



Arizona Commission on Access to Justice

2022 ANNUAL REPORT

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azcourts.gov/cscommittees/Arizona-Commission-on-Access-to-Justice

FROM THE CHAIR

2022 was another productive year for the Arizona Commission on Access to Justice. This Annual Report highlights some of the efforts undertaken by the Commission and its members in those 12 months. As in previous years, 2022 saw volunteers, staff, and partner organizations make miracles happen on a daily basis, to help ensure those in need have meaningful access to justice throughout Arizona.



Above and beyond representation by legal service providers of those most in need, 2022 continued to demonstrate a hunger for online resources. As describe below, more than 1,800,000 users accessed online resources addressing various areas of the law, including family law, housing law, consumer law and employment law, addressing topics like landlord/tenant rights, rental assistance, child support and parenting time, military discharges and civil commitment procedures, and also court locations, legal forms and legal aid resources. This annual report is a continued testament to the determination of hard-working heroes who enhance access to justice for all.

Among many other things, in 2022, the Commission:

- Approved a Plan for Excellence and Five Year Audacious Goals, discussed in more detail below. This Plan and these Goals are intended to be living documents, that will guide and drive the Commission's efforts going forward.
- Created a Rules workgroup to consider, initiate, recommend, comment on and craft rule change petitions designed to improve access to justice in Arizona's courts. The Rules workgroup will be a key component of these ongoing efforts to help ensure access to civil justice through the state.
- Implemented The Sandwich Campaign (TSC), designed to encourage communication, education and innovation for services provided or operations of the three Legal Services Corporation entities in Arizona: (1) DNA People's Legal Services; (2) Community Legal Services and (3) Southern Arizona Legal Aid. The TSC "prize" is a sandwich lunch for each of the three Arizona LSC entities each year. The hope of TSC is to have fun, exchange information and to learn from each other.

Looking beyond Arizona's borders, in 2022, Commission representatives helped facilitate meetings of the Four-Corners (Colorado, New Mexico, Utah and Arizona) Access to Justice Commission representatives. Beginning in July 2022, these quarterly remote meetings have been rich and rewarding, sharing similarities and differences, and meaningfully discussing how to better facilitate access to justice in Arizona and elsewhere, building on our common experiences.

The Commission has been busy, and its work is ongoing. We look forward to a productive 2023, and look forward, next year, to reporting on the daily miracles that those involved in providing access to justice in Arizona will accomplish this year.

– Samuel A. Thumma, Commission Chair

COMMISSION MEMBERS

Charles Adornetto

Maricopa County Justice Court
Kip Anderson

Superior Court in Mohave County

Hon. 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

The People's Law Firm

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

PLAN FOR EXCELLENCE

The Arizona Commission on Access to Justice approved its five-year Plan for Excellence in November 2022. In its plan, the Commission outlined six audacious goals to serve as a baseline for its work through 2027.

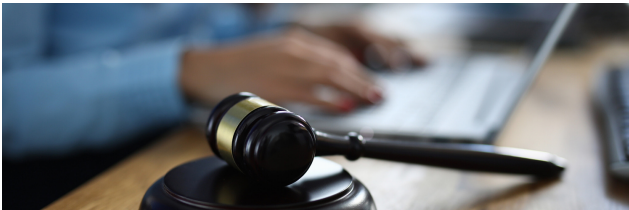
Among those goals, the Commission plans to

- Reduce the need for civil legal services by educating and empowering those involved in or affected by legal issues;
- Champion and support reforms to simplify the civil legal system and process; and
- Aggregate and share data to promote public awareness and understanding among all branches of government, public services, and the public regarding the civil legal system.

The Plan for Excellence can be found on the Commission's [resource webpage](#).

