

## **Draft Minutes**

### **Annual Meeting of the Advisory Board on the Americans with Disabilities Act**

**10:00 a.m.**

**Tuesday, March 1, 2022**

**Remote Conferencing via Teams**

*Streamed live on YouTube at <https://youtu.be/pjp8JeKjigE>*

**Members present:** The Hon. Patrick L. Carroll III, Chief Court Administrator, Chair, Atty. Brittany Kaplan, Mr. Charles Epstein, Ms. Kristin Giantonio, Atty. Paul S. Hartan, Ms. Laura Jovino, Ms. Sandra Lugo-Gines, Mr. Michael Hines, Atty. Deirdre McPadden.

**Members absent:** Ms. Kathleen Gensheimer, Ms. Deanna Dorkins, Atty. Carl D. Cicchetti.

**Others present:** Judge Elizabeth A. Bozzuto, Atty. Tais C. Ericson, Atty. Lori Petruzzelli, Atty. Viviana Livesay, Atty. Stephen N. Ment, Atty. Richard Loffredo, Ms. Heather Collins.

- I. **Welcome:** Board Chair, Chief Court Administrator Judge Patrick L. Carroll III: Judge Carroll called the meeting to order at 10:03 a.m., welcomed the members, guests and support staff, and noted that the meeting is being livestreamed and stored by the Branch on its YouTube Channel.
- II. **Approval of the Draft Minutes of the February 2021 Meeting:** A motion was made by Ms. Lugo-Gines to approve the draft minutes of the Board's last Annual meeting on Feb. 1, 2021, and the motion was seconded by Mr. Hines. The minutes were approved unanimously without change.
- III. **Discussion and Approval of the Draft 2021 Report of the ADA Advisory Board and Division Report-outs:** A draft copy of the Advisory Board's annual report was circulated to members prior to the meeting. Judge Carroll thanked the members for their contributions to the report and their ongoing commitment to ensuring access to justice for people with disabilities. It was noted that the Connecticut Judicial Branch and the state of Hawaii's Judicial Branch shared top honors in the Justice Index 2020, which assessed all 50 states and the District of Columbia's access to justice for people with disabilities. The assessment looked at disability access policies and procedures including the delivery of services, communication, planning and design, and training and support.

A motion to approve the report was made by Ms. Lugo-Gines, and it was seconded by Mr. Hines. The Board unanimously approved the Annual Report, which will be presented to Chief Justice Robinson.

IV. The members provided the following Annual Report highlights:

- **Ongoing initiative: Training:** Ms. Lugo-Gines reported that several hundred Branch employees from all Divisions completed online ADA training in 2021 including:
  - *The Nuts and Bolts of the ADA*, with 216 completions. This course must be completed by all new hires within three months of hire date.
  - *Service Animals 101*, with 222 completions.
  - *Advanced Training for ADA Contacts* was conducted for 69 Local Contacts, by the Centralized ADA Office.
  - The Centralized ADA Office provided an ADA Overview for 46 interns enrolled in the Branch's Experiential Learning Program.
  - 45 employees completed online courses offered by the New England ADA Center: *The Overview of Disability Rights Law*, and *Fair Housing Act, Section 504, and the ADA*.

Mr. Hines reported that nearly 200 employees in the Court Support Services Division completed one or more ADA-related trainings. The Division has developed a strong training network to support its employees in their specific roles. Among training for CSSD staff are:

- *Mental Health and Co-occurring Disorders*
- *Youth Mental Health First Aid*
- *Borderline Personality Disorder*
- *Introduction to Trauma*
- *Building Resiliency/Exploring Trauma*

Ms. Lugo-Gines said the Centralized ADA Office provided Title II training, resources, and background on developing ADA initiatives to nearly 50 ADA coordinators from municipalities and state agencies at the 2021 Annual Conference of the ADA Coalition of Connecticut.

- **Ongoing Initiative: Facilities:** Ms. Jovino reported that the Judicial Branch in 2020-2021 conducted ADA Assessments of facilities in four Judicial Districts: Ansonia-Milford, Hartford, Middlesex, and New Haven. The assessments of public, staff, and detention areas identified necessary improvements by three categories:
  - Work to be completed by in-house maintenance staff;
  - Minor work to be completed by contractors; and
  - Capital Improvement Projects (CIPs).

