the DIY Form programs and focused on basic programming techniques and the use of litigant-friendly features. Most participants had no programming experience. Fifteen people attended this training including personnel from Lewis, Tioga and Queens Counties and Family, Surrogate's and Town Courts.

May

- **New York City Housing Court Judges and Court Attorneys GAL Training**

This two-hour CLE training, entitled “Mental Illness and Guardians Ad Litem in Housing Court” was held for all New York City Housing Court Judges and Court Attorneys. It was designed to familiarize the audience with how mental illness manifests itself in Housing Court, how to recognize specific mental illnesses, and provide suggestions for what the Court and a GAL can do to help. Judges and Court Attorneys had an opportunity to exchange ideas and learn how to best handle various situations when a mentally ill litigant appears before them. The audience was left with resources and tools that might aid in seeing these cases to resolution while remaining sensitive to the difficulties faced by the litigants and seeing that their rights are protected.

- **New York County Surrogate’s Court Staff Training**

In-depth live training held twice at the New York County Surrogate’s Court on the three DIY Form programs for Surrogate’s Court staff. A total of 13 employees were trained. This training was requested by the Chief Clerk to improve usage statistics given the large volume of unrepresented litigants that appear in the Court.

- **Surrogate’s Court DIY Form Programs Showcase** (see April)

This live webinar training was given over two dates in April and May. An additional 30 employees were trained. Between the two trainings, employees from every Judicial District attended this showcase.

June

- **Family Court DIY Form Programs Showcase: Part I**

Offered twice in June, this live webinar outlined the two Family Court support-related DIY Form Programs, the Support Enforcement Program and the Support Modification Program. This training was open to all Family Courts, Help Centers, and Public Access Law Librarian employees. A total of 29 employees attended this review training.

- **Family Court DIY Form Programs Showcase: Part II**

Offered twice in June, this live webinar outlined the Spanish and English Paternity DIY Form Programs as well as the Custody & Visitation Enforcement Program and the Custody & Visitation Modification Program. This training was open to all Family Courts, Help Centers, and Public Access Law Librarian employees to attend. A total of 28 employees attended this review training.

July

- **DIY Forms Training Suffolk County District Courts**

Suffolk County District Court staff attended an hour long live webinar detailing the four DIY Form landlord-tenant programs as well as the upcoming Vacate Default Judgment Consumer Debt DIY Form program. Seventeen employees attended.

October

- **Law Librarian Association Meeting Presentation**

All DIY Form programs were showcased at this live presentation for New York State Courts Law Librarians at their annual meeting in Albany. There were 24 Librarians in attendance. Promotional materials were distributed for the Law Librarians to disseminate to their patrons.

- **Consumer Debt Vacate Default Judgment DIY Form Program Webinar**

This live webinar training was offered three times in an effort to educate court staff about the new Consumer Debt Vacate Default Judgment DIY Form program. The papers generated from this program for failure to appear or failure to answer can be filed in Supreme, County, City, District, New York City Civil, Town and Village Courts. Nearly 100 employees were trained.

- **Facilitating Access Training Part I and II**

Over two dates, live webinar training was held for all New York State Court Help Center personnel on Facilitating Access. Facilitating Access Training emphasizes how court staff can assist the public and the differences between legal information and legal advice. The training provided guidelines and exercises for responding to the public, as well as an overview of tools and resources available to refer unrepresented litigants for assistance.

- **NYS Family Court Family Offense Advocate Petition Program**

Judge Fern A. Fisher gave a presentation via webinar on the New York State court system's advocate document assembly program. The powerpoint presentation was given at a meeting of the Judicial District Coordinators in preparation for the roll-out of the Family Offense Petition Program to all the counties outside New York City. Judge Fisher explained how the data collected in the program is sent directly into the court's case management system.

November

- **District, City, Town and Village Court Landlord-Tenant DIY Form Program Showcase**

This live webinar was presented twice to demonstrate the Tenant Vacate Default Judgment, the Nonpayment Petition, the Licensee Holdover Petition, and the Squatter Holdover Petition DIY Form programs. In addition, the 56 attendees were given an overview of related UCMS protocols.

