

Program Committee & Project Updates

January 2020



Collaboration for Justice

ACCESS TO JUSTICE COMMITTEE

The Access to Justice Committee works to identify ineffective, inefficient, and unfair court management policies and procedures, recommends improvements, and advocates for their implementation. The Committee is committed to strengthening fairness, integrity, effectiveness, and professionalism in the courts. Its mission is to provide practical information on how to build and maintain an effective and independent justice system that enjoys the confidence of the public and lives up to the expectations of transparency and accountability.

Chair: Mark DuPont

Meets: Fourth Thursday of every month, alternate months in-person (12:00 PM) and by phone (3:00 PM)

Current Projects

Circuit Clerk of Cook County Candidates' Forum & Transition Advisory Report

- On January 14, 2020, Chicago Appleseed, Chicago Council of Lawyers, and the American Constitution Society (Chicago Lawyers Chapter) are sponsoring a forum for all four candidates to discuss their visions of the future of the Cook County Circuit Court Clerk's office. The event will be recorded and subsequently analyzed, resulting in a report on findings and best practice recommendations.

Eviction Court Recording and Reporting

- Monitoring how the court recording systems in Cook County's eviction courtrooms are being implemented; working to expand such technology into Cook County debtor/creditor courtrooms, as well as all eviction courts in the county and the state; expanding to a nationwide project with the Appleseed Network to identify injustices related to a lack of court recording or reporting in other jurisdictions.

Judicial Election Literacy and Community Engagement

- In collaboration with Chicago Votes, Chicago Appleseed & Chicago Council of Lawyers are working to develop an exemplary curriculum for community engagement and education around judicial elections in Cook County. Our joint www.VoteforJudges.org website was visited by more than 70,000 people in 2017.

Judicial Quality, Fairness, and Independence Review with the Appleseed Network

- Assessing what impact different judicial selection approaches (such as a Research Advisory Committee) have on the quality and diversity of the bench and developing best practices in Cook County. Working to produce local protocols around community Court Watching and peer mentoring for judges.

Statewide Advisory Council for the Illinois Central Panel of Administrative Law Judges

- Developing a proposal for an Illinois Statewide Advisory Council for the Central Panel of Administrative Law Judges to help ensure due process in hearings and the quality and diversity of the judiciary. A curriculum including twice annual webinars on how to engage with pro se litigants and acknowledge and mitigate implicit bias will promote higher quality, more independent administrative judiciaries.

CHILD & FAMILY LAW COMMITTEE

The Child & Family Law Committee works on projects aimed to improve the experience of parents, children, families, and divorce litigants navigating the Cook County courts, with a particular emphasis on unrepresented parents and vulnerable children. The Committee often works in partnership with the Domestic Relations Division of Cook County—specifically around the handling of divorce, paternity, and the support of children.

Co-Chairs: Joan Colen & Nicole McKinnon

Meets: 3:00 PM on the first Tuesday of every month

Current Projects

Hearing Officer Program

- Evaluating the Hearing Officer Program with the hope to advocate for its expansion throughout Cook County, the state, and nationally

Early Resolution Program

- Helped launch the Early Resolution Program (ERP) in the Domestic Relations Division, evaluate that program, and determine best practices while also partnering with community organizations to develop outreach and education programs for the public

Cook County Child Representative Program

- Researching the policies and procedures related to the Child Representative Program in Cook County to understand its effectiveness and develop recommendations for improvement as needed

CIVIL LIBERTIES & POLICE ACCOUNTABILITY COMMITTEE

The Civil Liberties & Police Accountability Committee meets monthly to discuss civil liberties issues that are both local and national in scope—including, importantly, police accountability in Chicago. The Committee has issued public policy positions on issues such as supporting Civil Asset Forfeiture Reform, recommending changes to the Chicago Police Department's Collective Bargaining Agreements, and more.

Co-Chairs: Carl Royal, David Melton, & Gordon Waldron

Meets: 12:00 PM on the second Friday of every month

Current Projects

Police Accountability

- Research and advocacy around an ordinance to create a Community Commission for Public Safety; supporting the end of the Chicago Police Department's using of investigative alerts; and following implementation of CPD Federal Consent Decree provisions.

Chicago's Vehicle and Traffic Policies

- Research and advocacy around Chicago's reform of traffic offense fees and fines; advocating for reform of Chicago vehicle impoundment policies.

Federal Civil Rights Policy

- Advocating against proposed amendments to Civil Rights Act regarding harassment and the proposed amendment to the federal Arbitration Act on appeals from arbitration rulings.

