

2011

New York State Courts Access to Justice Program

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New York State Courts Access to Justice Program 2011 Report

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Our Mission: To ensure access to justice in civil and criminal matters for New Yorkers of all incomes, backgrounds and special needs, by using every resource, including self-help services, *pro bono* programs, and technological tools, and by securing stable and adequate non-profit and government funding for civil and criminal legal services programs.

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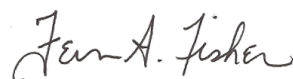
MESSAGE FROM JUSTICE FISHER



In many ways 2011 was my most challenging year as an administrator in the Unified Court System due to the profound cuts to the judiciary's budget. The retirement incentive at the end of 2010, coupled with the hiring freeze and staff layoffs of 2011, resulted in a personnel shortage and loss of institutional memory in the courts. As the Deputy Chief Administrative Judge for New York City Courts, I struggled to preserve the status quo in the courts as services and court hours were decreased. As the Director of the New York State Courts Access to Justice Program, I initially feared that we would not be able to furnish the same level of assistance that we had in the past. In addition to staff layoffs, all but one of the NYS Courts Access to Justice Program's contracts were terminated due to budget shortfalls. ProBonoNY and all the limited legal assistance volunteer lawyer programs were completely defunded. All this at a time when the economic downturn and lack of civil legal services continued to increase the numbers of unrepresented litigants in the New York State Courts.

The one saving grace came in April 2011 when the judiciary's budget funded \$12.5 million for vital civil legal services, due to the heroic efforts of our Chief Judge Jonathan Lippman. Thankfully, judiciary money was distributed to 56 legal services providers to represent low and moderate income New Yorkers facing foreclosures, evictions, domestic violence, consumer debt and other serious legal problems.

Against this bleak backdrop, the NYS Courts Access to Justice Program's staff tirelessly worked to keep our programs afloat, devising one creative measure after another to continue, increase and improve services for the unrepresented public. I am pleased to present this report highlighting the NYS Courts Access to Justice Program's activities over the 2011 calendar year. In light of the enormous economic challenges of 2011, I am proud of our accomplishments and attribute the triumph to my hard working and brilliant staff who understand the importance of our efforts. In addition, my thanks goes out to the numerous *pro bono* attorneys and volunteers, as well as the capable and devoted judicial and non-judicial staff throughout the state, who continually strive to improve equal access to justice for the millions of vulnerable New Yorkers who find themselves having to navigate our complex court system on their own. Finally, I am grateful to the Chief Judge, whose understanding of access to justice allows me and the NYS Courts Access to Justice Program to evolve and thrive.



Fern A. Fisher
January 2012

NYS COURTS ACCESS TO JUSTICE PROGRAM GOALS

Finding long-term solutions to chronic lack of civil legal assistance for people of low-income and modest means in New York including finding a permanent public funding stream for civil legal services.

Improving and increasing the availability of criminal defense representation to people facing criminal charges.

Gathering and reviewing statewide data on legal services delivery and needs towards increasing and improving civil and criminal legal assistance.

Coordinating efforts between courts, legal aid organizations and other legal and non-legal organizations, administrative agencies and lawmaking bodies to expand access to justice.

Analyzing, recommending and promoting proposed legislation, court rules, codes of conduct, policies and systemic changes that will open greater access to the courts.

Analyzing and addressing the collateral consequences of criminal convictions.

Fostering the development of new low-income and modest means income *pro bono* programs and supporting and improving the quality of existing *pro bono* programs both court-based and outside the court, using lawyers, law students and other professionals.

Testing and developing delivery of legal assistance models both court-based and non-court-based, including limited scope representation delivery systems to improve and increase availability of assistance.

Expanding access to justice for unrepresented litigants by increasing the availability of self-help tools using a variety of methods including, but not limited to, technology, plain language forms and signs, and informational materials.

Providing culturally competent access to justice for litigants of diverse backgrounds and languages.

Addressing access to justice for individuals with special needs or social services needs by expanding social work and social services in the court system.

Providing more opportunities for justice via community empowerment using outreach, education and training of government officials and offices, neighborhood agencies and community members.

Fostering awareness of the needs of unrepresented litigants and litigants of diverse backgrounds and special needs and insuring high quality service by both judicial and non-judicial personnel via education, training and literature.

2011 HIGHLIGHTS

★ COURT PROGRAMS AND INITIATIVES

- Housing Volunteer Lawyer for the Day Program extended to assist small property owners in Kings County.
- Bridge the Gap Training Initiative established.
- Intra-Program collaboration efforts undertaken.
- Uncontested Divorce Program replicated in Westchester County.

★ TECHNOLOGY AND SOCIAL MEDIA

- New York State DIY (Do-It-Yourself) Forms generated more documents than any other jurisdiction.
- DIY Form programs expanded to District, City, Town and Village Courts.
- Added Spanish and French to the New York City Tenant Affidavit DIY Form program, making it the first trilingual program in the nation.
- Consumer Debt Advocate Assisted document assembly program created.
- Facebook Volunteer Lawyer page launched.

★ DIVERSE POPULATIONS

- The Assigned Counsel Project expanded to Richmond County.
- Poverty Simulations held for Criminal Court judicial and non-judicial personnel.

★ COMMUNITY OUTREACH

- Free Legal Clinics held.
- Mobile Help Center launched with NYLAG as lead partner.

Please read further for all of the NYS Courts Access to Justice Program's accomplishments in 2011.

INTRODUCTION

In March 2009, New York State Chief Judge Jonathan Lippman appointed the Honorable Fern A. Fisher as the Director of the newly formed New York State Courts Access to Justice Program which was established to improve equal access to justice by making the courts easier to navigate for New Yorkers of low-income and modest means who cannot afford an attorney.¹ Last year, the NYS Courts Access to Justice Program published its first report outlining the access to justice measures taken in light of the economic downturn and the chronic lack of free or low-cost legal services, which led to record numbers of unrepresented litigants² in the courts.³ The 2010 Report summarized the steps taken to expand greater opportunities for *pro bono* service throughout the state, by forging partnerships with non-profit organizations, law schools, government agencies and bar associations, to address legal issues and disseminate information in areas such as family, divorce, consumer debt, foreclosure and landlord-tenant law. The 2010 Report also focused on the education, outreach and training efforts made to assist underserved populations throughout New York State.⁴

In 2011, the \$170 million cut to the judiciary's budget greatly impacted the NYS Courts Access to Justice Program's ability to continue programs and initiatives needed to reach litigants throughout the state. This second report focuses on the steps taken, in light of monetary challenges, to preserve *pro bono* programs and services and to continue self-help measures and the dissemination of information in order to remove barriers to justice for all litigants regardless of education, income, background or special needs.

After the loss of funding for ProBonoNY and New York City, Nassau and Suffolk Counties' volunteer lawyer programs, a primary objective in 2011 was to find solutions to continue "unbundled" *pro bono* programs that provide one-on-one legal assistance in the courthouses. As set forth in Part I of this report, "**Court Programs and Initiatives**," the majority of the NYS Courts Access to Justice Program's New York City volunteer lawyer programs were able to continue and thrive. Although some of these programs suffered brief hiatuses and/or cutback of days and hours, all of these programs assisted more litigants in 2011 than in the previous year. In fact, the Volunteer Lawyer for the

¹ Prior to March 2009, the responsibilities of the NYS Courts Access to Justice Program were overseen by the former Office of the Administrative Judge for Justice Initiatives.

² The NYS Courts Access to Justice Program uses the term "unrepresented" litigant and not "self-represented" litigant. The term "self-represented" implies that individuals who appear without attorneys have made a choice to represent themselves and are on an equal playing field as attorneys. It is a misconception that litigants choose to be *pro se*; the overwhelming majority have no other recourse.

³ More than 2.3 million unrepresented litigants attempt to navigate the court system each year. See http://www.nycourts.gov/ip/access-civil-legal-services/PDF/CLS-2011TaskForceREPORT_web.pdf, page 16.

⁴ The NYS Courts Access to Justice 2010 report can be found at: http://www.nycourts.gov/ip/nyaj/pdfs/NYA2J_2010report.pdf.

Day Housing Program expanded its service to unrepresented landlords, the Volunteer Lawyer Program - Consumer Debt assisted CLARO in expanding to Richmond County and the Uncontested Divorce Program was replicated in Westchester County. One creative undertaking in 2011 was the collaboration among the individual access to justice programs which led to joint recruitment and training efforts, the sharing of resource materials, court personnel, and volunteers, and the creation of new initiatives that would assist greater numbers of unrepresented litigants. Through the Law Student and Law Graduate Initiative and the Bridge the Gap Training Initiative, the NYS Courts Access to Justice Program placed greater emphasis on cultivating law students, law graduates and newly admitted attorneys in an effort to create a long-lasting commitment to public service at the start of their legal careers.

With more and more unrepresented litigants turning to the internet for answers to their legal problems, the NYS Courts Access to Justice Program focused greater energy in 2011 on technological solutions to disseminate information. Since travel, outreach, printing and shipping of written materials throughout the state were eliminated due to budget cuts and layoffs, low-cost alternatives of assisting the unrepresented public needed to be explored. As discussed in Part II of this report, **“Technology, Social Media and Publications,”** the NYS Courts Access to Justice Program successfully developed and grew its internet-based resources, such as, DIY (Do-It-Yourself) Form document assembly programs, the CourtHelp website, internet publications, and social media websites as cost saving mechanisms to serve the ever increasing numbers of unrepresented litigants in need of information.

In 2011, budget cuts impacted social work services provided by the NYS Courts Access to Justice Program. Social work availability for litigants in the Integrated Part was eliminated leaving a void in needed assistance that cannot be filled by either legal services attorneys or the private bar. Without the NYS Courts Access to Justice Program’s social work program, the ratio between litigants and social workers in the Assigned Counsel Project increased. Long-standing partnerships between the NYS Courts Access to Justice Program and Master Degree Programs in social work schools were dissolved, including Columbia University School of Social Work, Silberman School of Social Work at Hunter College, Yeshiva University Wurzweiler School of Social Work, and New York University Silver School of Social Work. Despite monetary challenges, as detailed in Part III of this report, **“Addressing the Access to Justice Needs of a Diverse Population,”** the NYS Courts Access to Justice Program continued to strive to protect New York’s most vulnerable citizens and to level the playing field for all litigants through its programs and initiatives. For example, the Guardian Ad Litem Program, Assigned Counsel Project and Integrated Part addressed the needs of New York City’s vulnerable landlords and tenants. The NYS Courts Access to Justice Program also continued its Poverty Simulation training program for judicial and non-judicial personnel to increase sensitivity and awareness of the 2.8 million people living in poverty in New York State.

Part IV of this report, “**Community Outreach**,” highlights the NYS Courts Access to Justice Program’s efforts to improve access to justice, perceptions of fairness and courthouse efficiency by providing information to the public through various outreach programs. Through the Community Leaders Roundtables and the Public Librarians' Program, the NYS Courts Access to Justice Program trains community leaders, public librarians, neighborhood agencies, and government offices on available resources. Outreach programs, such as the Community Seminar Series, Community Law Days, and the new Legal Clinics and Mobile Help Center, help empower communities through education and increased equal access to justice.

The Task Force to Expand Civil Legal Services in New York reported in November 2011 that the access to justice crisis in the courts has not abated but has continued to grow.⁵ The judiciary’s funding of civil legal services was an important step in the fight to find permanent, steady and adequate funding to provide equal access to justice for all New Yorkers. Clearly, there is still much more to be done.⁶ The NYS Courts Access to Justice Program has accomplished much with the assistance of court personnel and the partners and friends acknowledged on page 61 of this report. The \$170 million cut to the Unified Court System’s budget greatly challenged the NYS Courts Access to Justice Program to find creative solutions to advance equal access to justice. This report summarizes the most significant measures taken by the NYS Courts Access to Justice Program in 2011 to address these challenges.

⁵ See the Task Force to Expand Access to Civil Legal Services in New York Report to the Chief Judge, November 2011 at: http://www.nycourts.gov/ip/access-civil-legal-services/PDF/CLS-2011TaskForceREPORT_web.pdf.

⁶ Read the testimonies at the Chief Judge’s public legal services hearings at: <http://www.courts.state.ny.us/hearings/>.

PART I: COURT PROGRAMS AND INITIATIVES

In 2011, the NYS Courts Access to Justice Program focused its energy on creative economic solutions to continue the many court-based volunteer programs and initiatives throughout the state which assist thousands of unrepresented litigants each year. The cut to the judiciary's budget left many volunteer lawyer programs without funding to proceed. ProBonoNY, the court system's statewide program to support and increase *pro bono* legal services outside New York City, and all the limited legal assistance volunteer lawyer programs in New York City and Nassau and Suffolk Counties, were completely defunded. The NYS Courts Access to Justice Program took innovative measures to share ideas and personnel among its own programs as a means to cut costs and continue to provide superior services to litigants. As a result, 2011 marked a year of collaboration, sharing of resources, creative training programs, and the creation of new initiatives and programs to increase the availability of legal assistance for unrepresented litigants. Below is a summary of the NYS Courts Access to Justice Program's 2011 programs and initiatives.

VOLUNTEER LAWYER FOR THE DAY PROGRAM - CONSUMER DEBT

The NYS Courts Access to Justice Program's Volunteer Lawyer for the Day (VLFD) Consumer Debt Program offers unrepresented litigants in consumer debt proceedings the opportunity to have *pro bono* lawyers represent them during their court appearances in the Civil Court of the City of New York. Volunteer lawyers, who are trained and supervised by the VLFD Consumer Program, help some of the thousands of New Yorkers in financial distress. In the VLFD Consumer Program, a volunteer attorney meets the client for the first time at the courthouse, appears on the client's behalf during the day, and the representation is complete at the end of the day. Volunteer lawyers primarily represent litigants in vacating default judgments and during settlement negotiations to help level the negotiating positions of the parties. The Program maintains webpages for prospective and participating volunteers: http://nycourts.gov/courts/nyc/civil/vlfd_civil.shtml



Highlights of 2011 include the following:

- **Program Partnerships:** Begun as a pilot program in 2009, this program expanded to include almost daily programs in New York, Kings, Queens and Bronx Counties in 2010. Due to budget cuts in 2011, program days were reduced for five months of the year, but the program was able to resume full services in late 2011 because of the judiciary legal services funding received by program partners. This program is conducted in partnership as follows:
 - New York County Lawyers' Association - operates four days a week in the New York County Civil Court.
 - New York Legal Assistance Group - operates four days a week in the

- Queens County Civil Court.
- The Brooklyn Bar Association's Volunteer Lawyer Program - operates four days a week in the Kings County Civil Court.
- New York Legal Assistance Group - operates four days a week in the Bronx County Civil Court.
- Trainings Held:** In 2011, the program offered three Continuing Legal Education (CLE) training programs and recruited and trained a total of 241 volunteer attorneys to provide limited representation for unrepresented consumer debtors in the Civil Courts of Kings, Queens, Bronx and New York Counties.
- Litigants Served:** Approximately 3,577 litigants were assisted by this program in 2011. Using the lowest rate per case received by local legal services organizations, at \$1,200 per case, the value of legal services provided by the volunteers in one year was in excess of four million dollars.
- Volunteer Recognition:** Two attorneys were honored for exceptional service in the program. One was a newly admitted attorney who volunteered two or more times a week in the Queens County program for over a year. Another attorney was a recent law school graduate who volunteered almost every day in the Bronx County program for the past year. In addition, four attorneys were recognized for their distinguished service for volunteering 50 or more hours in the program for the past year.