- **Introduction to DIY Form Programming** (see April)

This live webinar presentation trained 24 court employees on basic programming of the DIY Forms front-end A2J software. Attendees included six Chief Clerks, seven Court Clerks and a Law Librarian.

December

- **District, City, Town and Village Court Landlord-Tenant DIY Form Program Showcase** (see November)

An additional 26 District, City, Town and Village Court employees were trained on the

available landlord-tenant DIY Form programs and related UCMS protocols.

- **4th Judicial District Surrogate Court Chief Clerks Presentation**

A presentation was made to the District Executive and 11 Surrogate's Court Chief Clerks showcasing the three DIY Form programs for Surrogate's Court. The goal of this private session was to offer assistance with implementation of the DIY Form programs inside the courthouses and to discuss techniques for program promotion.

APPENDIX D: SAMPLE SLIDES

**For information on
Housing Court go to:**

nycourts.gov/courts/nyc/housing



A volunteer lawyer can:

- review your court papers,
- help you fill out forms,
- help you get ready for court, and
- give you legal referrals.

**A stipulation
("stip") is a written
agreement
between both
sides in a case.**

**A "stip" says what
each side is
supposed to do (for
example, pay
money, make
repairs) and when
they must do it by.**



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**For more information
about the Guardian
Ad Litem Program
(GAL) visit:**

www.nycourts.gov/nyc-gal

If you are a senior with a housing court case the **Assigned Counsel Project (ACP)** may be able to help!



Use the **Small Property Owner DIY** program to make court papers to start a nonpayment case.

Start now at the Help Center in room 104.

“Help Centers” are at every housing court. In this building it’s in room 104.



Adjournment

DEFINITION:

An **adjournment** is when the court reschedules a case to a new later date.



Watch legal informational videos on **YouTube** at:

[YouTube.com/user/NYCourtsA2J](https://www.youtube.com/user/NYCourtsA2J)



Housing Court Answers sits in the clerk’s office in room 225.



APPENDIX E: ACCESS TO JUSTICE EFFORTS THROUGHOUT NEW YORK

In addition to the Access to Justice Program's measures taken to provide equal access to justice, many other judicial and non-judicial personnel throughout the New York State court system act to assist unrepresented litigants and improve access to justice. The efforts listed below are those that are not previously acknowledged in this Report and were reported to the Access to Justice Program by the various judicial districts and courts. This sampling of the wonderful programs, services, presentations, and fairs held in 2013 could not have happened without the care and commitment of so many hard working court employees who strive to provide equal access to justice.

3rd Judicial District

Community Law Days – April 6th & 7th – Albany Public Library; participants included: Albany County Bar Association, NYSBA, Albany Law School, The Legal Project, Legal Aid of NENY, Prisoners' Legal Services and Veterans' Justice Outreach.

In an effort to promote access to justice, the Third District has installed public access terminals in all of their Supreme Court Libraries and juror assembly rooms, all with the ability to generate forms from the DIY site. They also have wireless access points installed in all of their courthouses in the District.

In addition, there is a program in Albany Family Court through Albany Law School, where law students are on-site during set hours to assist the litigants in filing petitions.

5th Judicial District

The District hosted a number of court tours and programs to promote awareness of the courts and its programs with schools, local and international groups for over 125 participants.

The Syracuse Law Library has 4 public access computers. All libraries in the 5th JD have public access computers.

The Onondaga County Bar Association's Volunteer Lawyers Project in the Onondaga Family Court provides assistance to the public on family law issues.

6th Judicial District

DIY Posters and cards are available at all public counters in the Sixth Judicial District. Clerks routinely share information with patrons about using the forms and direct them to the appropriate site.

The District in the near future is planning to put the DIY forms and information up on

their website.

7th Judicial District

Ongoing outreach to local schools and colleges with a total of 98 tours of the courts. Ongoing programs to promote an awareness of the courts and its programs had 43 participants in their Student Ambassador Program and five college students in a new program to learn about what the court offers to the public.

