

## JUDICIAL CROSSROADS TASK FORCE ACCESS TO JUSTICE COMMITTEE

### Findings:

- **Coordination** The network of processes and services aimed at providing justice connects with, but is larger than, the court system itself. Lack of coordination throughout this larger network undermines the quality of justice and increases costs. Strains on the system as the result of ongoing economic and demographic changes are likely to exacerbate the negative effects of lack of coordination.
- **Self-help** A large and growing number of people represent themselves in civil matters, and most have no help doing so. Providing more centralized support for the self-represented improves the process before during and after court, results in increased satisfaction from court users, and saves time and money.
- **Disparate Treatment** Perceptions of discrimination, insensitivity, and lack of cultural competence concerning minority groups and other diverse populations challenge the credibility, effectiveness and equitable nature of our judicial process.
- **Language** Interpretation services in Michigan courts are underfunded and inconsistently applied across courts, in many cases in violation of constitutional and federal requirements. Failure to systemically address this issue threatens federal funding sources for the entire state.
- **Child Welfare** Measures taken to prevent children from ending up in the juvenile justice system and abuse and neglect system are cost-effective. Children and families of color experience significantly worse outcomes in the child welfare system than do non-minority children.
- **Indigent Defense** Michigan has tolerated an indigent defense system so lacking in resources that assigned counsel can only occasionally provide the effective assistance of counsel guaranteed by the U.S. and Michigan constitutions, causing large downstream costs and the risk of costly litigation.
- **Indigence, Fees, Fines and Costs** Imposing legal financial obligations on people who can't afford to pay limits access to justice and increases taxpayer costs. The absence of clear standards for determining indigence and for enforcing payment orders or using alternatives to immediate payment or incarceration for failure to pay leads to exacerbating the problem such as adding penalties to amounts that already cannot be paid and inconsistency about who qualifies for waivers and for appointed counsel.
- **Problem-solving (Specialty) Courts** Problem-solving courts reduce recidivism and improve compliance with court orders, increasing public safety and saving tax dollars.