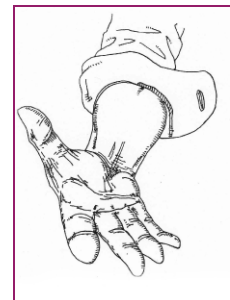
"In these difficult times and struggling to keep a small business afloat, the legal counsel provided by the program was directly responsible for helping me to resolve my legal issues....Your program provides an extremely valuable tool in a court system where defendants need at least legal advice in order to counterbalance against plaintiffs who have the financial means to be represented by lawyers. Please make every effort to continue this program. It is money well spent."

-VLF Consumer Program litigant, Jan. 2011

VOLUNTEER LAWYERS PROGRAM - CONSUMER DEBT

The NYS Courts Access to Justice Program's Volunteer Lawyer Program (VLP) helps unrepresented litigants with their consumer debt cases by providing legal advice and information about the court process. Attorneys commit to volunteering in the New York City Court Help Centers under the supervision of the Help Center's Court Attorneys. Volunteer lawyers review court papers, help fill out forms and discuss case strategy. Volunteers do not represent the litigants in court or file papers on their behalf. The Program maintains webpages for prospective and participating volunteers:

<http://nycourts.gov/courts/nyc/civil/vlp.shtml>. As well as a webpage for unrepresented litigants: <http://nycourts.gov/courts/nyc/civil/vlpselfrep.shtml>. Highlights in 2011 include:



- **Trainings Held:** In 2009, the NYS Courts Access to Justice Program established a NYC Civil Court Consumer Services Advisory Committee to leverage and coordinate the resources of organizations (CLARO, county bar associations, legal services providers, etc.) that provide *pro bono* legal services to consumer debtors in the Civil Courts. Working with the Committee, the NYS Courts Access to Justice Program organized joint citywide volunteer attorney recruitment and trainings in 2011 for both the VLP Consumer Debt Program and CLARO (Civil Legal Advice and Resource Office). Three CLE programs were held and a total of 296 volunteer attorneys and law students were recruited and trained in 2011.
- **Program Expansion:** In 2011, the NYS Courts Access to Justice Program assisted in expanding CLARO's court-based consumer debt volunteer program to Richmond County. Court-based programs already exist in Kings, Queens, Bronx and New York counties.
- **Litigants assisted:** In 2011, the NYS Courts Access to Justice Program VLP Consumer Debt Program assisted 1,494 litigants.
- **Volunteer Recognition:** One attorney was honored for exceptional service in the program, having volunteered on a weekly basis for the past two years. In addition, five attorneys were recognized for their distinguished service for volunteering 50 or more hours in the program for the past year.

"Thank you very much for your assistance. My case was dismissed with prejudice - but only because through this program's educational effort I understood some of the nuances of the process!"

-VLP litigant, Oct. 2011

VOLUNTEER LAWYER FOR THE DAY PROGRAM - HOUSING

The NYS Courts Access to Justice Program's Volunteer Lawyer for the Day (VLFD) Program connects unrepresented litigants with trained *pro bono* attorneys who provide legal advice and limited representation during court appearances in the New York and Kings County Housing Courts. The NYS Courts Access to Justice Program recruits, trains and supervises volunteer lawyers to handle the portion of the tenant's or owner's nonpayment case that takes place in the Resolution Part. Representation begins and ends the same day. By volunteering, lawyers help some of the thousands of unrepresented tenants threatened with the loss of their homes and unrepresented landlords in financial or other distress, gain much needed legal representation. The VLFD Housing Program increases access to justice while helping the court deal with a heavy caseload. More information can be found at: http://nycourts.gov/courts/nyc/housing/vlfd_housing.shtml



During the course of 2011, the VLFD Housing Program had to be discontinued in Kings County Housing Court due to unprecedented budgetary cuts. In spite of the loss of funding, the NYS Courts Access to Justice Program not only revived the Program with

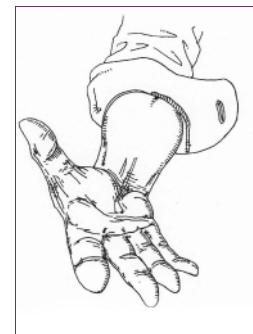
the assistance of its staff and the renewal of its partnership with CUNY School of Law's Community Legal Resource Network (CLRN), but also expanded representation to include landlords thanks to the recruitment of members of the landlord bar in Kings County. A summary of 2011 highlights is as follows:

- **Expansion of the Program:** In the fall of 2011, the VLFD Housing Program was expanded to include free legal representation for small property owners in Kings County Housing Court in an unprecedented effort in New York State to further alleviate the unmet legal needs of unrepresented litigants. With the assistance of seasoned attorneys from the landlord bar, unincorporated landlords who own no more than one building with no more than three apartments in New York City, suing their tenant for the payment of rent, are eligible for the VLFD Housing Program. The stakes can be extremely high for small property owners who are unable to collect outstanding rents as it puts them at risk of defaulting on their mortgages and losing their home. This representation is available in light of growing foreclosure filings due to the increased pressures brought upon by the economic downturn, especially among lower income small property owners. These litigants who had already been frequent users of the Housing Court's Help Centers to acquire free legal advice can now also benefit from limited representation.
- **Renewed Partnership:** During the course of the year, the VLFD Housing Program had to be suspended for several months in Kings County Housing Court because of a loss of funding due to the court system's budget cuts. The VLFD Housing Program was able to resume in the spring of 2011 by mobilizing court staff to oversee the volunteers. The collaboration was renewed in Kings County in the fall when CUNY School of Law's CLRN was able to hire a new Supervising Attorney to provide guidance to volunteers who represent litigants in certain nonpayment proceedings.
- **New Training Programs:** In addition to the mandatory VLFD Housing Program training of 3.5 free CLE credit hours, which includes topics covering nonpayment proceedings, negotiating and writing stipulations of settlement in Housing Court and ethics of unbundled representation, three new live CLE training workshops of 1.0 credit each were developed and offered to attorneys who completed the mandatory training. In exchange for each hour of free CLE credit, attorneys agreed to provide one day of representation in the VLFD Housing Program.
Trainings held:
 - Basics of Family Eviction Prevention Supplement (FEPS), February 2011.
 - Landlord-Tenant Do-It-Yourself (DIY) Interactive Computer Programs, April 2011.
 - Traverse Hearings and Rent Breakdowns in Nonpayment Proceedings, May 2011.
- **Trainings Held:** In 2011, the VLFD Housing Program held three combined VLP/VLFD Housing CLE sessions, and a live Bridge the Gap training session in New York County to maintain a constant flow of volunteers for the Program. Individual attorneys were also trained by watching the CLE course on DVD.

- **Testimonials Added to VLFD Housing Program Website:** New written testimonials from VLFD Housing Program participating attorneys were added to provide prospective volunteers a better understanding of the volunteer experience and what they can take away from involvement in the Program: http://nycourts.gov/courts/nyc/housing/vlfd_testimonials.shtml.
- **Litigants Helped:** In 2011, the VLFD Housing Program in the New York County and Kings County Housing Courts represented about 250 litigants. Volunteers who assisted them gained invaluable, hands-on experience in lawyering under the supervision of an experienced supervising counsel and court staff. In addition, throughout the year, approximately 300 litigants received free legal advice and consultation from Program staff.
- **Volunteer Attorney Recognition:** Two attorneys, including one recent law graduate, received a plaque acknowledging their outstanding *pro bono* service for their contribution to the VLFD Housing Program at the annual *Pro Bono* Service Awards Ceremony. In consultation with the Supervising Attorneys in New York and Kings Counties, ten attorneys were awarded a Certificate of Distinguished Service for their dedication to the VLFD Housing Program. The VLFD Housing Program volunteer attorneys were also recognized on the NYS Courts Access to Justice Program's Facebook page.

VOLUNTEER LAWYERS PROGRAM - HOUSING

The New York City Housing Court's Volunteer Lawyers Program (VLP) provides free legal information and advice to unrepresented tenants and owners in the six Help Centers in the New York City Civil Court. The NYS Courts Access to Justice Program's VLP Housing Program recruits, trains and places the volunteer lawyers in the Help Centers, where they are supervised by experienced Help Center Court Attorneys. Unlike the Court Attorneys who can only provide legal and procedural information, volunteer lawyers review court papers, predicate notices, leases, rent records, eviction notices, and other housing or court-related documents, assist with the completion of court papers, and discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the cases. The VLP provides an important service to New York City residents faced with the loss of their home or the need to begin a proceeding in Housing Court. No appointments are necessary and there is no income threshold to receive assistance. Information is available for prospective volunteers and participating attorneys at <http://nycourts.gov/courts/nyc/housing/vlp.shtml>. Litigants can also learn information about the VLP and see when a volunteer lawyer will be available in their county: <http://nycourts.gov/courts/nyc/housing/vlpselfrep.shtml>.



In 2011, the VLP was able to continue without a hiatus despite the loss of Help Center Court Attorneys to unprecedented budget cuts. Highlights in 2011 include:

- **New Training Segments:** In 2011, in addition to the mandatory training in

nonpayment proceedings, holdover proceedings, HP actions, and ethics of unbundled legal services for 8.5 free CLE credit hours, a new segment on harassment was created and added to the training and three new live CLE training workshops of 1.0 credit each were developed and offered to attorneys who completed the mandatory training. In exchange for each hour of free CLE credit, attorneys agreed to provide four additional hours of volunteer service in the VLP Housing Program. Trainings held:

- Basics of Family Eviction Prevention Supplement (FEPS), February 2011.
- Landlord-Tenant Do-It-Yourself (DIY) Interactive Computer Programs, April 2011.
- Traverse Hearings and Rent Breakdowns in Nonpayment Proceedings, May 2011.
- **Trainings Held:** About 200 attorneys were trained during three combined VLP/VLFD Housing CLE sessions held throughout the year at the New York County Civil Court and during a live Bridge the Gap training. In addition, attorneys were also individually trained by watching the CLE course on DVD. After completing the course, volunteer lawyers contributed nearly 2,100 hours of *pro bono* service to unrepresented litigants visiting the Help Centers.
- **DIY Use:** Legal advice also included support with the use of the five New York City Housing Court DIY Form computer programs, which some volunteers were trained to use to assist unrepresented litigants in need of court documents.
- **Litigants Helped:** In 2011, VLP lawyers assisted more than 2,800 unrepresented litigants throughout New York City. In New York County alone, 934 litigants received legal advice from more than 1,000 hours of volunteer service. This represents more than a 300% increase over the number of litigants assisted by the VLP in New York County in 2010.
- **Website Updated:** The VLP website was updated to feature written testimonials by participating attorneys who shared their thoughts and experiences about their volunteer service:
http://nycourts.gov/courts/nyc/housing/vlp_testimonials.shtml.
- **Volunteer Attorney Recognition:** Two attorneys, including an attorney emeritus who volunteered virtually every Monday for a year in the New York County Help Center, were selected in consultation with Help Center Court Attorneys and awarded a plaque for exceptional *pro bono* service for providing free legal advice in the Housing Court's VLP. In addition, ten attorneys were also recognized and honored with a Certificate of Distinguished Service for performing above and beyond their peers, dedicating hundreds of *pro bono* hours to unrepresented litigants seeking assistance. The attorneys were also acknowledged on the NYS Courts Access to Justice Program's Facebook page.

"I never realized how many people faced evictions or unfair judgments without any legal help...I was not only helping people to better understand their legal rights, but my legal competencies grew and I was being supervised."

-VLP Housing Volunteer
Attorney, Dec. 2011

UNCONTESTED DIVORCE PROGRAM

Launched in 2009, the NYS Courts Access to Justice Program's Uncontested Divorce Program assists unrepresented litigants with the preparation of uncontested divorce forms at on-site clinics in the Supreme Court Help Centers in New York, Queens, Kings and Bronx Counties. Uncontested divorces can be complicated, confusing and overwhelming for unrepresented litigants. The NYS Courts Access to Justice Program recruits, trains and supervises volunteer attorneys to assist litigants using a software program designed for use by attorneys generating legal documents that streamlines the drafting process and produces personalized documents for each litigant.

The Uncontested Divorce Program runs one afternoon per week in New York County, one full day and two mornings per week in Kings County, one afternoon per week in Queens County and one evening per week in the Bronx County. In 2011, due to staff layoffs and the decrease in courthouse evening hours, Program hours were reduced in several counties. The hardest hit was the Queens County Program which decreased from five days per week to one afternoon per week. Budget cuts also affected trainings and only three were held in 2011, as compared with the five trainings held in 2010. Despite holding fewer trainings, the Uncontested Divorce Program's volunteer lawyers managed to assist double the number of litigants in 2011 as compared to 2010. Highlights from 2011 include:

- **New Funding:** In 2011, the Bronx County Bar Association became a co-sponsor and funded the Bronx County program. This allowed the Program to continue in the Bronx Supreme Court after the Program's Supervisor was laid-off and the Program was temporarily suspended.
- **Trainings Held:** In 2011, the program offered three CLE training programs where a total of 187 volunteer attorneys were recruited and trained to provide assistance to unrepresented litigants in uncontested divorce proceedings in New York City's Supreme Courts of Kings, Queens, Bronx and New York Counties.
- **Litigants Helped:** In 2011, more than 2,179 litigants were assisted by this Program.
- **Program Replicated in Westchester County:** The NYS Courts Access to Justice Program distributed uncontested divorce software program author licenses, shared training materials and provided technical assistance to the Westchester Supreme Court in order to replicate the New York City based project. In November 2011, the Program began running in the courthouse one day per week, helping unrepresented litigants prepare their uncontested divorce papers.
- **Volunteer Recognition:** Two attorneys were honored for their outstanding service in the Program, a retired attorney who volunteered weekly in the Queens County Program, as well as mentoring new attorneys participating in the program and a recent law school graduate who volunteered twice a week in the Bronx County program. In addition, eight attorneys were honored for their distinguished service for volunteering 50 or more hours in the Program.

VOLUNTEER ATTORNEY PROGRAM - FAMILY COURT

Volunteer lawyers provide legal advice and assistance to unrepresented litigants in the New York City Family Courts under the supervision of Help Center Attorneys. Volunteer attorneys assist with initial pleadings in support, paternity, custody, visitation, family offense and guardianship matters. The availability of such services helps reduce delays and recidivism, ensures a more efficient and fair outcome for unrepresented litigants and empowers litigants to pursue their cases to final resolution. The NYS Courts Access to Justice Program oversees the New York City Family Court Volunteer Attorney Program, which offers free CLE training in return for a *pro bono* commitment. The Family Court provides all administrative support for the project including scheduling and supervision of volunteers, as well as indemnification coverage.

