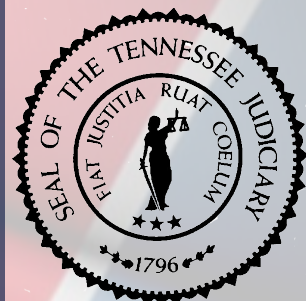




Tennessee Supreme Court  
**Access to Justice Commission**  
Annual Report 2017





*A volunteer attorney assists a client at a legal clinic.*

*On the cover*

The Marshall County Courthouse. The Access to Justice Commission is modeling a court kiosk program in 2018 after a program in Marshall County that won a “most innovative program” award from the American Bar Association.

## Table of Contents



<b>Introduction</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Letter from Justice Connie Clark</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Letter from Marcy Eason</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Letter from Gail Vaughn Ashworth</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Strategic Planning</b>	<b>10</b>



<b>Initiatives</b>	
<b>HELP4TN Day</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Self-Help Forms</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Legal Aid Organizations</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>Legal Clinics and Outreach</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>Attorney Pro Bono Work</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>Equal Justice University</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>Pro Bono &amp; Faith Days</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>Pro Bono Recognition</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>Immigration Task Force</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>Pro Bono Distributions</b>	<b>30</b>



<b>Access to Justice Commission Roster</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>Access to Justice Commission Committees</b>	<b>34</b>
<b>Access to Justice Commission Staff</b>	<b>38</b>
<b>Access to Justice Partners</b>	<b>40</b>
<b>Faith &amp; Justice Alliance Partners</b>	<b>42</b>

# Introduction

**T**en years ago, the Tennessee Supreme Court declared **access to justice its number one strategic priority.** By doing so, the entire Court publicly expressed its support of the many legal aid providers, pro bono programs, bar associations, law schools, and other organizations dedicated to serving disadvantaged Tennesseans with civil legal issues.

After making this announcement, the Tennessee Supreme Court created the Access to Justice Commission, giving it broad authority to implement programs and initiatives to improve access to justice in Tennessee. Under Tennessee Supreme Court Rule 50, the Commission must:

- Educate the public concerning the need for legal representation to meet the ideal of equal justice under the law;
- Identify the priorities to meet the need of improved access to justice; and
- Make recommendations to the Supreme Court of projects and programs the Commission determines are necessary and appropriate for enhancing access to justice in Tennessee.

The Commission accomplishes these goals through developing a strategic plan every two years.

The Commission is made up of ten leaders, both from within and outside the legal profession, and operates using an Advisory Committee structure, something that is unique to this group. In 2017, the Commission had six Advisory Committees focused on Education, Faith-Based Initiatives, Family Law, Pro Bono, Public Awareness, and Self-Represented Litigants. Advisory Committees are made up of equal justice stakeholders and other experts throughout the State.

The Advisory Committees explore issues surrounding self-represented litigants, ways to encourage more pro bono and reduced-rate legal representation, and methods to increase resources and funding for access to justice in civil matters.

Further, Advisory Committees partner with the Alternative Dispute Resolution Commission to examine pro bono and reduced-rate mediation opportunities. Committees address existing and proposed laws, rules, procedures, and policies that are barriers to access to justice.

They develop and recommend initiatives and systemic change to reduce barriers to access to justice and meet the civil legal needs of persons who do not qualify for traditional legal aid due to their income. They partner with organizations to address the needs of persons with disabilities who do not qualify for assistance programs by virtue of their income. Advisory Committees explore ways to help persons in language minorities and persons whose legal issues cannot be handled by legal aid programs.

An overall task of the Commission is to make the public aware of the continuous civil legal needs of their fellow Tennesseans and the availability of existing resources and new resources to those in need. It has one this by working to establish itself as the statewide coordinating arm of access to justice.

This marks the first annual report the Tennessee Supreme Court and the Access to Justice Commission have created and published and is meant to complement the annual Pro Bono Report released each October. It highlights the good work it has done, and also includes key accomplishments of our many partners, which are valuable to the Court and Commission's success in 2017 and prior years.



More than 60 million Americans have family incomes at or below 125 percent of the federal poverty level, including:

- 6.4 million seniors
- 11.1 million people with disabilities
- 1.7 million veterans
- 10 million rural residents

The Justice Gap, 2017



In the past year, 71 percent of low-income households nationwide experienced at least one civil legal problem, including problems with domestic violence, veterans' benefits, disability access, housing conditions, and health care. Seven in 10 of these households say the problem has significantly impacted their lives.

The Justice Gap, 2017



71 percent of households with veterans, or other military personnel, have experienced a civil legal problem in the past year.

The Justice Gap, 2017



Low-income Americans receive inadequate or no professional legal help for 85 percent of the civil legal problems they face in a given year.

The Justice Gap, 2017



1,023,177 Tennesseans live below the federal poverty line. That is nearly 1 in 6 people, which ranks the state 40th in the nation. Over 22 percent of children under the age of 18 live below the poverty line.

Talk Poverty, 2017



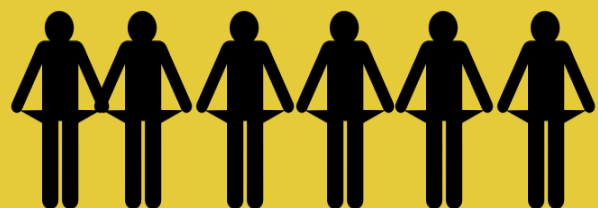
Approximately 6 out of 10 Tennessee low-income households reported experiencing one or more civil legal problems in the past year.

Tennessee Statewide Legal Needs Assessment, 2014



Tennessee households identified as “working poor” were significantly more likely to report that they had experienced a civil legal problem in the past year than those who were not working.

Tennessee Statewide Legal Needs Assessment, 2014



Over 60 percent of low-income Tennesseans who reported having a single biggest legal problem did not take action to solve their problem. Common reasons included lack of financial resources, lack of trust in the judicial system, feeling it is better to leave things alone, and feelings of intimidation by the legal system.

Tennessee Statewide Legal Needs Assessment, 2014



TENNESSEE SUPREME COURT

TENNESSEE SUPREME COURT

Tennessee Supreme Court  
Court of Appeals  
Court of Criminal Appeals

# From Justice Connie Clark

I have had a special affinity for the Access To Justice Commission and its initiatives since its creation in 2009. But, during the three years that I have served as the Court's direct liaison to the Commission, I have been even more amazed and excited to observe up close the limitless passion, purpose, and performance of every commission member, every staff member, every Tennessee attorney, every bar association, every Legal Service Corporation-funded employee, and the hundreds of other service agency employees and community leaders involved in the drive to provide meaningful civil legal access to all who need it.

In this initial public report I want to acknowledge the particular leadership of the twenty-one Tennesseans who have accepted seats at the Commission table since 2009 and the professional staff who serve them. Diverse in every way, these extraordinary folks have devoted hundreds of hours each year to our goals: the education of the public and the recommendation and implementation of initiatives and systemic changes needed to accomplish real access to justice for those who do not have the means to hire attorneys to assist with their problems.

They have been the driving force behind Court rule changes, the creation of uniform forms, the increase in attorney and law student pro bono service, the increased use of technology to connect with potential clients, the increased outreach to the media and the public, the creation of alliances with faith groups and community outreach organizations

who also serve our neighbors in need, and the marshaling of resources of every kind to increase the arsenal of tools available in our quest to one day be able to address every unmet legal need in some way. Our attorney rules of ethical conduct have always acknowledged that economic barriers disadvantage many of our neighbors who need civil legal help, and the rules ask all attorneys to devote time and resources to improving access to justice. But the Commission has given new energy and focus to that ideal and in doing so has reinvigorated thousands of people, including the members of our Supreme Court, to embrace that ideal as our primary focus in evaluating the ability of our system to serve the members of our communities. We are all better for the work they have done, and I am privileged to observe that work up close.

—Justice Connie Clark

## From Marcy Eason, Chair 2016-1018

It is an honor and privilege to have served as Chair for the Access to Justice Commission for the past two years. The energy and positive focus of the Commission and dedicated AOC staff are continuing sources of pride and inspiration. From the time this Commission was created less than a decade ago, forward momentum has been constant, spurred on by the solid commitment of the Tennessee Supreme Court. For others involved in similar Access to Justice endeavors throughout the country, this supportive collaboration is unique.

In a building and strengthening phase under a strategic plan adopted two years ago, the Access to Justice Commission invested in new and innovative projects to advance ATJ initiatives, and strengthen existing partnerships and programs state wide. The Commission sustained its civil legal advice clinic expansion plan, to establish at least one legal advice clinic in each judicial district. Currently, all of Tennessee's thirty-one judicial districts have some type of legal clinic. A statewide communications plan was created and adopted to advance ATJ statewide initiatives and solidify our relationship with all essential Access to Justice partners. The plan conveys a unified message on the importance of civil legal aid and the impact it has on our communities and our state.

The Tennessee Supreme Court held an unprecedented statewide news event from five locations focusing on HELP4TN to educate Tennesseans on available ATJ resources and further opportunities for pro bono service by volunteer attorneys. Supreme Court Pro Bono Recognition Programs have expanded throughout the legal community and law schools.

Recognizing a unique need and opportunity under the Faith and Justice initiative of the Commission, the Tennessee Faith and Justice Alliance recruited over 25 new members, publishes regularly to the faith community and attorneys, holds faith leader training events and volunteer attorney CLE presentations.

Through strategic plans and forward-thinking collaborations and programs the Commission continues to develop opportunities for improved access to justice in Tennessee. Working with the AOC and the CLE Commission, the ATJ Commission developed a mechanism to fund a court kiosk pilot project in ten locations throughout the state. The kiosks placed in courthouses will provide immediate and convenient resources to self-represented litigants and the court staff who serve them. Based on a privately funded critical needs study the Commission created its first substantive law committee focused on family law. The Committee developed a statewide survey for all stakeholders on existing family law resources, and will use that survey to identify needed resources in this essential area.