ACCESS TO JUSTICE

- **AZCourts.gov** expanded its online presence by adding the Access to Justice Arizona **webpage**. It includes a variety of legal-help resources and programming for communities across the state, as well as forms to request a justice to speak at an event or request to visit the Arizona Supreme Court.
- The Court launched its statewide jury improvement and outreach initiatives with the "It was fair because I was there" **sticker** campaign during juror appreciation week in May. Jurors received a sticker as a small token of appreciation for exercising their civic duty.
- For the first time in 50 years, juror compensation was increased in Arizona courts after the legislature passed the 2022 bipartisan budget. Jurors can now qualify for up to \$300 of their daily wage for participating in jury service in superior court. View the video **here**.
- The Court's online **Self-Service Center** and **Legal Info Hub** expanded its content by adding information on Housing Stability Court Navigators, Warrants, and Sources of Law.
- In its report, the Continuity of Court Operations During a Public Health Emergency Workgroup recommended that courts continue to use and expand technology to conduct remote court proceedings. The Arizona Judicial Council approved adoption of the **Plan B Workgroup's recommendations** about which hearing types should be held remotely and which should be held in-person. Those recommendations were adopted as presumptive standards for Arizona courts.



PLAN B WORKGROUP RECOMMENDATIONS FOR REMOTE HEARINGS ADOPTED AS PRESUMPTIVE STANDARDS ACROSS ARIZONA

- **AZCourtHelp Legal Talks** offered by the Coconino County Law Library had 1,328 participants attend 95 programs on 41 topics that were presented by 44 volunteers.
- The Arizona Supreme Court announced a new partnership with Arizona State University to create the **Center for Forensic Science and Psychology**. The Center will help to deliver a streamlined and efficient process for conducting essential research in forensics and mental health and putting it to practice in courts across Arizona.
- Maricopa County Justice Courts made significant strides in technology by rebuilding [justicecourts.maricopa.gov](https://www.maricopa.gov) as a more user-friendly site. The court also added comprehensive self-help information on virtual hearings.
- Maricopa County Justice Courts expanded access to justice by moving many court proceedings online, resulting in better attendance and implemented a Veterans Treatment Court.

- Coconino, Mohave, and Yavapai County Law Libraries launched its Housing Stability Court Navigator Program that coordinates court-related efforts between tenants, landlords, and legal services organizations. The program connects clients with federal assistance, helping increase housing stability and reduce evictions in the counties.
- Spanish-language access was expanded by the Coconino County Law Library for its AZCourtHelp Legal Talks. It offered four programs in Spanish and 16 videos with Spanish subtitles/dubbing. A state grant helped to fund language access for seven of the 16 videos.
- The Coconino County Law Library conducted a nine-week Law4AZ program for the Yuma County Law Library with the Civil Legal Justice Trainings and updated the Justice Gap Map to reflect the increase in access to justice in Yuma County.

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. This workgroup also worked with the Court on the jury improvement projects.
- The **Self-Represented Litigants-Limited Jurisdiction Courts** workgroup continued its work on producing videos and legal information sheets (now called landing pages) on a variety of legal topics for the Court's Legal Info Hub. The workgroup created and published content on Housing Stability Court Navigators; Warrants; and Sources of Law. It will soon publish content on Technology and Best Practices for Conducting Virtual Hearings and other content.
- The **Rules** workgroup, created in 2022, is being chaired by Judge (and Commission Member) Bruce Cohen and is well underway. This workgroup will, among other things, help evaluate best practices within Arizona and in other states and identify possible changes to court rules or practices to reduce barriers to access.
- The **Judicial and Attorney Engagement** workgroup solicited senior lawyer input for suggested changes to Arizona Supreme Court Rule 38 to facilitate more *pro bono* involvement by retired lawyers. It continued its partnership with Arizona Bar Foundation to develop a portal on its website for judges and attorneys for *pro bono* and public service opportunities. The workgroup surveyed the Maricopa County Superior Court Bench to gather valuable information about existing *pro bono* efforts by the judiciary and ideas for additional content for the portal.
- The **Inter-Governmental Collaboration** workgroup focused on partnership opportunities with state and local governments to increase access to legal information and services. Members drafted a letter sent to legislators informing them of legal resources for their constituents, created factsheets about the benefits of legal services for specific populations and areas of law, and engaged national experts on access to justice messaging strategies.

STATEWIDE LEGAL HELP

The Arizona Bar Foundation hosts an online and telephone prequalification application for legal help programs across the state. The automated interview assesses the eligibility of those seeking legal assistance for free or reduced-cost programs and directs them to the most appropriate service.