Highlights in 2011 include the following:

- ***Trainings and Recruitment:*** The Program offered two comprehensive 3-part CLE training programs and recruited and trained a total of 104 volunteer attorneys to provide assistance to unrepresented litigants on a daily basis in the Family Court Help Centers of Kings, Queens, Bronx and New York Counties. In addition to solo practitioners, Program participants include many large law firms that have agreed to send associates on a regular basis. The firms also conduct periodic trainings with DVDs. These firms include: Alston & Bird; Arent Fox LLP; Bank of America; Cadwalader, Wickersham & Taft LLP; Citigroup; Colgate-Palmolive Company; Cooley LLP; Debevoise & Plimpton LLP; Dechert LLP; DLA Piper LLP; Greenberg Traurig LLP; HSBC; Hughes Hubbard & Reed LLP; Locke Lord Bissell & Liddell LLP; McCarter & English LLP; Morgan, Lewis & Bockius LLP; Morrison Foerster LLP; Orrick, Herrington & Sutcliffe LLP; Pfizer Inc.; Proskauer Rose LLP; Reed Smith LLP; Ropes & Gray LLP; Shearman & Sterling LLP; Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom LLP; Stroock & Stroock & Lavan LLP; White & Case LLP; Willkie Farr & Gallagher LLP.
- ***Litigants Helped:*** In 2011, more than 3,300 litigants were assisted by volunteer lawyers in the New York City Family Courts.
- ***Volunteer Recognition:*** One attorney from a large firm and one solo practitioner were honored for their exceptional service. In addition, 27 attorneys were recognized for their distinguished service for volunteering 50 or more hours in the Program in 2011. The New York Law Journal also honored two attorneys in the program for their sustained commitment to *pro bono* service.

ATTORNEY EMERITUS PROGRAM

The NYS Courts Access to Justice Program oversees the Attorney Emeritus Program (AEP), which was the brainchild of Chief Judge Jonathan Lippman. The AEP engages attorneys aged 55 and older in *pro bono* legal



service. In 2011, the AEP continued to expand, highlights include:

- **Increased Pool:** The number of attorneys eligible to change their attorney registration status to Attorney Emeritus substantially increased due to a 2011 rule change. Previously, only retired lawyers could register as Attorney Emeritus but now any lawyer age 55 and over can register, even if he or she is actively practicing law. This significantly increases the number of people who can now participate in the AEP.
- **Volunteers and Providers:** In 2011, the AEP had 250 interested volunteer attorneys and 51 legal service providers.
- **Website Expanded:** In order to increase the visibility of the Program, the AEP's website was expanded: <http://www.nycourts.gov/attorneys/volunteer/emeritus/rsaa/>. The new website includes a more user-friendly volunteer application as well as more detailed information about the Program. One of the most important features of the new website is the list of volunteer opportunities. Volunteers can now search for opportunities by region so they can find a legal service provider that aligns best with their location and strengths. This strengthens the matching process and ensures that all interested applicants find the right opportunity as soon as possible. These new features will allow for the AEP to continue to successfully expand throughout New York.

LAW STUDENT AND LAW GRADUATE VOLUNTEER INITIATIVE

The NYS Courts Access to Justice Program encourages law students and law graduates to participate in court-based volunteer programs, thus, involving new lawyers in public service early in their legal careers. Under this initiative, law students and law graduates provide legal advice and limited scope representation to unrepresented litigants in consumer debt, landlord-tenant, uncontested divorce, and family law matters in New York City's Civil, Family and Supreme Courts. Highlights in 2011 include:

"I thoroughly and sincerely enjoyed my time spent with this program and cannot praise the experience enough. As a law student with interests in public service and litigation, I can think of very few opportunities that would have given me the same learning and professional experience."

-New York Law School volunteer Aug. 2011

- **Student Practice Orders Renewed:** In 2011, the Appellate Divisions of the First and Second Departments renewed the NYS Courts Access to Justice Program's Student Practice Orders. The Practice Orders authorize a program of activities for law students and law graduates awaiting admission to the New York State Bar, acting under the supervision of the NYS Courts Access to Justice Program. This enables the NYS Courts Access to Justice Program to expand the pool of volunteers for its volunteer lawyer programs.

- **Multi-Program Training:** Recruitment of recent law school graduates for the VLP Consumer, VLFD Consumer, VLP Housing, VLFD Housing, and Uncontested Divorce Programs was increased through the newly created Bridge the Gap *pro bono* training initiative.
- **Multi-Program Recruitment:** The NYS Courts Access to Justice Program also expanded its participation in law graduate fellowship and law student public service internship programs. Outreach was made to New York City area law schools, including, New York Law School, St. John's University School of Law, Benjamin N. Cardozo School of Law, CUNY School of Law, Fordham Law School, Columbia School of Law, Touro Law Center, Pace University School of Law, and Brooklyn Law School, to introduce court-sponsored programs and seek feedback on law student involvement.
- **Volunteer Recognition:** The NYS Courts Access to Justice Program, in collaboration with the NY County Lawyers Association, NY State Bar Association and the Office of the Mayor of the City of New York, honored volunteers for outstanding *pro bono* service rendered in the courts. The awards ceremony highlighted law students and recent law school graduates who had volunteered in the courts. Thirty-one law students and recent law school graduates were among those selected for special recognition for their distinguished service.

RESOLUTION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

The NYS Courts Access to Justice Program's Resolution Assistance Program (RAP) trains college students, law students and other approved volunteers to provide in-court assistance to tenants and owners, who are parties to nonpayment proceedings and are appearing without an attorney in the New York City Housing Courts. The RAP helps unrepresented litigants have a productive experience by providing non-legal support, raising awareness of available resources so litigants can better advocate for themselves, and giving litigants the confidence to discuss their claims or defenses before a Court Attorney or Judge. As nonpayment proceedings involve peoples' homes and livelihoods, it is important for unrepresented litigants to be able to utilize the resources available to them within the courthouse and the community at large; that is where RAP volunteers are most helpful and necessary. The Program maintains webpages for prospective and participating volunteers at: <http://nycourts.gov/courts/nyc/housing/rap.shtml>. Highlights in 2011 include:



- **New and Continued Partnerships:** The NYS Courts Access to Justice Program partnered with Berkeley College and Briarcliffe College to recruit and train prospective volunteers. RAP also worked with Benjamin N. Cardozo School of Law, St John's University School of Law, and the Columbia Law School Tenants' Rights Project to involve law students in the Program. The Program further strengthened its collaboration with the New York City Paralegal Association and

the Office of the Mayor of the City of New York's NYC Service. In addition, students from the City College of New York's Skadden, Arps Honors Program in Legal Studies and recent graduates from New York Law School's Public Interest Graduate Fellowship Program also participated in RAP.

- **New Training Program:** The RAP training was expanded to include a segment taught by the Human Resources Administration on the "One Shot Deal," a one-time emergency grant, to highlight the social services aspect of the Housing Court.
- **Trainings:** In 2011, eight sessions were held at the New York County Civil Court and two sessions were offered at St John's University School of Law. Overall, 177 volunteers were trained to serve in the Bronx, Queens, Kings and New York County Housing Courts. This represents more than a 150% increase in RAP volunteers over 2010.
- **RAP Volunteer Experience:** The website was updated with written testimonials from two former RAP volunteers who shared their experience about helping litigants in the RAP and how they gained a better understanding of proceedings in Housing Court:
http://nycourts.gov/courts/nyc/housing/rap_testimonials.shtml.
- **RAP Recognition:** In 2011, one volunteer serving in Bronx County Housing Court, and one volunteer of New York County Housing Court were awarded a plaque for outstanding *pro bono* service and two fellow volunteers received a Certificate of Distinguished Service for helping unrepresented litigants navigate the Housing Court, providing them with the confidence to discuss their claims and raising awareness about available resources for legal, monetary or other assistance. The volunteers were also acknowledged on the NYS Courts Access to Justice Program's Facebook page.

"The Program taught me the importance of assisting unrepresented litigants and the responsibility that comes with that assistance...As a RAP volunteer, I eased the stress levels of unrepresented litigants by providing them with support."

-RAP volunteer Nov. 2011

BRIDGE THE GAP TRAINING INITIATIVE

Several of the NYS Courts Access to Justice Program's volunteer attorney programs worked together to develop a "Bridge the Gap" training program targeted at law school graduates and newly admitted attorneys to fulfill their first or second year mandatory continuing legal education (CLE) requirements. The training offers a total of 16 CLE credits: 7 professional practice credits, 6 skills credits and 3 ethics credit hours. In exchange for the 16 CLE credits, lawyers commit to complete a 50-hour supervised *pro bono* practicum within 6 months of training in the New York City Civil and Supreme Courts, assisting litigants with housing, consumer debt and uncontested divorce matters in the NYS Courts Access to Justice Program's unbundled legal services programs. This initiative was undertaken to involve attorneys in *pro bono* service early in their careers, in an effort to encourage long-term commitment to public service. Exposing

new lawyers to unbundled legal services familiarizes them with new ways to expand their client base. Through the supervised practicum, lawyers gain invaluable lawyering experience that they can carry over into their own practice. Most importantly, new lawyers gain a better understanding of the need to increase access to justice, while assisting some of New York's most vulnerable litigants.

The first Bridge the Gap training was held in New York County over four days in October 2011 during National *Pro Bono* Celebration Week. The training was a huge success. The training was oversubscribed and attorneys were wait-listed weeks before the training. Over 150 law graduates and newly admitted attorneys participated. It is planned that future Bridge the Gap trainings will be held twice a year.

NATIONAL PRO BONO CELEBRATION WEEK

The third annual National *Pro Bono* Celebration Week was celebrated October 23 - 29, 2011. The NYS Courts Access to Justice Program sponsored a Bridge the Gap CLE *pro bono* training series, a Volunteer Awards Ceremony and Volunteer Opportunity Expo, and community legal clinics during the week in celebration of *pro bono* service.



- **Bridge the Gap Training Series:** The NYS Courts Access to Justice Program offered its first free Bridge the Gap CLE training during *Pro Bono* Celebration Week to encourage and facilitate *pro bono* service by recent law graduates and newly admitted attorneys. The program was offered in return for *pro bono* service in the NYS Courts Access to Justice Programs. Attorneys were trained to provide free legal advice and limited representation to unrepresented litigants in New York City's Civil and Supreme Courts. Recent law school graduates and newly admitted attorneys were able to fulfill their first or second year mandatory CLE requirements through participation in this new program. From October 24 - 27, 2011, training was conducted in ethics, uncontested divorce, housing and consumer debt. Over 150 recent law school graduates and newly admitted attorneys participated in this initiative.
- **Community Free Legal Clinics:** As part of *Pro Bono* Celebration Week, the NYS Courts Access to Justice Program partnered with the Interfaith Center of New York and the New York Legal Assistance Group (NYLAG) to "bring the courts to the community" by providing free legal assistance in a different county in New York City each day of the week between October 24 - 28, 2011. Temporary spaces were created where community members were able to receive free private legal consultations with volunteer lawyers and procedural and legal information from court Clerks, on custody and visitation, child support, domestic violence, consumer debt, small claims, housing, divorce, foreclosure, bankruptcy and immigration law topics. The NYS Courts Access to Justice Program's free DIY Form programs were also showcased at the clinics. Over the course of the week, 246 people were assisted by the free legal clinics.

- The National Pro Bono Celebration Week Volunteer Awards and Volunteer Opportunity Expo:*** In recognition of National Pro Bono Celebration Week, on November 1, 2011, the NYS Courts Access to Justice Program, along with the New York County Lawyers' Association, the New York State Bar Association, and the Office of the Mayor of the City of New York, held a *pro bono* awards reception and ceremony to honor outstanding dedicated volunteer attorneys for their *pro bono* service. It was hosted by the New York County Lawyers Association and attended by over 200 people. The program included remarks by Stewart D. Aaron, President, New York County Lawyers Association; Seymour James, President-elect, New York State Bar Association; David B. Goldin, Administrative Justice Coordinator, Office of the Mayor of the City of New York; and the Hon. Fern A. Fisher, Deputy Chief Administrative Judge for New York City Courts and Director, NYS Courts Access to Justice Program. One hundred and twenty-one volunteers were honored for their work in the NYS Courts Access to Justice Program's Consumer Debt, Uncontested Divorce, Housing, Family Law, Guardian Ad Litem and DIY Form programs. All of the honorees performed over 50 hours of *pro bono* services in a court-based program throughout 2011. During this event, a *Volunteer Opportunity Expo* was held for attendees to learn about the NYS Courts Access to Justice Program's volunteer programs. After the event, honorees were featured on the NYS Courts Access to Justice Facebook page: www.facebook.com/NYCourtsVLP.

"I wanted to thank you again for the event this evening. It was a wonderful celebration of like-minded professionals pitching in to help out the most at-risk members of our community."

-GAL volunteer, Nov. 2011

INTRA-PROGRAM COLLABORATION

The 2011 calendar year was very difficult for all of the NYS Courts Access to Justice court-based programs due to the severe decrease in the Unified Court System's budget. To find cost cutting solutions and new ways to stretch resources, a number of the NYS Courts Access to Justice Program individual programs worked together in 2011 with the mutual goal of assisting greater numbers of unrepresented litigants. Upon collaborating, it was learned that many volunteer lawyers had already volunteered for more than one court program or were eager to volunteer for another court-based program. As a result of intra-program collaboration, creative joint training programs were developed and conducted, resource materials were shared, volunteers learned more about volunteer opportunities and new initiatives and programs were established. Intra-program collaboration in 2011 includes the following:

- Volunteer Lawyer Programs' Facebook page:*** Realizing the common goals of the court-based volunteer lawyer programs, the NYS Courts Access to Justice Program launched a volunteer program Facebook page in September 2011.

The Facebook page provides one location where volunteers from all the court-based programs can find information about CLE trainings, volunteer opportunities, and volunteer recognition events.