End-of-Life Self-Determination for Terminally Ill Patients

- Working with a coalition of advocates focused on ensuring end-of-life self-determination for terminally ill patients in Illinois.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The Criminal Justice Advisory Committee (CJAC) uses research, advocacy, legislative proposals, technical assistance, and project management to improve all areas of our criminal justice system with the primary focus being on decarceration and racial equity. CJAC's work varies widely and includes everything from ensuring the enforcement of core constitutional rights to evaluating and designing individual Cook County diversion programs. The Committee works in partnership with various stakeholders, including law practitioners, community groups, advocates, academics, and other experts to develop fair and effective solutions to address systemic problems. Informed by invaluable community-based support, CJAC helps develop the manageable implementation plans necessary to bring about meaningful permanent change.

Co-Chairs: Alexandra Block, Jonathan Pilsner, & Margaret Truesdale

Meets: 12:00 PM on the third Thursday of each month

Current Projects

Bond Reform and Pretrial Justice

- Participating as a key member of the Coalition to End Money Bond since 2016, which has worked to ensure the appropriate administration of General Order 18.8A, a court order we advocated for - issued by Chief Judge Timothy Evans - that mandates that no person will be detained pretrial simply because they are unable to afford a monetary bond.
- Continually reviewing pretrial conditions including length-of-stay in Cook County Jail, reducing time from arrest to preliminary hearings, and evaluating the potential constitutional implications of electronic monitoring (EM) devices that record exact GPS location and/or sounds of the individual being monitored and those around them.

Combating Excessive Court Costs, Fines, and Fees

- Monitoring the implementation of Illinois' court costs and fees legislation, which aims to reduce the burden of excessive court costs, fines, and fees for litigants. Developing training and education programs to advise Assistant Public Defenders, Assistant Prosecutors, criminal defense practitioners, and the community on court debt issues.

Comprehensive Review of the Cook County Specialty Courts (CJAC)

- Evaluating the fairness and effectiveness of the Access to Community Treatment (ACT), which links justice system-involved individuals with community-based services to address substance-use disorders, as well as Cook County's other diversion courts.

Prosecutorial Accountability & Transparency

- Preparing data-rich reports on States Attorney Kim Foxx's Administration and advocating for changing the "win at all costs" culture historically present amongst prosecutors' offices.

Review of the Felony Court Practices (Post-Bond)

- Reviewing post-bond felony courtrooms to ensure procedural justice, fairness, accountability, and transparency of decision-making to combat implicit and explicit bias and promote judicial best practices. Ensuring all defendants' Sixth Amendment right to counsel, including through stationhouse representation. Seeking to increase stationhouse representation for all arrested individuals.

FEDERAL COURTS COMMITTEE

The Federal Courts Committee works to improve the administration of justice in the federal courts. The committee's standing agenda includes evaluating judicial nominees and assessing the procedures and resources of the federal courts to promote substantive justice for pro se and other litigants of limited resources. The committee collaborates with other organizations to identify projects for investigation, research, and publication.

Co-Chairs: William Strom & Meghan Paulas

Meets: 12:00 PM on the third Wednesday of each month

Current Projects

Federal Supervised Release Project

- Mapping the utility of conditions of supervised release (which are set at the time of sentence, not at the time of eligibility for release); individual rehabilitation; standards of protections of rights and liberty; and rules of procedure.
- Research around the level of judicial discretion in supervised release and sentencing and issues related to “vaguely worded” conditions.
- Working to create an opportunity for students to gain court experience by providing counsel to people who otherwise would not have it. Strategizing to figure out the best way to identify clients when there is no right to counsel in this situation.

Improving In Forma Pauperis Qualification Procedures

IMMIGRATION COURT REFORM COMMITTEE

The Immigration Court Reform Committee works in conjunction with the Appleseed Network Work Group on Immigration. Its focus is on the fairness and effectiveness of the immigration courts. The Committee has collaborated to spearhead comprehensive evaluations of the United States' Immigration Court System. Most recently, these efforts have led to the creation and distribution of a manual, [*Getting Off the Assembly Line: Overcoming Immigration Court Obstacles in Individual Cases*](#), which covers deportation issues pertinent to immigration attorneys. This signature effort has also produced two in-depth reports, congressional testimony, and the Executive Office for Immigration Review's (EOIR) adoption of crucial reforms.

Co-Chairs: Ellen Craig & Lisa Palumbo

Meets: 8:30 AM on the fourth Wednesday of every month

Current Projects

Immigration Bond Hearings

- Collecting and evaluating data around how the immigration bond hearing system functions; developing potential systemic fixes and advocacy strategies on how to implement such fixes and improve procedural justice.

Updating *Reimagining the Immigration Court Assembly Line*

- Updating the second report in our [*Assembly Line*](#) series to include topics such as independence and quality of Immigration Judges, video-teleconferencing, translation services, and stopping the inappropriate presence of ICE in the courthouses.