

Minutes
Public Service and Trust Commission
Committee on Self-represented Parties
Subcommittee on Training
January 14, 2009

The Public Service and Trust Commission Committee on Self-represented Parties, Subcommittee on Training met via teleconference at 225 Spring Street, Wethersfield, CT in Room 206 on January 14, 2009.

Those in attendance: Hon. Jonathan E. Silbert (chair), Ms. Krista Hess, Atty. Susan Reeve, Hon. Mary E. Sommer, and Hon. Cynthia K. Swienton.

Judge Silbert called the meeting to order at 1:05pm.

1. The subcommittee unanimously approved the minutes of the December 10, 2008 meeting.
2. Krista Hess provided the subcommittee with an overview of the work thus far of the remaining four (4) subcommittees of the Committee on Self-represented Parties. A discussion was held during the overview of the Subcommittee on Support Services regarding the feasibility of dedicated dockets for self-represented parties. The Subcommittee on Training agreed to address this issue at the next full meeting of the Committee on Self-represented Parties on January 23, 2009.
3. The subcommittee briefly reviewed and discussed the preliminary results from the survey which was sent to Judges, Family Support Magistrates, Small Claims Magistrates, Chief Clerks, Housing Specialists, Foreclosure Mediators and Court Service Center staff. It was agreed that the updated survey results would be redistributed to the subcommittee once the final numbers had been tallied.
4. The subcommittee discussed the letter to self-represented parties drafted by Judge Silbert, as well as a revised draft submitted by Judge Swienton. The subcommittee agreed that the concept of a letter to self-represented parties was a good one and that the purpose of the letter was to encourage parties to retain counsel while providing useful information regarding available court resources. A discussion was held regarding how to best maximize the effectiveness of the letter, with consideration given to such issues as format, content and distribution.

The subcommittee further discussed the possibility of producing two drafts of the letter to self-represented parties: a shorter draft that might be printed on the reverse side of a judicial notice (JDNO), and a somewhat longer version that would be available for distribution at clerk's offices, Court Service Centers, municipal libraries, etc. The subcommittee agreed to advocate for multiple modes of distribution in order maximize the number of self-represented parties who might benefit from the information contained in the letter.

5. A discussion was held regarding the creation of video resources for self-represented parties. The subcommittee discussed a suggestion from Judge Jonathan Kaplan to create a video of the family support magistrate advisement of rights that would run in continuous, sequential loops. The parties would be required to watch the video and sign a form indicating to the court that they had viewed the video advisement. The form would be placed in the court file, thereby negating the need for the Magistrate to repeatedly administer the advisement each time court was opened. Additionally, this would serve to eliminate the need for parties to sit through the advisement on each court date, and may assist in contributing to a more efficient use of time.

In addition, a discussion was held regarding videos produced by other states, specifically, Indiana and Washington State. It was agreed that when information is delivered by a "live" person versus in writing, the message delivered seems to have a greater impact on the person receiving it. The subcommittee also discussed the need to produce videos in English and Spanish due to the growing number of Spanish-speaking parties and the shortage of interpreters.

The subcommittee also discussed the costs associated with producing a video and agreed to contact Mr. Michael Emons to determine the extent of the costs.

6. The meeting was adjourned at 1:50 p.m.