



ARIZONA COMMISSION ON  
ACCESS TO JUSTICE

# 2021 ANNUAL REPORT



**Alternative Format**

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<https://www.azcourts.gov/cscommittees/Arizona-Commission-on-Access-to-Justice>

## FROM THE CHAIR

And just like that, 2021 is a memory filled with COVID-19 variants and a lingering sense of uncertainty. But one thing was certain—volunteers, staff, and partner organizations accomplished extraordinary things, in challenging and unprecedented times, as they continued to help provide those in need meaningful access to justice throughout Arizona.

Illustrating the need for such **resources**, this annual report for **Arizona's Commission on Access to Justice** highlights ongoing efforts to enhance access to justice in Arizona. Along with describing the efforts of Arizona's legal service providers and summarizing legal resources and assistance available online, this report highlights several new access to justice programs reflecting innovation by those on the front lines in helping those most in need.

As described below, more than 650,000 individuals accessed online resources representing nearly 2.5 million unique pages in seeking help. All that, of course, was above and beyond representation by legal service providers of those most in need. This annual report is a testament to the determination of hard-working heroes who enhance access to justice for all. We owe them a debt that we can never repay.

This 2021 Annual Report takes a more streamlined approach to summarize the work of so many, who do so much, this past year, with the able guidance of new Court Public Information/Communications Officer Alberto Rodriguez. Leveraging technology, like we are doing in everything it seems these days, links to various resources provide substantial supporting and additional information. We hope you enjoy the new format. And we look forward, next year, to reporting on the daily miracles that those involved in providing access to justice in Arizona will accomplish in 2022.

– Commission Chair Samuel A. Thumma



## COMMISSION MEMBERS

### **Charles Adornetto**

Maricopa County Justice Court

### **Kip Anderson**

Superior Court in Mohave County

### **Alexander Ball**

Tucson City Court

### **Pamela Bridge**

Community Legal Services, Inc.

### **Stacy R. Butler**

James E. Rogers College of Law

### **Hon. Dean Christoffel**

Superior Court in Pima County

### **Hon. Bruce Cohen**

Superior Court in Maricopa County

### **Joel F. England**

State Bar of Arizona

### **Anni L. Foster**

Office of the Governor

### **Kevin Groman**

Association of Corporate Counsel

### **Hon. Anna Huberman**

Maricopa County Justice Courts

### **Joe Kanefield**

Arizona Attorney General

### **William Knight**

Attorney

### **Hon. Joseph Kreamer**

Superior Court in Maricopa County

### **Maria Morlacci**

Arizona Attorney General

### **Hon. Maurice Portley (Ret.)**

Casey Family Programs

### **Janet K. Regner**

Public Member

### **Marcus Reinkensmeyer**

Administrative Office of the Courts

### **Kevin Ruegg, PhD**

Arizona Bar Foundation

### **Rodolfo Sanchez**

DNA People's Legal Services

### **Dr. Rebecca Sandefur**

Arizona State University

### **Kathy Schaben**

Superior Court in Yuma County

### **Hon. Samuel A. Thumma**

Arizona Court of Appeals, Div. One

### **Hon. Valerie Wyant**

Superior Court in Coconino County

### **Anthony Young**

Southern Arizona Legal Aid

## JUDGE WINTHROP, A LEGACY UNMATCHED



From the start of Arizona's Commission on Access to Justice in 2014, until his retirement last year, Lawrence F. Winthrop served with great distinction as Commission Chair. Larry gathered an incredible, talented team who, in every real sense, live and breathe to help advance access to justice in Arizona. Larry spent countless hours furthering that goal, with incredible achievements, serving as the driving force in making the Commission what it is today.

During his service as Commission Chair, Larry was a vigorous advocate for programs that help connect people of modest means to the legal information and assistance they need. Arizona Supreme Court Chief Justice Robert M. Brutinel recognized that "Larry's efforts and commitment to access to justice have been tireless and he leaves big shoes to fill in this role and for the citizens of Arizona." While serving as Commission Chair, Larry also served as a Judge on Division One of the Arizona Court of Appeals. And when not at his day job, as a founding member of The Feeny/Winthrop Band, Larry has helped raise more than \$500,000 for St. Joseph The Worker to transform lives through quality employment.