- 39,275 online applications and 23,582 telephonic applications for legal help were processed, resulting in a combined total of 62,857 requests.
- 80% of online applicants and 84% of telephonic applications were eligible for help from legal aid organizations or modest means.
- Of those eligible for legal help, 81% qualified for free help from a legal-aid provider and 19% qualified for reduced-cost program.
- Top areas of law requested: Family Law (40%); Housing Law (28%); Consumer Law (8%); and Employment Law (6%)

2022 TOP PRO BONO ATTORNEYS

Alicia Rosa Abella Korte	Patrick Lacroix
Ruperto Alba	Christopher Lazenby
Nancy Anger	Peggy (Margaret) Lemoine
Lee Bennett	Sylvia Lett
Kayla Bernays	Ronda Lustman
Paul Bowron	Frances Susan McGinnis
Robert Charles Jr.	Lauren Merdinger
Steven Cole	Nancy Morrow
James Conlogue	Robert Murillo
Marsha Cotton	Paul Nordini
Paloma Diaz	Nathan Parkey
Catherine Fine	Frederick Petersen
Juan Flamand	Edwin Ramos
Stuart Gerrich	James Rayburn
Gloria Goldman	Shawna Riggers
Elizabeth Goodman	Steven Simon
John Gordon	Ben Smith
Robert Hahn	Tyler Stanton
Valerie Hink	Heather Stewart
Karolyn Keller	Marki Stewart
Christina Kelly	Janet Story
Scott Klundt	Grant Stratton
Kory Koerperich	Geoff Ulreich
Gary Kraft	Edwinus van Vianen
Clayton Kramer	Robert Walston

ARIZONA BAR FOUNDATION



AZCourtHelp.org

AZCOURTHELP.ORG
USERS:

628,104

TOP CONTENT:
- FIND MY COURT
- ARIZONA FORMS
- LEGAL AID RESOURCES

AZLAWHELP.ORG
USERS:

620,375

TOP CONTENT:
- APPLICATION FOR LEGAL HELP
- LANDLORD/TENANT RIGHTS
- CHILD SUPPORT, CUSTODY,
PARENTING TIME

LAWFORKIDS.ORG
USERS:

198,195

TOP CONTENT:
- CURFEW LAWS IN ARIZONA
- KIDS VOTING ARIZONA
- US CONSTITUTION ARTICLE 1,
SECTION 8

AZEVICTIONHELP.ORG
USERS:

173,850

TOP CONTENT:
- RENTAL ASSISTANCE
- RESIDENTIAL EVICTION FOR
NON-PAYMENT
- EXPECTATIONS FOR EVICTION
HEARINGS

LAWFORVETERANS.ORG
USERS:

151,960

TOP CONTENT:
- MILITARY DISCHARGES
- WHO IS A VETERAN
- CHILD SUPPORT & MILITARY
BENEFITS

LAWFORSENIORS.ORG
USERS:

48,579

TOP CONTENT:
- CAPITAL GAINS TAX
- OBTAINING DEATH
CERTIFICATES
- PAYING DEBTS AFTER DEATH

AZCOURTCARE.ORG
USERS:

22,579

TOP CONTENT:
- COE APPLICATION
- CIVIL COMMITMENT PROCESS
- MANDATORY TREATMENT LAWS

AZCOURTHELP CHAT
CHATS:

1,280

184 HOURS DEDICATED
BY VOLUNTEERS

Thank you

A special thank you to AZCourtHelp Live Chat volunteers who dedicated 184 hours helping Arizonans via 1,280 chats.

- MARIA BELTRAN
- KATHRYN BRUNO
- JENNIFER HAYDEN
- GRETCHEN HORNBERGER
- VALERIE LERMA
- KARIN SAAVEDRA
- JACKIE TRAHER
- THOMAS VALENGAVICH

AWARDS & RECOGNITION

Chief Justice Robert Brutinel became the first-ever inductee of the Yavapai County Bar Association's Hall of Fame. Organizers with the Yavapai County Bar Association said Chief Justice Brutinel was an obvious choice for the honor, as a Prescott native who spent much of his early law career and first years on the bench in Yavapai County.