The hardworking Commission members, through the leadership of the Tennessee Supreme Court and its unwavering support, have made significant inroads to provide true equal justice to all Tennesseans. What I have come to appreciate through this work is not only the selfless volunteerism in Tennessee, but the creative collaborative partnerships that exist, especially in the legal services arena. As this Commission continues to evolve, new and exciting developments are in store for everyone. Stay tuned—I know I will!

—Marcy Eason



# From Gail Vaughn Ashworth, Chair 2018-2020

This first annual report of the Commission captures the many successes of the past year and demonstrates how this good work continues to build on the strong foundation created by Tennessee lawyers, judges, and leaders across the state since the inception of the Commission in 2009.

A new two-year strategic plan is adopted in the spring of each new plan year and the Commission's fifth strategic plan will soon be in place. Each plan is designed to:

- advance the mission
- set new goals
- evaluate the effectiveness of work being done, and
- identify new ideas and creative solutions for Tennessee.

Strategic planning is an exciting, collaborative, exhausting, yet exhilarating, experience. The synergy in the room is something I know every volunteer experiences when they participate in the ATJ mission by serving clients all across our state in many different ways. The information collected and presented in the annual report helps inform our planning as we move forward.

Some of the highlights from this report include:

- The Faith and Justice Alliance programs and trainings that continue to open up opportunities for service through the many faith communities and tap into extensive volunteer networks to assist in addressing the need in Tennessee
- Achieving the goal of all judicial districts having at least one legal advice clinic- and, many of the clinics are in user-friendly locations for people who need assistance and connection to this tried-and-true method of delivering legal services
- The Court Kiosk Resource pilot project received grant funding and kiosks will be placed in multiple locations across the State to provide

access to tools, information and resources to self-represented litigants and others onsite at these courthouses

- The HELP4TN Day begun in 2017 will be carried on and grown due to the tremendous success of the Spring 2017 new initiative
- Pro Bono Recognition events honoring lawyers and volunteers have grown in numbers across the State and help highlight the great volunteer work being done by so many lawyers in Tennessee

Moving the needle forward to provide better resources, communication, education, and services in Tennessee is a process that requires collaboration among the Bench, the Bar and people in the communities we all serve. We all benefit from that collaboration. The creative means being used to increase greater access to legal services is a hallmark of the work being done in Tennessee and we want to continue to grow these means in the years to come.

I look forward to working with the Commissioners and staff, the Supreme Court, and the many hardworking lawyers and volunteers in Tennessee to further this important work to ensure that access to justice is available to all.

—Gail Vaughn Ashworth

# Strategic Planning

One of the overall functions of the ATJ Commission is to gain and maintain an understanding of all the many pro bono and self-represented litigants initiatives throughout Tennessee. This understanding enables the Commission to identify potential collaborations, develop educational materials to replicate initiatives in underserved areas, and disseminate information to the general public on where they can go to get civil legal help.

Activities in the 2016 ATJ Commission Strategic Plan track the objectives listed above. The Commission created a statewide Communications Plan with the help of Voices for Civil Justice, a national communications initiative that spotlights the critical role of civil legal aid in assuring fairness for all in the justice system. The Commission conducted a statewide survey of judges, court clerks, attorneys, mediators, and other stakeholders to get a picture of existing family law resources and needs.

The Tennessee Justice and Faith Alliance exceeded its goal of recruiting twenty-five new partners or projects, many of which are in rural parts of the state. The clinic expansion project, aimed at having a least one recurring legal advice clinic in each judicial district, is close to meeting its goal. As of the release

of this report, there has been at least one legal advice clinic in each judicial district, but not every district has regular clinics.

The access to justice website, [www.JusticeForAllTN.com](http://www.JusticeForAllTN.com), has a page devoted to resources for judges and court clerks on issues surrounding self-represented litigants. The Commission facilitated Tennessee as being one of four jurisdictions included in a national study on self-represented litigants with family law issues over the past two years. This study is available as a resource.

The timeline includes highlights from the 2016 Plan. Many of the items are featured in other portions of this report.

# 2017-18 Access to Justice Commission Strategic Plan Highlights



- Identify other organizations to serve as portals/access points to low-income Tennesseans and distribute materials to them.
- Develop and have available printed materials at clinics and Tennessee Faith & Justice Alliance events.
- Increase use of resources by 10 percent.
- Develop statewide communications plan.



- Conduct statewide survey of family law programs and resources.



- Increase number of lawyers recognized as Attorneys for Justice by 10 percent.



- Have at least one legal advice clinic in each judicial district.
- Recruit 25 new Tennessee Faith & Justice Alliance projects - focus on rural areas and other faiths.
- Create and implement plan to have 10 new court kiosks.



- Integrate with other Committees to disseminate information.
- Expand plain language forms - develop 1 packet per year.
- Create page on ATJ website for judges with resources on handling self-represented litigants.
- Collaborate with Alternative Dispute Resolution Commission.

# HELP4TNDAY 2017

In 2017, the Tennessee Supreme Court and its Access to Justice Commission sponsored the first Help4TNDay on Saturday, April 1. Help4TNDay was a day of public service, where Tennesseans could get free legal advice and information online, over the phone or in-person at legal advice clinics. Events took place over the two weeks leading up to April 1, and the two weeks following.

The goals of Help4TNDay were to bring public awareness to the continuous need for civil legal help for Tennesseans and highlight the many organizations that work to meet that need. The Tennessee Supreme Court kicked off Help4TNDay by holding five simultaneous press conferences across the state. The press conferences were held in Chattanooga, Jackson, Knoxville, Memphis, and Nashville, and featured local legal aid organizations and clients who had received help from them. The mayors in each city and county issued proclamations declaring Saturday, April 1, as Help4TNDay.

Help4TNDay was named after the statewide legal information portal, [www.Help4TN.org](http://www.Help4TN.org). Tennesseans can find links to court forms, find information about legal issues, and learn about legal resources in their area. Tennesseans can also get free legal advice and referrals from the Help4TN legal helpline, 1-844-Help4TN. The Access to Justice Commission created a public service announcement featuring Help4TN.org, which ran on television and radio during the Help4TNDay celebration.

Help4TN.org includes information where Tennesseans who qualify can get free civil legal advice online. TN Free Legal Answers is a website where Tennesseans can ask their legal questions and get a response via email from a pro bono lawyer.

Throughout Help4TNDay, over 53 events took place. These included general civil legal advice clinics, Know Your Rights presentations, and free legal education trainings for volunteer lawyers. There were also five expungement clinics where Tennesseans who qualified for free expungements were helped. Clients were able to meet with a lawyer and then go before the judge to have their qualifying charges expunged.

These expungement clinics are a unique opportunity for volunteer lawyers to help a client conclude a legal problem over one day. They require coordination and help

**53** events  
**5** expungement clinics  
**800** people served  
**5** press conferences  
**\$1 million** in free publicity

from the local judges, lawyers, and court clerks to be successful. These professionals in Hardeman, Grainger, Montgomery, Rutherford, and Madison Counties came together to provide this much-needed service to their communities.

Over 800 Tennesseans were directly helped at legal clinics, online by TN Free Legal Answers, or over the phone through the Help4TN helpline during



Help4TNDay. Tennessee’s civil legal service providers and pro bono programs received over \$1 million in free publicity as a result of the press conferences and numerous events.

Because of the success of the Help4TNDay in 2017, the

Access to Justice Commission decided to make the initiative an annual celebration each April. Help4TNDay was such a success because of the participation and help from our stakeholders, including the Tennessee Bar Association, the Tennessee Alliance for Legal Services, Legal Aid of

East Tennessee, Legal Aid Society of Middle Tennessee and the Cumberslands, Memphis Area Legal Services, and West Tennessee Legal Services.

# SELF-HELP FORMS

In addition to fully supporting civil legal service providers and the wonderful work done by pro bono lawyers, the Access to Justice Commission has prioritized creating resources for people who must represent themselves in court.

Beginning on January 1, 2017, Tennessee parents with minor children, who were representing themselves and agreed on the divorce terms, had access to Tennessee Supreme Court approved forms and instructions to walk them through the divorce process. This is the first statewide resource for parents who find themselves in this situation.

To qualify to use the forms, the parents have to agree on all the terms of the divorce, including the child support amount. They can't own any real property and can't have any type of retirement accounts.

In addition to being acceptable in any court with divorce jurisdiction, the forms are written in plain language, which is a fifth-to-eighth grade reading level. The Commission creates all resources for self-represented litigants in plain language, with the goal of helping them have a better understanding of what is going to happen to them in the courtroom and throughout their case.

There have been forms for Tennesseans who have no minor children and agree on the terms of the divorce, have no real property, and have no retirement accounts,

available statewide in plain language since 2011. The Tennessee Supreme Court approved the Commission's request to update these forms. The updated versions were adopted in October 2017. The updates improve the forms and incorporate lessons learned during the first years of their use.

Both sets of forms were made possible by the Commission's recommendation, and the Tennessee Supreme Court's adoption, of Supreme Court Rule 52. Rule 52 provides that any forms approved under the Rule are universally acceptable as legally sufficient in Tennessee.

The Commission has a forms implementation process that involves all stakeholders prior to submitting any forms to the Tennessee Supreme Court. The process allows legal aid providers, judges, court clerks, the private bar, and other stakeholders to review the forms and contribute suggested edits and comments. The goal is to develop

## Website Pageviews 2017

[tncourts.gov](http://tncourts.gov)

**85,936** divorce forms

**70,755** publications/forms

**32,141** self-help center

**30,293** parenting plan

**8,763** orders of protection

[justiceforalltn.com](http://justiceforalltn.com)

**7,771** i need help/forms

**2,652** pro se guide

the best possible version of the relevant form and instructions in the beginning of the process, as opposed to waiting until the end stages to solicit feedback.