Larry's leadership, commitment, wisdom, persistence, and grit have left Arizona and the Commission in a far better place. Larry, thank you for all you are and do. We are better for it and know that our efforts going forward will build on the incredible foundation your wonderful leadership has provided.

*"Larry's leadership, commitment, wisdom, persistence, and grit have left Arizona and the Commission in a far better place."*

## ACCESS TO JUSTICE

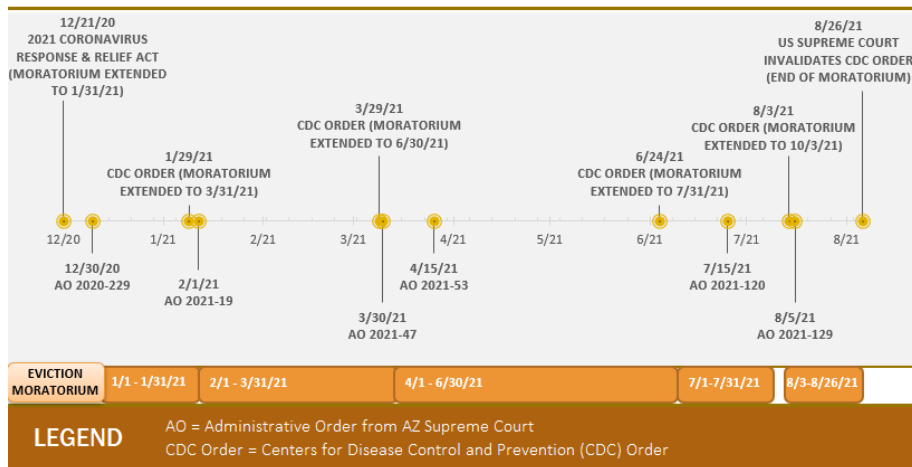
- The Court's online [Self-Service Center](#) and [Legal Info Hub](#) expanded its content by adding information on eviction actions, consumer debt, and marijuana expungement. The content is offered in English and Spanish.
- The Arizona Supreme Court's Board of Nonlawyer Legal Service Providers approved licensure for its first group of legal paraprofessionals in Arizona. The Court's [Legal Paraprofessional Program](#) is leading the Nation in addressing the access to justice gap by offering this new tier of legal services providers. Ten applicants were reviewed and approved for licensure on November 29.
- The Arizona Administrative Office of the Courts published a website with information on marijuana-related records expungement. It provides information on the voter-led initiative, forms and instructions, frequently asked questions, and helps individuals determine if they qualify for expungement. Provisions for expunging records that show the arrest, charge, adjudication, conviction, or sentence of certain marijuana-related offenses took effect July 2021. More [here](#).
- The Pima County Public Defender's Office launched its Family Prevention First Clinic, a pre-petition dependency program. The clinic helps prevent families from relying on the child welfare system by helping address their civil legal issues.
- Commission members helped to expand the Court's online resources with content to address consumer debt and eviction actions. New information includes loan types, vehicle repossession, homeowner associations, small claims court, statutes of limitation, settling a lawsuit, summary judgment, how to file an answer, and evidence. Information is available via legal sheets and videos. View them on the [Self-Service Center](#).
- The Coconino County Law Library revived the [Law4AZ](#) program. In Phase One, it measured the justice gap by collecting data on 32 access-to-justice indicators, surveying 424 courts and libraries, and using the results to calculate an access-to-justice score for each Arizona Census Tract. In Phase Two, results were plotted on the Justice Gap Map, showing six access-to-justice "deserts" in Arizona. Those areas were the first to receive Law4AZ training. Program and training materials were developed to help facilitate the successful implementation.