Commission member **Professor Stacy Butler** was honored as part of the inaugural class of Women of Impact by the University of Arizona's Office of Research, Innovation and Impact. Stacy, who serves as a James E. Rogers College of Law Professor of Practice, also is Director of the Innovation for Justice (i4J) Program, which received an honorable mention for their Licensed Legal Advocate pilot from the World Justice Project 2022 World Justice Challenge.

Commission member **Anni Hill Foster** was appointed by Governor Douglas A. Ducey as a Judge on the Arizona Court of Appeals, Division One, in Phoenix.

Commission member **Judge Bruce Cohen** was honored by the national Association of Family and Conciliation Courts with the Irwin Cantor Innovative Program Award, which recognizes innovation in court-connected or court-related programs. Judge Cohen accepted the award on behalf of the Family Court *Kingdom Quest* program. The program also was named a 2022 Judicial Branch Strategic Agenda Award Winner by the Arizona Supreme Court.

Lillian O. Johnson, Executive Director of Community Legal Services, retired in 2022 after 40 years in that position. Among the many, many recognitions she has earned, the Arizona Bar Foundation awarded her the 2022 Walter E. Craig Distinguished Services Award.

ARIZONA TAX CREDIT

Each year, Arizona taxpayers donate hundreds of thousands of dollars through the Arizona Charitable Tax Credit program. The donations allow taxpayers to support access to justice by directing the beneficiary of their tax credit. In 2022, nearly \$230,000 was raised through the tax credit program. More information about legal aid agencies approved by the Arizona Bar Foundation can be found at azbf.org/participating-charitable-tax-credit-approved.

Nearly \$230,000 raised in 2022

LEGAL AID PARTNERS, ONGOING EFFORTS



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.

Sharon E. Sergent, CLS Executive Director, now leads the organization after Lillian O. Johnson's retirement in April 2022. See 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. Learn more about DNA at dnalegalservices.org.



Southern Arizona Legal Aid (SALA) provides free 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 low-income communities in our service area—Pima, Santa Cruz, Pinal, Navajo, Apache, Gila, Cochise, Graham and Greenlee counties. SALA also serves 11 of Arizona's

federally recognized tribes. SALA offers legal help in six case-priority areas: Family law, housing, consumer protection, access to government benefits, expungement, and immigration services targeting undocumented victims of crime. In 2022, SALA expected to close more than 4,000 cases and matters. Preventing evictions in 128 cases and assisting more than 150 survivors of family violence.

In August 2022, staff returned to the office to work after working remotely during COVID. Applicants for services can apply for services by calling our toll-free Intake Telephone Number during business hours or 24/7 online. In-person applications for services are available by appointment. Visit sazlegalaid.org for more information.

OTHER EFFORTS BY COMMISSION MEMBERS

- 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.

ACCESS TO JUSTICE MONTH

Recognizing the importance of access to justice in Arizona, Governor Douglas A. Ducey issued the following proclamation, declaring April 2022 as Access to Justice Month:



STATE OF ARIZONA PROCLAMATION

WHEREAS, as citizens we commit ourselves to the goal of equal access to justice for all; and

WHEREAS, promotion of meaningful access to justice for all Arizonans helps build confidence in the legal system; and

WHEREAS, most clients for indigent civil legal aid services are single heads of household with children and many among them are victims of domestic violence; and

WHEREAS, it is important to secure to all persons, particularly those with limited financial resources, professional legal help and meaningful access to the courts, thereby creating meaningful opportunities to preserve families, protect victims of crime, and uphold protection for all under the law; and

WHEREAS, many organizations and individuals - lawyers, legal professionals, judges, court staff, and volunteers - work valiantly to promote equal access to justice for all, and their efforts deserve our support and recognition; and

WHEREAS, we celebrate more than 100 years of Arizona's legal community and judiciary working to assure equal access to justice for all Arizonans.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Douglas A. Ducey, Governor of the State of Arizona, do hereby proclaim April 2022 as

ACCESS TO JUSTICE MONTH

As citizens we commit ourselves to the goal of equal access to justice for all.



“
*Injustice anywhere
is a threat to justice everywhere.*

- Martin Luther King, Jr.

**Arizona Commission on
Access to Justice**