**JUSTICE FOR ALL**  
A TENNESSEE SUPREME COURT INITIATIVE

Legal Help | I Can Help | Select Language | WATCH OUR VIDEOS

Home > Videos > Introduction to the Tennessee General Sessions Court

## Introduction to the Tennessee General Sessions Court

This video explains the types of cases that are handled in general sessions court. The video also provides information on helpful resources.

Introduction to the Tennessee General Sessions Court

Segment 1:  
Introduction to Tennessee  
General Sessions Civil Court

Introduction to the Tennessee General Sessions Court  
Category: General Public, Court System & How it Works

© Copyright 2017 | Site Map | About | Contact | TNCourts.gov | Privacy Policy | Last updated April 2013

SELF HELP CENTER

Welcome to the Self-Help Center of our website. The information provided here will help you find information about the court system, find an attorney and locate other resources that might help you represent yourself in some legal matters.

More resources and information is available at the Supreme Court's Justice for All website. Click the button below to go to that website.

**JUSTICE FOR ALL WEBSITE**

INTERACTIVE MAP

Learn more about the courts in each county. [Explore the Map.](#)

STILL NEED HELP?

Please look through this section of our website to find information on a variety of topics. If you cannot find what you are looking for, [click here to send us an email inquiry](#). We will respond to your inquiry as soon as possible. In order to maintain a reasonable response time, please review the help categories on this page before sending that email.

PLEASE NOTE: In accordance with Tennessee Code Annotated, Section 16-3-804(b), no employee of the state court system shall engage, either directly or indirectly, in the practice of law. This includes making legal referrals, performing legal research or giving legal advice.

**SELF HELP CENTER**

What should I expect in court? (Video)  
Find a Court Clerk  
Find a Lawyer  
Find a Mediator  
Forms  
Links & Resources

**ACCESS TO JUSTICE**

**COURT IMPROVEMENT**

**COURT INTERPRETERS**

**COURT REPORTERS**

**GAVELS PROGRAM**

**INDIGENT DEFENSE**

**MEDIATION**

**PARENTING PLAN**

**RFPS/GRANTS**

**SCALES PROJECT**

SEARCH TNCOURTS.GOV.

CONNECT WITH US ON TWITTER

HELP CENTER

**FAMILIES & CHILDREN**

[Child Dependency & Neglect Handbook for Parents & Guardians](#)  
[Child Support Information](#)  
[Divorce Forms](#)  
[Help for Visitation with your Children](#)  
[Mediation Information](#)  
[Parenting Plan Information](#)  
[Youth in Juvenile Court](#)

**TRIAL & CRIMINAL COURT**

If you have a question about a warrant (civil or criminal), an arrest, a trial, or any other trial court matters, please contact the Court Clerk for the county in which the case originated. [Click here to find the court clerk in your county.](#)

**Expungements**

**ESTATE & PROBATE**

Most probate and estate matters are handled by the Clerk & Master in your county. [Click here to find the Clerk & Master in your county.](#)

**SMALL CLAIMS**

Small claims cases are typically handled in General Sessions Court. For more information about small claims cases, please contact the court clerk in your county. [Click here to locate your county's court clerk.](#)

[Guidelines and Helpful Information for People with a Case in General Sessions Court](#)  
[Guidelines and Helpful Information for People with a Case in General Sessions Court \(Spanish\)](#)

**TRAFFIC & CITY ISSUES**

Municipal Courts handle traffic cases and cases involving violation of city ordinances. The Municipal Court Clerk in your city will be able to assist you with questions about these types of cases. [Click here to find your local Municipal Court Clerk.](#)

final\_div\_forms\_with\_kids\_effective\_2018.01.11

State of Tennessee	Court _____ <small>(Must Be Completed)</small>	County _____ <small>(Must Be Completed)</small>
<b>Request for Divorce (Complaint) (Form 1)</b>		File No. _____ <small>(Must Be Completed)</small>
		Division/Part _____ <small>(Large Counties Only)</small>
Plaintiff _____ <small>(Name: First, Middle, Last of Spouse Filing the Divorce)</small>		
Defendant _____ <small>(Name: First, Middle, Last of the Other Spouse)</small>		

This form is only for spouses who:

- Have children together who are under 18, in high school, or disabled **AND**
- Have agreed on parenting time, responsibilities, and child support **AND**
- Agree how to divide their personal property and debts, and have no land, or businesses, or retirement benefits, except for social security **AND**
- Agree to sign and notarize the Divorce Agreement and the Parenting Plan **AND**
- Lived in Tennessee when they decided to divorce **OR** one or both spouses lived in Tennessee for at least 6 months.

If you do not meet these rules, you cannot use these forms. Please talk to a lawyer.

**You cannot use these forms if**

- One of the children born while you are married is not both spouses' child. Warning! If this is true, speak to a lawyer. **OR**
- Somebody else has a court order giving them custody or visitation **OR**
- A spouse is pregnant no matter who the father is.

You may not be able to use these forms if either spouse is in the military. See sections 8 and 9.

**Divorce Certificate** - Get this official state paper from the court clerk. You must fill it out before going to court.

**ANSWER EACH QUESTION.**

① **Residency - (check all that apply):**

My spouse or I have lived in Tennessee for at least 6 months.  
 My spouse and I were living in Tennessee when the reason for this divorce happened.  
 Our differences arose in Tennessee.

② **Venue - (check one)** I am filing for divorce in this County because:

My spouse and I lived in this County when we separated.  
 Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
Street Address City State Zip

My spouse lives in this County.  
 I live in this County and my spouse does not live in Tennessee, or is in jail.

③ **Reason for Divorce** - My spouse and I can no longer get along, and we have irreconcilable differences.

January 2017 (Form 1) Request for Divorce Page 1 of 6

# LEGAL AID ORGANIZATIONS

Legal aid societies play a vital role in providing access to the legal system for many Tennesseans, and the Access to Justice Commission is proud to support and partner with these organizations. Their work, innovation, and dedication inspires the Commission each day and reassures it of its mission.

Tennessee has four legal aid organizations funded in part by the federal Legal Services Organization and by state funds managed by the Administrative Office of the Courts.

In Middle Tennessee, over 27,000 people attended 590 community events where the Legal Aid Society of Middle Tennessee and the Cumberlands (LASMTC) staff presented information and answered questions. In addition, LASMTC distributed 45,727 pieces of literature informing people about their legal rights and responsibilities.

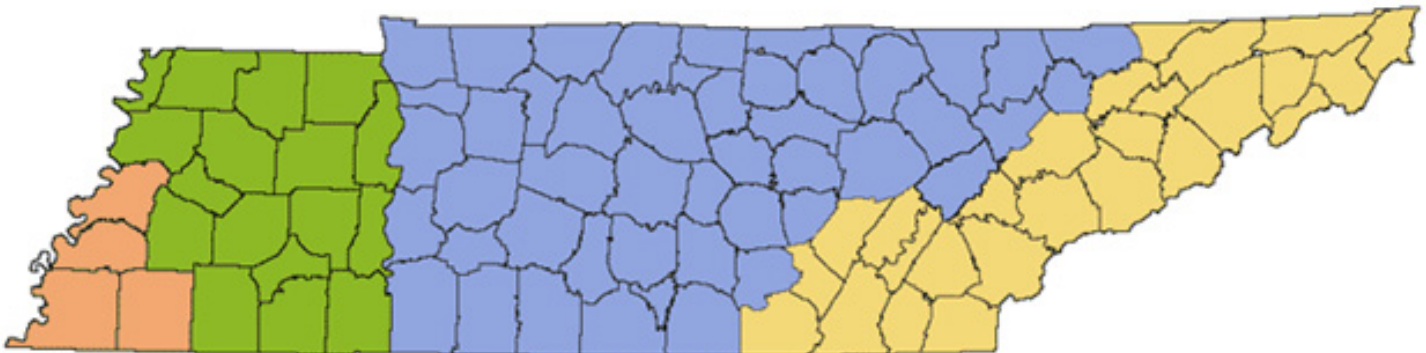
In East Tennessee, Legal Aid of

East Tennessee (LAET) served as a training resource for domestic violence shelters, housing development organizations, community centers, veteran's organizations, homeless shelters and many others. LAET continued its collaboration with the AOC and others on a variety of pro se projects.

West Tennessee Legal Services (WTLS), in partnership with Starbucks, offers "Military Monday's" every second Monday of the month. In those events, our brave veterans are provided an opportunity to meet with lawyers in a non-threatening, comfortable environment at the local Starbucks

to discuss various legal issues.

In Memphis, Memphis Areas Legal Services has created several key projects that augment and complement its delivery of legal assistance, including Memphis CHILD Legal Services, a partnership with Methodist LeBonheur Children's Hospital and the University of Memphis School of Law; Coordinated Response to Elder Abuse, which offers targeted legal services to seniors who have been victimized; A to Z of Used Car Buying Project, in collaboration with AutoZone; DHS Cycles of Success Program; and Supportive Services for Veteran Families.