The 7th JD Court Help Center was opened in the Hall of Justice Law Library in January of 2013. The Center, which is a collaboration between the NYS Courts, Volunteer Legal Services Project, Inc. Center and the Center for Dispute Settlement provides assistance to unrepresented litigants.

The Volunteer Attorney Program - This new pilot program is being expanded to the 7th JD and is being launched in Ontario County Family Court on January 14, 2014. The program is designed to connect volunteer attorneys with unrepresented litigants in Family Court. It currently connects local Ontario Family Court unrepresented litigants with attorneys located in New York City to assist them with procedural questions that they may have about their case. Planning is underway to expand the attorney connection to local Ontario and Monroe County attorneys as well.

8th Judicial District

The District held Law Day Programs with local schools and a number of court tours with local schools in the community.

Erie County has a dedicated Court Resource Center located at 77 West Eagle Street to assist the public with questions related to court procedures, forms and records.

In addition the following Courts have a dedicated computers/kiosks to allow members of the public to access the DIY Form programs:

Buffalo City Court - civil division
Allegany County Supreme, Family and Surrogate Courts
Chautauqua County Family Court
Chautauqua County Law Library has two public access computers
Erie County Surrogate Court
Genesee County Law Library has two public computers
Niagara County Law Library in Niagara Falls
Niagara County Law Library in Lockport
Orleans County Law Library
Wyoming County Law Library

9th Judicial District

The District held several court tours with local schools as well as provided speakers on court programs to local schools.

A Public Librarians' Access To Justice Workshop was presented at the Westchester Public Library (3/12/13).

The Ninth Judicial District Court Help Center employs a staff attorney and a court analyst to provide free court and procedural information to pro se litigants. They are neutral parties who do not give legal advice or tell an individual the best way to handle their case. The Help Center staff can provide information about the Supreme Court on the following topics:

- how to commence cases
- how to answer cases
- basics of filling out court forms
- court procedure
- referrals to appropriate state agencies and community organizations
- finding the appropriate court

Litigants also have access to DIY Forms.

10th Judicial District - Nassau County

The District held two programs at the Nassau County Family Court with the Mobile Legal Help Center (8/22/13 & 9/25/13); ongoing program with local schools provided many court tours to share information on court programs etc. (over 10) and speakers programs by Judges and non-judicial staff to many organizations to share information on the courts (presentations made to 1150+ individuals throughout Nassau County).

The Nassau County Court Information Center celebrated its grand opening in June of 2006. The center was honored to receive the DIY STAR AWARD from the Court's Access to Justice Program in December 2010. In 2013 the Nassau County Court Information Center was able to assist 16,300 people.

10th Judicial District - Suffolk County

DIY Programs - Family, District and Surrogate's Court. By using these well-designed programs, litigants and members of the public can access information about court proceedings and retrieve necessary information. Surveys of the programs have been overwhelming positive and it is clear that these resources have done much to ensure access to justice in these courts.

Law Day Event - May - Many local agencies and organizations come to the Cohalan Court Complex to exchange information and provide the community with resources furthering the ideal of promoting access to justice.

Women in the Courts Domestic Violence Program - October - Committee members sponsored a well-received panel program which included representatives from veterans and domestic violence advocacy groups to ensure access to courts by the respective participants and permitting a dialogue on how best to integrate the best practices in psychology and the law for each.

Worked with housing agencies, especially the Homeowners Protection Program (HOPP), to ensure that homeowners receive information about statutorily required conferences in residential foreclosure actions. To further assist in this effort, Suffolk has had notices to homeowners providing dates of conferences and information about available resources translated into Spanish.

Suffolk County Women in the Courts Committee together with the Educational Assistance Corporation, have collaborated to make sure the Children's Center in the Cohalan Court Complex remains open for litigants with children.

Ongoing participation in the Long Island Advocacy Coalition which promotes access to the courts and other governmental institutions by ensuring those for whom English is not a first language will fully understand all court proceedings through appropriate interpretation. Suffolk also provides the language line for those litigants who need assistance at the Clerks' windows.

