

**MINUTES**  
**Of**  
**Advisory Board on the Americans with Disabilities Act**  
**Tuesday, July 8, 2014**  
**9:30 A.M.**  
**225 Spring Street, Wethersfield CT**

**In attendance:** Judge Patrick L. Carroll, Chair; members: Atty. Mark Ciarciello, Atty. Eileen Condrón, Ms. Christine Elkins, Ms. Sandra Lugo-Gines, Atty. Pam Meotti, Atty. Tom Smith, Ms. Mary Sitaro, Atty. Cindy Theran. From the Legal Services Unit, Attorneys Maureen Finn and Viviana Livesay.

**Members absent:** Mr. Charles Epstein, Atty. Deirdre McPadden, Atty. Stephen Ment,

**Also present:** Superior Court Operations Executive Director Attorney Joseph D. D'Alesio; Ms. Heather Collins, support staff to the Board; and Mr. Daniel Irace, Court Operations. One member of the public was present.

- I. **Welcome** by Judge Carroll
- II. **Approval** of Minutes of the 24 February, 2014 meeting: There were no objections to the Draft minutes, which were circulated to the Board and posted online. The minutes are approved.
- III. **New ADA Auxiliary Aids Signage:** Ms. Collins provided to the Board a draft of a suggested sign that will be displayed in public areas of Branch facilities. The sign incorporates the universal symbols for communication assistance, including: sign language, audio enhancers (pocket talkers), large print materials, Braille materials, and wheelchair accessibility. The sign was developed with the Access to Facilities Implementation Committee, which is chaired by Attorney Ment. The members discussed the need for the sign, which directs the public to the site ADA contact. There was discussion about the likelihood that the sign will encourage more people with disabilities to see assistance. Prior to posting the sign, it will be shared with Chief Clerks and Chief Judicial Marshals, so that they can discuss, if necessary, with their staffs the protocol for requesting an accommodation.
- IV. **Survey questions:** Ms. Lugo-Gines is working with other Court Ops. managers to develop survey questions that will be used in part to assess and improve services where needed, and in part to begin the process of performance measures. A series of questions on a voluntary survey asks ADA services users about their experiences with the request process, through use of the services, to the quality of the service provided (rating from very unsatisfied through very satisfied). Those who participate will be asked if they are a juror, attorney, party to a case, or 'other.' There is also a final question asking if there are other ADA services that can be helpful. There was discussion about how the sign will be distributed; Board members expressed some concern that anonymous reviews by people who have not asked for services,

or people who were denied accommodations, could unfairly skew the assessments. The survey is still in development, and the Board will discuss it again at the next meeting in the fall.

- V. **Update on the development of a policy for Judicial Marshal Services** on prisoners with disabilities: Legal Services Attorney Poncini, who serves as the JMS legal advisor, developed the policy in consult a number of people, including JMS Director O'Donovan Murphy. Director Murphy approved of the policy, which was reviewed by Attorney D'Alesio. Attorney D'Alesio told the Board that he has approved the policy for implementation and distribution to the appropriate staff.
- VI. **Update on JDP-ES-221, Notice Under the ADA:** Legal Services: The Board had previously requested that Legal Services update the official ADA Notice to include language stating that the Branch does not provide items of a personal nature, such as wheelchairs. Attorneys Finn and Livesay said they will proceed once an email has been sent to them on behalf of the Board. Ms. Collins will send the email.
- VII. Discussion of the Draft of **2014 Annual Report** to Chief Justice Rogers: The Board members received a Draft of the Annual Report and reviewed the information and recommendations. There was general discussion about the report content. The members agreed to support the report and its sixteen recommendations, with some minor changes. The recommendations are in four categories: Facilities, Training, Technology, and Outreach & Compliance. The recommendations to be submitted to Chief Justice Rogers for her review are:
1. The Branch should conduct on-site surveys of restrooms to ensure accessibility, beginning with restrooms used by jurors. Assessments should be conducted using the criteria established by the Department of Justice [2010 ADA Standards for Accessible Design](#). The DOJ has established [Guidance on the 2010 Standards](#) as well as an [Information Line](#) available for assistance. Restrooms in facilities owned by the Judicial Branch and open to the public, which do not meet the 2010 standards should, whenever architecturally feasible, be brought into compliance. Further, restrooms in facilities not owned by the Judicial Branch that are found to be inaccessible should be brought into compliance by the lessors.
  2. Where parking is provided to jurors and members of the public by the Judicial Branch, the Branch should revise its [Internet Directions and Information](#) pages to expand way-finding information to the judicial facility. Specifically, pages should be updated to include accurate and specific information on the distance between juror and Branch-owned public parking lots and the public entrance to the facility served by those parking area(s).
  3. The Branch should consider posting way-finding signage between elevators and/or stairs that also indicates distances. For example, if a person with a mobility issue exits an elevator, a sign telling them the approximate distance to the nearest restroom would

be helpful. Further, the Branch should consider posting information about accessibility features of public facilities on the Directions pages of each of the public facilities. For example, buildings that have elevators; the locations of publicly available, accessible restrooms and other relevant public areas.