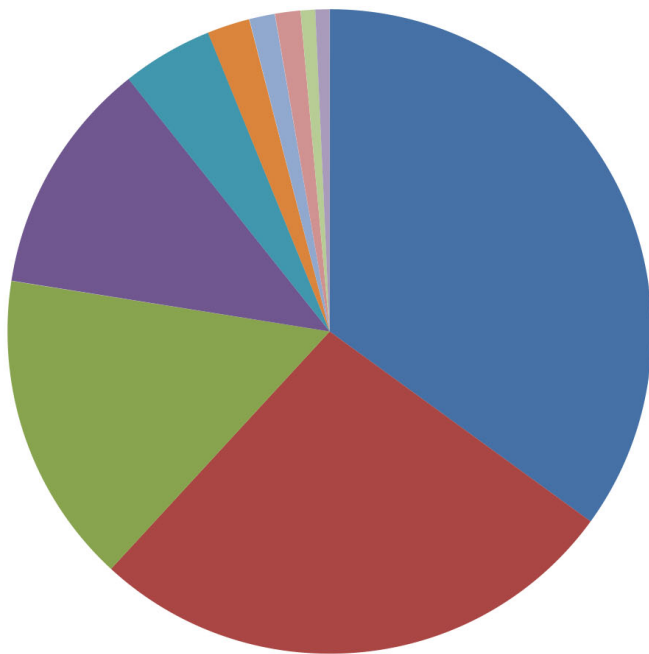
The four LSC-funded legal aid organizations divide up the state as shown above. In addition to their work, there are multiple other legal aid organizations providing much-needed services throughout Tennessee.

*The information for this page came from the AOC's Status Report to the General Assembly - Civil Representation Indigents Fund, Fiscal year 2016-17.*





## Case Type



- Family
- Housing
- Consumer
- Income Maintenance
- Health
- Individual Rights
- Miscellaneous
- Juvenile

In 2017, the four LSC-funded legal aid organizations in Tennessee closed 20,145 cases, by the case type shown to the left. A 2015 Tennessee Bar Association study, which included work done by various types of legal aid groups in Tennessee, showed a \$11.21 impact per dollar of legal aid program funding.

# LEGAL CLINICS & OUTREACH

Legal clinics are one of the main ways of reaching those with civil legal needs. In recent years, the Access to Justice Commission has prioritized expungement clinics, which can help people secure housing and jobs. These clinics are a massive undertaking and take great coordination between judges, clerks, volunteer lawyers, and, of course, those in need.

One Saturday, a free expungement clinic for non-conviction offenses was held in the 24th Judicial District, which was the first of its type in this district. Partners for the clinic were the Tennessee Faith and Justice Alliance, an initiative of the Tennessee Supreme Court Access to Justice Commission, the Tennessee Bar Association Young Lawyers' Division, the Court Clerk's Office of Henry County, First United Methodist Church of Paris, and General Sessions Judge Vicki Snyder.

The clinic was held for four hours, and approximately 60 people were served. Community members arrived with the hope of having their criminal record expunged, and the conversation was one of fresh starts and second chances. As the day progressed, volunteer attorneys helped complete paperwork and, once the paperwork was complete, the individuals went before Judge Snyder, who reviewed the documents and, if appropriate, approved the expungement.

Representatives from the Court Clerk's Office, including Clerk

Mike Wilson and his staff, were present to assist and pull additional documents as needed.

On another Saturday in Bolivar, volunteers came together for a free legal clinic at Campbell Chapel Baptist Church to help members of the public get their criminal records expunged. Volunteer lawyers met with and prepared court forms for almost 40 clients who qualified for free expungements. Judge Boyette Denton, Hardeman County General Sessions Judges, was also on-site. Judge Denton held court at the Church so people were able to complete the expungement process in one day and with the help of a volunteer lawyer.

Tennessee Supreme Court Justice Roger Page, Representative Johnny Shaw, and Bishop Jessie Williams welcomed everyone and spoke of their support for the clinic and similar projects. The Church and its members opened its doors, providing advertising for the clinic, free space to meet, and lunch for everyone. Hardeman County Circuit Court Clerk Linda K. Fulghum and her staff worked hard in the

lead up and during the clinic.

The Hardeman County Expungement Clinic was a project of the Tennessee Faith and Justice Alliance, an initiative of the Tennessee Supreme Court Access to Justice Commission, Campbell Chapel Baptist Church, Hardeman County NAACP, Advance Business Consultants CPA, Representative Shaw, and Judge Denton.

Since 2007, the Memphis Bar Association's Access to Justice Committee and Memphis Area Legal Services Inc. have collaborated with other organizations to provide free legal assistance to anyone in need. As titled, the clinic is held the second Saturday of every month at the Benjamin L. Hooks Central Library.

An average of 80 to 100 people are served at each clinic, 10,000 since its inception. A variety of legal issues are handled, such as advanced directives, family law, landlord-tenant, bankruptcy and more.



## Sample of the types of legal clinics offered:

Debt-collection, Veteran’s issues, Expungement, Health, Small business, Child support, Estate planning, Family law, Seniors, and Tax

The AOC, through the Supreme Court Access to Justice Initiative and Commission, publishes a monthly list of legal advice clinics, sponsors stand-alone clinics, and assists partners to create civil legal advice throughout Tennessee.



**91**  
Legal clinics / pro bono opportunities in West TN

**193**  
Legal clinics / pro bono opportunities in Middle TN

**122**  
Legal clinics / pro bono opportunities in East TN

# ATTORNEY PRO BONO WORK

The work of a lawyer doing pro bono legal service is rarely a glamorous one. However, it is work filled with purpose and compassion, restoring the vision of why many choose to become lawyers in the first place. It is work that is vital; as lawyers fill an essential, unique position in communities that is irreplaceable.

In 20 minutes, a lawyer can change the trajectory of a life.

This year, Tennessee should be proud. The numbers speak for themselves — an increase in the number of attorneys volunteering, the number of total hours donated, and, most importantly, the number of lives served. Pro bono reporting began five years ago after the Supreme Court deemed access to justice a strategic initiative. What you are witnessing now is the beginning of a culture shift. Attorneys today know that providing pro bono services is expected of them and, whether they are driven by faith, service, or a desire to lead, they are eager to do their part. Just over a year ago, the Justice Index ranked Tennessee as one of the top states in the nation for providing access to its courts and the efforts of our pro bono attorneys play a significant role in this honor.

In 2016, 49.54 percent of Tennessee attorneys who completed their Annual Registration Statement for the year reported that they provided 591,064 hours of pro bono service in 2015. Using a standard hourly rate of \$200, the value of these

services is estimated to be more than one hundred million dollars (\$118,212,800 to be exact) in free legal services to Tennesseans in need.

This means 8,122 Tennessee attorneys rolled up their sleeves and got to work, doing pro bono services an average of 72.77 hours each over the year.

These numbers reflect an increase of approximately 8 percent of Tennessee attorneys who reported pro bono from the prior year, and an increase of approximately 4 percent of hours performed from the prior year. In addition, a greater amount of those hours were spent providing direct pro bono legal services to people in need. 2016 marks the highest number of hours provided to persons of limited means without a fee since the annual reporting began in 2012. 2016 also marks the highest number of hours ever provided to nonprofit organizations serving persons of limited means since 2012.

According to a 2016 American Bar Association report, when asked about the types of clients represented, responding attorneys were most likely to report that

they provided pro bono services to a single parent, an ethnic minority, or an elderly person.

The Help4TN helpline handled 4,139 calls in 2016, representing a 7 percent increase from 2015. The helpline reached callers in 91 of Tennessee's 95 counties. The most common questions received on the Help4TN helpline were landlord/tenant, divorce, and child custody questions, which collectively accounted for 33 percent of the total questions asked. Child support, debt collection, criminal, employment, probate, fee generating, and contract dispute questions collectively accounted for 24 percent of the total questions asked.

In addition to providing pro bono services, 23.63 percent, or 3,875, of Tennessee attorneys reported voluntary contributions of financial support to organizations providing legal services to persons of limited means.

In addition to providing one-on-one legal advice, pro bono attorneys also provided free or reduced fee mediations, donated time to the profession, and staffed dozens of legal clinics from Memphis to Mountain City.

# \$118,212,800

*in free legal services provided to Tennesseans in need*

## 49.54%

of Tennessee Attorneys provided pro bono legal services

## 591,064

hours of pro bono legal services provided

## 23.63%

of Tennessee Attorneys made a monetary donation to an organization that provides legal services to persons of limited means

## 4,139

calls made to the HELP4TN helpline, representing a 7% increase from 2015. The helpline reached callers in 91 of Tennessee's 95 counties.

## 72.77

average number of hours donated per year, per attorney

## 100%

of law schools report pro bono work done by students and faculty.

## 66%

of bar associations report that at least a quarter of members participated in pro bono in 2016.

## 101

Tennessee law firms employing more than 1,000 attorneys reported that 71.01% of their attorneys participated in pro bono activities

# EQUAL JUSTICE UNIVERSITY

Every year, the Tennessee Alliance for Legal Services (TALS) hosts a statewide conference focused on civil legal services, pro bono programs, and access to justice. The conference, Equal Justice University (EJU), is one of the only times that Tennessee access to justice stakeholders are able to convene to learn from each other, celebrate successes, and create and strengthen partnerships.

Equal Justice University includes over 50 training sessions on legal issues that affect vulnerable Tennesseans. EJU also equips participants with information on new technology to enable organizations to be more efficient and how to communicate the value of their work to various audiences.

2017 marked the 40th anniversary of the Equal Justice University in Tennessee. This milestone was celebrated as part of a program of the Sargent Shriver Center on Poverty Law called “The Witness”, aimed at introducing advocates and their poverty law and access to justice colleagues across the country. Participants interviewed each other, providing insight on why they work to provide access to justice to Tennesseans. Justice Cornelia A. Clark was featured in one of the interviews.

Participants had the opportunity to hear from leaders in the legal system from across the state. Chief Justice Jeff Bivins served as the keynote speaker during the welcome lunch. He emphasized the Court’s continuing commitment to access to justice as a top priority and

*“The support and excitement from the access to justice community surrounding the 40th anniversary of the Equal Justice University was incredible. We had the highest attendance of record. Tennessee is unique that the full Tennessee Supreme Court supports the work of our civil legal aid providers, pro bono lawyers, and equal justice advocates. That support was demonstrated repeatedly throughout the conference.”*

*-Ann Pruitt*

being “the right thing to do.” Former Justice Janice M. Holder presented an award named in her honor to Larry Bridgesmith and Cat Moon for their innovative work in connecting technology solutions with challenges faced by vulnerable Tennesseans and the legal agencies that serve them.