- **Bridge the Gap Training:** The VLFD Consumer, VLP Consumer, VLFD Housing, VLP Housing and Uncontested Divorce Volunteer Lawyer Programs teamed up and devised a new initiative to increase long term *pro bono* service by exposing lawyers to unbundled legal services in court-based programs early in their legal careers. A 16 hour joint program “Bridge the Gap” training was held in October 2011 in conjunction with National *Pro Bono* Celebration Week.
- **Landlord-Tenant DIY (Do-It-Yourself) Form Training:** In April 2011, the DIY Form Program collaborated with the VLP and VLFD Housing Programs to host a CLE accredited training in New York County for attorneys who already completed the basic Housing Court VLP or VLFD Program training. The training focused on two Housing Court DIY Form programs with a goal that trained lawyers would promote the DIY programs and assist housing litigants in court. Lawyers received one free CLE skills credit in exchange for either four hours of volunteer service in the Help Centers or one day of representation in the VLFD Housing Program.
- **Practical Workshops:** In February and May 2011, the VLP Housing, VLFD Housing and GAL programs partnered to offer free practical workshops on “Basics of Family Eviction Prevention Supplement (FEPS)” and “Traverse Hearings and Rent Breakdowns in Nonpayment Proceedings.” These workshops were specifically chosen as a means of enhancing the volunteers’ skill and ability to effectively advocate for the litigants.
- **“One Shot Deal” Training:** In a unique collaboration, the GAL Program shared its workshop on the “One-Shot Deal,” a one-time emergency grant administered by the Human Resources Administration’s Department of Social Services, with RAP, incorporating it into the RAP training program.
- **RAP and DIY Program Collaboration:** RAP students from the City College of New York’s Skadden, Arps Honors Program in Legal Studies and the New York Law School’s Public Interest Graduate Fellowship Program were trained to assist litigants with the DIY Form programs in the Clerk’s Offices in the Civil Court.
- **Law School Recruitment Efforts:** Throughout 2011, the NYS Courts Access to Justice Program conducted joint recruitment efforts targeted at New York City area law schools to increase law student and law graduate involvement in volunteer programs. Joint presentations were made for the VLP Consumer, VLFD Consumer, VLP Housing, VLFD Housing, Uncontested Divorce, VLP Family, and RAP programs at law school public service opportunity events. Meetings were also held with law school career service directors and public service internship coordinators.

COURT HELP CENTERS

Help Centers provide an invaluable service to unrepresented litigants. They were created in response to the ever increasing numbers of litigants that go to court without legal counsel because they cannot afford representation. Help Centers are located in the courthouse, are free to the public, do not income screen, operate on a first come, first serve basis and do not require an appointment.



The Court Help Centers are staffed by a combination of Court Attorneys and Court Clerks, who provide free comprehensive procedural and legal information on Supreme Court special proceedings (*i.e.*, Article 78), matrimonial/family, real property/housing and other civil assistance. Five of the existing offices follow a one-court model, meaning, they generally provide procedural and legal information about a particular court (Supreme Court or New York City Civil Court). One office, housed in a courthouse with multiple courts (*i.e.*, Supreme, Surrogates and lower Civil), is a multi-court office which provides assistance for all three courts. The Suffolk model (the Library Resources for the Public Program) is a collaboration with the Public Access Law Library, where multiple services are offered to the unrepresented in one location. Help Center locations can be found on CourtHelp: <http://nycourthelp.gov/helpcenters.html>.

The Court Help Centers offer referrals to full-service representation, *pro bono* attorney providers, legal clinics and other low-cost legal service providers. They provide referrals to alternative dispute resolution and social service support systems. Unrepresented litigants are provided with free sample forms, informational pamphlets and publications. In addition, computers are available for litigants to do legal research, view Civil Court Community Seminars, or to complete DIY Forms. The Help Center staff does not provide legal advice and no attorney-client relationships are created. In the New York City Help Centers, volunteer attorneys from court-sponsored limited representation programs are supervised by the Help Center Court Attorneys and utilized to provide unrepresented litigants with housing and consumer debt legal advice.

Highlights of the Help Center activities in 2011 include:

- **Handbook for Volunteer Programs:** In the summer of 2011, an Access to Justice Handbook for Volunteer Programs was created. This handbook details volunteer opportunities, guidelines, rules and procedures for existing and future volunteers. The Handbook for Volunteer Programs is distributed to the volunteer attorneys in the New York City Civil Court Help Centers. The handbook is available online at: <http://www.nycourts.gov/ip/ny2j/pdfs/HandbookforVolunteerPrograms-12-2-11.pdf>.
- **Court Help Center Forms:** A uniform numbering system was created to categorize the Court Help Center forms, several new housing court forms were created and many existing forms were revised using plain language.

- **Filemaker Program for Gathering Statistical Data:** Working with OCA's Exam Development Group, the NYS Courts Access to Justice Program made substantial progress on a new Filemaker program that would allow the Court Help Centers to produce summary weekly, monthly or yearly reports. In April 2011, the Filemaker program was piloted in Suffolk County and the Bronx County Court Help Center and has been a huge success.
- **Supreme Court Forms:** At the end of 2010, the NYS Courts Access to Justice Program formed a committee comprised of supervisors of the New York City Supreme Court Help Centers to create, review and revise forms for use throughout the New York City Supreme Court Help Centers. The goal was to create a standardized group of fillable forms that litigants could easily utilize. In 2011, several forms were selected, revised and made into fillable plain language forms.

PART II: TECHNOLOGY, SOCIAL MEDIA AND PUBLICATIONS

Budget and personnel limitations in 2011 sharply curtailed travel and outreach around the state, courthouse programs requiring staff assistance, and printing and distribution of published materials. These restraints induced the NYS Courts Access to Justice Program to focus more energy on technology-based resources and services as a means to assist the unrepresented public. Technology's exponential growth, its enhanced accessibility and its decreasing costs, make internet-based resources, such as, the DIY (Do-It-Yourself) Form document assembly programs, CourtHelp, and internet publications, ideal mechanisms for serving unrepresented litigants. Social media and networking tools, such as, Twitter, YouTube, and Facebook, are similarly excellent technological tools for disseminating information. Both access to justice and court operations are greatly improved through the use of technology. A number of the NYS Courts Access to Justice Program's most significant technological undertakings and achievements in 2011 are discussed below.

DIY FORM USAGE

DIY Forms are free and easy guided step-by-step document assembly programs that use a litigant's answers to questions to generate a completed personalized court form, which is ready to print, serve and file. The DIY Form programs are available to unrepresented litigants over the internet and in many courthouse Clerks' Offices and Help Centers throughout the state. Previously, DIY Form programs were available for litigants in Family, Supreme, Surrogate's, New York City Civil and New York City Housing Courts. In 2011, the first DIY Form programs were developed for City, District, Town and Village Court litigants. A list of the 17 available DIY Form programs is set forth on the New York State Courts Access to Justice Program's website: <http://www.nycourts.gov/ip/nya2j/diyforms.shtml#availableprograms>.

"Thanks so much for the creation of this website. I'm thrilled that I could create and print this document. I'm going to the courthouse with confidence. What an awesome service."

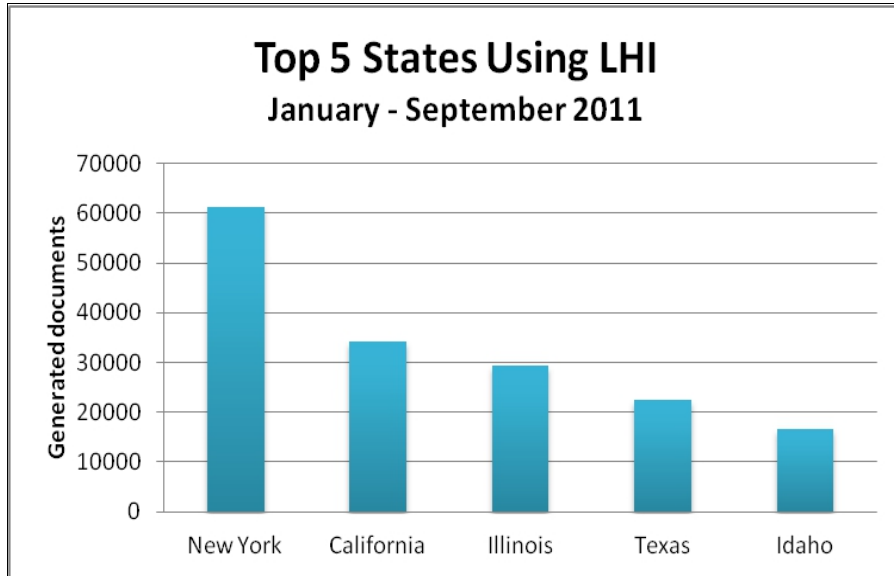
*-DIY internet feedback
Dec. 2011*

The NYS Courts Access to Justice Program tracks the usage of the DIY Form programs and reviews the data to determine where and how to follow-up with program changes and personnel training and outreach. Tracking efforts are the key to the enormous success and continued advancement of the programs. DIY Form program usage data is collected from three sources: LawHelpInteractive (LHI) statistics, Universal Case Management System (UCMS) statistics, and DIY User Surveys.

2011 usage highlights are as follows:

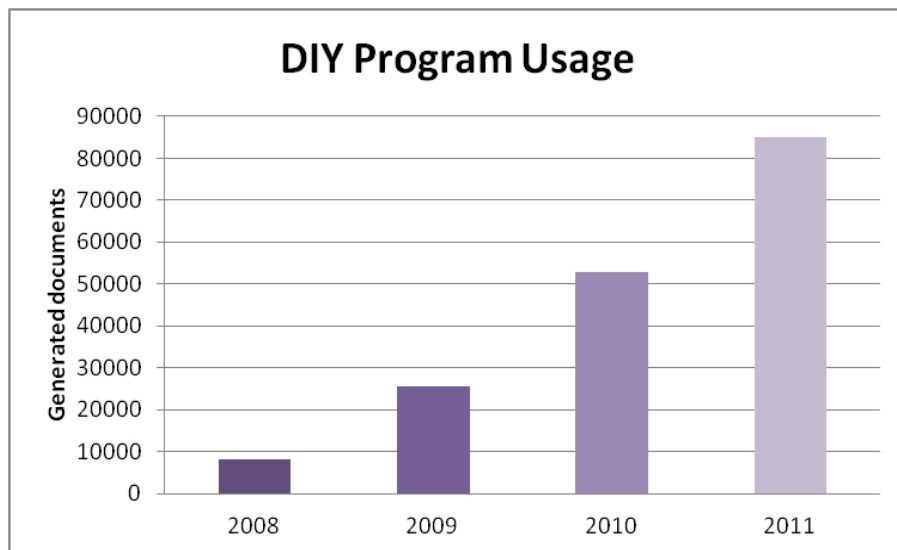
- **LHI Statistics:** The New York State court system contracts with Pro Bono Net to host the DIY Form programs on the internet on Pro Bono Net's server called

LawHelpInteractive (LHI). LHI compiles quarterly usage statistics for the 60 jurisdictions that use LHI to host their document assembly programs. The statistics indicate how many times a document was generated from every program.



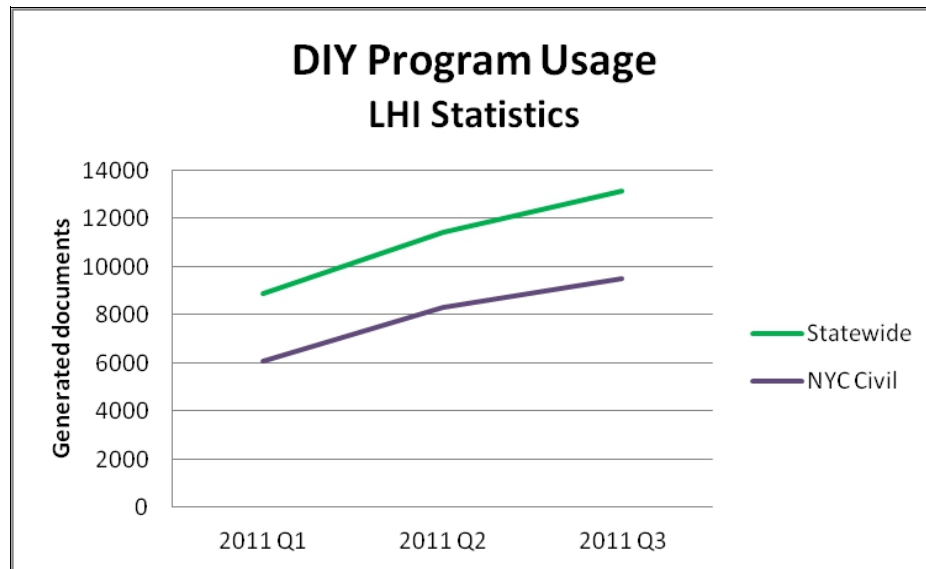
For the past two years, the New York State court system’s DIY Forms have generated more documents than any other jurisdiction. Indeed, in 2011, New York’s generated documents comprised 26% of the total number of documents generated on LHI even though New York does not have the most document assembly programs.

In 2011, more than 85,000 court forms were generated by DIY users. This is an increase of more than 60% since 2010 and an increase of 957% since 2008.



These numbers have increased due to the efforts of court personnel in every county throughout the state. In 2011:

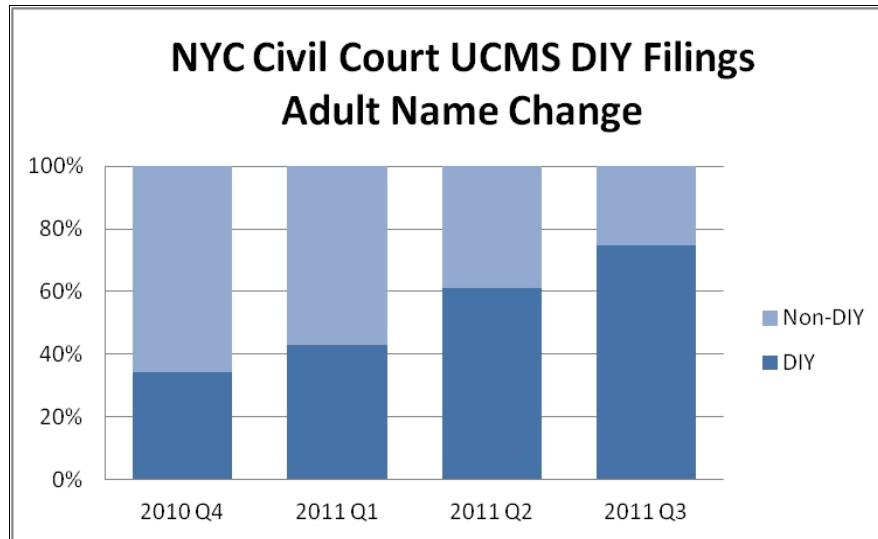
- Supreme, Family, and Surrogate's Court programs made up 56% of the generated documents and New York City Civil Court programs made up 44% of the generated documents.
- Family Court programs made up 45% of DIY generated documents and New York City Civil Court Housing programs made up 28% of DIY generated documents.
- The Family Court Support Modification Petition program was the most used DIY Form program. In the first three quarters of 2011, this program made up 34% of the generated documents.
- In the first three quarters of 2011, there was a 48.14% increase in statewide generated documents and a 57.20% increase in New York City Civil Court generated documents.



