

Focus on *Access to Justice*

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

ATJ Department's 2024 Top 10 List of Accomplishments

As 2024 draws to a close, the Access to Justice (ATJ) Department celebrates the year's accomplishments and extends its gratitude to the partners and supporters who have worked alongside it to ensure access to justice for all. While the past year presented challenges, it also brought forward new opportunities to strengthen access to legal resources and services for underserved communities. Below are the top 10 highlights from the department's efforts in 2024:

1. Expansion of Rural Legal Access. In a significant step towards expanding rural access, a Legal Help Access Point was launched in Chalmette, St. Bernard Parish. Located in the St. Bernard Parish Government Building, this new access point was made possible through the Justice for All grant. The access point provides private spaces for individuals to navigate legal resources, meet virtually with attorneys, and attend online court hearings.

2. Education and Engagement with Law Students. The department continued its commitment to shaping the future of civil legal aid through its 9th class of the Access to Justice Internship program. This six-week summer program provided Louisiana law students with an in-depth understanding of the state's Civil Legal Aid Network. Additionally, the ATJ department participated for the fifth year in LSU Paul M. Hebert Law School's Apprenticeship Week, where students gained practical skills for advancing their careers and serving the public.

3. Access to Justice Conclave. The second Access to Justice Conclave convened thought leaders from across Louisiana to raise awareness of available legal resources and explore court and community navigator projects. The ATJ Commission's Community Outreach and Education Committee followed the conclave with four training sessions for court personnel and partners, including

2-1-1, ViaLink, and LSU Libraries, distributing helpful guides and materials for both staff and patrons.

4. Celebrated 21 Years of Civil Legal Aid Training. The Louisiana Justice Community Conference marked its 21st year of providing essential training for civil legal aid attorneys. The event united representatives from nonprofit legal service providers and featured a pre-conference on Child In Need of Care (CINC) cases and Domestic Violence (DV) issues. A Public Interest Networking reception, hosted by the Louisiana Bar Foundation, also brought together advocates for public interest law.

5. LIFT Incubator and Modest Means Directory Growth. The department's LIFT Incubator program expanded access to pro bono and affordable legal representation, especially in underserved rural areas and for those impacted by Hurricane Ida. In addition, the Modest Means Directory saw significant growth, with 25,000 applications received since its launch in 2018, demonstrating the increasing demand for affordable legal services.

6. Self-Represented Litigants Summit. In Alexandria, the department hosted the Self-Represented Litigants (SRLs) Service Providers Summit. The event brought together judges, court staff, legal aid organizations, and pro bono providers to discuss how to best support SRLs in addressing their civil legal needs. Attendees also learned about new developments in automated court forms and AI technologies aimed at assisting SRLs.

7. Law Talks Educational Series. The ATJ Department hosted its quarterly "Law Talks" series, providing virtual legal education on a variety of topics, including divorce, domestic violence, disaster response, and more. Livestreamed on Louisiana Lawyers in Libraries' Facebook page, the sessions reached

libraries across the state, offering patrons the chance to watch in person or virtually.

8. Lawyers in Libraries Week of Service. The 11th Annual Lawyers in Libraries Week of Service saw 152 volunteer lawyers contributing over 365 hours of pro bono service. The event included both in-person and virtual opportunities to connect with legal professionals. For the second time, the program introduced an On-Call List, which successfully rescheduled canceled events, ensuring that more patrons received the legal advice they needed.

9. Training on Interdiction and Supported-Decision Making. In line with House Concurrent Resolution 38, the department hosted several trainings on interdiction procedures and supported-decision making alternatives. These sessions were presented at various conferences and through collaborations with the Louisiana State Bar Association's Legal Services for Persons with Disabilities Committee. The department also distributed a reference card on interdiction procedures and less restrictive alternatives.

10. Volunteer Lawyers Answer Legal Questions. On LA.FreeLegalAnswers.org, volunteer attorneys answered over 1,100 questions, providing free legal advice to Louisiana residents. The site's 250 volunteer lawyers continue to be a valuable resource for individuals seeking help with civil legal issues.

These accomplishments reflect the tireless dedication of the Louisiana State Bar Association (LSBA), its partners, and the Civil Justice Community – comprising civil legal aid and pro bono organizations – that continues to ensure access to justice for all. The ATJ Department looks forward to another year of collaboration and progress in advancing justice across the state. 📌

Nominations Now Open for 2025 Pro Bono and Children's Law Awards

The Louisiana State Bar Association's (LSBA) Access to Justice Department is calling for nominations for the 2024 Pro Bono and Children's Law Awards, recognizing outstanding legal services and contributions in several key categories. Nominations are due by Thursday, February 13, 2025, and will be accepted online at www.lsba.org/ProBono/ProBonoAwards.aspx.

Award recipients will be honored at a special ceremony hosted by the Louisiana Supreme Court in May. The awards aim to highlight the dedication and achievements of individuals and organizations committed to advancing access to justice for underserved communities.

The awards recognize outstanding

achievement in several categories.

► The Children's Law Award recognizes an attorney or organization that has provided outstanding services in the field of children's law.

► The Law Student Award recognizes law students who have demonstrated a dedication to providing legal services to the poor.

► The Friend of Pro Bono Award recognizes individuals or groups that have provided services other than casework to support pro bono efforts.

► The Pro Bono Publico Award recognizes attorneys and firms who have provided more than 50 hours of pro bono services per year and who have demonstrated exceptional support of the ideal of access to justice.

► The Century Club Award recognizes attorneys who have provided 100 or more hours of volunteer service in the past year.

► The Career Public Interest Award recognizes an individual who has devoted at least 10 years of his/her career to public interest legal work and who has demonstrated excellence and leadership in his/her service to the poor and disenfranchised.

► The David A. Hamilton Lifetime Achievement Award recognizes an individual who has been in practice for at least 15 years and whose work demonstrates a lifelong commitment to the provision and enhancement of legal services to the poor.

For more information, email Access to Justice Department Coordinator Bridget Berins at bridget.berins@lsba.org.

LSBA Launches "25 in '25" Access to Justice Initiative

The Louisiana State Bar Association (LSBA) is kicking off the new year with an impactful initiative aimed at expanding access to justice across the state. The "25 Hours in 2025" program encourages LSBA members to volunteer 25 hours of pro bono service in 2025 to help those who cannot afford legal representation.

Attorneys are invited to make a concrete commitment at the start of the year by scheduling a short block of time to explore local pro bono opportunities. By visiting www.probono.net/la, members can review a wide range of organizations in Louisiana seeking legal assistance. Access to Justice department encourages attorneys to find a cause that aligns with

their expertise or interests and to directly contact an organization to offer their services.

This initiative builds on the LSBA's longstanding commitment to improving access to legal services for underserved communities and provides an easy way for attorneys to make a meaningful difference in the lives of those in need. Whether you specialize in family law, civil rights, or another area of practice, your 25 hours can contribute to ensuring that justice is accessible to all.

Participating in "25 Hours in '25" is a valuable way for attorneys to give back to their community while advancing the LSBA's mission to promote the fair administration of justice across Louisiana.



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