Three lawyers were recognized for their commitment to access to justice during an Awards Dinner. Carol Gish and Ashley Holliday of West Tennessee Legal Services received the B. Riney Green Award. This award is given as a way to recognize a person or persons who contributed to statewide collaboration for the benefit of clients of the legal service or pro bono programs. The Awards Dinner also featured

Nicole Austin-Hillery, director and counsel of The Brennan Center for Justice’s Washington, D.C. office.

Christina Magráns-Tillery received the New Advocate of the Year Award for her creative and effective advocacy efforts on behalf of clients in the Knoxville area. Ms. Magráns-Tillery is a staff attorney at Legal Aid of East Tennessee. She formerly served as the Pro Bono Coordinator for the Tennessee Supreme Court Access to Justice Commission.

Ann Pruitt, TALS Executive Director, and Tony Seaton, Vice-Chair of the Access to Justice Commission, presented the Tennessee Supreme Court with a token of appreciation for



their leadership in Help4TNDay, specifically traveling across the state for multiple events. Chief Justice Bivins accepted for the Court. AOC Director Deborah Taylor-Tate was also recognized for her steadfast support of the Help4TNDay initiative. The TALS Board also recognized Anne-Louise Wirthlin, the AOC Access to Justice Coordinator, for her work on Help4TNDay.

Tennessee Bar Association

President Lucian Pera and Executive Director Joycelyn Stevenson voiced their appreciation for the legal services professionals and pro bono volunteers at the Leadership Luncheon. They emphasized the TBA's continuing support and involvement in the access to justice community.

TALS is a statewide nonprofit organization committed to equal access to justice in Tennessee.

Its Board of Directors includes executive directors and staff from both federally and other-funded legal service providers, law schools, the TBA, the AOC, advocacy organizations, and other stakeholders. To our knowledge, Tennessee is the only state to have an umbrella organization over all legal service providers.

## PRO BONO & FAITH DAYS

The Tennessee Faith and Justice Alliance kicked off its first Pro Bono & Faith Days, #PBFDDays, over nine days in October 2017. Houses of worship and faith-partners were encouraged to participate by sharing information on free civil legal resources to their members or host a pro bono project during the month of October.

Forty-six houses of worship shared information to their members on social media, bulletin boards, newsletters, or other public locations. The TFJA supplied statistics on Tennesseans' civil legal needs and information on available resources, such as Help4TN.org, in the form of recipe cards. A "peanut butter and fluff" theme was used throughout the recipe cards.

PBFDDays launched with an event at Poverty and the Arts in Nashville, TN. Artists overcoming homelessness were asked to create peanut butter and fluff sandwiches which were photographed and used in marketing materials. Kimi deMent, the Administrative Office of the Courts Pro Bono Coordinator, was on hand to provide free legal advice, similar to what can be received during a civil legal advice clinic.

Twenty-five organizations partnered to host 18 events through formal programming, such as during a sermon, youth group, children's ministry, Sunday school or its equivalency, a public education program, or faith leader trainings. Events also included general civil legal advice clinics and expungement clinics.

A highlight of events include partnering with the American Muslim Advisory Council, the ACLU, the Community Legal Center in Memphis, and the Tennessee Alliance for Legal Services to host a Know Your Rights and Faith Leader Training in Memphis. The Music City Community Court partnered with the TFJA to host an expungement clinic at New Covenant Christian Church in Nashville. Legal Aid of East Tennessee, the Gospel Justice Initiative, and the Christian Legal Society in Chattanooga held a free training event for faith leaders and volunteer lawyers.

PBFDDays highlighted the impact that houses of worship can have on the lives of their members through helping with their civil legal issues. It's estimated that there are 11,000 houses of worship in Tennessee with over three million followers. Studies indicate that sixty percent of people turn to their faith leader first in a time of crisis.

2017 marked the first year that the TFJA as a whole organized around Celebrate Pro Bono Month, an initiative that takes place each October and is led by the Tennessee Bar Association.

One focus of the inaugural campaign was reconnecting and strengthening existing TFJA partnerships and recruiting new TFJA partners and volunteers. All 100 of the existing TFJA partners were reached. At least six new partnerships were formalized through PBFDDay.

The TFJA received special recognition from members of the Tennessee legislature for its work at the Bloomfield Full Gospel Baptist Church Expungement Clinic in Memphis. The recognition came in the form of a House of Representatives Proclamation signed by Speaker Beth Harwell and Representative Barbara Cooper.

The TJFA is a project of the Supreme Court's Access to Justice Commission. It is an alliance of faith-based groups in Tennessee who commit to providing legal resources to their congregations and communities. The TFJA was created to align needs seen at the local house of worship level with possible legal resources that are nearby, perhaps even within the same congregation.



OCT  
21-  
29

## Pro Bono and Faith Days

Everyone has the right to an attorney, correct? Think again. The constitutional right to an attorney only applies when someone has been charged with a felony or is at the risk of losing their liberty. But, what about victims of domestic violence or other crimes? Where would you turn if your employer owed you a paycheck? If needed benefits were denied?

Each year, more than 60 percent of disadvantaged Tennesseans have at least one civil legal problem and have nowhere to turn. The Tennessee Faith & Justice Alliance is the faith community's opportunity to step forward and be that vital connection.

What's your recipe to help?

#PBFDAYS

Created by the Tennessee Supreme Court Access to Justice Commission.



*A social media push was a large part of Pro Bono and Faith Days, including multiple social media graphics like the one shown on the left. Many organizations made legal clinics and community event that included social services, outreach, and, of course, food.*

## PRO BONO & FAITH DAYS PARTNERS

- |  |   |   |
|--|---|---|
| Apostles Anglican Church                                   | First United Methodist Church<br>Paris TN             | St. George's Episcopal Nashville                    |
| Arnstein Jewish Community<br>Center Knoxville              | Grace Lutheran Church                                 | St. James Episcopal Church                          |
| Belmont Church Nashville                                   | Hillsboro Church of Christ                            | St. James Missionary Baptist<br>Church              |
| Beth Sholom Synagogue                                      | Hilldale Baptist Church                               | St. John's Lutheran Church-<br>Knoxville            |
| Bloomfield Full Gospel Baptist<br>Church                   | Hope Presbyterian                                     | St. John's Lutheran Church-<br>Nashville            |
| Campbell Chapel Baptist Church                             | Jesus Christ Church of Latter Day<br>Saints Nashville | St. Luke's Episcopal Church                         |
| Catholic Diocese of Nashville                              | Mt. Lebanon Missionary Baptist<br>Church              | St. Timothy Lutheran Church                         |
| Church of the Redeemer                                     | Murfreesboro First UMC                                | Tennessee Fosters                                   |
| Clark UMC Nashville  | New Covenant Christian Church                         | Tennessee Immigration & Refugee<br>Rights Coalition |
| Crosspoint Church Legal Clinic                             | New Life Church Columbia                              | West Nashville Crosspoint Dream<br>Center           |
| Episcopal Church of the Good<br>Shepherd                   | Northside Assembly of God                             | White Oak United Methodist<br>Church                |
| Evergreen Presbyterian                                     | Overcoming Believers Christian<br>Church              |   |
| Faith and Culture Center-Our<br>Muslim Neighbor Initiative | Poverty and the Arts                                  |   |
| Fellowship Bible Church                                    | Reelfoot Rural Ministries                             |   |
| First Baptist Church                                       | Salvation Army Nashville                              |   |
| First Baptist Church<br>Murfreesboro                       | Samaritan Center Ooltewah                             |   |
| First Presbyterian Church<br>Clarksville                   | South Soddy Baptist Church                            |   |
|  | St. Francis of Assisi Episcopal<br>Church Ooltewah    |   |

# PRO BONO RECOGNITION

The Tennessee Supreme Court understands the time and effort that lawyers donate to provide pro bono services. It also understands the value that Tennessee's pro bono lawyers add to the goal of giving all Tennesseans access to justice. For these reasons, the Court has a program to recognize lawyers who perform 50 or more hours of pro bono work in a calendar year. The program, Attorneys for Justice, has been in existence for four years now and continues to grow in the number of attorneys recognized each year.

In addition, the Tennessee Supreme Court realizes that law students who are engaged in pro bono activities while in law school are more likely to continue to do pro bono work once they are practicing attorneys. Law students who donate 50 or more hours of pro bono service during their law school career can be recognized as Law Students for Justice.

Over 520 attorneys were recognized as Attorneys for Justice in 2017, with the number of attorneys recognized increasing by over five percent from the prior year. One hundred and forty-one law students were recognized as Law Students for Justice, an eight percent increase from the prior year.

Attorneys and law students who are recognized receive a certificate of achievement signed by all five Supreme Court Justices. They also receive an electronic version of the recognition seal, which they

can use on letterhead, websites, and social media. The Tennessee Supreme Court also publicly recognizes attorneys and law students at events throughout the state. A member of the Tennessee Supreme Court presents attorneys and law students with certificates at these events.

The first recognition events were held in 2014 in Nashville, Knoxville, and Memphis. Belmont College of Law was a founding partner for the recognition event in Nashville; the Middle Tennessee event has been at the law school since the recognition program began. The Middle Tennessee event is held in October, to celebrate pro bono month. Participation and popularity of this event continues to grow each year.

Over the years, the Tennessee Supreme Court expanded the events and now holds one in Upper East Tennessee in

partnership with Legal Aid of East Tennessee. It has partnered with the Knoxville Bar Association and Memphis Bar Association to be able to recognize attorneys and law students in front of a larger number of their colleagues and peers.

