

# Justice Initiatives Committee

Annual Report: Fiscal Year 2020

**Jurisdiction:** Support the State Bar’s access to justice efforts by:

- Developing and recommending proposals for proactive programs to benefit underserved populations, including the poor, racial and ethnic minorities, LGBTQA, juveniles, domestic violence survivors
- Supporting resources for civil legal aid programs
- Providing recommendations and support for the State Bar’s pro bono legal services program
- Recommending John W. Cumiskey Award recipient
- Identifying the need for any workgroups to support the jurisdiction of the committee
- Conferring and coordinating regularly with the Access to Justice Policy, Affordable Legal Services, and Online Legal Resource and Referral committees on common strategic goals
- Identifying possible collaborations to support

**Note:** This committee may have more than 15 members and may include non-State Bar members.

Time Frame	Strategic Plan Goal/Strategy	Description of Activity
FY 2020	1.4/2.3/4.4	A Lawyer Helps Pro Bono Honor Roll The 2020 “A Lawyer Helps” Pro Bono Honor Roll (Honor Roll) recognizes Michigan attorneys and firms providing pro bono legal services. Michigan attorneys providing 30 or more hours of eligible pro bono legal services in a calendar year and firms with attorneys on average providing 30 or more hours of eligible pro bono legal services in a calendar year were eligible to appear on the Honor Roll. The Michigan attorneys and law firms appearing on the 2020 Honor Roll represent thousands of hours of pro bono service provided in the 2019 calendar year, increasing access to justice for many low-income Michigan families. This year, the coronavirus pandemic, extensive flooding in Mid-Michigan, widespread social unrest, and other unprecedented challenges have increased the need for pro bono service. Thankfully, Michigan attorneys, even when faced with significant disruptions to their own lives, have continued the tradition of pro bono service, supporting access to justice, and helping those in need. Now more than ever, “A Lawyer Helps.”
	1.2/2.3/4.4	Michigan Legal Assistance Partnership Project (MI-LAPP) - includes Qualified Domestic Relations Order Referral Program, Tax Pro Bono Program, MI Patent Pro Bono Project, & Malpractice for Pro Bono Program
	1.4/2.3/4.4	Pro Bono Partner Programs (Program Development, Recruitment, and Promotion). The JI Committee established the criteria for the Partner Program initiative. To be recognized as a Partner Program, programs must complete a brief online application and certify their pro bono programs meet all established criteria
	1.4/2.3/4.4	Online Portal - Pro Bono Opportunities. Includes the "Legal Clinics & Events Calendar" that is updated weekly with events.

		The calendar is available on the A Lawyer Helps website at <a href="http://alawyerhelps.org">alawyerhelps.org</a> .
	1.3/2.2/4.4	Midland Flooding Response Assistance - Disaster Legal Services Legal Assistance Initiative. Hotline number created for people impacted by the flooding disaster. In partnership with Legal Services of Eastern Michigan and Dow Chemical, an online video featuring a hometown NFL player was created to promote the hotline and availability of legal help for residences of the federally natural disaster area.
Current Projects	1.2/2.3/4.4	Pro Bono Honor Roll. As the Honor Roll begins its third year, the JI Committee will work to vigorously promote and encourage increased participation.
	1.2/2.3/4.4	Michigan Legal Assistance Partnership Project (MI-LAPP) - includes Qualified Domestic Relations Order Referral Program, 62 17   Page Tax Pro Bono Program, MI Patent Pro Bono Project, & Malpractice for Pro Bono Program. The committee is continuing to work on expanding the capacity of the programs, number of pro bono attorneys on each program's pro bono panel, and promotion of services to the public.
	1.4/2.3/3.5/4.4	Michigan Bar Journal - Access to Justice Theme Issue - September 2021. The MJB theme issue will educate members on ATJ issues and opportunities to help increase access to justice for low-income Michiganders.
	1.3/2.2/4.4	Limited Scope Representation Pro Bono Project Proposal with Affordable Legal Services Committee – JI/ALS Committees have been working with the 3rd Circuit Court in Detroit on a pro bono project at the Self-Help Center. The committee is also looking at expanding ADR and ODR in resolving landlord/tenant disputes.
	1.2/2.2/4.4	Michigan Legal Assistance Partnership Project. Expansion as needed. With the success of the MILAPP programs, especially the QDRO and Tax Programs. Committee members were asked to identify other specialized areas of the law where it might make sense for legal aid programs, SBM, and its Sections to collaborate to potentially create new pro bono initiatives. The committee proposed several specialized areas of law where a collaboration might be helpful, including the following: a. Drafting Child Support Orders - While the Friend of the Court calculates the amount of child support for orders, FOC does not prepare orders. Drafting these orders would require a relatively small-time commitment for pro bono attorneys, with no expectation of ongoing representation. The Family Law Section would be the obvious section for this type of collaboration. b. Real Property / Probate Issues. Many clients seek legal aid help because of issues with real property. Many times, the problem is due to title issues. In property tax foreclosure cases, even though many clients potentially qualify for financial help to pay all or part of the property taxes based on their incomes, they are ineligible because of a lack of ownership. The issue may arise when a parent dies and an heir(s) takes ownership. But the estate is never probated, and property ownership is never transferred from the deceased person. In these cases, pro bono attorneys

		<p>could assist with probating deceased family members estate and transfer of ownership the surviving heir(s). The Probate &amp; Estate Planning and Real Property Law Sections would be the most obvious sections for this type of collaboration. c. Name Changes for Transgender People. People that are transitioning need help securing a legal name change so they can take an important step toward making their legal identities match their lived experience. Possible collaboration with the LGBTQA Section. d. Objections to Garnishment / Payment Agreements / Set Aside Defaults. Many people sued for unpaid debts never answer the complaints (many may not know they have to) which results in default judgments. Once a default judgment is entered, the garnishments are usually not far behind. Pro bono attorneys could help defendants set aside default judgments, object to garnishments, and set up payment plans. Committee members proposed offering clinic-style events in collaboration with the members of the Consumer Law and Solo and Small Firm Sections.</p>
<p><b>Future Goals</b></p>	<p>1.2/2.3/4.4</p>	<p>2021 Pro Bono Honor Roll. As the Honor Roll begins its third year, the JI Committee is working to promote the current 2020 Honor Roll, which included a significant increase in participation. The 2021 Honor Roll applications will available online in early January 2021. The anticipated publish date for the 2021 Honor Roll is early May 2021. Staff is considering ways to streamline the application process.</p>
	<p>1.3/2.2/4.4</p>	<p>Limited Scope Representation Pro Bono Project Proposal with Affordable Legal Services Committee – JI/ALS Committees have been working with the 3rd Circuit Court in Detroit on a pro bono project at the Self-Help Center. Plans were to have a clinic operational in March, but the clinic has been put on hold due to the 3rd Circuit Family Court planned closing until the end of the year. The committee is continuing its efforts to partner with the 36th District Court to handle landlord/tenant cases when the courts reopen. The committee is also looking at expanding ADR and ODR in resolving landlord/tenant disputes</p>
	<p>1.2/2.3/4.4</p>	<p>Michigan Legal Assistance Partnership Project (MI-LAPP). The committee is coordinating with the Tax Program's administration group to provide more webinars and recorded trainings for participating attorneys to expand professional competence and continuing professional development.</p>
	<p>1.2/2.3/4.4</p>	<p>Expanding/Promoting increased engagement of SBM's members in pro bono opportunities by educating members on the need, opportunities to help, and the benefits of increased access to justice for all regardless of income.</p>
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**Recommended Committee Changes: None.**

**Additional Comments: None.**