In both the Central Islip and Riverhead court complexes, the law libraries house a Library Resources for the Public Program (LRPP). That program, staffed by court personnel, is heavily used (approximately 750 used the program in September 2013 alone). The program representatives provide users with information about various proceedings and available resources. LRPP has been in place for a number of years, and was on the vanguard of such initiatives statewide. Non-English speaking litigants also have the option of speaking to a bilingual representative or using the language line so that the information provided is understood.

Suffolk County Bar Association - Pro Bono Foundation - The office of the District Administrative Judge has, historically, been represented by a standing member on the Pro Bono Foundation. The Foundation strives to ensure that everyone, no matter their means, receives the highest level of professional representation. Toward that end, the Foundation honors those who volunteer their services to indigent clients. The presence of a court representative on the Board of Managers allows for a free exchange of information from those in the best position to provide it, as to the status of pro bono efforts throughout the County.

Bronx County Family Court

Successfully piloted Family Offense Petition Advocate Program and conducted trainings for other county staff and advocate groups.

Brooklyn Law School - Elder Rights Clinic, October 2013: "Do Older Adults have Access

to Justice?" Discussed access to and from the court, offsite filing and home-bound and mobility impaired access for older adults.

Bronx County Information Fair "Encouraging Healthy, Happy and Safe Families," April 2013, staffed Access to Justice Program table.

Bronx County Teen Day Fair, September 2013, Staffed Access to Justice Program table.

Opened state-of-the-art Court Help Center.

Richmond County Surrogate's Court

The Surrogates Court staff participated in the Richmond County Borough President's "Stand Together for Autism Resource Fair" to provide information about guardianship proceedings to assist the autistic community.

In association with Lifestyles for the Disabled, Inc., Surrogate Robert Gigante and court staff presented information on the importance of establishing guardianship for a loved one with a developmental disability.

PARTNERS & FRIENDS

The NYS Courts Access to Justice Program could not possibly reach as many New Yorkers in need of assistance without the help of our many partners and friends outside the court system. Below is a list of the individuals, agencies, nonprofit organizations, charitable organizations, government offices, *pro bono* organizations, bar associations, law firms, law schools, social work schools, and colleges throughout New York State that generously offer their services to increase access to justice for unrepresented litigants. This list would be endless if it included the numerous court personnel and volunteers who continuously commit their time and energy to bolster our efforts. The Access to Justice Program is grateful for the assistance.

Albany County Bar Association
Albany Law School Clinic & Justice Center
Allison Schoenthal, Esq., Hogan Lovells
Alston & Byrd, LLP
American Corporate Counsel Association,
Greater NY Chapter
Amistad Long Island Black Bar
Association
Arent Fox LLP
Association of Black Women Attorneys
Association of Ghanaian Lawyers of
America
Banco Popular North America
Benjamin N. Cardozo School of Law
Berkeley College
Better Business Bureau
Big Brothers Big Sisters of Rockland
County
Black Bar Association of Bronx County
Briarcliffe College
Bronx CLARO Program
Bronx County Bar Association
Brooklyn Bar Association Volunteer
Lawyers Project
Brooklyn Law School
Bruce Jordan, Assistant Deputy
Commissioner, NYC Human Resource
Administration
Bushwick Housing and Legal Assistance
Program
Cadwalader, Wickersham & Taft, LLP
Capital District Black and Hispanic Bar
Association
CASA of Rockland County (Court
Appointed Special Advocates)
Catholic Charities Diocese of Rockville
Center
Center for Court Innovation
Center for Safety and Change
Chadbourne & Parke
Child Care Resources of Rockland
Children's Law Center (CLC)
Citigroup, Inc.
City Bar Justice Center
CLARO NYC
Clifford Chance
Colgate-Palmolive Company
Community Action For Safe Apartments
Columbia Law School Lawyering in the
Digital Age Clinic
Cooley, LLP
CUNY School of Law
CUNY School of Law Community Legal
Resource Network
Davis Polk & Wardwell LLP
Davis Wright Tremaine LLP
Debevoise & Plimpton LLP
Dechert LLP
Della DeKay, Esq., Guardian Ad Litem,
NYC Housing Part
Disability Advocates, Inc
DLA Piper LLP
Douglass J. Seidman, Manhattan
Courthouse Project, The Legal Aid
Society
Duane Morris LLP
Empire Justice Center
Empire Justice Center, Telesca Center