Lawyers generally apply when they renew their annual registration with the Board of Professional Responsibility. They can also apply directly to the AOC. Law offices, as a whole, may apply to the AOC to be recognized if the office averages 50 or more hours of pro bono service per attorney. Two law offices were recognized in 2017, Anderson Busby, PLLC in Knoxville and Dodson, Parker, Behm & Capparella, PC in Nashville. Dodson, Parker, Behm & Capparella is the only law office to be recognized for averaging 50 hours or more of pro bono work for all four years that the recognition program has been in existence.



# IMMIGRATION TASK FORCE

In June 2017, the Tennessee Faith and Justice Alliance held its first Immigration Task Force meeting. The TFJA created the Task Force to connect faith leaders, TFJA attorneys, and immigration experts statewide.

Further, the Task Force enables members to collaborate on projects and initiatives and consolidates resources and expertise. The need for the Task Force arose during Help4TNDay, as many groups across the state planned Know Your Rights

presentations and immigration pro bono projects.

During the inaugural meeting, the group discussed how to support and connect existing pro bono efforts statewide and how to identify where the TFJA can be

an additional resource. The Task Force has resulted in Know Your Rights and faith leader trainings, including events for #PBFDays. Members have been able to share insights and troubleshoot issues during quarterly meetings.

## Immigration Task Force Members

Lily Axelrod  
Alessandra Ceccarelli  
Jackie Dixon  
Daniel Ellis  
Luisa Enriquez  
Jennifer Escue  
Brittany Faith  
Camila Fyler  
Alice Gatebuke  
Ryan Gill

William Gill  
Kati Goodner  
Erin Guzman  
Mary Kathryn Harcombe  
Ian Hennessey  
Deb House  
Adrienne Kittos  
Ann Mathes  
Charlie McDaniel  
Wade Munday

Carol S. Nickle  
Lauren Prater  
Arthur Quinn  
Laura Sanchez Ramirez  
Samantha Sanchez  
Mercedes Strollo  
Zulfat Suara  
David Rogers  
Bailey Schiermeyer  
Anne-Louise Wirthlin



*The Tennessee Faith and Justice Alliance held a Know Your Rights training in Murfreesboro as part of Pro Bono and Faith Days. It was the part of the groups' outreach to immigrant communities.*



# PRO BONO DISTRIBUTIONS

The Tennessee Supreme Court approved an Access to Justice Commission proposal to provide a way for lawyers to donate funds to an Access to Justice fund when they renew their law license each year. Funds are distributed annually each June to non-profit organizations that provide direct civil legal assistance to disadvantaged Tennesseans. Legal services can be done through full representation or limited representation, including civil legal advice clinics. In addition, funds can be used to support the organization's pro bono work or legal services provided by staff attorneys.

The first distribution period began in July 2015. Funds were collected over the next twelve months and distributed in June 2016 to 11 organizations. Over \$76,000 was distributed the first year to the eleven organizations listed below in the form of grants from the Administrative Office of the Courts.

- Legal Aid of East Tennessee
- Legal Aid Society of Middle Tennessee and the Cumberland
- Memphis Area Legal Services
- West Tennessee Legal Services
- Community Legal Center
- Disability Rights Tennessee
- Justice For Our Neighbors
- Southeast Tennessee Legal Services
- Tennessee Coalition to End Sexual and Domestic Violence
- Tennessee Justice Center
- Volunteer Lawyers and Professionals for the Art

In 2017, the distribution amount grew to over \$90,000. Ten organizations received distributions, as Southeast Tennessee Legal Services merged with Legal Aid of East Tennessee. The list of organizations is reviewed and approved annually by the Commission's Pro Bono Advisory Committee, the Committee that researched and developed the original proposal.

Access to Justice Funds have been used to support a clinic in Memphis sponsored by the Community Legal Center for lower income self-represented litigants to encourage visitation and child support. The Tennessee Coalition to End Sexual and Domestic Violence has used the funds to provide pro bono legal services to clients through its Immigrant Legal Clinic which serves immigrant victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, dating violence, stalking and trafficking. Legal Aid of East Tennessee was able to provide crisis legal services in the form of full representation to victims of domestic violence, including safety planning.

The Commission encourages lawyers to support the organizations that provide meaningful access to justice through civil legal services to disadvantaged Tennesseans by contributing to the Access to Justice Fund.



Tennessee Bar Association Corporate Counsel Pro Bono Initiative was launched as a joint effort by the TBA Access to Justice Committee, the TBA Corporate Counsel Section, and the Association of Corporate Counsel (ACC) to help foster a coordinated approach to pro bono work and support for the access to justice community by corporate counsel in Tennessee. Over the last eleven years, the Corporate Counsel Pro Bono Initiative has raised over \$500,000. This money has funded corporate counsel pro bono project grants across the state. The funded projects offer in-house and corporate lawyers specific pro bono opportunities tailored to their situations, skills and interests and facilitate partnerships among corporate legal departments, law firms, access to justice and other community service organizations to help meet local legal service gaps. Each year, the Corporate Counsel Pro Bono Initiative hosts a gala, pictured above.

# ACCESS TO JUSTICE COMMISSION ROSTER



**Gail Vaughn Ashworth, Chair**  
Wiseman Ashworth Law Group, PLC  
511 Union Street, Suite 800  
Nashville, TN 37219-1743  
Phone: 615-254-1877  
Email: gail@wisemanashworth.com



**J. William Coley**  
Hodges, Doughty & Carson, PLLC  
617 W. Main Street  
Knoxville, TN 37902  
Phone: (865) 317-4567  
Email: bcoley@hdclaw.com



**John L. Farringer, IV**  
Sherrard, Roe, Voigt & Harbison  
150 3rd Avenue South, Suite 1100  
Nashville, TN 37201  
Phone: (615) 742-4200  
Email: jfarringer@srvhlaw.com



**Michael L. Forrester**  
Hunter, Smith & Davis, LLP  
1212 North Eastman Road  
Kingsport, TN 37664  
Phone: (423) 378-8836  
Email: forrest@hsdlaw.com



**Sean Hunt**  
The Hunt Law Firm  
3257 W. Sarazens Circle  
P.O. Box 171-119  
Memphis, TN 38187  
Phone: (901) 730-0937  
Email: sean@thehuntfirm.com



**Alexander McVeagh**  
Hamilton County General Sessions  
Judge  
600 Market Street, Suite 203  
Chattanooga, TN 37402  
Phone: (423) 209-7660  
Email: alexanderm@hamiltontn.gov



**Mary Jo Middlebrooks**  
1651 Hollywood Drive  
P.O. Box 1985  
Jackson, TN 38302  
Phone: (731) 423-2234  
Email: mmiddl9469@aol.com



**Ann Jarvis Pruitt**  
Executive Director  
Tennessee Alliance for Legal  
Services  
50 Vantage Way, Suite 250  
Nashville, TN 37228  
Phone: (615) 627-0956  
Email: APruitt@tals.org





**Sharon R. Ryan**  
 Senior Vice President, General Counsel  
 & Corporate Secretary  
 International Paper  
 6400 Poplar Avenue  
 Memphis, TN 38197  
 Email: sharon.ryan@ipaper.com



**Beverly Watts**  
 Executive Director  
 Tennessee Human Rights  
 Commission  
 312 Rosa L. Parks Avenue  
 23rd Floor  
 Nashville, TN 37243  
 Phone: (615) 741-5825  
 Email: beverly.watts@tn.gov

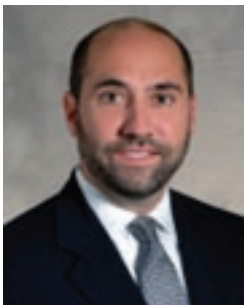
## Supreme Court Liaison:



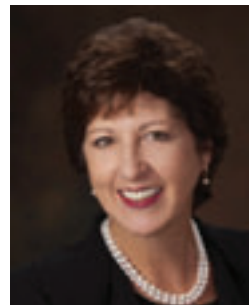
**Justice Connie Clark**  
 Tennessee Supreme Court  
 401 7th Ave. North  
 Nashville, TN 37243

## Departing Commission Members:

A special thanks to three members of the Commission whose terms ended on March 31, 2018. David Esquivel and Tony Seaton led the Pro Bono Committee together for six years. Tony Seaton served as the Vice-Chair of the Commission from 2016-2018. Marcy Eason led the Self-Represented Litigants Committee for four years, then served as Commission Chair from 2016-2018. Their dedication and leadership have been inspirational and will be greatly missed.



