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## Access to Justice

### II. IMPROVING THE LEGAL SYSTEM

The Access to Justice Board was established by the Washington Supreme Court at the request of the Washington State Bar Association and is charged with planning for the statewide delivery of civil legal aid services.

#### **Themes:**

- Understanding how the civil legal aid system works in Washington, how you can get involved and where you can make referrals for low-income clients you are not able to represent.
- Understanding the barriers low income people face in accessing the justice system, what policy work is being done to address those barriers and how you can get involved.
- Understanding how the public criminal defense system works in Washington.
- Understanding the systemic problems in the criminal legal system, what policy work is being done to address them and how you can get involved.

#### **Conversation Starters:**

- Have you had any potential clients contact you with urgent legal needs but they don't have any resources to pay you? Have you known where you could refer them?
- In your work, do you see systemic problems that seem to impact a particular population (e.g., low-income, communities of color, immigrant communities) and you wonder what can be done about these problems and how you can help?

#### **Activities:**

- Review state plan introduction materials with schematic explaining the relationship between the Alliance Partners.
- Attend an Access to Justice Board Meeting and/or committee meetings.
- Attend a Civil Legal Needs Study CLE (this is something that the Equal Justice Coalition can do for groups).
- Volunteer with a civil legal aid organization (can provide more detail in the pro bono document).
- Attend an Access to Justice Board meeting.

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### **Activities (continued):**

- What are some issues that were addressed that you can follow-up on?
- Attend a Council on Public Defense meeting.
- Join efforts to lobby for state civil legal aid funding.

### **Resources:**

- Discuss what additional resources the mentor/mentee have found useful in their own practice.
- WSBA: Washington State Access to Justice Board
  - Communications Committee: Charged with assisting the ATJ Board in:
    - Communicating the Board's work.
    - Facilitating Alliance for Equal Justice communications.
    - Communicating with the public.
  - Delivery System Committee:
    - Monitor client needs and promote best practices.
    - Address new service delivery challenges.
    - Provide ongoing support for regional planning.
    - Coordinate with stakeholders to ensure that delivery initiatives do not duplicate current services.
    - Monitor and Assess the impact of policy changes.
    - Develop the state plan.
  - Equal Justice Coalition: A non-partisan broad-based organization working to educate policy makers and the public about the importance of civil legal aid.

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### **Resources (continued):**

- Justice Without Barriers Committee:
  - Advocate for a fully inclusive justice system.
  - Identify impediments and work to remove or reduce the effect of them.
- Leadership Development Committee:
  - Oversee the Equal Justice Community Leadership Development Academy.
  - Create and develop a statewide leadership development plan.
- Pro Bono Council: Responsible for supporting and advocating for volunteer legal programs in Washington State.
- Rules Committee:
  - Develop a procedure for reviewing rule proposals.
  - Review rule proposals and make recommendations to the ATJ Board about supporting or commenting on specific rule changes.
- Technology Committee:
  - Promotes efficiency in technology needs assessment, development and implementation.
  - Promotes the application of technology to enhance individual access to the justice system.
  - Oversee implementation of the Access to Justice Technology Principles.
- [Alliance for Equal Justice Providers](#)
- [Civil Legal Needs Study](#)