

# Focus on *Access to Justice*

For more information, visit [www.lsba.org/atj](http://www.lsba.org/atj).

## Criminal Justice Committee hosts summit on mental health and the criminal justice system

**C**riminal justice stakeholders, mental health experts and advocates from across the state gathered on April 26 in Baton Rouge for the seventh Criminal Justice Summit hosted by the Louisiana State Bar Association's (LSBA) Criminal Justice Committee. This year, the summit focused on measures to address the increasing number of individuals with mental health conditions coming into contact with the criminal justice system.

"One in five adults in the United States have some degree of mental illness [and] . . . 65% of inmates in county jail have some degree of mental illness," said St. Charles Parish Sheriff Gregory C. Champagne, discussing the growing rate of law enforcement encounters with the mentally ill. "Behavior of [the] untreated mentally ill escalates over time [and] longer stretches in jail and solitary confinement exacerbates the problem," he said.

Unfortunately, jails and prisons tend to be the largest mental health care providers in the United States. While most agree that jails and prisons are not places for



This Criminal Justice Summit panel shared information on crisis intervention team programs and training. From left, William C. Credo III, at podium; Loren M. Lampert, Louisiana District Attorneys Association; St. Charles Parish Sheriff Gregory C. Champagne; and Chief Clifford Gatlin, Louisiana College.

people with mental illnesses, the summit attendees asked, "What can we do once a person with mental health needs enters or comes into contact with the system?" Crisis intervention teams, communication and identification strategies, and innovative programs for victims, criminal defendants and juveniles are a few of the topics discussed to answer this question.

To prevent interaction with the criminal justice system, 19th Judicial District Court Judge Donald R. Johnson present-



Discussing innovative programs at the Criminal Justice Summit were, from left, Barksdale Hortenstine, Jr., Orleans Public Defenders; Aaron Rizzio-Clark, Louisiana Center for Children's Rights; Kristen Raby, Victim Services, 19th JDC District Attorney's Office; and East Baton Rouge Parish District Attorney Hillar C. Moore III.

ed the new laws regarding assisted outpatient treatment programs in civil court, which creates a civil process to petition for a court-ordered treatment plan for people with serious mental illness. This process can be performed without the commission of a crime and was developed as a means to prevent people with serious mental illness ending up in jail or Department of Correction's custody.

The summit was interactive and included four working group sessions. Attendees continued conversations about the topics presented and discussed what they were seeing in their districts regarding mental health services. Many expressed concern for the lack of access to mental health care and proposed the creation of a resource repository so people know where to go when experiencing a mental health crisis.

The summit was coordinated by the Planning Subcommittee — Chair Jean M. Faria, Richard J. Bourke, Barksdale Hortenstine, Jr., Loren M. Lampert and Kerry K. Lentini.

The Criminal Justice Committee is now drafting a summit report including topics presented and recommendations discussed. To learn more about the event, report or other activities of the Criminal Justice Committee, email LSBA staff liaison Amy E. Duncan at [amy.duncan@lsba.org](mailto:amy.duncan@lsba.org).



# LAWYERS IN LIBRARIES

*October 21-26, 2019*

In support of National Celebrate Pro Bono Week, the Louisiana Library Association and the Louisiana State Bar Association are sponsoring Lawyers in Libraries events across Louisiana, where libraries host attorney volunteers for educational workshops and "Ask a Lawyer" sessions. *Your volunteerism at these events helps ensure that justice is available to all, regardless of income.*

**Make a difference and ensure justice:  
volunteer in your local library!**

To participate in a **Lawyers in Libraries** event, sign up at  
[www.lsba.org/louisianalawyersinlibraries](http://www.lsba.org/louisianalawyersinlibraries).

# 4<sup>th</sup> Year: ATJ Developing Leadership Intern Program

The law students in the fourth class of the Louisiana State Bar Association (LSBA) Access to Justice Developing Leadership Intern Program participated in orientation on May 13.

Through the six-week program, select interns (one from each of Louisiana's four law schools) had the opportunity to work with civil legal aid programs and shadow district court judges. The purpose of the program is to educate future access to justice leaders on the civil legal needs of low-income people, the ways in which civil legal aid organizations within the justice community address those needs, and how these services are increasing the quality of life for those served so that they will use this knowledge in their future careers, ultimately furthering access to justice for Louisiana's most vulnerable citizens.

