

Focus on *Access to Justice*

For more information, visit www.lsba.org/atj.

Self-Represented Litigants Service Providers Summit Held in Pineville

The Louisiana Access to Justice (ATJ) Commission's Self-Represented Litigants Committee hosted its fifth Self-Represented Litigants Service Providers Summit on April 19 in Pineville. The summit, held at the Louisiana National Guard Training Center Pineville, was a collaborative, one-day program uniting various stakeholders including judges, clerks of court, legal aid providers, pro bono organizations and domestic violence support groups. The aim was to enhance support and services available to self-represented litigants (SRLs), ensuring they receive adequate assistance within the legal system.

ATJ Commission Co-Chair Alainna R. Mire and Self-Represented Litigant Committee Chair Judge Patrice W. Oppenheim (22nd Judicial District Court) led the day's programming. Both highlighted the national surge in SRLs and the formidable access barriers they encounter, including poverty, language limitations and mental health challenges. Consequently, many struggle to navigate the legal system effectively, hampering their ability to have their concerns addressed by the courts. Judge Oppenheim and Mire emphasized the pivotal role summit attendees play in aiding SRLs with their civil legal matters and in streamlining court operations for enhanced efficiency.

The summit sessions provided courts and SRL-serving organizations with valuable resources. Topics spanned a spectrum, from a thorough examination of self-help center best practices to insights into court forms, emerging technologies such as generative AI, updates on expungement procedures, and materials tailored for SRLs. Throughout the summit, participants seized the opportunity to engage in fruitful discussions and exchange ideas aimed at refining support mechanisms for SRLs.



Judge Patrice W. Oppenheim, chair of the Self-Represented Litigant Committee, welcomed attendees to the Self-Represented Litigants Service Providers Summit.



Access to Justice Commission Co-Chair Alainna R. Mire welcomed attendees to the Self-Represented Litigants Service Providers Summit.



Chelsea C. Green, attorney with the Louisiana Coalition Against Domestic Violence.



Col. Dirk J. Thibodeaux, State Judge Advocate for the Louisiana National Guard.

The event's success was made possible through the collaborative efforts of various entities, including the Louisiana Access to Justice Commission and its SRL Committee, the Louisiana District Court Judges Association, Judge Oppenheim, Judge Patricia E. Koch (9th Judicial District Court), and Rachael M. Mills and Stephanie M. Beauth, both with the Louisiana State Bar Association's Access to Justice Department. 📌



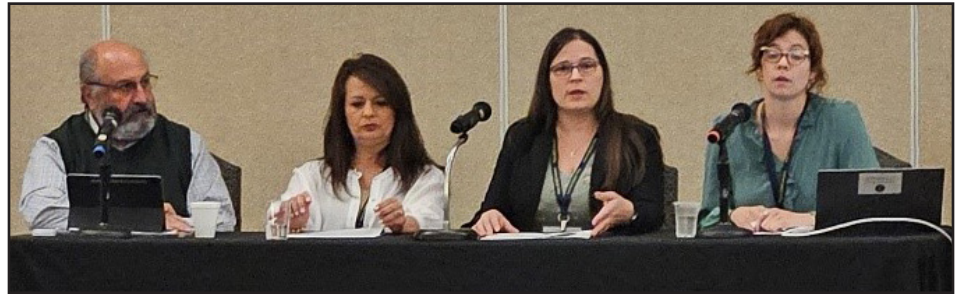
Miriam D. Childs, director of the Law Library of Louisiana, discussed the library's programs to assist self-represented litigants.

“Ensuring Meaningful Access to Courts for Persons with Disabilities:” Collaborative Training Conducted in April

In an initiative aimed at fostering inclusivity within the judicial system, the Louisiana Access to Justice Commission’s Accessibility Committee and the Louisiana State Bar Association’s Legal Services for Persons with Disabilities (LSPD) Committee spearheaded a comprehensive training program titled “Ensuring Meaningful Access to Courts for Persons with Disabilities” at the Louisiana Judicial College’s Spring Judges Conference in Lafayette on April 4-5.

Topics covered in the training included the governing federal and state laws; disability issues commonly encountered in the court setting; best practices on how courts can provide accommodations and make proceedings more welcoming; developing accommodations protocol that ensures meaningful access to court programs; and considerations for non-compliance.

Speakers for this session included Judge Douglas J. Saloom, City Court of Lafayette; Hope LaFleur, judicial administrator of the 9th Judicial District Court; Caitlin P.



Speakers for the “Ensuring Meaningful Access to Courts for Persons with Disabilities” training included, from left, Judge Douglas J. Saloom, City Court of Lafayette; Hope LaFleur, judicial administrator of the 9th Judicial District Court; Melanie A. Bray, Disability Rights Louisiana; and Caitlin P. Morgenstern, Louisiana Supreme Court.

Morgenstern, Louisiana Supreme Court, and Melanie A. Bray, Disability Rights Louisiana.

This training represents a pivotal step towards empowering judicial leaders to navigate the complex terrain of disability rights within the courtroom. Recognizing the inherent challenges faced by persons with disabilities in accessing justice, presenters helped to equip judges with the knowledge and tools necessary to uphold the rights of individuals with disabilities, ensuring their

equitable participation in legal proceedings.

The success of the training is a testament to the collaborative efforts of the Accessibility Committee, the LSPD Committee, judicial stakeholders and disability rights advocates. As the legal landscape continues to evolve, the imperative of ensuring meaningful access to courts for persons with disabilities has never been more pressing. Through ongoing dialogue and partnership, strides are being made towards creating a more inclusive and accessible judicial system. 📌

Thanks to the 2024 ATJ Intern Sponsors!

The Louisiana State Bar Association’s (LSBA) Access to Justice (ATJ) Department acknowledges the 2024 ATJ Developing Leadership intern sponsors. ATJ intern sponsors provide mentorship and a stipend to the four ATJ interns while they learn about Louisiana’s civil legal aid network during the six-week summer program. This year’s sponsors include Entergy Services, LLC; Butler Snow, LLP; the LSBA’s Civil Law & Litigation Section; and Phelps Dunbar, LLP. 📌

BUTLER SNOW

entergy

Louisiana State Bar Association
Serving the Public. Serving the Profession.
Civil Law & Litigation Section

phelps

Is It Really That Important to Report Pro Bono Hours?

The unequivocal answer is YES! Each year, attorneys provide thousands of hours of pro bono work for those who can’t afford to pay for legal services — and, each year, thousands of hours probably go unreported. Some attorneys say it’s self-aggrandizement to report. Others say only the office manager sees the reporting form.

Don’t do a disservice to your local pro bono and legal services programs by not reporting. When seeking funding, these organizations are frequently asked, “What are attorneys doing to help?” Help the Louisiana State Bar Association support local public interest organizations by providing them the information to respond to that question.

Complete the “Voluntary Pro Bono Reporting Form” included with the 2024-2025 dues statement or report pro bono hours online at: www.lsba.org/ProBono/ProBonoVoluntaryReporting.aspx. 📌

Attorney Volunteers Needed for Lawyers In Libraries

Volunteers are needed for the LSBA’s Lawyers in Libraries 2024 events, taking place Oct. 21-26, 2024, in conjunction with National Celebrate Pro Bono Week. During this week, attorney volunteers are needed for two-hour “Ask-a-Lawyer” sessions where patrons can ask legal questions one-on-one. These sessions will be offered in person at libraries across the state and by phone for those who cannot participate in person. Individual events are scheduled based on attorney preference and library availability. To volunteer or for more information, visit www.LouisianaLawyersinLibraries.org. 📌