

COLLABORATION FOR JUSTICE

Chicago Appleseed Fund for Justice and the Chicago Council of Lawyers

Selected Accomplishments and Programs

Introduction

Chicago Appleseed is a social impact research and advocacy organization which uses multidisciplinary research to identify community injustices, and to develop and advocate for practical solutions. Chicago Council of Lawyers is a public interest reform bar association which advocates for a fair and effective administration of justice. Together, the two organizations comprise a *Collaboration for Justice*, focusing on the areas of Criminal Justice Reform, Judicial and Lawyer Ethics, Immigration Court Reform, Payday Lending Reform/Economic Inclusion, and Family Law. The Chicago Council of Lawyers works independently of Chicago Appleseed in its efforts to evaluate judges for the purpose of educating voters.

Accomplishments and Programs

Criminal Justice Reform

Stopping Illegal and Unconstitutional Practices, and Implementing Indigence Hearing Reform. Chief Judge of the Circuit Court, Timothy C. Evans, issued in August 2013 General Administrative Order No. 2013-11 in response to a Chicago Appleseed investigation that uncovered a practice where judges were denying defendants a public defender without the required indigence hearing. The Chief Judge's order and accompanying memoranda require the courts to conduct hearings on indigence based on the required financial affidavits and in line with Illinois statute and federal constitutional law. The Chicago Appleseed investigation was done in collaboration with the Chicago Council of Lawyers, and with pro bono counsel from DLA Piper.

We uncovered a practice where judges routinely denied public defender to defendants simply because they had posted bond and not upon a statutorily required indigence hearing. Furthermore, in cases where a public defender was assigned, the public defender's office would often be reimbursed from the defendant's bond money on a motion by the assistant state's attorney—also without an underlying indigence hearing. Essentially, these practices force defendants to choose between pre-trial freedom and a public defense and are in clear violation of Illinois statute and jurisprudence, as well as the Sixth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution.

Helping to Bring About a New Model of Criminal Justice Treatment Diversion. Beginning in May 2013, we have been staffing the Adult Redeploy Planning and Implementation Grant Project under the guidance of Presiding Judge Paul Biebel, Court Administrator Peter Coolson, and Judges Mary Roberts and Lawrence Fox. Through this effort, a treatment diversion courtroom—the ACT (Access to Community Treatment) Court—will be established to focus on providing community-based treatment services in felony cases. If successful, we believe that this model can lead to a coordinated diversion process within the Circuit Court of Cook County that can result in a genuine reduction of the Cook County Jail population.

Judicial and Lawyer Ethics

Established the Center for Judicial Performance and Integrity (Center). Within the Center is the Judicial Performance Commission of Cook County, which is designed to use judicial evaluations to help improve the quality of the judiciary through research-based reports that includes detailed discussion of the strengths and weaknesses of judicial performance, proposed judicial performance improvement plans, when indicated—including such strategies as peer mentoring, additional education, and court watching.

We also submitted to the Illinois Supreme Court, in collaboration with the Illinois Campaign for Political Reform, our Policy Brief on proposed judicial recusal standards and procedures.

Immigration Court Reform

In collaboration with National Appleseed, the Appleseed Network of Justice Centers, and national law firms Akin Gump and Latham & Watkins, Chicago Appleseed in 2012 released our latest report, *Reimagining the Immigration Court Assembly Line: Transformative Change for the Immigration Justice System*. Working with U.S. Senator Chris Coons, Appleseed, Chicago Appleseed and our pro bono partner, Akin Gump, successfully saw the recent approval of an amendment to S.744 which incorporates our longstanding position that immigrants should not have to file Freedom of Information Act requests in Immigration Court to receive their own records. This amendment will make the system fairer, more efficient, and save more than \$10 million tax dollars each year.

Payday Lending/Economic Inclusion Reform

Chicago Appleseed participated in an effort to pass legislation limiting the predatory practices charged by payday lenders. In collaboration with the Illinois Asset Building Group (IABG), we worked with financial institutions to develop small dollar loan portfolios, through workshops, conferences, and webinars. Two years of work on small dollar lending culminated in November 2012 at the Illinois Asset Building Group 2012 Conference. At the conference, Chicago Appleseed Law and Policy Analyst, Katy Welter, presented on two path-breaking tools that Chicago Appleseed and IABG developed for lenders interested in offering safe yet profitable small dollar loans: the *Alternative Small Dollar Loan Toolkit* and the *Small Dollar Loan Profitability Calculator*.

Family Law

Working to make the Illinois child support system more efficient and effective. In collaboration with the Presiding Judge of the Cook County Circuit Court Domestic Relations Division, we are working to identify proposed innovations and review existing improvements to ensure that the court treats fairly and equally both marital and non-marital children. With pro bono assistance from Skadden Arps Slate Meagher & Flom and Baker & McKenzie, we are assessing changes made to the Parentage Court following the submission of our preliminary report. We have been asked by the Presiding Judge of the Domestic Relations Division to see whether having a separate Parentage Court is constitutional in light of changes that have been made to improve the process.

Social Media

We ask that you follow us on our social media links:

Online: www.chicagoappleseed.org

Facebook: www.facebook.com/ChicagoAppleseed

Blog: www.chicagoappleseed.org/blog/

Twitter: www.twitter.com/ChiAppleseed

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