

NEW DIRECTIONS FOR THE OFFICE OF THE CLERK OF THE COOK COUNTY CIRCUIT COURT:

Recommendations for Planning and Transitioning to New Leadership

A Brief Summary of Recommendations Related to Accessibility

With a new Clerk set to take office following the November 2020 General Election, Chicago Appleseed, Chicago Council of Lawyers and the Civic Federation have released a transition report with recommendations for the next Clerk of the Circuit Court to better serve the public and users of the court system. The transition report presents recommendations for the Clerk to implement within the first 30 days, first 180 days and the first year within six major topics: (1) overall management; (2) technology; (3) public access to data; (4) accessibility and user service; (5) ethics and oversight; and (6) budget transparency and accountability.

The following are a selected set of recommendations for the Clerk to improve accessibility and customer service for all court users, especially those with physical, comprehension or language barriers and self-represented litigants:

APPOINT A CHIEF ACCESSIBILITY OFFICER

- This new position would be responsible for ensuring the Clerk's Office meets the needs of court users with unique needs including physical disabilities and translation or language needs.
- The Clerk's Office, in conjunction with the Chief Judge's Office, should develop a comprehensive ADA Accessibility Plan and implement it in each courthouse. This would include improving physical accommodations such as adjustable ADA kiosks in the Daley Center and training employees on how to help individuals with disabilities access accommodations offered by the courts.
- The Clerk's Office should ensure uniformity of signage and communications about available accommodations and services throughout every courthouse and division.
- The Chief Accessibility Officer, working with other stakeholders, should develop a language access plan to improve language and translation services and implement the plan in each courthouse.

APPOINT A CHIEF PUBLIC SERVICE OFFICER

- This new position would ensure that the Clerk's Office serves the needs of all litigants and members of the public, especially self-represented and underserved litigants, serving as a liaison to help desks and other pro bono resources already available in Cook County courthouses.
- The Chief Public Service Officer should ensure that all Clerk's Office personnel are adequately trained to address questions and assist self-represented litigants in navigating typical scenarios they face in court. This includes ensuring staff are trained adequately on the Clerk's e-filing and case management systems to troubleshoot and answer questions from attorneys and the public.
- The Chief Public Service Officer should conduct periodic customer satisfaction surveys to identify areas for improvements.