The Facilities Unit of the Administrative Services Division has added an architect to its staff and a large measure of their responsibility is to oversee the assessments, improvements, and recommendations for improving ADA access, Ms. Jovino said. The number one priority is completing work that has been identified as work that can be completed in-house, by maintenance staff. Facilities has been working on this project with the Branch's Legal Services Unit, the U.S. Department of Justice, and the state Attorney General's Office. Judge Carroll said that this working relationship has been enormously beneficial to the Branch and that the DOJ is pleased with not only the progress the Branch has made in remediating ADA accessibility issues, but to the Branch's ongoing commitment to ADA compliance overall. He also noted that the Legal Services Unit has worked with the Governor's office to encourage the Executive Branch to strengthen its commitment to improving access to state facilities for people with disabilities.

- **Ongoing initiative: Law Libraries:** Ms. Lugo-Gines reported that the Law Libraries Unit, which maintains the Branch's ADA Resources page, continues to expand its Law By Subject pages pertinent to the ADA including
  - Service Animals and the ADA
  - Dog Law in Connecticut, Sec. 4: Service Animals
  - Comfort and Support Dogs for Witnesses and, new for 2021:
  - Special Education.

The Law Library staff is familiar with computer accessibility settings and has utilized those settings to accommodate patrons using the public access computers.

- **Ongoing initiative: Technology:** Ms. Lugo-Gines reported that in 2021, the Branch redesigned its ADA internet page to make it easier to navigate and making information more easily available. The information is broken down into smaller bites of information. Additionally, a new ADA Quick Card was added with real-world examples, written in plain language, and posted on the ADA homepage.

The Branch translated the ADA internet homepage into Spanish, Portuguese, and Polish, with encouragement from the Board and the Limited English Proficiency Committee. These are the top three most requested languages, other than English.

The Centralized ADA Office re-designed the intranet page for Judicial Branch staff, making the site a one-stop-shop for not only ADA Contacts, but any Branch staff member who quickly needs information on processes, forms,

equipment, policies, guidelines, and assistance from a trained ADA Local Contact by district.

In 2021 the Branch consolidated its process for scheduling American Sign Language, Certified Deaf Interpreters, and Communication Access Realtime Translation, which are vendor-provided services. The electronic request form is completed by any Branch staff member via the internal Interpreter Request app.

- **Ongoing Initiative: Purchasing Services:** Ms. Lugo-Gines reported that in 2021, the Branch provided sign language services 332 times, and CART services were provided 45 times. It is expected those numbers will increase as the court system continues to expand dockets and proceedings with the waning of the pandemic.

V. **Future Initiatives**, as reported by Ms. Lugo Gines:

- **Training:** In 2022, Connecticut Judges and Family Support Magistrates will participate in ADA training, focusing on Title II of the Act, specifically on the concepts of reasonable accommodations and fundamental alterations of the process.
- **Training:** Remote training is being developed by the Centralized ADA Office (CAO), for all new Local Contacts. This individualized training, via TEAMS, will allow a staff member of the CAO to conduct personalized ADA training with new contacts. With large numbers of retirements expected over the next year, this training will help ensure new Contacts can hit the ground running when asked to provide an accommodation.
- **Training** for Interns in the Experiential Learning Program will continue, and the Branch may provide training to Probate Courts.
- **Facilities:** Ms. Jovino said the Facilities Unit’s architect will review the ADA assessments, cited above and, with approval from the Attorney General’s Office and the DOJ, prioritize and implement the improvements under the three-category approach.
- **Information:** The Board is going to request that the Branch’s Interpreter and Translator Services Unit to translate the “Procedure for Members of the Public to Request an Accommodation Under the Americans with Disabilities Act” into Spanish, Portuguese, and Polish.

VI. **Next Meeting:** The next Annual Meeting of the ADA Advisory Board will be in late winter/early Spring 2023.