- Navigators provide court users with greater access to courthouse services including legal forms and location-navigation assistance. Since its inception, Navigators have helped more than 170,000 court users through this access to justice program. Although COVID-19 related challenges caused a temporary suspension of the program, in late 2021, the Maricopa County Superior Court and AmeriCorps began to recruit new members for its Navigator Program.

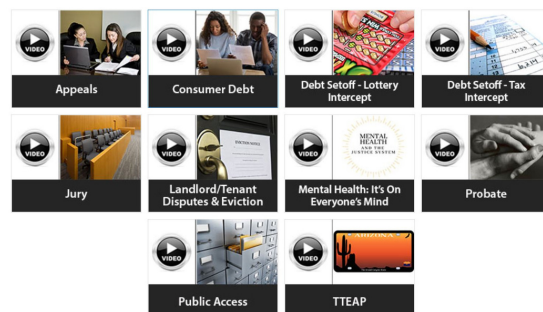
## WORKGROUP UPDATES

- The Public Information and Messaging workgroup continued to collaborate with the State Bar of Arizona, courts statewide and the Administrative Office of the Courts to ensure the public and other agencies were provided accurate information regarding the courts and the legal system. Court COVID protocols and eviction actions were a priority. This workgroup also worked with the Court's Disinformation Taskforce.
- The Self-Represented Litigants-Limited Jurisdiction Courts workgroup assessed and began to develop videos and information sheets on a variety of legal topics for the Court's [Legal Info Hub](#). The Consumer Debt Series made its debut in 2021. The workgroup continues to develop products on Technology and Best Practices for Conducting Virtual Hearings; Housing Stability Court Navigators; Warrants; Post-Conviction Relief; Civil Traffic Laws; and Sources of Law.
- The Judicial and Attorney Engagement workgroup helped launch a portal on the Arizona Bar Foundation's website offering information about pro bono and public service opportunities for judicial officers and collaborated with the new U.S. Attorney and his leadership team to engage U.S. Attorneys in pro bono work. It also worked with senior lawyers to help instruct them on modifications made to the Sup. Ct. Rule 38 application process.
- The Inter-Governmental Collaboration workgroup continued its efforts to focus on partnerships with state and local governments to increase access to legal information and services, including during the pandemic.

### 2021 EVICTION MILESTONES



### LEGAL INFO VIDEOS



## COVID RESPONSE

- The Continuity of Court Operations During a Public Health Emergency Workgroup (Plan B Workgroup) made recommendations about best practices and technologies that should be retained or adapted post-pandemic. The recommendations in this Plan B Workgroup whitepaper are based on experience and feedback from Arizona's courts addressing pandemic and post-pandemic practices. Read the report [here](#).
- The Arizona Bar Foundation, [State Bar of Arizona](#), ASU Sandra Day O'Connor College of Law, and Arizona's legal aid organizations launched a legal information hotline to address the needs of Arizonans. The Legal Information Hotline was staffed by legal aid attorneys, volunteer lawyers, law school students, and legal professionals. More than 3,000 callers received legal information and more than 850 callers received referrals to a free 30-minute consultation provided by volunteer attorneys recruited by the State Bar of Arizona. The Hotline, and a related weblink, were operational through April 2021. Separately, the State Bar of Arizona's Resource Center and Public Service Center responded to a total of 7,000 inquiries from members of the public seeking information on legal matters.