The student interns were sponsored by law firms and businesses which provided mentorship and a stipend. Providing sponsorships for four consecutive years are the law firms of Adams and Reese, L.L.P.; Baker, Donelson, Bearman, Caldwell & Berkowitz, P.C.; and Phelps Dunbar, L.L.P. Entergy, L.L.C., joined the program as a sponsor this year.



Interns participating in the fourth class of the Louisiana State Bar Association Access to Justice Developing Leadership Intern Program, along with their sponsoring law firms and businesses, were, from left, Christopher K. Ralston, Phelps Dunbar, L.L.P.; Martin A. Stern, Adams and Reese, L.L.P.; Francie Trimble, Phelps Dunbar intern; Christopher M. Vitenas, Baker, Donelson, Bearman, Caldwell & Berkowitz, P.C.; Kaylin Jolivet, Baker Donelson intern; Zora Djenohan, Adams and Reese intern; Selena Martinez, Entergy intern; and Christy F. Kane, Entergy, L.L.C.

Interns were Francie Trimble, for Phelps Dunbar; Kaylin Jolivet, for Baker Donelson; Zora Djenohan, for Adams and Reese; and Selena Martinez, for Entergy.

Participating civil legal aid programs for this year's Baton Rouge interns were the Baton Rouge Bar Association, the Parole Project, STAR and Louisiana Coalition Against Domestic Violence.

New Orleans civil legal aid participating programs included the New Orleans Family Justice Center, the Justice & Accountability Center and the Pro Bono Project of New Orleans. Further, all four interns spent time with

Crescent Care, Louisiana Appleseed and Southeast Louisiana Legal Services.

Participating judges included Judge Bernadette G. D'Souza, Orleans Parish Civil District Court; Judge Jeffrey C. Cashe, 21st Judicial District Court; Judge Timothy S. Marcel, 29th Judicial District Court; and Judge Lisa M. Woodruff-White, East Baton Rouge Family Court.

Interns also participated in LSBA activities, including an Access to Justice Commission meeting and the LSBA Pro Bono Publico and Children's Law Awards Ceremony. 📺

## LSBA members participate in Civil Legal Aid Day

For the second year, members of the Access to Justice (ATJ) Commission, joined by Louisiana Appleseed and the Louisiana Bar Foundation, traveled to the state Capitol for Civil Legal Aid Day. Commission members staffed a table in the rotunda that provided legislators and Capitol visitors with information about Louisiana's civil legal aid network.

In addition, the Louisiana House of Representatives and the Louisiana Senate passed resolutions recognizing May 1 as Civil Legal Aid Day and expressing thanks to Louisiana's two largest civil legal aid providers — Acadiana Legal Service Corp. and Southeast Louisiana Legal Services — for ensuring that 48,867 citizens had access to the state's justice system in 2018. The 48,867 citizens included veterans seeking service benefits, victims of domestic violence seeking protection against abusers, senior citizens fighting consumer fraud, homeowners opposing unlawful foreclosure, and parents seeking child support.

Prior to Civil Legal Aid Day, representatives of the ATJ Commission's Funding Committee held a legislative breakfast on



Attending Civil Legal Aid Day at the state Capitol included, from left, Monte T. Mollere, Louisiana State Bar Association; Laura Tuggle, Southeast Louisiana Legal Services; Rep. Franklin J. Foil, Louisiana House of Representatives; Gregory L. Landry, Acadiana Legal Service Corp.; and Adrienne K. Wheeler, Louisiana Appleseed.

April 17 to explain the importance of funding for Louisiana's civil legal aid programs and the significant economic impact that civil legal aid provides the state. Data from the 2018 Social Return on Investment Analysis found that, for every \$1 invested in Louisiana's civil legal aid services, these programs deliver \$9.13 in immediate and long-term consequential financial benefits. As the analysis illustrates, investing in civil legal aid

causes a ripple effect, not only affecting the families served, but the community at large. Schools, businesses, government agencies and the state as a whole benefit from resolving civil legal problems.

To learn more about the ATJ Commission's Funding Committee, email Louisiana State Bar Association ATJ Projects Counsel Rachael M. Mills at [rachael.mills@lsba.org](mailto:rachael.mills@lsba.org). 📺