**David R. Esquivel**  
*Bass, Berry & Sims PLC*  
 150 Third Avenue South, Suite 2800  
 Nashville, TN 37201  
 Phone: (615) 742-6285  
 Email: desquivel@bassberry.com



**Marcia (Marcy) M. Eason**  
 Miller & Martin PLLC  
 Volunteer Building, Suite 1000  
 832 Georgia Avenue  
 Chattanooga, TN 37402  
 Phone: (423) 756-6600  
 Email: meason@millermartin.com



**Tony Seaton**  
 Law Offices of Tony Seaton PLLC  
 118 E. Watauga Avenue  
 Johnson City, TN 37601  
 Phone: (423) 282-1041  
 Email: tony@tonyseaton.com

# ACCESS TO JUSTICE COMMISSION COMMITTEES

## Access to Justice Faith-Based Committee Members

Bill Coley, Chair, Hodges, Doughty & Carson, PLLC

Gary Behler, Juvenile Court Clerk, Hamilton County

Margaret Behm, Dodson, Parker Behm & Capparella, PC

Sam Blaiss, Attorney at Law

Andy Branham, Counsel on Call

Dr. Ray Cleek, First Baptist Church, Hendersonville

Nancy Cogar, Attorney at Law

Andre Crismon, Legal Aid Society of Middle Tennessee & the Cumberland

Rev. Dr. Jason Curry, Fisk University

Jackie Dixon, Weatherly, McNally & Dixon, PLC

Marcy Eason, Miller & Martin, PLLC

Daniel Ellis, Breeding & Henry, LLC

Carla Fox, Attorney at Law

Rebecca Griffey, District Attorney for the 24th Judicial District

Amber Griffin Shaw, Gordon Shaw Law Group

Hon. Deborah Henderson, General Sessions Judges, Shelby County

Ian Hennessey, London Amburn

William Hunt, Attorney at Law

Lanis Karnes, Karnes Legal Services

John Kernodle, Attorney at Law

Robin Kimbrough, Chaplain and Special Assistant to the President of United Methodist Affairs, Meharry Medical College

Hon. Jennie Latta, Bankruptcy Judge, U.S. District Court for the Western District of Tennessee

Harrison McIver, Executive Director, Memphis Area Legal Services

Bishop Dr. Alvin Miller, St. John Missionary Baptist Church

Dominique Miller, St. John Missionary Baptist Church

Jed Mitchell, Attorney at Law

Jola Moore, Attorney at Law

Rev. Freddie Moore, Grace United Methodist Church

Danielle Salton, Manager of Pro Bono Programs, Memphis Area Legal Services

Billye Sanders, Attorney at Law

Father Ragan Schriver, University of Tennessee College of Social Work

Randy Spivey, Fred D. Gray Institute for Law, Justice & Society at Lipscomb University

Zulfat Suara, American Muslim Advisory Council

Nick Tidwell, Fidelis Law, PLLC

Jennifer Wade, Juvenile Magistrate, Davidson County Juvenile Court

Rev. Ralph White, Bloomfield Full Gospel Baptist Church

Palmer Williams, The Peacefield Group

Cary Conerway Woods, Divorce Referee, Shelby County

## Education Committee

Beverly Watt, Chair, Tennessee Human Rights Commission

Hon. Don Ash, Senior Judge

Claudia Avila-Lopez, Insight Counseling Centers of Tennessee

Michael Bressman, Vanderbilt University Law School

Alicia Cone, Tennessee Council on Developmental Disabilities

Katie Edge, Butler Snow, LLP

Hon. Phyllis Gardner, General Sessions Judge, Shelby County

Deb House, Legal Aid of East Tennessee

Sue Kay, Vanderbilt University Law School

Lyndsey L. Lee, Hodges Doughty & Carson

Elise McMillan, Vanderbilt Kennedy Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities

Kelly Lise Murray, Vanderbilt University Law School

Sharon Ryan, International Paper

Daniel Schaffzin, Cecil C. Humphries College of Law

Cathy Quist Shanks, Circuit Court Clerk, Knox County

Kevin Smith, Cecil C. Humphries College of Law

Liz Todaro, Tennessee Bar Association

## Family Law Committee

Mary Jo Middlebrooks, Chair,  
Middlebrooks & Gray, PA

Wendy Bach, University of  
Tennessee College of Law

Ellen Black, Belmont University  
College of Law

Anita Coffinberry, Vinson &  
Coffinberry, P.C.

Jackie Dixon, Weatherly, McNally  
& Dixon, P.L.C.

Daniel Ellis, Breeding Henry

Henry Fincher, Attorney at  
Law

John K. Harber, Pryor, Priest,  
Harber, Floyd & Coffey

Maureen Holland, Holland &

Associates PC

Deb House, Legal Aid of East  
Tennessee

Lanis Karnes, Karnes Legal  
Services

Jackie Kittrell, Community  
Mediation Center

Brad Morgan, University of  
Tennessee College of Law

Charlie McDaniel, Legal Aid of  
East Tennessee

Hon. Clayburn Peeples, Circuit  
Court Judge, 28th Judicial  
District

Hon. Rob Philyaw, Juvenile Court  
Judge, Hamilton County

Yolanda Redero, Vanderbilt  
University Law School

Carl Seely, Seely Law & Mediation

Lucinda Smith, Legal Aid Society  
of Middle TN & the Cumberland

Hon. Phillip Smith, Circuit Court  
Judge, Davidson County

Anna Swift, Owings, Wilson &  
Coleman

Liz Todaro, Tennessee Bar  
Association

Hon. L. Marie Williams, Circuit  
Court Judge, 11th Judicial District

Cynthia Richardson Wyrick, Ogle,  
Wyrick & Associates, P.C.

## Pro Bono Committee

David Esquivel, Co-Chair, Bass  
Berry Sims

Tony Seaton, Co-Chair, Law  
Offices of Seaton & Bates PLLC

Hon. Bill Acree, Retired Judge

Heidi Barcus, London Amburn

Jim Barry, International Paper

John Blankenship, Blakenship &  
Blankenship

Wynne du Mariau Caffey-Knight,  
Elmore Stone & Caffey PLLC

Cathy Clayton, West Tennessee  
Legal Services

David Cook, The Hardison Law  
Firm PC

Jackie Dixon, Weatherly, McNally  
& Dixon, P.L.C.

Kathryn St. Clair Ellis, Legal Aid  
of East Tennessee

Paige Evatt, Legal Aid of East  
Tennessee

Sheri Fox, Legal Aid of East  
Tennessee

Lori Gonzalez, The RayNa  
Corporation

Hon. Ross Hicks, Circuit Court  
Judge, 19th Judicial District

Hon. Jeff Hollingsworth, Circuit  
Court Judge, 11th Judicial District

Gary Housepian, Legal Aid  
Society of Middle TN & the  
Cumberlands

Judge Laurie D. Jewett,  
Brentwood Municipal Court

Sue Kay, Vanderbilt University  
Law School

Jackie Kittrell, Community  
Mediation Center

Anne Mathis, Community Legal  
Center

Charlie McDaniel, Legal Aid of  
East Tennessee

Harrison McIver, III, Memphis  
Area Legal Services

Rachel Moses, Legal Aid Society  
of Middle TN & the Cumberland

Cheryl G. Rice, Egerton, McAfee,  
Armistead & Davis, PC

Andrew Ross, Metropolitan  
Public Defender's Office

Danielle M. Salton, Memphis  
Area Legal Services

Amber Shaw, Law Office of J.  
Houston Gordon

Hon. Wayne C. Shelton, General  
Sessions Judge, Montgomery  
County

Kevin Smith, Cecil C. Humphries  
College of Law

Lucinda Smith, Legal Aid Society  
of Middle TN & the Cumberland

Hon. Charles C. Sullivan, II,  
Retired Judge

Liz Todaro, Tennessee Bar  
Association

Deborah Yeomans-Barton, Legal  
Aid of East Tennessee

# ACCESS TO JUSTICE COMMISSION COMMITTEES

## Public Awareness Committee

Sean Hunt, Co-Chair, The Hunt Firm

Ann Pruitt, Co-Chair, Tennessee Alliance for Legal Services

Keith Austin, Lamar Outdoor Advertising

Hon. Lee Bussart, General

Sessions Judge, Marshall County

Anthony Dotson

Jeremy Floyd, BPV Capital Management

Paul Garner, Mid-South Peace & Justice Center

Neil McBride, Legal Aid

Society

Patrick Tamburrino, Tamburrino, Inc.

Liz Todaro, Tennessee Bar Association

## Self-Represented Litigants Committee

Gail Vaughn Ashworth, Chair,  
Wiseman & Ashworth PLC

Cathy Allshouse, Legal Aid of  
East Tennessee

Hon. Denise Andre, General  
Sessions Judge, Williamson  
County

Sandy Bledsoe, Vanderbilt  
University

Mary Ellen Bowen, Mid-South  
Mediation Services

Andy Branham, Counsel on Call  
Inc.

Charlotte Broyles, Clerk &  
Master, Coffee County

Hon. James Butler, Chancellor,  
26th Judicial District

Frank Cantrell, Memphis  
Mediation Group, LLC

Curt M. Cobb, Clerk & Master,  
Bedford County

Marty Cook, Circuit Court Clerk,  
Monroe County

Ted Crozier, Clerk & Master,  
Montgomery County

Rob Cruz, Certified Judicial  
Interpreter

Rev. Dr. Jason Curry, Fisk  
University

Jackie Dixon, Weatherly,  
McNally & Dixon, P.L.C.

Hon. Geoff Emery, General  
Sessions Judge, Knox County

Kevin Fowler, Legal Aid Society  
of Middle TN & the Cumberlands

Hon. Thomas R. Frierson, Court  
of Appeals

Hon. Jeff Hollingsworth, Circuit  
Court Judge, 11th Judicial  
District

Deb House, Legal Aid of East  
Tennessee

Becky Jacobs, University of  
Tennessee College of Law

Kathy Jones-Terry, Clerk &  
Master, Hamblen County

Jackie Kittrell, Community  
Mediation Center

Hon. Robert Lincoln, General  
Sessions Judge, Washington  
County

Dr. Mike Mailahn, Tennessee  
Department of Intellectual and  
Developmental Disabilities

Minton P. Mayer, Wiseman  
Ashworth Law Group, PC

Bishop Minnie Mitchell, New Life  
Thru Christ Ministries

Penny Murphy, Circuit Court  
Clerk, Jefferson County

Bruce Ralston, Bruce A. Ralston,  
Attorney

Ted C. Raynor, Baker, Donelson,  
Bearman, Caldwell & Berkowitz,  
PC

Janice Snow Rodriguez, TN  
Foreign Language Institute

Ricky Rooker, Circuit Court  
Clerk, Davidson County

Stephen L. Shields, Jackson,  
Shield, Yeiser & Holt

Hon. Phillip Smith, Circuit Court  
Judge, Davidson County

Hon. Dwight E. Stokes, General  
Sessions Judge, Sevier County

Virginia Story, Story Abernathy  
Campbell Ashworth Yarbrough  
Hudson

John Tarpley, Lewis, Thomason,  
King, Krieg & Waldrop, PC

Liz Todaro, Tennessee Bar  
Association

Mark C. Travis, Travis ADR  
Services

Deborah Yeomans-Barton, Legal  
Aid of East Tennessee

Rita Young, Community  
Mediation Center

# ACCESS TO JUSTICE COMMISSION STAFF



Anne-Louise Wirthlin is the Access to Justice Coordinator for the Administrative Office of the Courts where she provides day-to-day administration for the Supreme Court Access to Justice Initiative and the Access to Justice Commission. She oversees the Pro Bono Coordinator position and the implementation of the ATJ Commission's Strategic Plan. Anne-Louise is a graduate of LEAD Tennessee, a statewide, year-long development initiative for current and emerging leaders from all branches of state government. She is a member of the TN Government Leadership Council. She is currently earning a Graduate Certificate in Public Administrative Executive Leadership from Tennessee State University. Anne-Louise is a skilled presenter on access to justice and has authored numerous articles in the Tennessee Bar Journal on the topic.