ARIZONA ATTORNEYS  
**RESPOND**  
 LEGAL HOTLINE  
 866.611.6022

**4,200 HOURS**  
**3,145 CALLS**  
**91,167 ONLINE VISITORS**  
**859 REFERRALS**

## TOP PRO BONO ATTORNEYS

Greg Altschuh	Erwin Kratz
Nancy Anger	Peggy LeMoine
Robert Barrasso	Zelma Letarte
Kayla Bernays	Ronda Lustman
Payslie Bowman	Tracy Marsh
Cabell Breckinridge	Kymerley Moffett
Caleb Brown	Sharon Mover
Randi Burnett	Ken Moyer
Jessica Cotter	Ryan O'Neal
Steve Cox	Judy O'Neill
Kelly Daly	Christina Perez Hesano
Bob Erbe	Don Powell
Tracy Essig	Edwin Ramos
Catherine Fine	Shawna Riggers
Kimberly Friday	Isaac Rothschild
John F. Gordon	Kellv Rowe
Alvsha Green	Sheree Rybak
Nora Gustafson	Steven R. Simon
Keith Hammond	Benjamin Smith
Hugh Hegyi	Sesaly Stamps
Valerie Hink	Grant Stratton
Steven R. Itkin	Geoff Ulreich
Russell M. Johnson	Ed van Vianen
Bob Johnstone	Jim Whitehill
Scott Klundt	Claudia Work
Kelly Krall	

2021

ARIZONA BAR FOUNDATION



AZCourtHelp.org

### AZCOURTHELP.ORG

USERS:

**655,839**

TOP CONTENT:

- FIND MY COURT
- COURT FORMS
- WARRANT TYPES
- MARRIAGE LICENSES
- EVICTION RIGHTS

### AZLAWHELP.ORG

USERS:

**613,916**

TOP CONTENT:

- LANDLORD/TENANT RIGHTS
- CHILD SUPPORT, CUSTODY, PARENTING TIME
- MOBILE HOME PARKS
- PAID SICK LEAVE

### EVICTIONHELP.ORG

USERS:

**138,946**

TOP CONTENT:

- GETTING ASSISTANCE
- CDC MORATORIUM INFO
- RENTAL ASSISTANCE

### LAWFORVETERANS.ORG

USERS:

**93,108**

TOP CONTENT:

- DIVIDING MILITARY PENSIONS
- WHO IS A VETERAN?
- TYPES OF MILITARY DISCHARGE
- HUNTING/FISHING REGULATIONS

### LAWFORSENIORS.ORG

USERS:

**66,918**

TOP CONTENT:

- MOVING TO AZ WITH PETS
- OBTAINING DEATH CERTIFICATES
- PAYING DEBTS AFTER DEATH
- CAPITAL GAINS TAX, HOME SALE

### AZCOURTCARE.ORG

USERS:

**13,434**

TOP CONTENT:

- INVOLUNTARY MENTAL HEALTH TREATMENT
- MH TREATMENT APPLICATION
- MANDATORY TREATMENT LAWS IN MH COURT

Arizona Foundation for  
**LEGAL SERVICES  
 & EDUCATION**  
 THE ARIZONA BAR FOUNDATION

- 39,382 online applications and 20,517 telephone applications for legal help were started.
- More than 80% of applicants were eligible for help from legal aid organizations or modest means.
- Top areas of law requested: family law (44%); housing (26%); consumer law (8%).

## OTHER EFFORTS BY COMMISSION MEMBERS

- Participated in the renewed Federal Office for Access to Justice, created as a part of the United States Department of Justice to enhance access to justice throughout the country. These efforts included providing information in response to the Questionnaire for State Access to Justice Commissions requested by the Office of Access to Justice and related follow up.
- Reviewed and supported Arizona Child Support Guideline changes recommended by the Child Support Guidelines Review Committee.
- Reviewed and supported changes to the Arizona Code of Judicial Administration and other changes recommended by the Commission on Minorities in the Judiciary, now known as the Commission on Diversity, Equity and Justice.
- Reviewed and supported proposed changes to the Licensed Legal Paraprofessional Scope of Practice regulations.
- Reviewed and supported the Family Court Improvement Committee Incarceration and Re-entry Child Support Workgroup Pilot Program in the Superior Court in Maricopa County.
- Participated in, and presented at, the American Bar Association's virtual National Meeting of State Access to Justice Commission Members and Chairs.
- Presented to various groups, internationally, nationally and locally, on access to justice issues.

## ARIZONA TAX CREDIT

Each year, Arizona taxpayers donate hundreds of thousands of dollars through the Arizona Charitable Tax Credit program. In 2021, more than \$290,000 was raised through the tax credit program, an increase from 2020. The donations allow taxpayers to support access to justice by directing the beneficiary of their tax credit. More information about legal aid agencies approved by the Arizona Bar Foundation can be found at [azbf.org/participating-charitable-tax-credit-approved](https://azbf.org/participating-charitable-tax-credit-approved).