4. Parking signage: The Judicial Branch should consider posting signage in its jury parking lots that provide information for use by jurors with a communication disability who are unable to enter unattended juror parking areas.
5. The Judicial Branch has added training in response to the public's needs and changing requirements, including training for Judges at the annual Judges Institute, and upon orientation to the Bench. Judge Support Services (JSS) should continue to work with the Advisory Board to develop training for Judges on the ADA accommodation process. This can include an explanation of the administrative nature of providing ADA modifications and accommodations for the public, including accommodations that necessarily affect the flow of court proceedings, particularly for individuals with hidden disabilities. Additionally, JSS may want to consider developing training for Judges and judicial officers on the etiquette and sensitivity that may be required in handling and implementing accommodation requests from people with disabilities.
6. In order to ensure that more staff are continuously trained on the Act, the Branch should develop more online training for Branch staff, with a particular emphasis on the Nuts & Bolts of the ADA, and on service animals. Both of these trainings are currently conducted by Branch staff; developing online training in both of these areas, with input from all Divisions, will help the Branch to deliver uniform training on the laws and requirements of the Act to all employees.
7. The Branch should continue to seek grant funding to expand and/or continue specific training on serving people with hidden disabilities. In the current fiscal year, the State Justice Institute's \$29,500 grant, matched with \$3,900 Branch training dollars, allowed hundreds of employees to attend daylong training on *Successful Interactions with People with Hidden Disabilities*. This training has been very highly rated by attendees, many of whom have indicated it should be mandatory for all staff.
8. Certain training should be mandatory for all Judicial Branch supervisors, managers and staff.
9. The Judicial Branch annually provides tens of thousands of dollar in services, at no cost, to individuals with disabilities. The Branch should consider budgeting additional amounts each year to purchase updated training materials, such as information guides, to provide to ADA Contacts and Branch staff who work directly with the public. The Judicial Branch should consider investing a portion of its equipment budget for the new court facility in improved communications features, including the installation of a hearing loop in a trial courtroom; the purchase of portable video relay interpreter

equipment; and the purchase of Wireless Assistance Listening System Frequency Modulation (FM) kits. Portable FM kits can be used in any setting at any location.

10. With the construction of the new Torrington Courthouse, the architectural firm(s) charged with designing the facility should review these recommendations in consideration of making the new site the Branch's most accessible facility for people with different abilities. The architects should consider the United States Advisory Board's Courthouse Accessibility Committee's [2006 report, Designing Accessible Courthouses](#). Members of this Committee included State and Federal Judges, architects, people with disabilities and their advocates, accessibility designers, and State and Federal Judicial Branch managers and leaders. The U.S. Access Board "*is a federal agency that promotes equality for people with disabilities through leadership in accessible design and the development of accessibility guidelines and standards...*" Further, the Branch should consider spending some of the required dedicated arts budget for the new facility to purchase art from artists with disabilities.
11. The Judicial Branch should develop a database or other computer system to track ADA-usage statistics and other related data, including technology requests and usage
12. The Judicial Branch should, with the assistance of the Advisory Board, fully articulate its ADA policies that support all aspects of the requirements of the Act. The overarching policy should address the requirements of Title II entities to provide effective communication and reasonable modifications, as well as DOJ requirements related to service animals.
13. The Judicial Branch should implement a survey of court users who make ADA accommodation requests, to determine if the accommodation process is easy to understand; whether the request process is working; to determine if the Branch is providing appropriate and current (i.e., updated) accommodations; and to gauge the level of quality of vendor-provided services, such as sign language, and the quality of [Judicial Branch auxiliary aids](#). The data should be collected and used to develop performance measures and metrics.
14. The Branch should offer ADA compliance training to states attorneys and public defenders, whose offices are housed in Judicial Branch facilities. State's attorneys are Constitutional officers who are part of the Executive Branch's Division of Criminal Justice; the Division of Public Defender Services is led by the Chief Public Defender and is a state agency. Occasionally, requests for ADA accommodations made to the Judicial Branch on behalf of parties to criminal cases that directly impact the administration of a courtroom proceeding. Training of these non-Judicial Branch entities, by Judicial Branch staff, on the Act, the Branch's obligations, and the services and aids offered to all people will help to ensure that people with disabilities receive appropriate accommodations from non-judicial authorities, managers and staff inside Judicial Branch facilities.

15. The Advisory Board should continue to conduct community outreach, when possible, about the Branch's commitment to the ADA, and provide education to community members on how the Branch provides services to people with disabilities. That should include offering materials in other languages such as Spanish and Polish. The information should also be posted on the Branch's Spanish information website.
16. The Branch's Courthouse Observation Team (COT) should conduct focused observations to ensure that people with disabilities are being appropriately accommodated by Judicial Branch staff.

VIII. Schedule next meeting: The Board will meet again in late September or early October. Ms. Collins will email the members with a date and time. She will also email the members the report when it has been accepted and reviewed by the Chief Justice. The meeting adjourned at 10:30 a.m.