Before joining the AOC, Anne-Louise practiced law as a contract attorney working with TennCare then worked at a small family law practice in Brentwood, TN. She earned her Bachelor's degree and J.D. from the University of Tennessee. After being admitted to the Tennessee Bar in 2004, Anne-Louise earned her LLM in Taxation from the University of Alabama. Anne-Louise is a member of the Tennessee Bar Association Access to Justice Committee and sits on the Board of Directors for the Tennessee Alliance for Legal Services. Ms. Wirthlin is trained in Rule 31 General Civil mediation. She sits on the Board of the Tennessee Hemophilia and Bleeding Disorders Foundation.



Kimi deMent serves as the Pro Bono Coordinator for the Tennessee Supreme Court's Access to Justice Commission and liaison for the Tennessee Faith & Justice Alliance, a faith-based initiative of the Access to Justice Commission. The Pro Bono Coordinator identifies pockets of the state where pro bono resources are lacking and focuses efforts to create new resources in those areas. The position conducts outreach to faith-based institutions, bar associations, local attorneys, the judiciary and other stakeholders to facilitate pro bono resources in those locations. The position also maintains a statewide database of existing pro bono resources and reports from pro bono programs on the number of clients helped, and the number of volunteers participating.

Prior to her work at the Administrative Office of the Courts, Kimi worked at the Legal Aid Society of Middle Tennessee and the Cumberland in Nashville, Tennessee, and in the private bar as an associate attorney for the firm of Kious, Rodgers, Barger, Holder, and Kious PLLC, in Murfreesboro, Tennessee. Kimi holds a Bachelors of Arts from Vanderbilt University, a Juris Doctor from the University of Tennessee College of Law, and a Masters of Arts and Theology from the University of the South: Sewanee. In her free time, Kimi volunteers with Achilles International as a marathon guide for athletes with disabilities, serves as a small group leader with the West End Methodist Church youth group, serves as a cofacilitator for the REACH Program in partnership with the Cal Turner Program at Vanderbilt University, and is active in numerous outdoor adventure communities across Tennessee.



*Kimi deMent shows a volunteer the ropes at an expungement clinic.*

# ACCESS TO JUSTICE PARTNERS

Administrative Office of the Courts  
Annoor Academy  
City of Chattanooga (Proclamation)  
Disability Rights Tennessee  
Linda Fulghum, Hardeman County Circuit Court Clerk's Office  
Grainger County Court Clerk's Office  
Hamilton County (Proclamation)  
Melissa Harrell, Rutherford County Criminal Court Clerk's Office  
Henry County Court Clerk's Office  
City of Jackson (Proclamation)  
Lincoln Memorial University Duncan School of Law  
Madison County (Proclamation)  
City of Memphis (Proclamation for Help4TNDay)  
Metropolitan Government of Nashville and Davidson County (Proclamation)  
Metro Nashville Public Schools Bringing Justice to You  
Montgomery County Court Clerk's Office  
Shelby County General Sessions Court Clerk's Office  
Sevier County Bar Association  
Southern Migrant Legal Services  
Tennessee Bar Association ATJ Committee  
Tennessee Board of Professional Responsibility  
Tennessee Bureau of Investigation  
Tennessee Coalition to End Domestic and Sexual Violence  
Tennessee Commission on Aging and Disabilities  
Tennessee Commission on Continuing Legal Education  
Tennessee Council on Developmental Disabilities  
Tennessee Human Rights Commission  
Tennessee Justice Center  
Tennessee Supreme Court Alternative Dispute Resolution Commission  
Upper Cumberland Young Lawyers Association  
Volunteer Lawyers and Professionals for the Arts  
Washington County Bar Association  
Williamson County Juvenile Court  
YWCA





## Partnering With Military Spouses

The Tennessee Supreme Court and the 101st Airborne Division and 5th Special Forces Group, stationed at Fort Campbell, Kentucky, celebrated the Supreme Court's Revised Military spouse Rule (Rule 7), which permits attorney spouses of those in the military to obtain temporary law licenses to practice in Tennessee while their active-duty spouse is stationed in Tennessee at a military installation. Under the revised Military Spouse Rule, attorney spouses are not required to take the Bar exam again if they previously passed the exam in another state. The attorney spouses may be admitted as long as they are licensed in another state and meet Tennessee's appropriate ethical requirements.

# FAITH & JUSTICE ALLIANCE PARTNERS

Advance Business Consultants CPA	Judge Boyette Denton	Legal Aid Society of Middle Tennessee and the Cumberland
Advance Financial 24/7	Judge Lisa Eischeid	Legal Association for Women
American Civil Liberties Union	El Shaddai Christian Church	Lincoln Memorial University -- Duncan School of Law
American Muslim Advisory Council	Empowering Women Conference	Lipscomb University
Judge Jill Ayers	Family Justice Center Eastgate	The Links Incorporated
Ball Camp Baptist Church	Fellowship Bible Church – Brentwood	Loaves & Fishes
Beacon of Hope	First Baptist Church Murfreesboro	Masjid As-Salam
Beck Cultural Center	First Presbyterian Church Clarksville	Maximus
Beecken Center	Good Samaritan Ministries	Meharry Medical College
Judge Rachel Bell	Gospel Justice Initiative	Memphis Area Legal Services
Belmont University College of Law	Grace Lutheran Church	Memphis Bar Association
Bloomfield Full Gospel Baptist Church	Greater Galatians Baptist Church	Mending Hearts Legal Clinic
Campbell Chapel Baptist Church	Green Street Ministries	Mountain View United Methodist Church
Catholic Charities East Tennessee	Hagan Law Group, PLLC	Mt. Carmel Baptist Church
Cecil C. Humphreys School of Law -- University of Memphis	The Healing Center	Mt. Zion Baptist Church
Judge Charles Cerny	Higher Ground Worship Center	Muslim Community of Knoxville
Chattanooga Bar Association	Hope for the Inner City	Muslim Student Association at the University of Tennessee
Chattanooga Community Kitchen	Howard Gentry Davidson County Criminal Court Clerk's Office	Nashville Bar Association
Christian Legal Society	Interdenominational Ministers Fellowship	Nashville Coalition to End Domestic and Sexual Violence
Chattanooga Church	Interfaith Dental Clinic	Music City Community Court
Church Street United Methodist Church	Islamic Center of Jackson	Nashville School of Law
Colonial Heights Baptist Church	Islamic Center of Murfreesboro	National Association for the Advancement of Colored People - Hardeman County
Community Health Education Network	Jones Memorial Baptist Church	National Bar Association Ben F. Jones Chapter
Community Kitchen	Knoxville Bar Association	National Disaster Interfaiths Network
Community Legal Center Memphis	Knoxville Bar Association Barrister	Nehemiah Missionary Baptist Church
Compassionate Counsel	Knoxville Bar Association Access to Justice Committee	New Covenant Christian Church
Representative Barbara Cooper	Knoxville Community Step Up	Open Table Nashville
Crosspoint Dream Center	Kroger	
Diocese of Knoxville	Legal Aid of East Tennessee	



*Houses of worship played a vital role in HELP4TN Day in 2017.*

Palmershire Community Association

Paris First United Methodist Church

Phyllis Wheatley Center

Poverty and the Arts

Powell United Methodist Church

Professional Legal Assistance Network

Reelfoot Rural Ministries

Judge John Rosson, Jr

Rutherford & Cannon County Bar Association

Rutledge Baptist Church

Salvation Army

Samaritan Center Ooltewah

Scott's Chapel Methodist Church

Representative Johnny Shaw

South Soddy Baptist Church

Southeast Tennessee Veterans Coalition

St. James Missionary Baptist Church

St. Luke's Episcopal Church

St. Thomas Moore Society

Judge Vicki Snyder

Take One Initiative

Tennessee Alliance for Legal Services

Tennessee Bar Association

Tennessee Bar Association Young Lawyers Division

Tennessee Fosters Collaborative

Tennessee Immigrant and Refugee Rights Coalition

Tennessee Justice for Our Neighbors

Tennessee Prison Reentry

Training Resolved

The United Methodist Church

University of Memphis College of Law

University of the South: Sewanee

University of Tennessee College of Law

University of Tennessee College of Law Expungement Clinic

University of Tennessee Health Science Center - Memphis

Vanderbilt University Divinity School

Vanderbilt University Law School

Vestal United Methodist Church

Vet 2 Vet Tennessee

Voices for Civil Justice

West End United Methodist Church

West Tennessee Legal Services

West Tennessee Mediation Summit

White Oak United Methodist Church

Judge Lane Wolfenbarger

# JUSTICE FOR ALL

A TENNESSEE SUPREME COURT INITIATIVE

Administrative Office of the Courts  
511 Union Street #600  
Nashville, TN 37219  
(615) 741-2687  
(800) 448-7970  
[www.tncourts.gov](http://www.tncourts.gov)  
[www.justiceforalltn.com](http://www.justiceforalltn.com)