for Justice
 Erie County Minority Bar Association
 Erie County Women's Bar Association
 Evan Denerstein, Esq. MFY Legal Services, Inc.
 Feerick Center for Social Justice, Fordham Law School
 Franklin H. Williams Judicial Commission
 Greater New York Chamber of Commerce
 Greenberg Traurig LLC
 Hinshaw & Culbertson, LLP
 Hiscock & Barclay
 Hogan Lovells
 Hon. Howard L. Malatzky (Ret.)
 Housing Court Answers, Inc.
 HSBC
 Hughes Hubbard & Reed LLP
 Immigration Equality
 Interfaith Center of New York
 JASA, Queens Legal Services for the Elderly
 John Jay College of Criminal Justice
 Julie Grainger, Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal
 Katie M. Lachter, Esq., Hinshaw & Culbertson, LLP
 Kaye Scholer
 Kirkland & Ellis, LLP
 LawHelp.org/NY
 Legal Aid Society of the Bronx
 Legal Aid Society of Brooklyn
 Legal Aid Society of New York City
 Legal Aid Society of Northeastern New York, Inc.
 Legal Aid Society of Rochester, NY
 Legal Aid Society of Rockland County
 Legal Aid Society of Suffolk County
 Legal Assistance of Western New York, Inc.
 Legal Assistance of Western New York, Inc., Bath Office, Southern Tier Legal Services
 Legal Assistance of Western New York, Inc., Elmira Office, Chemung County Neighborhood Legal Services
 Legal Assistance of Western New York, Inc., Geneva Office
 Legal Assistance of Western New York, Inc., Ithaca Office, Tompkins/Tioga Neighborhood Legal Services
 Legal Assistance Western New York, Inc., Jamestown Office, Southern Tier Legal Services
 Legal Assistance of Western New York, Inc, Olean Office, Southern Tier Legal Services
 Legal Assistance of Western New York, Inc. Rochester Office, Monroe County Legal Assistance Center
 Legal Services for the Elderly, Disabled or Disadvantaged of WNY, Inc.
 Legal Services of the Hudson Valley
 Legal Services NYC
 Legal Services of NYC - Bronx
 Legal Services of NYC - Brooklyn
 Lenox Hill Neighborhood House
 LIFT
 Lincoln Square Legal Services, Inc. at Fordham University School of Law (Family Advocacy Clinic)
 Locke Lord LLP
 Long Island Hispanic Bar Association, Suffolk County Chapter
 Long Island Housing Services, Inc
 Lucas A. Ferrara, Esq., Newman Ferrara LLP
 Lucy C. Newman, Esq. Staff Attorney
 The Legal Aid Society
 Macon B. Allen Black Bar Association
 Mallory Curran, Supervising Attorney, Mental Health Law Project, MFY Legal Services, Inc.
 Manhattan CLARO Program
 Manhattan Legal Services
 Maurice A. Deane School of Law at Hofstra University
 McCarter & English LLP
 Mercy Center Legal Advice Program
 Metropolitan Black Bar Association
 Mintz, Levin, Cohn, Ferris, Glovsky and Popeo, P.C.
 MFY Legal Services, Inc.

Monroe County Bar Association
Morgan, Lewis, and Bockius, LLP
Morrison Foerster LLP
My Sister's Place
Nassau County Bar Association
Nassau County Coalition Against
Domestic Violence
Nassau/Suffolk Law Services Committee,
Inc.
Neighborhood Economic Development
Advocacy Project (NEDAP)
Neighborhood Legal Services, Inc.
New York Appleseed
New York Asian Women's Center
New York City Bar Association
New York City Bar Association Legal
Referral Service
New York City County Clerks Office
New York City Housing Authority
New York City Paralegal Association
New York County Lawyers' Association
NYCLA
New York Law School
New York Legal Assistance Group
NYLAG
New York State Bar Association
New York State Board of Elections
New York State Court Officers
Association
New York State Office of the Attorney
General
New York University Law School
Niagara County Legal Aid Society, a
Division of Neighborhood Legal
Services, Inc.
Nigerian Lawyers Association
Northern Manhattan Improvement
Corporation (NMIC)
NYC Commission on Human Rights
NYC Department for the Aging
NYC Department of Consumer Affairs
NYC Human Resources Administration,
Department of Social Services
NYC Human Resources Administration,
Office of Legal Affairs
NYC Service, Office of the Mayor of the

