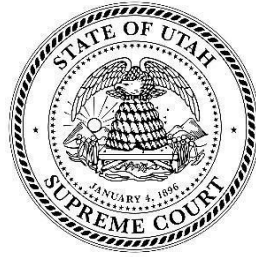


# UTAH SUPREME COURT AD HOC COMMITTEE



**Meeting Minutes**  
**Utah Supreme Court's Ad Hoc Committee on Regulatory Reform**  
**Community Justice Advocates Work Group**  
**Thursday, April 30, 2026**  
**12:00 - 1:00**  
**Online via WebEx**

Attendance by WebEx: Maryt Fredrickson, Bre Hickerson, Dr. Jayme Walters, Andrea Donahue, Stacy Haacke, Hayley Cousin, Lakshmi Vanderwerf, Megan Connelly, Tanya Rosado, Janine Liebert, Mark Steinagle

Guest CJAs: Cassie O'Brien, Davis Turnbull, Melaine Webster, Lindsey Garlick

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1. Welcome

2. Review of Meeting Minutes

- The minutes were reviewed and approved with one correction to a name spelling. Maryt then turned the floor over to Hayley and Jayme to lead our CJA Q&A.

3. Conversation with CJAs, moderated by Hayley and Jayme

- Introductions: Hayley invited our 4 CJA guests to introduce themselves and tell us a bit about their practice areas before we jumped into questions.

Examples of cases that felt particularly impactful to our CJA guests:

- Cassie talked about the fact that in Uintah County, CJAs are allowed to go onsite for domestic violence cases once the site is deemed safe. She talked about being able to have CJAs discuss the difference between protective orders and stalking injunctions with clients. She also noted that judges know

- them and the CJAs know what questions they will ask their clients for the types of issues they generally help with.
- Lindsey said that her program at the Duchesne County Sheriff's Department is extremely impactful. She likes helping emotionally prepare clients for what court will entail and talked about the difference that makes.
  - Davis talked about a client that was evicted and how he helped her and her children stay off the streets and negotiate removal of treble damages from the debts she owed her prior landlord.
  - Melaine talked about helping a debt client negotiate with debt collectors, as well as the value of helping clients with smaller, everyday issues.

#### Barriers to Becoming a CJA

- The CJAs noted that there are minimal barriers to becoming a CJA. The time commitment is significant and doesn't come with any financial incentive, but the CJAs didn't feel this discouraged them from this work.
- The CJAs did say that even a small cost could become a barrier for rural CJAs because their budgets and salaries are so much less than non-rural advocates.

#### Ongoing CJA Requirements (e.g. training, filing fees, etc.)

- The CJAs noted that refresher trainings would be appreciated, especially in relation to changes to relevant laws. Monthly CLEs exist already and the CJAs like having those.
- If a filing fee is imposed, a fee waiver option would also be appreciated.

#### Changes the CJAs don't want to see

- Attorney mentorship is critical and CJAs need this to continue.
- Jayme asked what kind of mentorship CJAs prefer. Lindsey mentioned that getting a response within 24-48 hours is preferable because of the urgency and safety components when you are dealing with protective orders. Melaine noted that the CJA discussion board is really helpful. Cassie said that having access to other CJAs is also really valuable.
- No minimum quota for CJA work, please, as the workload ebbs and flows.

#### How are CJAs perceived/how does that perception affect their effectiveness?

- One CJA noted that local attorneys often help her prepare documents and refer clients to her that can't afford to pay an attorney.

- There was mixed discussion about judges' perception of CJAs. One CJA noted that the 8<sup>th</sup> district held a staff training on CJAs, so those judges are more familiar with these advocates and sometimes even have the CJAs introduce themselves for the record and explain their scope. Judge Beech (8<sup>th</sup> District) is particularly supportive of CJAs! But another CJA has felt like an annoyance before because the judge and other attorneys didn't know what a CJA was and what she was allowed to do.
- The CJAs felt like judges responded better to their clients because of their presence and that clients that have a CJA are taken more seriously. Court proceedings seem to go smoother with a CJA and clients are better prepared for how to act in court and what to expect. Opposing parties are often more willing to negotiate with clients that have a CJA to assist them.

What resources and support do CJAs need to be successful?

- Funding for volunteers would be much appreciated, as people often volunteer and spend hours assisting clients. This would allow non-profits to allow their staff to spend more time helping in a CJA capacity.
- Reference guides would be helpful for common practice areas.
- Having access to other CJAs, especially for rural CJAs, is very helpful.

Do you want your certification to travel with you if you leave your agency?

- CJAs would all appreciate a portable certification and can't currently do that. They reiterated that many CJAs have spent years doing the work and learning about common legal issues in their practice areas, so their individual experience should count for something after they leave an agency.

Do you wish you could charge for CJA services?

- It would be nice to have the option, just because a lot of the non-profit employers they work with are not stable with current funding cuts, etc.
- But the CJAs emphasized the value of providing these free services because of the kinds of clients and issues they work with. One CJA noted that she couldn't have charged any of her past clients in good conscious because of their circumstances.
- The CJAs also noted that being paid for these services could create a conflict that would prevent them from being able to work in their current roles.

- Grants for agencies that hire CJAs would be helpful, but the CJAs were not motivated by money at all and many said they would do the work for free.

#### Final Thoughts

- One CJA said that if this program went away, she would feel it is an ethical violation for her not to assist people in the matters that she has knowledge and expertise in.
- Two areas to consider expanding services to are divorce/custody and immigration, because these are major areas in rural areas. A criminal law program is another option, so that CJAs could help take simple matters off of public defender's plates.
- One CJA reiterated how impactful it is to be able to reduce clients' anxiety and give them some form of support in some of the hardest moments they've had (like losing their homes).
- CJA-oriented scholarships for people considering law school or other education in this field would be really valuable.

We asked about the scope of CJAs and if an issue outside of their certification area comes up, what happens.

- The CJAs noted that you just refer that issue out to another CJA with a certification in the practice area.
- A referral list that allowed CJAs to collaborate in this way would be really helpful, because they don't always know who to refer people out to.
- Agency constraints are also worth noting. For example, one CJA described that someone can only get debt/housing help from CJAs if they are victims of domestic violence.

#### 4. Action Items

- Hayley will put together a list of questions to send out a CJA survey.
- We will continue refining our recommendations at our May meeting as we prepare to start writing our final report.