

Meeting Minutes

Utah Supreme Court's Ad Hoc Committee on Regulatory Reform

Community Justice Advocates Work Group

Thursday, July 29, 2025

12:00 – 1:00

Online by WebEx

Attendance Online: Maryt Fredrickson, Ada Miller, Stacy Haacke, Andrea Donahue, Hayley Cousin, Lakshmi Vanderwerf, Ciriac Alvarez Valle, Megan Connelly, Judge Mrazik

Special Guest: Nikole Nelson, Frontline Justice

1. Welcome. Theme for today's meeting is trends around the country through a Q & A with Nikole Nelson at Frontline Justice and her work on the Community Justice Worker program through the Alaska Legal Services Corporation.
2. Approval of minutes. One change to make, correcting LLP to LPP. Motion by Judge Mrazik. Seconded. No nay votes.
3. *Defining "community justice worker."* The field is largely emerging under that title, but it's not a universal term. Wide variety of ways in which people are identifying CJWs in their operating rules or statutes. And the term may not be consistent between the two. For example, Alaska's program uses the term CJW but the Alaska statute the program operates under does not. But all are defined as non-lawyers who give legal counsel to those who need legal assistance. Some states use issue-specific names, like in Delaware which uses "tenant advocate." Another is "licensed court assistance." There are many variations. Suggestion to keep definition and nomenclature broad enough and open ended, so that you can encourage organizations and people to come in and start operating in this area. Also keep the term non-exclusive, so people who think of themselves as, for example, social workers or community health workers, can come into the space and do the work without changing their identity or title.
 - a. California's recent proposal uses the term CJW. But there could be a concern that Community "justice" worker has political or social overtones,

perhaps warranting a different title. But the analogue to community “health” workers makes the term easily understood in places with community health workers.

4. *Training.* Alaska uses 5 asynchronous online training modules. The CJWs only have to take the training for the area that they are practicing in. they are AK specific. But Frontline Justice is building out similar trainings that states can use as templates or models.
5. *Reflections on Models.*
 - Alaska’s model is broad, which is working great. It is a broad waiver of UPL rules, under the umbrella of AK Legal Services Corp as the entity housing all CJWs. The program is also not subject matter specific, which provides room for growth. The supreme court in that state asked if it should be topic by topic but advocacy for the broad, unspecific was successful and allows more programs to emerge as needs or resources change, without needing more rules or program amendments. A downside to the model is that everyone must be housed within one organization, without opportunities to be housed in other nonprofits.
 - Arizona uses a different model, which is also a waiver system. The waivers are subject-matter and entity specific.
6. *Entity v. Individual.* In Alaska, the program is a hybrid model. The AK Legal aid program is the vouchsafe organization that the CJWs operate under. But each individual gets the waiver from the state bar association. That gives a public place for people to be registered and the public and judges can see who (individuals) are CJWs and what their scope of practice is. That list has not been a burden for the AK bar and was supported, but a shift in bar leadership could shift directions.
7. *Consumer Complaints.* In Alaska, since the waiver is issued by the bar, just like attorney licenses are, a complaint against a CJW also goes to the bar and the claim would be against Alaska Legal Services, the licensed attorney organization. Alaska Legal Services also provides a quarterly report to the AK Supreme Court and the bar’s board of governors.
8. *Reporting Requirements.* The reports do not gather demographic data or subject matter types. It is cases closed, outcomes, and complaints. Limited data keeps the burden of the reporting organization small; if the burden is too high, that can be a deterrent to starting or continuing a program. But AK Legal Services gathers demographics and subject matter types at intake, so that information is available. Alaska’s program was funded by a NSF grant, so a final report is due to the

grantor. Preliminary results are that the program has a 25-1 return on the funds. Prior to that, legal services were getting a return of 5-1 on dollars spent.

9. *Non-profit v. for profit.* It is essential to this type of program that the consumers pay nothing for the service. As a no charge service, there is no competition with the private bar. Texas's program is not yet implemented, because the legislature stepped in, and there are some stakeholders who want to allow for fees. In the immigration arena, there are some providers who charge de minimis fees. When you charge fees, there can be competition, and the opposition, from the practicing bar. In AK, pastors and social workers from anywhere can get the credential; they just have to route through AK Legal Services. It should not matter if that person is a complete volunteer or if they are paid by their employer, as long as the appropriate credentialing and supervisory structure is in place.
10. *Transferability.* In Alaska there is just one organization to practice under. So if a CJW leaves the organization, they lose the credential. But there is value in allowing CJWs to transfer once the credential is obtained. Frontline Justice is looking at micro-credentialing, via as task force, and potentially people with the micro-credentials could move from state to state on things that are federal in nature like SNAP benefits.
11. *Income Limits.* When working through LSC-funded organization, the consumers have to meet the income restrictions and other residency restrictions. Or, other funds have to be used.
12. *Sources of CJWs.* They can come from any range of partnerships that already meet and help people where the people are at, like AARP trains 38,000 tax preparers nationwide. There are other national organizations with local chapters that can be sources. In Utah, the LDS church has a large footprint and could be considered as a potential implementation partner.
13. *LPPs and CJWs.* LPPs can hang out their own shingle and help people for a fee. That is a market-based solution. A CJW is a justice reform. A CJW charges no fee, targeting a subset of the population that can otherwise not get help. A study reflects that for all people in the country to get the legal help they need, every licensed attorney would need to do 6 full weeks of pro bono work per year. Paralegals, however, are on the front line, want to help, and can be key strategic partners. Allowing LPPs to serve as CJWs to gain their experience hours on the path to licensure can be a component of LPP licensing. Having those training requirements line up can be helpful.

14. *Growing Pains and lessons Learned.* Alaska's program grew and scaled quickly. Non-lawyers were involved in developing the program from the outset. Some programs did not engage with nonlawyers, so while the intention of the CJW program was good, it is not expanding. Maryland's program is one that has done a good job at nonlawyer engagement during development.
15. *Overarching Model Viewpoint.* A CJW program is a shift from direct service delivery. The training module is stand alone and can be accessed by a willing person on demand and asynchronously. The AK Legal Services set up a pathway for a person to onboard a consumer in need directly (conflicts check, income, intake, etc. without needing a referral first), provide the service, close the matter, and provide the short report. So, it is like direct placement with an attorney but without the go between and onboarding that can take time and create delay. Instead of a direct service delivery model, it is more of a workforce and training model.
16. *Sandboxes.* Sandboxes are one pathway, like Washington just launched, but can be a deterrent because they are time limited, and they can create barrier via the Sandbox requirements.

No action items.