- **UCMS Statistics:** Since 2009, Family, Surrogate's, and New York City Civil Courts' employees record DIY filings in UCMS when a litigant submits a DIY generated document. Supreme, New York City Housing, Town and Village Courts' case management systems do not have this capability. In October 2011, the Department of Technology built DIY Form tracking capability into the City and District Courts' UCMS so that quarterly reports disclosing the total number of DIY filings, as well as the total number of unrepresented litigant filings, can be collected. Comparing the total number of unrepresented filings to the number of DIY filings gives an estimate of the incorporation of the programs in the courthouse. Instructions for Clerks to record DIY filings are available on the NYS Courts Access to Justice Program's intranet site.

DIY filings continued to increase in 2011. In particular, in the first nine

months of 2011, the New York City Civil Court increased their total DIY UCMS filings for the three civil programs from 29.12% of recorded filings to 60.94%. As demonstrated by the chart below, by the third quarter of 2011, 74.65% of all adult name change Petitions filed in the Civil Court were generated by the DIY Form program.



- User Surveys:** The NYS Courts Access to Justice Program has been inputting data from returned surveys into a database since May 2009. (A copy of the User Survey is attached hereto as Exhibit “A”). In 2011, staff and resource budget cuts severely limited the ability of the NYS Courts Access to Justice Program to input DIY Form program data collected from the DIY User Surveys. This negatively impacts the ability to improve usage of the programs and service to the public because of the lack of timeliness of the feedback. In 2011, the NYS Courts Access to Justice Program managed to input data from more than 13,000 User Surveys.

“NYS DIY Forms is very helpful and saves time. I hope it will stay long in the Court System.”

-DIY User Survey, Kings Co. Family Court, Support Modification, Sept. 2011

The majority of comments in the User Surveys express gratitude and appreciation for the service. Samples of some of the common themes that run through the 2011 responses are set forth below:

Comments About Ease of Use:

- Queens County Family Court, Support Modification, March 2011: “This would be the first time filling out paperwork was easy. Using the computer was fast and less stressful than waiting. A+++ for court employee.”
- Richmond County Civil Court, Consumer Debt Affidavit, September 2011: “Well done on ease of use and links to definitions of legal terms during the

process.”

- Saratoga Family Court, Support Modification, September 2011: “This was a great program to use. The explanation for each question was very clear. This is a very user friendly program.”
- Onondaga County Family Court, Support Modification, October 2011: “This program was so simple and made my life easier. I was so afraid I would do it wrong. Had I known how easy it was I wouldn’t have put this off so long.”

Comments About Time Saving:

- Queens County Family Court, Support Modification, March 2011: “The service is wonderful and of great help to working people who can not take time off of work to sit in court for hours.”
- New York County Civil Court, Minor Name Change, August 2011: “I found this program to be a wonderful time saving tool, enabling me to complete forms prior to going to court.”
- Queens County Housing Court, Tenant Affidavit, October 2011: The program is straight forward, I like it. It just took me less than 10 minutes to complete the application, ‘Excellent program’.”

Comments About Empowerment:

- New York County Family Court, Support Modification, May 2011: “I appreciate the new DIY Program. It made me feel part of the process instead of just a number. Thanks.”
- Kings County Family Court, Support Enforcement, August 2011: “Excellent, I actually enjoyed this process, it allows us to become more involved & in control of the process. I love it.”

Comments About Procedural Assistance:

- Saratoga County Family Court, Support Modification, January 2011: “I found this extremely helpful, save me from asking questions and trying to figure out what and how to file! Kudos!!”
- New York County Civil Court, Consumer Debt Affidavit, August 2011: “This is very functional and practical for those who do not have much knowledge of these procedures. Thank you.”
- Wayne County Family Court, Support Modification, September 2011: “This program was very helpful because I printed out the papers as well and I wasn’t sure where to put the right info, so thanks a lot for the DIY program.”
- New York County Housing Court, Small Property Owners Nonpayment Petition, October 2011: “This program was very intuitive in helping me get the correct forms that I needed to use.”

Comments About Saving Money:

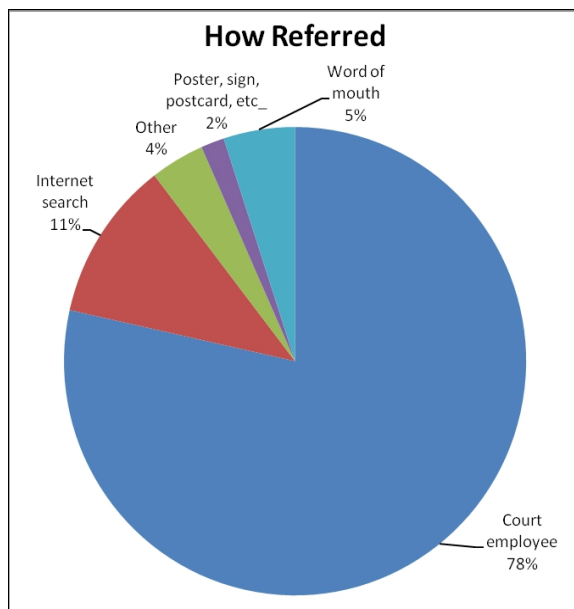
- New York County Supreme Court, Adult Name Change, June 2011: “This program is great!! I wish I knew about this before buying the change name packet on legalzoom.”
- Suffolk County Family Court, Support Modification, July 2011: “I am very appreciative this service was made available to citizens who need to be

heard by the court who cannot afford attorneys.”

- Queens County Surrogate’s Court, Small Estate Affidavit, September 2011: “This was very easy to use and understand. My father’s estate was very small and this program saved me hundreds of dollars.”
- Richmond County Surrogate’s Court, Small Estate Affidavit, October 2011: “This is a great website. I waited all this time to file because I couldn’t afford a lawyer to do this.”

Highlights from the User Surveys include the following:

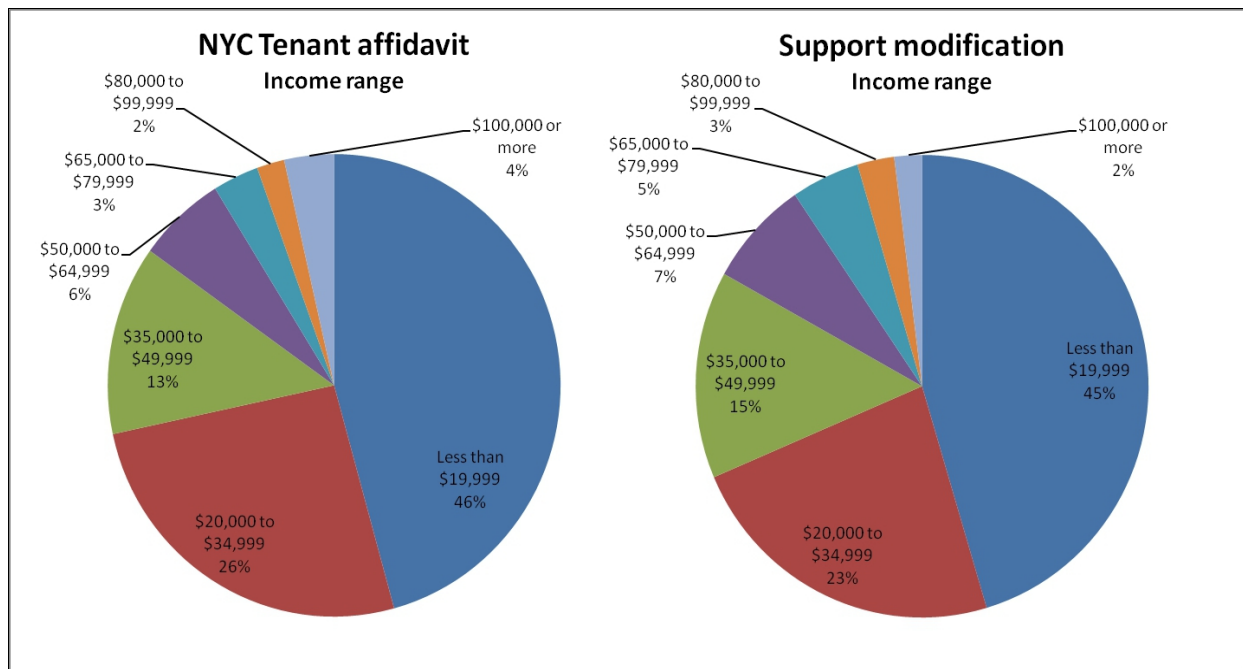
- **Saved Time:** Examining all of the DIY Programs together, 92.48% of people said that the DIY program saved them time. Those between 18 and 24 had the highest percentage of users who said that the program saved them time at 95.06%. From there, the percentage steadily decreases respective to age range. Those 65 and older had the lowest percentage of users who thought that the program saved them time at 88.76%.
- **How Referred:** 78% of users were referred to the program by a court employee demonstrating that the great success of DIY programs is attributable to training of court employees and their promotion of the programs. The chart below shows how litigants said they learned about the availability of the DIY program.



- **Internet Access:** More people had internet at home in 2011 - 82% compared to 78% in 2010. Of Spanish users, 69% had internet at home. English users, 82% had internet at home.
- **Where Used:** 42% of litigants used the DIY program in a Court Help Center in 2011. In 2010 it was just 26%. 80% of litigants used the

program in the Help Center or in the Clerk's Office compared to 72% in 2010. Regardless of internet access at home, the majority of litigants use DIY programs in the courthouses that offer them.

- Income: Among all DIY program users, 41% had incomes of less than \$19,999. As demonstrated in the chart below, the greatest percentage of low-income litigants used the New York City Housing Court Tenant Vacate Default Judgment program and the Family Court Support Modification Petition program. 72% of litigants using the Tenant Vacate Default Judgment program, and 68% of litigants using the Support Modification program, had annual incomes of less than \$35,000.



DIY FORM DEVELOPMENT

The NYS Courts Access to Justice Program follows a set of Best Practices when developing a new DIY Form program for unrepresented litigants. In 2011, these Best Practice were published in a guide for other court systems:

http://www.nycourts.gov/ip/nya2j/pdfs/BestPractices_courtsystemdocument_assemblyprograms.pdf. Development of a DIY Forms takes a considerable amount of time to produce a legally acceptable universal form and instructions.

All DIY programs go through substantial testing by both judicial and non-judicial personnel, private attorneys and stakeholders in the community before being released to the public. In addition, DIY Form programs are sent to a specialist to put the text into plain language to help users understand the information better and avoid confusion and misunderstanding. Once a

NYS DIY Forms DO-IT-YOURSELF

DIY Form program is released, it is continuously maintained and updated based upon user feedback, changes in the law, and technological advances. Additional language options and features are often added where feasible and practical.

2011 New Programs:

- **Spanish Paternity Petition Program:** A Spanish version of the Family Court Paternity Petition program was made available for Family Court litigants in March 2011. The text of the entire DIY program is written in Spanish. This program was chosen because there is very little English text that a litigant must input. With this option, Spanish Instructions, a Spanish copy of the Petition (in addition to the court's English copy), and a Spanish User Survey, are generated. An interpreter in the Kings County Family Court greatly assisted with the creation of the program. http://www.nycourts.gov/courthelp/diy/paternity_spanish.html.
- **Guardianship Article 17-A:** An Article 17-A Guardianship program was created for Surrogate's Court litigants to petition for continued legal guardianship of mentally retarded or developmentally disabled individuals after they reach the age of 18. After over a year in development, with substantial input from the EGG (Expert Guardianship Group) developer's group of volunteer court employees from Surrogates' Courts across the state, the guardianship program was launched in April 2011. This program produces the Petition and all of the accompanying required forms needed in this very complicated proceeding. At present, this program is the largest and most ambitious of its kind in the entire country. <http://www.nycourts.gov/courthelp/diy/guardianship17A.html>.
- **Enforcement Petition Program:** In April 2011, a Family Court Enforcement Petition program was added to produce a Petition to enforce spousal and/or child support orders. The program also produces Spanish instructions at the option of the litigant. Bronx Family Court Clerks with DIY programming training greatly contributed to the development of the front-end interface of this program. <http://www.nycourts.gov/courthelp/diy/supportEnforcementViolation.html>.
- **Small Property Owner Nonpayment Petition Program for Outside New York City:** This program produces either a Rent Demand Notice or a nonpayment Notice of Petition and Petition for unrepresented landlords outside New York City who own three or fewer rental units. This program is the first DIY Form applicable to District Courts, City Courts and Town and Village Courts. A developer's group of volunteer Clerks and Judges from these courts throughout the state assisted in the creation of this program. The program was launched in October 2011. <http://www.nycourts.gov/courthelp/diy/smallProperty.html>.
- **Tenant Vacate Default Judgment Program for Outside New York City:** This program makes an Order to Show Cause and Supporting Affidavit for a tenant to vacate a default judgment for failure to appear in a holdover or nonpayment case in a District, City, Town or Village Court. The program also gives the tenant the option to print instructions in Spanish. It was launched in October at the same time as the new small property owner nonpayment program. <http://www.nycourts.gov/courthelp/diy/tenantVacateDefault.html>.

2011 Program Modifications:

- ***New York City Nonpayment Answer Program Modification:*** In February 2011, several changes were made to the New York City Civil Court Nonpayment Answer Program, an informational program that helps a tenant answer a nonpayment proceeding by identifying defenses and counterclaims. The program was modified to add a military defense for tenants on active duty or dependent on someone in military service, a military service fact sheet, a Section 8 screen for NYCHA tenants, and some learn more screens to clarify text based upon user feedback. The English audio was updated to reflect the changes. http://www.nycourts.gov/courts/nyc/housing/int_nonpayment.shtml.
- ***Spanish New York City Tenant Answer Program Modification:*** In February 2011, the Spanish version of the Civil Court Tenant Answer Program was modified to match the English changes. The Spanish Audio was also updated. http://nycourts.gov/courts/nyc/housing/housing_spanish/int_nonpayment.shtml.
- ***New York City Consumer Debt Affidavit to Vacate a Default Judgment:*** In June 2011, in response to feedback that some Civil Court Judges were denying the Orders to Show Cause made by this program as not specific enough, the program was modified accordingly. http://www.nycourts.gov/courts/nyc/civil/int_affidavit2vacate.shtml.
- ***Adult Name Change Petition Program Addition:*** In September 2011, the new universally accepted Request for Judicial Intervention (RJI) form was added to the Supreme Court Adult Name Change program. <http://www.nycourts.gov/courthelp/diy/nameChange.html>.
- ***Small Estate Affidavit Program Modifications:*** In response to Clerks' feedback, the following features were added to the program in October 2011: an option to add a second affiant, the niece/nephew distributee level, Family Tree Affidavit, Heirship Affidavit, and changes to the instruction sheet. <http://www.nycourts.gov/courthelp/diy/smallestate.html>.
- ***Support Modification Petition Program Changes:*** In 2011, the Support Modification Petition Program went through two rounds of changes. In September 2011, in response to Clerks' feedback, the changes requested window was expanded to accommodate more than one kind of modification request to the support order. In October 2011, to keep current with changes in the law and revisions in the promulgated form, the following two grounds were added: 15% change in litigants' incomes and three years since the last modification to the order. <http://www.nycourts.gov/courthelp/diy/supportmodification.html>.