City of New York
Office of the Bronx Borough President
Office of the Mayor of the City of
New York
Office of the State Courts Administrator,
Supreme Court of Florida
Orrick, Herrington & Sutcliffe, LLP
Pace Women's Justice Center
Partnership for Children's Rights
Paul Hastings LLP
Paul, Weiss, Rifkind, Wharton &
Garrison LLP
Pedro A. Rivera, Esq.
Pfizer Inc.
Prisoners' Legal Services of New York
Pro Bono Foundation
Pro Bono Net
Pro Bono Partnership
Proskauer Rose LLP
Queens County Bar Association
Queens County Bar Association, Lawyer
Referral Service
Queens Volunteer Lawyers Project, Inc.,
Queens County Bar Association
Retired and Senior Volunteer Program of
Rockland County (RSVP)
Richard De Ariaz, NYC Human
Resources
Administration, Department of Social
Services, HASA
Richmond County Bar Association
Robert Jacovetti, Esq., Brooklyn Bar
Association Volunteer Lawyers Project
Rockland County Bar Association
Rockland County Probation Department
Rockland County Women's Bar
Association
Ropes & Gray LLP
Self-Represented Litigation Network
SEPA Mujer
Shanna Tallarico, Esq., New York Legal
Assistance Group
Shearman & Sterling LLP
Sheryl R. Karp, Esq., The Legal Aid
Society
Sidney Cherubin, Esq., Brooklyn Bar

Association Volunteer Lawyers Project
Simpson Thatcher & Bartlett
Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom
LLP & Affiliates
SRO Law Project, Goddard Riverside
Community Center
St. John's University School of Law
Staten Island CLARO Program
Staten Island Women's Bar Association
Stroock & Stroock & Lavan LLP
Suffolk County Attorney, Suffolk County
Department of Law
Suffolk County Bar Association
Suffolk County Bar Association Pro Bono
Foundation
Suffolk County Children's Center at
Cohalan Court
Suffolk County Criminal Bar Association
Suffolk County Department of Veterans
Affairs
Sullivan & Cromwell LLP
Taxpayer Advocacy Panel
Tenant Protection Unit, Division of Housing
& Community Renewal
Thompson Hine LLP
Touro College Jacob D. Fuchsberg Law
Center
The Center for Dispute Settlement
The Cervantes Society of America
The City College of New York, Skadden
Arps Honors Program in Legal Studies
The Committee For Hispanic Children
And Families
The Legal Aid Society
The Legal Aid Society of Mid-New York,
Inc., Pro Bono Program
The Legal Aid Society of Rochester
The Legal Project, Capital District
Women's Bar Association
The New York Community Trust
The Task Force to Expand Civil Legal
Services in New York
UBS Financial Services
Urban Justice Center
U.S. Department of Labor
U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs,

Suffolk County
Volunteer Lawyers for the Arts
Volunteer Lawyers Project of Onondaga
County, Inc.
Volunteer Legal Services Project of
Monroe County, Inc.
Volunteers of Legal Services
Volunteer Counseling Services of
Rockland County
Volunteer Lawyer's Project of Onondaga
County
Wagner College
Watson Farley & Williams LLP
Weil Gotshal & Manges
Westchester Black Bar Association, Inc.
Westchester County Bar Association
Westchester Women's Bar Association
Western New York Law Center
White & Case LLP
William Randolph Hearst Public
Advocacy Center, Touro Law Center
Willkie Farr & Gallagher LLP
Worker Justice Center of New York
Wurzweiler School of Social Work,
Yeshiva University
YMCA of Rockland County (Rockland
Children's Center)

New York State Courts Access to Justice Program

www.nycourts.gov/nya2j

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