

STANDING COMMITTEE ON LEGAL AID

Annual Report 2003-2004

Committee Name: Standing Committee on Legal Aid

Jurisdiction: Shall represent the interest of persons who are unable to afford counsel in civil matters and the legal aid programs servicing such persons.

Officers and Membership:

Chair: Terri L. Stangl

Members : 15

Associates: 4

Meeting Schedule: (quorums at all meetings)

October 17, 2003 – Telephone

February 5, 2004 – Telephone

At least one additional meeting will take place in the summer of 2004.

There were also communications with and surveys of the membership about proposed policies that took place electronically in between meetings. If the members did not express sufficient interest in taking a position on proposals before it, then the Committee did not meet.

Committee Activities:

Information on actions taken by bar

At each meeting, the Committee Chairperson reports on actions taken by the Bar and proposals for change that are before the bar. The Chairperson or designee has participated in Bar meetings for Committee Chairpersons in order to be current on these initiatives. The Committee also has members who are part of the Representative Assembly. The Committee Chairperson participates in the Standing Committee on Justice Initiatives.

During 2003-04, the Legal Aid Committee reviewed and commented on a number of proposed court rules and legislation within the permissible scope of Keller and related administrative orders. The Committee also offered comments on the proposed changes to the Michigan Rules of Professional Responsibility, both on its own and in collaboration with other bar entities.

The Legal Aid Committee was authorized to offer testimony in support of HB 4706, which establishes a framework for charging costs for medical records, and makes one free copy available to indigent persons. This bill was enacted into law in March 2004.

The Legal Aid Committee also has drafted a proposed change to the court rules related to juvenile guardianships which was supported in principle by the Representative Assembly in April 2004. The Assembly's Drafting Committee will be working on refining the proposal's language.

Resources Provided by the State Bar of Michigan in Support of Committee Work:

Conference Call costs
Technical assistance on bar procedures and policies
Emails alerting the Committee to new rules and legislation that may be of special interest to it.

Future Goals and Activities:

Guardianship Proposal: The Committee will be working with the Drafting Committee to finalize language for submission to the Michigan Supreme Court on its juvenile guardianship proposal.

Ongoing Policy Comments: The Committee will continue to monitor, analyze and respond to policy proposals that are posted on the Public Policy web site.

Access to the Courts: The Committee also plans to identify rules and/or practices that may make it more difficult for low-income and unrepresented persons to access the court system. Depending on what is identified, the Committee may identify areas for possible recommendations for consideration by the State Bar. Any work in this area will be done in coordination with members of the Justice Initiatives Committee.

Resources Needed:

Same as prior year.

Additional staff resources may be needed if the committee resumes more active work on loan repayment issues. Staff may be asked for assistance in obtaining information about court practices around the state.

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