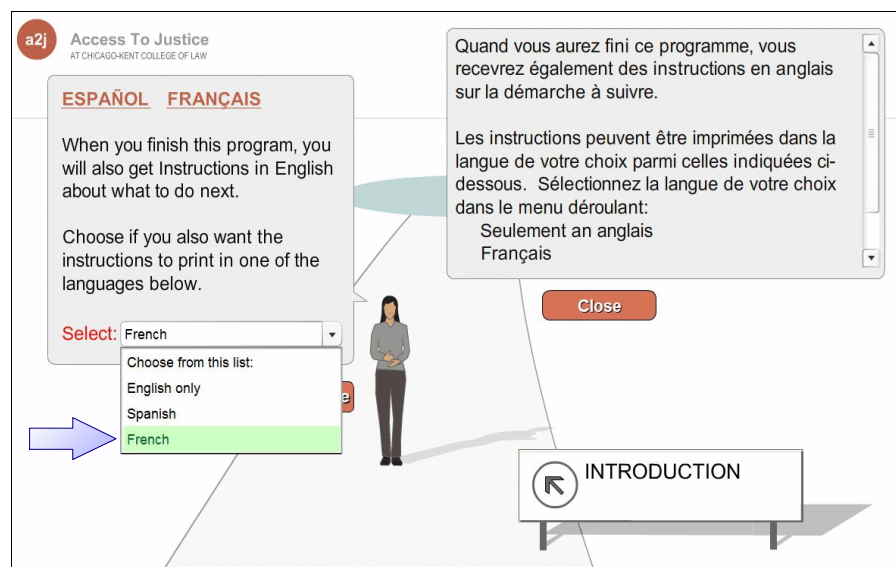
2011 Language Features Added:

- ***Spanish Audio Track Option Added to English Text:*** In February 2011, a Spanish audio track was added to the New York City Civil Court Adult Name Change Petition Program to accompany the English text. As the user proceeds through the English program, he or she can listen along in Spanish. This audio

feature is aimed at Limited English Proficiency (LEP) users who speak some English but may not read as well and would benefit from the audio track. A user has an option to choose to listen to audio in English in this program as well.

http://www.nycourts.gov/courts/nyc/civil/int_adultnamechange.shtml.

- **Spanish Instructions Added:** Spanish instructions were added to a number of DIY Form programs. During the program, the litigant is given the option of choosing Spanish instructions. If the user chooses the Spanish option, the instructions generated with the DIY court form are printed in Spanish in addition to English. This is very helpful to LEP litigants and also helpful for persons who may be assisting the litigant. Spanish instructions were added to the following programs:
 - New York City Roommate Holdover Petition/Termination Notice Program: Added March 2011.
http://www.nycourts.gov/courts/nyc/housing/roommate_diy.shtml.
 - New York City Affidavit to Vacate a Default Judgment in a Consumer Debt Case: Added September 2011.
http://www.nycourts.gov/courts/nyc/civil/int_affidavit2vacate.shtml.
- **French Instructions Added:** French instructions were added to the New York City Tenant Affidavit to Vacate a Default Judgment Program in June 2011. During the program, the litigant is given the option of choosing the language he or she wants the instructions to be printed in when the program is completed. If the user chooses the French option, the instructions generated with the DIY court form are printed in French in addition to English. This is very helpful to LEP litigants and also helpful for persons who may be assisting the litigant.

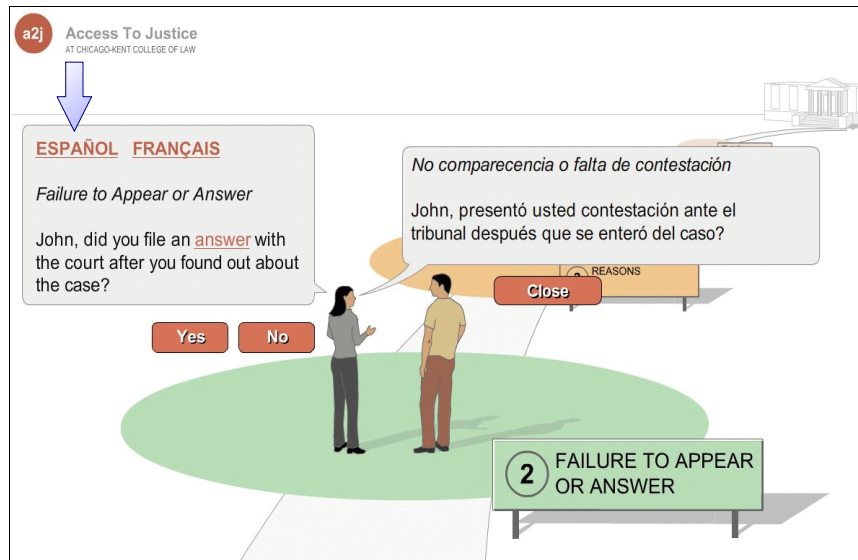


Language Options

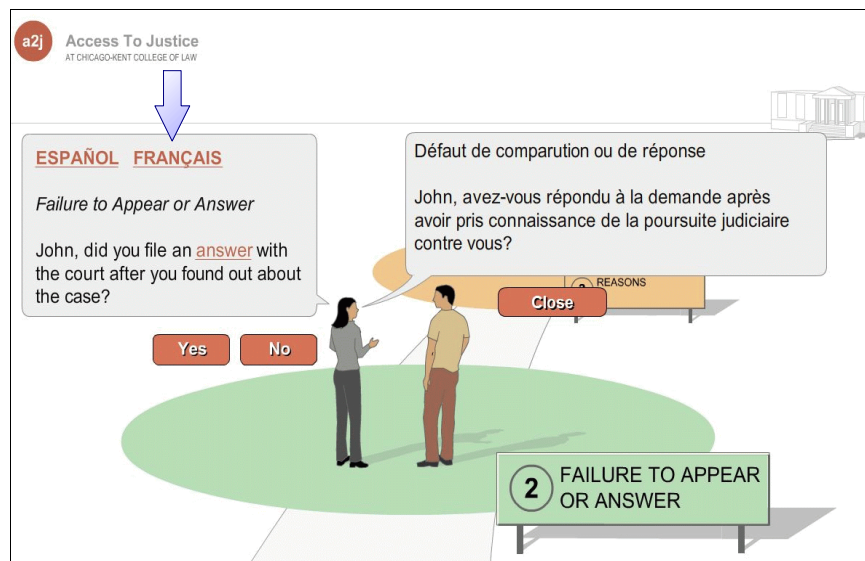
- **Spanish and French “Pop-Ups” Added:** “Pop-ups” are highlighted words in the text that can be clicked on by the user to obtain additional information, often a

definition. Pop-ups were incorporated into programs to provide a foreign language translation of the English text. This feature is aimed at LEP users and is helpful when court staff and advocates assist litigants. Foreign language pop-ups were incorporated into programs in 2011 as follows:

- New York City Tenant Affidavit to Vacate a Default Judgment Program: Spanish pop-ups added April 2011, French pop-ups added December 2011. The images below show how the screens look to DIY users when they click on the French and Spanish foreign language pop-ups.



Sample Spanish Pop-up Screen



Sample French Pop-up Screen

- http://www.nycourts.gov/courts/nyc/housing/int_tenantaffidavit.shtml. Family Court Support Modification Petition Program: Spanish pop-ups

added December 2011.

<http://www.nycourts.gov/courthelp/diy/supportmodification.html>.

- **French User Survey Created:** If the litigant chooses the French option, the User Survey is also printed in French. The French User Survey was implemented in June 2011. (A copy of the French User Survey is attached hereto as Exhibit "A").

2012 DIY Programs in Development:

- **Minor Name Change Petition Program:** A developer's group made up of Clerks from Supreme Courts throughout the state was established to answer jurisdictional, legal and procedural questions about their own courts and to test the logic and programming in early prototypes. The goal is to produce uniformly acceptable forms and instructions.
- **Uncontested Divorce Program:** The Uncontested Divorce DIY Form program will produce the papers required to initiate an uncontested divorce proceeding. In early 2012, a developer's group will be assembled with Supreme Court Clerks from throughout the state to act as advisors. Once the program is completed, it is likely that the Uncontested Divorce Program will be the largest and most complex DIY Form Program ever created.
- **Small Claims Assessment Review (SCAR):** The SCAR DIY Form program will produce a Small Claims Assessment Review Petition for Supreme Court. SCAR gives property owners an opportunity to challenge the assessment on their real property.
- **Safe Deposit Box Petition Program:** This Surrogate's Court program will produce a Petition and a Proposed Order for a litigant to request access to a decedent's safe deposit box.

In an effort to cultivate a cadre of DIY Form volunteer developers throughout the state, the NYS Courts Access to Justice Program periodically holds webinars called "Introduction to DIY Programming." In 2011, webinars were held in January and December. These webinars trained attendees on the features and basic programming techniques of A2J Author, the "front-end" of DIY Forms. The webinars are open to all court personnel and no programming experience is required. In December 2011, the developer's webinar was oversubscribed just three days after posting the information on the court's intranet site.

The successful partnership between the NYS Courts Access to Justice Program and Legal Assistance of Western New York, Legal Services Corporation and the State Justice Institute that produced several DIY Form programs continued and concluded in 2011.

DIY FORM TRAINING AND OUTREACH

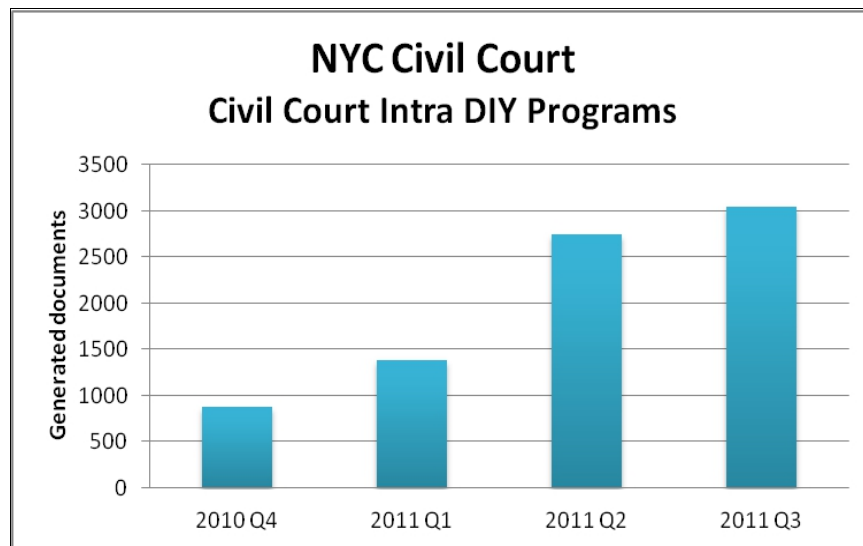
In large part, New York's tremendous success with the DIY Form programs is attributable to personnel training and the assistance of court staff throughout the state. The User Surveys evidence that litigants are consistently directed to use the programs in courthouses and over the phone by court personnel. The majority of users complete the DIY Forms in a court facility such as a Clerk's Office or Help Center. Since court staff is the primary means that unrepresented litigants learn about the DIY Form programs and because the DIY Form programs are a resource intended to save staff time assisting these litigants, the NYS Courts Access to Justice Program focuses considerable time and energy on training staff about the programs. Unfortunately, due to budget and personnel cuts, live trainings and courthouse visits to demonstrate the DIY Form programs were greatly curtailed in 2011. To keep costs low, court personnel were primarily trained by the NYS Courts Access to Justice Program through MeetingPlace webinars.

Personnel training in 2011 included:

- **Webinar Trainings:** All court staff and personnel were invited to attend webinars on specific DIY programs. These webinars highlighted features of a program, its application in the court and how the programs improve courtroom efficiency. Webinars were held for:
 - DIY Family Court Program Showcase: April and May 2011.
 - Surrogate's Court Guardianship Article 17-A Program: April 2011.
 - Surrogate's Court Small Estate Affidavit Program: July 2011.
 - Small Property Owner Nonpayment Petition Outside New York City Program: October and November 2011.
 - Tenant Vacate Default Judgment Petition Outside New York City Program: October and November 2011.In addition, webinar trainings on the various programs were held for individual courts. These smaller personalized trainings allow more discussion. The NYS Courts Access to Justice Program will hold these private webinars upon request. The following were held:
 - Dutchess County Surrogate's Court: January 2011.
 - Westchester County Surrogate's Court: February 2011.
 - New York County Surrogate's Court: May 2011.
 - Suffolk County Surrogate's Court: July 2011.
- **Live Trainings:** Live trainings have proven to be the most effective tool for increasing the usage of a DIY program. However, personnel layoffs and travel restrictions prevented NYS Courts Access to Justice Program staff from conducting live trainings. In 2011, the NYS Courts Access to Justice Program was able to facilitate two DIY Form live program trainings for City Court and Family Court Clerks, thanks to Oswego County Fulton City Court Chief Clerk Maureen Ball and Bronx County Family Court Clerk of Court Mike Williams. The Clerks were trained about DIY Form programs available for their courts, informed

about promotional materials, and instructed in UCMS and User Survey protocols:

- City Court Chief Clerks Training: October 2011.
- New York State Court Clerk Association of Family Court Clerks Training: October 2011.
- ***New York City Civil Court Training and Outreach:*** In March 2011, NYS Courts Access to Justice Program staff met with Civil Court of the City of New York administration regarding the poor statistics from LHI, UCMS and User Surveys for the Civil Court's eight DIY Form programs. Although the DIY Form programs started in the Civil Court in 2007, program usage was considerably lower for these programs than usage in other courts. Civil Court administration took action and made DIY Form training and usage a priority. In mid-March, near the end of the first quarter of 2011, administration held a meeting and discussed the DIY statistics and feedback and the possible ways to improve the process with the senior County Clerks. During the succeeding weeks, citywide administration had ongoing conversations with the different counties about the DIY programs. The County Clerks took steps to train personnel and improve the process. The results were phenomenal and directly responsible for improved usage of the programs inside the Civil Court Clerk's Offices and Help Centers. The NYS Courts Access to Justice Program tracks usage of the Civil Court DIY Form programs both inside the courthouse and outside the courthouse. Usage of all Civil Court DIY programs increased more than 100% between the first and third quarters of 2011. The three civil programs showed the most improvement. The chart below displays civil program usage inside the courthouses between the fourth quarter of 2010 and the third quarter of 2011. Usage improved 121.58% for the civil programs between the first and third quarters of 2011.



DIY Form program usage improved in every Civil courthouse and the Civil Court Civil Clerk's Office staff was awarded a DIY Star Award in October 2011:

<http://www.nycourts.gov/ip/nya2j/awardNewYorkCivil.shtml>.