*More than \$290,000 raised in 2021*

## LEGAL AID PARTNERS, ONGOING EFFORTS



SOUTHERN ARIZONA  
LEGAL AID, INC.®

SALA provides civil legal aid to people who would not otherwise have equal access to justice, and is dedicated to promoting family stability, strengthening neighborhoods and improving the quality of life for all our communities. SALA provides free civil legal aid services to low income individuals and families in southern and southeastern Arizona, including 11 of Arizona's Native American tribes.

Pre-COVID, SALA worked out of dedicated locations serving Pima & Santa Cruz Counties; Pinal County; Navajo/Apache/Gila Counties and Cochise/Graham/Greenlee Counties. During the pandemic, SALA offices closed to in-person interactions and transitioned to working remotely to assist clients. To maintain services, SALA expanded its call center and directed clients to their website. Visit [sazlegalaid.org](https://sazlegalaid.org) for more information.



Community  
Legal Services

CLS is a non-profit law firm that has worked for decades to increase fairness in the civil justice system on behalf of Arizona's most underserved communities. Pre-COVID-19, CLS worked out of dedicated locations serving Maricopa, Yavapai, Mohave, La Paz and Yuma Counties. During the pandemic, CLS likewise transitioned its intake services to telephone and online interactions.

Through an extensive outreach effort, CLS sent COVID-19-related information to farmworkers and community partners on landlord notification, unemployment resources, and stimulus checks. Longtime CLS Executive Director Lillian O. Johnson recently announced her retirement effective April 2022, and the search for a new CLS Executive Director has begun. See [clsaz.org](https://clsaz.org) for more.



**DNA People's Legal Services** is an eight-office, nonprofit law firm that provides free civil legal services to low-income people who otherwise could not afford to hire an attorney. Pre-COVID-19, DNA's Arizona offices included Navajo Nation offices, Hopi offices as well as offices in Window Rock and Flagstaff. DNA's service area is large because the Navajo Nation encompasses parts of Arizona, New Mexico, and Utah. At different times during the pandemic, the Navajo Nation was subject to stay-home orders and curfews and DNA staff was self-quarantined in an abundance of caution for the protection of the public and staff.

The Hopi Nation, which is located within the Navajo Nation and New Mexico, also implemented strict regulations regarding travel. As a result of these restrictions, DNA transitioned to a combination of working remotely, posting updated information on their website regarding COVID-19, and referring clients to the AZLawHelp [website](https://www.azlawhelp.com). Learn more about DNA at [dnalegalservices.org](https://dnalegalservices.org).

## AWARDS & RECOGNITION



VALERIE LERMA,  
CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERT BRUTINEL  
& CATHLEEN COLE

The AZCourtHelp [Law Librarian Live Chat](#) program was recognized with a 2021 Judicial Branch Strategic Agenda Award in Flagstaff. Valerie Lerma, Law Librarian of the Maricopa County Superior Court and Cathleen Cole, Legal Information and Access to Justice Director of the Arizona Bar Foundation accepted the award on behalf of the program.

The Arizona Supreme Court – Administrative Offices of the Courts (AOC) Dependent Children's Services Division was selected as the winner of the 2021 Summit Award in Court Administration & Management by the Arizona Association of Counties for its program "[Promoting Quality Representation for Children and Parents.](#)" The AOC's winning entry resulted from its work with counties across the state to enter agreements allowing them to claim nearly \$14 million dollars since early 2020.

Commission member Judge Joseph Kremer received the 2021 State Bar of Arizona James A. Walsh Award.

Active Commission participant Chris Groninger received the 2021 State Bar of Arizona Award of Appreciation.

Commission member Judge Maurice Portley received the Arizona Bar Foundation's 2021 Walter E. Craig Distinguished Service Award.

***Congratulations, and thank you, to these and other Commission members for their lifelong commitment to helping people in need.***



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