Public Training in 2011 included:

- **Volunteer Lawyer Training:** In April 2011, the NYS Courts Access to Justice Program held a CLE accredited DIY Form Training in New York County, which was open to the volunteer attorneys in the New York City Housing Court Volunteer Attorney Programs. The presentation focused on the Tenant Affidavit to Vacate a Default Judgment Program and the Roommate Holdover Program.
- **Library Outreach:** Public library systems are an excellent community resource for unrepresented litigants seeking information regarding legal processes. Public libraries offer free internet and many unrepresented litigants who may not have access to a computer take advantage of this service. In 2011, the NYS Courts Access to Justice Program conducted live DIY hands-on training sessions for the public librarians in the Third, Fifth and Ninth Judicial Districts.

Public Outreach in 2011 included:

- **Promotional Materials:** Printed plain language promotional cards, flyers and posters for the DIY Form programs are disseminated throughout New York in the courthouses, Help Centers, public access libraries and all training and outreach events. Due to budget cuts, printing and shipping of materials around the state was severely curtailed in 2011. However, court personnel can download flyers from the NYS Courts Access to Justice intranet site, as well as the public website at: <http://www.nycourts.gov/ip/nya2j/diyforms.shtml>. (Copies of the 4x6 promotional cards are annexed hereto as Exhibit "B").
- **Internet Sites:** Aside from linking to the DIY Form programs from CourtHelp, outreach was done to other websites to provide links to the DIY Form programs. For example, CLARO added the Affidavit to Vacate a Default Judgment in a Consumer Debt Case program to its website: http://www.claronyc.org/claronyc/information_links/Informationlinks.html. Most DIY programs are linked from the legal informational self-help website, LawHelp: <http://lawhelp.org/ny/>.
- **Twitter:** Twitter was used 92 times to inform the public about DIY Form programs. In 2011, the Twitter site had 129 individuals and organizations following its tweets.
- **Community Outreach Events:** The DIY Form programs were provided to unrepresented litigants at community outreach events in 2011, such as, Law Day, Free Legal Clinics and Community Day events.



DIY Form Program Recognition in 2011 included:

- **DIY Star Awards:** The DIY Star Award recognizes UCS personnel and courts who have made exceptional contributions to the successful development and implementation of the DIY Form programs, furthering equal access to justice for unrepresented litigants. Quarterly statistical information, litigant User Surveys and nominations by fellow employees are reviewed to choose winners. In addition to applauding the individuals or courts whose actions are critical in creating lasting change in court culture and work environment, the DIY Star Award boosts employee morale and has fostered competition among the courts, thus, improving data collection compliance, program promotion and program awareness and usage.



In 2011, each winning “DIY Star” courthouse was awarded a large touchscreen monitor and computer for litigants to use the DIY Form programs. The touchscreen computer monitor enhances the ease of use of the already user-friendly programs. (DIY Star winners are featured on the court’s intranet homepage and the internet: <http://www.nycourts.gov/ip/nya2j/DIYawards.shtml>. 2011 Recipients of the DIY Star Award:

- Queens County Family Court, Help Center Staff, and Nicole Coleman, Court Assistant, March 2011: After their fellow New York City Family Courts in Kings and the Bronx Counties won DIY Star Awards in 2010, the Queens Family Court took extraordinary steps to improve usage and customer service in the courthouse and were awarded a DIY Star Award for their efforts:

“I was reluctant to use the program but I was pleasantly surprised. The staff here was exceptionally helpful..they were excellent!”

-DIY User Survey, Queens Co. Family Court, Support Modification, Sept. 2011

- <http://www.nycourts.gov/ip/nya2j/awardQueens.shtml>. DIY computer terminals were originally located in the lobby with no personnel close by to assist a litigant. Since space is limited in this courthouse, it was difficult to find a suitable area. The Support Collections Unit was relocated to make a Help Center for DIY usage on the first floor of the building with the greatest traffic. Clerks screen users for the DIY program and are available to assist with the process.
- New York County Civil Court, Civil Court Clerk’s Office Staff, October 2011: Although usage improved in every Civil courthouse, the Civil Court Civil Clerk’s Office usage showed the most improvement which earned the staff a DIY Star Award for their outstanding efforts making New York County the first Civil Court to win a Star Award: <http://www.nycourts.gov/ip/nya2j/awardNewYorkCivil.shtml>. The Clerk of the County attributed the marked improvement to the following steps

taken in the Civil Clerk's Office:

- Two more DIY Form work stations were added, making a total of four.
 - Working with limited space and resources, the layout of the DIY Form work stations was changed to make the area more user friendly and comfortable for litigants to use the terminals.
 - Three supervisors were assigned to act as DIY liaisons to assist the court users and to set an example of the type of service that should be provided.
 - DIY Form program users were given a priority over non-program users so that if litigants use the programs they do not have to wait on line to see the Clerk. An attractive Express Line sign was designed and posted in a visible location to draw litigants to the terminals.
 - Daily review was conducted of the non-DIY Name Change and Consumer Debt Orders to Show Cause that were DIY eligible to learn why these litigants did not use the DIY Form programs.
 - Personnel were retrained and cross-trained to sharpen their service skills.
- ***Pro Bono Recognition Awards:*** In celebration of National *Pro Bono* Week, the NYS Courts Access to Justice Program honored one law graduate and one retired attorney for the numerous volunteer hours that they contributed throughout 2011 toward the creation and implementation of DIY Form programs.

"The staff was extremely helpful, courteous, professional, knowledgeable and friendly. I felt at ease and affirmed going through the process."

-DIY User Survey , New York Co., Adult Name Change, July 2011

ADVOCATE DOCUMENT ASSEMBLY PROGRAMS

Prior to 2011, the NYS Courts Access to Justice program used document assembly technology solely to create DIY Form programs as a self-help tool for unrepresented litigants to make their own court papers. The DIY Form programs employ an attractive front-end interface with simple screens, displaying one task at a time with clear and limited options. "Pop-ups" are added to the program to provide legal definitions and "Learn Mores" are added to explain legal concepts and provide additional information. The script of the program is sent to a plain language specialist and language features are often added. These steps are taken in an effort to produce a document assembly program that an unrepresented litigant will be able to use inside or outside the courthouse with limited or no assistance. When a program is designed with an expectation that an advocate will assist the litigant through the process and be available to ensure that a *prima facie* pleading is produced and terms and concepts are explained, many of the steps included in the DIY Form development process can be omitted. The benefit of skipping these steps is twofold. It is much faster to create an

advocate program without producing the front-end interface, and it provides an advocate a much faster method of interviewing a litigant and producing court papers when multiple pieces of data are gathered on each screen. The following advocate document assembly programs were developed in 2011:

- ***Family Court Family Offense Petition***: A Family Offense Petition is filed in Family Court when there has been an incidence of domestic violence and an Order of Protection is needed. Since domestic violence has such serious ramifications and these litigants are in great need of advice and information to protect their safety, it was decided that a Family Offense Petition is not appropriate for a DIY (Do-It-Yourself) Form program. The Family Offense Petition program is specifically designed for advocate use where the advocate assists an unrepresented litigant in completing the Family Offense Petition and an Address Confidentiality Affidavit, if needed, while providing the guidance required in these scenarios. In 2012, the documents created from this program will be e-filed with the Family Court and a pilot program will be available to advocates and advocate organizations in the New York City Family Courts.
- ***NYC Affidavit to Vacate a Default Judgment in a Consumer Debt Case***: In response to requests by our volunteer lawyers who wanted a faster process to assist litigants preparing court papers in support of an Order to Show Cause to vacate a default judgment for failure to appear or answer a consumer debt proceeding, the NYS Courts Access to Justice Program developed an advocate version of the NYC DIY Form Consumer Debt program. Testing and feedback was received from the groups in the NYS Courts Access to Justice Program's Consumer Debt Consortium. A webinar to showcase the program was also conducted for the Consortium. The VLP Consumer Program's volunteer lawyers began using this program in December 2011. Since the Civil Court is flooded with litigants who are unable to pay credit card bills, the NYS Courts Access to Justice Program plans to freely share this program with other consumer advocate groups in 2012.

ELECTRONIC FILING

There is no question that electronic filing, or "e-filing," of bulk documents brings with it the promise of substantial savings and improvements in efficiency that will dramatically change the way our courts operate in the future. However, because access to technology itself is not equal among all New Yorkers, the use of technology in the New York State court system must protect and advance the fundamental right to equal access to justice for all litigants. The NYS Courts Access to Justice Program is committed to assisting the court system with its e-filing project, "NYSCEF," while ensuring that unrepresented litigants are considered and included in the planning and implementation of e-filing solutions.

Highlights in 2011 include:

- **Family Court Family Offense Petition Program:** In 2011, as part of a grant to create a Family Offense Petition Program for domestic violence victims that can be electronically filed, the Unified Court System's Department of Technology worked with Pro Bono Net to build the capability to directly transfer data from LHI to the Family Court's case management system. The NYS Courts Access to Justice Program developed a document assembly Family Offense Petition program using the UCMS tags and dictionaries so that the data from LHI is compatible with UCMS. This program is specifically designed for an advocate to assist an unrepresented litigant in completing and filing the Family Court Family Offense Petition and an Address Confidentiality Affidavit, if required. It is anticipated that in the coming years the technology designed for this document assembly program will lead to the e-filing of documents produced by the DIY Form programs.
- **E-filing Recommendations:** Access to technology is not equal among all New Yorkers. There exists potential for an e-filing system to create unintended harm and additional barriers to justice for many of our most vulnerable litigants. The NYS Courts Access to Justice Program has submitted access enhancing recommendations to the Department of Technology to consider as e-filing protocols and solutions to expand access to the courts are designed and deployed, so that the needs of all users are served in a fair, impartial, uniform, and effective manner.
- **Electronic Filing and Access to Justice Best Practices Project:** The NYS Courts Access to Justice Program is working with the Forms Committee Working Group of the Self-Represented Litigation Network on a Legal Services Corporation technology grant awarded to Central Minnesota Legal Services to devise a national model and guidelines for unrepresented e-filing by the end of 2012.

EXPANSION OF NYS COURTS ACCESS TO JUSTICE PROGRAM WEBSITE

Throughout 2011, the NYS Courts Access to Justice Program's website: <http://www.nycourts.gov/nya2j>, was expanded to provide greater resources for unrepresented New Yorkers, as well as information for access to justice advocates throughout the country. Highlights of the content added include:

- **Courts and Community Center.** The NYS Courts Access to Justice Program is dedicated to educating the public about the judicial system and removing barriers to justice for New York State residents through community outreach and education. In the fall of 2011, the "Courts and Community Center" section was added to the site to showcase available community outreach programs. The website has



news on upcoming community events and general information on all community outreach programs. The public can also contact community outreach staff to schedule a court tour, submit a request to present a seminar, request a speaker or participate in the Community Leaders Roundtables. Public Librarians can inquire about librarians' training and download Librarians' Portfolios to assist their patrons with obtaining information about legal matters.

http://www.nycourts.gov/ip/nya2j/Courts_Community_Center/index.shtml.

- **Litigants with Diverse Needs:** A "Litigants with Diverse Needs" webpage was added in November 2011 with information and resources about the NYS Courts Access to Justice Program's landlord-tenant based assistance in New York City for litigants who, due to age or physical or mental impairments, are unable to avail themselves of helpful court-based programs or information. The Assigned Counsel Project, Guardian Ad Litem Program and Integrated Part are included in this page: <http://www.nycourts.gov/ip/nya2j/diverseneeds.shtml>.
- **Poverty Simulations:** A Poverty Simulation webpage was created in December 2011 about the NYS Courts Access to Justice Program's training program to sensitize judicial and non-judicial staff to the needs of New Yorkers living in poverty. This new page explains the importance of the trainings and provides information and links to news articles and census data. <http://www.nycourts.gov/ip/nya2j/povertysimulation.shtml>.
- **DIY Forms:** The DIY Forms section of the website was expanded to include the links to all DIY programs on CourtHelp, and promotional flyers for the programs. <http://www.nycourts.gov/ip/nya2j/diyforms.shtml>.
- **Our Work:** A webpage was added to the site in November 2011 highlighting some of the work done by the NYS Courts Access to Justice Program. <http://www.nycourts.gov/ip/nya2j/ourwork.shtml>.
- **Publications:** Several resources were added to the Publications page, including the Best Practices Guide to Document Assembly Programs, the Handbook for Volunteer Programs and Judge Fern Fisher's September 2011 Civil Legal Services Testimony. <http://www.nycourts.gov/ip/nya2j/publications.shtml>.

COURTHELP

The NYS Courts Access to Justice Program maintains the Unified Court System's statewide website for unrepresented litigants. Unrepresented litigants increasingly turn to the internet to access legal and procedural information. CourtHelp continues to be an important resource for litigants to find self-help court forms, topical information, general court-related assistance and helpful links. CourtHelp is available at:



<http://nycourthelp.gov>. CourtHelp highlights in 2011 include the following:

- **Site Visits:** CourtHelp received more than 740,000 unique visits in 2011, an increase of 23% from 2010. The Forms page received more than 45,400 visits.

- **DIY Forms:** CourtHelp is the main home of the NYS Courts Access to Justice Program's DIY Forms.
 - DIY Form Visits: There were more than 130,000 visits to the DIY Forms pages hosted on CourtHelp (New York City Civil Court landing pages are on the Civil Court's website) making DIY Forms the most visited pages on CourtHelp.
 - Landing Pages: The Family Court Support Modification Petition program page received more than 30,000 visits. The Surrogate's Court Small Estate Affidavit program received more than 23,000 visits.
 - City and District Court Pages: Two DIY Form programs were launched on October 1, 2011 for the City and District Courts outside New York City. In the first week of October alone, the pages received 1,199 visits.
- **Modifications:** CourtHelp topical sections for housing, Surrogate's Court, name changes, custody and child support were modified to add new resources. The court addresses for more than 1,100 town and village courts were updated. The DIY Forms section of CourtHelp expanded with the addition of individual pages for each court listing its respective programs; there are pages for Supreme, Family, Surrogates's, District/City/Town & Village, New York City Civil and New York City Housing Courts.

FACEBOOK

In September 2011, the NYS Courts Access to Justice Program launched a volunteer program Facebook page as a place to share information with interested volunteers. Since many of the court-based volunteer lawyer programs have common needs, the Facebook page provides one location for posting information that appeals to multiple audiences. In 2011, the Facebook page was used to announce the Bridge the Gap training, post photos from the *Pro Bono* Celebration Week recognition awards, and to solicit and thank volunteers for the Poverty Simulation trainings. As of December 2011, 151 people "like" the Facebook page and several volunteers have left favorable comments about their experiences.



The use of social media is a wonderful opportunity to promote *pro bono* work in the courts. Facebook is able to track the number of times people have viewed a News Feed story posted on the page whether the viewer likes the page or not. For example, on November 2, 2011, the day after the *Pro Bono* Celebration Week recognition awards, 1,190 people saw the Facebook post about the event and on December 13, 2011, 811 saw the post about the Poverty Simulation. By taking a few minutes to post information on Facebook, the NYS Courts Access to Justice Program is instantly able to reach hundreds of potential volunteers. It is expected that the page will be used more extensively in 2012 to publicize CLE trainings,

"A great place to get training, CLE credit and offer help with as little or as much time that we have available."

-Facebook comment, Sept. 2011

volunteer opportunities and recognition events. The NYS Courts Access to Justice - Volunteer Lawyer Programs Facebook page is found at: www.facebook.com/NYCourtsVLP.

YOUTUBE

The NYS Courts Access to Justice Program established a YouTube site in 2010 as another self-help resource for New Yorkers to find information. YouTube is linked from the NYS Courts Access to Justice website, <http://nycourts.gov/nya2j>, and CourtHelp, <http://nycourthelp.gov>. As of December 2011, the YouTube site had 999 video views. In 2011, staff layoffs severely impaired the NYS Courts Access to Justice Program's ability to create video content for YouTube.



The following videos were added to the YouTube site, <http://youtube.com/user/NYCourtsA2J>:

- **Collecting Rent for NYC Landlords:** Created for the unrepresented landlord, this two-part video explains the process of starting a summary proceeding against a tenant for rent arrears, the papers required and how they must be filed and served. Uploaded in November 2011.
- **Getting Repairs and Services for NYC Tenants:** This video follows the story of a tenant living in New York City whose apartment is in need of several repairs. It explains the step-by-step procedure from filing a proceeding against the landlord to the final resolution. Uploaded in November 2011.

TWITTER

In 2011, the NYS Courts Access to Justice Program continued to use Twitter to communicate to the public in an effort to provide equal access to justice for New York State residents of all incomes and backgrounds. In December 2011, the NYS Courts Access to Justice Program had 129 followers, which included private citizens, as well as 29 government, media, access to justice and social service agencies, such as, Pro Bono Net, NYLAG, LawHelp NY, and the Interfaith Center of New York. Launched in the spring of 2010, the NYS Courts Access to Justice Program is one of two court systems in the country using Twitter specifically to deliver information to the unrepresented public. By the end of 2011, the NYS Courts Access to Justice Program tweeted 234 times to advertise and promote community seminars, *pro bono* events, CLE training programs, DIY Form programs and to showcase court events such as the DIY Star Awards and Community Law Day. In 2012 it will be used more frequently to publicize community outreach events and to disseminate legal information. Twitter is linked from the NYS Courts Access to Justice website: <http://nycourts.gov/nya2j> and CourtHelp: <http://nycourthelp.gov/>. The NYS



Courts Access to Justice Program Twitter page is found at:
<http://twitter.com/NYCcourtsA2J>.

PUBLICATIONS

The NYS Courts Access to Justice Program authored the following publications in 2011:

- ***Document Assembly Programs Best Practices Guide for Court System Development and Implementation Using A2J Author.*** In April 2011, the NYS Courts Access to Justice Program published a Document Assembly Programs Best Practices Guide. The guide is a tool for other court systems interested in producing self-help document assembly programs that generate court forms for low-income unrepresented litigants. The guide is available on the NYS Courts Access to Justice Program website at:
http://www.nycourts.gov/ip/nya2j/pdfs/BestPractices_courtsystemdocument_assemblyprograms.pdf.
- ***Guide to Small Claims & Commercial Small Claims:*** Partnering with the Civil Court of the City of New York, and Nassau and Suffolk Counties, this plain language publication was updated in August 2011 to help litigants understand how to proceed in a small claim or commercial small claim case. Sadly, significant budget cuts decreased most evening Small Claims Court hours, requiring changes to the guide. The publication is available in the Help Centers and on the court's website:
<http://nycourts.gov/courts/nyc/civil/pdfs/smallclaims.pdf>. The publication is also available in Spanish:
http://www.nycourts.gov/courts/nyc/civil/civil_spanish/pdfs/smallclaims.pdf and Chinese:
http://www.nycourts.gov/courts/nyc/civil/civil_chinese/pdfs/smallclaims.pdf.
- ***Handbook for Volunteer Programs:*** In the summer of 2011, an Access to Justice Handbook for Volunteer Programs was created. This handbook details volunteer opportunities, guidelines, rules and procedures for existing and future volunteers. The handbook is part of the volunteer lawyer trainings and is given out to volunteer lawyers in the Help Centers. The handbook is available on the NYS Courts Access to Justice Program website at:
<http://www.nycourts.gov/ip/nya2j/pdfs/HandbookforVolunteerPrograms-12-2-11.pdf>.
- ***New York City Tenants: Questions & Answers About Housing Court.*** Working with New York City Help Center staff, the NYS Courts Access to Justice Program published a new tenant's guide in October 2011 in a plain language format for litigants in the New York City Housing Court. The publication is available in the Help Centers and on the court's website:
<http://nycourts.gov/courts/nyc/civil/pdfs/tenantsguide.pdf>.
- ***Tenant Questions & Answers: Nonpayment Eviction Cases in New York State:*** In November 2011, the NYS Courts Access to Justice Program published a plain language guide to nonpayment cases for tenants with cases in District,

City, Town or Village Courts. The guide was written with valuable input from the Legal Assistance of Western New York. This guide is the first in a planned series for landlords and tenants outside New York City. The publication is available on CourtHelp at:

<http://www.nycourts.gov/courthelp/Booklets/Nonpaymentevictioncases.pdf>.

PART III: ADDRESSING THE ACCESS TO JUSTICE NEEDS OF A DIVERSE POPULATION

The New York State Courts Access to Justice Program oversees a number of programs and initiatives aimed at assisting litigants who, due to age, physical or mental impairments, financial or other limitations are unable to meaningfully avail themselves of court-based programs or self-help information. In 2011, despite court system budget cuts that eliminated social work services, leaving a gap unmet by legal services organizations and the private bar, the NYS Courts Access to Justice Program's landlord-tenant programs continued to creatively assist such litigants with the myriad of difficulties and challenges they present with every day. The NYS Courts Access to Justice Program also continued its efforts to foster awareness by providing both judicial and non-judicial personnel with Poverty Simulation training and education. By enhancing the quality of the services rendered, sensitizing court personnel to the needs of a diverse population, and improving access to information on programs and resources available free of charge, the NYS Courts Access to Justice Program continues to strive to equalize the playing field for all litigants.

GUARDIAN AD LITEM PROGRAM

The NYS Courts Access to Justice Program continues to oversee the operation of the New York City Civil Court - Housing Part, Guardian Ad Litem Program. The Guardian Ad Litem (GAL) Program recruits, trains, supervises and provides Housing Court Judges with a pool of GALs who safeguard the rights and prevent the eviction of some of New York City's most vulnerable people. GALs are trained by a panel of experts in the fields of legal and social work advocacy and landlord-tenant law. Attorneys are provided with free CLE credits upon completion of the training in exchange for accepting at least three unpaid GAL cases. Highlights of the GAL Program's activities in 2011 include:



- **Increase in GAL Pool:** Despite the loss of prospective GALs due to the higher standards implemented in 2010, the GAL pool continued to increase in 2011. The GAL list currently consists of 198 GALs, 106 of whom are attorneys and 92 non-attorneys. More information on becoming a Guardian Ad Litem is available on the internet: <http://www.nycourts.gov/courts/nyc/housing/GALprospective.shtml>. While many people express an interest in becoming a GAL, not all who submit an application are granted the opportunity to take on this responsibility. Given the vulnerability of the population served, prospective GALs must participate in an interview and undergo a background check to participate in the program. They must also provide references who are able to speak to the prospective GAL's professionalism and character. This process allows only those who are best-suited for the work to ultimately be placed on the GAL list.

- **Free Practical Workshops and Training:** In 2011, the GAL Program partnered with the VLFD and VLP Housing programs to offer free practical workshops to GALs on “Basics of FEPS” and “Traverse Hearings and Rent Breakdowns in Nonpayment Proceedings.” It also partnered with NYCHA and the Legal Aid Society to train experienced GALs to serve as a GAL in NYCHA Administrative Hearings. These workshops and training were specifically chosen to enhance the training already provided to GALs and address concerns relevant to GAL work.
- **Improved Information for Litigants:** The GAL Program continued its efforts to ensure that litigants are aware of available information and resources. The goal is for litigants to have a voice and be knowledgeable about what a GAL appointment means for them and how they may address any concerns. To this end, in 2011, the GAL Program revised the NYC Civil Court, Housing Part Guardian Ad Litem webpage: <http://www.nycourts.gov/courts/nyc/housing/GAL.shtml>, and added links to “Frequently Asked Questions for Tenants”: http://nycourts.gov/courts/nyc/housing/pdfs/GAL-LitigantBrochure_EN.pdf and “Frequently Asked Questions for Owners”: <http://nycourts.gov/courts/nyc/housing/pdfs/GAL-Information-Landlords.pdf>. The GAL Program also published a Spanish version of the “GAL Litigant Brochure” on the NYS Courts Access to Justice Program and the NYC Civil Court, Housing Part website: http://www.nycourts.gov/courts/nyc/housing/pdfs/GAL-LitigantBrochure_SP.pdf. These pages allow tenants and landlords to easily access helpful information. The GAL Program also created a “Litigants with Diverse Needs” page on the A2J Public site: <http://www.nycourts.gov/ip/nya2j/diverseneeds.shtml>, which includes a description of how the GAL Program strives to level the playing field for litigants who are mentally or physically impaired.
- **Improved Process for Securing a GAL:** During this past year the GAL Program expanded its use of the FileMaker application so that it is now available to all Housing Court Judges in New York and Kings Counties. This application, co-created with OCA’s Division of Technology, provides Judges with a mechanism for securing GAL names more efficiently while also preserving the integrity of the GAL appointment process, ensuring that names are provided in a manner that is fair and impartial, pursuant to Part 36 Rules. The GAL FileMaker program has been successful and well received and will be expanding citywide in early 2012. Once expanded, the Program will be able to collect data relevant to the population served and identify possible individual county needs.
- **Collaboration with HRA:** In 2011, the GAL Program continued to collaborate with the New York City Human Resources Administration (HRA) to enhance Program operations. HRA’s Office of Legal Affairs (OLA) often initiates the motion for the appointment of a GAL. It is also responsible for issuing payment to GALs for work rendered on cases where the ward is a client of Adult Protective Services (APS). Given HRA’s role, in 2011, the GAL Program worked closely with HRA on the following:

- Improved the process whereby relevant parties will be informed of a GAL appointment. The “GAL Order of Appointment” was modified so that it will be available in quadruplicate form. This will allow for the Court, GAL, ward, and HRA’s OLA to each receive their own separate copy of the Order in a timely manner.
- Modified the “GAL Affidavit of Services” and the “GAL Affirmation of Services” forms to capture the amount of time GALs spend advocating for their wards according to categories listed. Completion of these new forms is expected to yield information on what type of advocacy efforts that the GALs are spending most of their time performing and/or highlight problematic areas.
- Continued co-drafting a procedural manual with APS to provide guidelines for the coordination of efforts between APS and GALs to advocate for shared wards.
- **GAL Recognition:** In 2011, the NYS Courts Access to Justice Program, in collaboration with the New York County Lawyers Association, New York State Bar Association and the Office of the Mayor of the City of New York honored volunteers for outstanding *pro bono* service rendered in the Court. Ten GALs were among those recognized with an award. To receive an award, a GAL had to have been recommended by a Judge or Court Attorney who could attest to their exceptional work.

“The work is sometimes daunting and for the most part I’m working on these cases by myself. In tonight’s celebration, I was reminded that I am a small part of a greater endeavor and that I belong to a group of amazing volunteers who although they are working separately are also working together to provide the greater goal of access to justice to society’s most vulnerable.”
 -GAL volunteer, Nov. 2011

ASSIGNED COUNSEL PROJECT

The NYS Courts Access to Justice Program oversees a partnership program between the New York City Civil Court and the Department for the Aging (DFTA), known as the Assigned Counsel Project (ACP). This Project provides free legal and social work services to seniors who are facing eviction in Housing Court or who are owners or tenants whose safety is threatened by a tenant or roommate. Both the attorney and the social worker or the social work intern work as a team to resolve the case. Legal representation is provided by the following sub-contracted legal service providers: MFY, Brooklyn Legal Services of NY, Brooklyn Legal Aid Society, and JASA Queens Legal Services for the Elderly. ACP highlights for 2011 include:



- **Social Work Interns:** During the first eight months of 2011, social work interns overseen by the NYS Courts Access to Justice Program played a significant role

in advocating for seniors served by the ACP. Their advocacy helped to stabilize many seniors in a time of crisis with maximum appropriate support and resources otherwise unknown. Specifically, social work interns on the Court's end were able to provide social work services to 24% of the seniors served during this eight-month period. Due to OCA budget cuts, however, as of August 2011, social work assistance is now provided solely by DFTA.

- **Program Expansion:** Despite the loss of social work interns, the NYS Courts Access to Justice Program continued to play an active role in ensuring that Judges refer seniors to the ACP and that seniors are aware of the existence of the ACP. The NYS Courts Access to Justice Program makes court staff available for initial screening to determine if a senior is appropriate for services and to coordinate with DFTA and the legal service providers so that seniors are successfully linked to an attorney and social worker, once their referral is accepted. Court Attorneys also spend time linking those who are not accepted by the ACP to other available resources for help. Finally, the NYS Courts Access to Justice Program makes a Special Counsel available to serve as a liaison in facilitating communication between the partners and overall program coordination. As a result of the partners' strong relationship, in 2011 the ACP was able to easily expand to Staten Island, making its services available to appropriate seniors living in every borough in NYC except the Bronx.
- **Improved Information and Accessibility for Seniors:** In 2011, the NYS Courts Access to Justice Program revised the ACP's litigant brochure incorporating "plain language" concepts for the benefit of the population served: http://nycourts.gov/courts/nyc/civil/pdfs/acp_brochure.pdf. It also updated both the NYS Courts Access to Justice Program's website: <http://www.nycourts.gov/ip/ny2j/diverseneeds.shtml#assignedcounselproject>, and the NYC Civil Court, Housing Part's website: <http://www.nycourts.gov/courts/nyc/housing/services.shtml#acp>, so that they now include a description of the ACP under "Litigants With Diverse Needs" and "Court Services" respectively. Access to this information will enable seniors who are at risk for eviction to learn more about a program that could potentially help stabilize their situation, free of cost.

INTEGRATED PART

The Integrated Part (also known as the Part I) is a Special Part physically located in the New York County Civil Court of the City of New York. Cases are transferred into Part I when a tenant is the subject of both a Housing Court case and an Article 81 Guardianship case. Both cases are presided over by the same Acting Supreme Court Justice. During the first eight months of 2011, social work interns, working under the supervision of a lead social worker and Special Counsel, also a social worker, assisted the Part I Judge with challenging litigants in need of social work intervention while their cases were still pending. Social work interns were able to provide information, secure benefits, obtain counseling and address urgent situations thereby allowing for Part I to operate more efficiently. Due to budget cuts, however, social work availability is no

longer in place. Yet, the need for such a Part as well as the Judge's unique ability to handle the challenging cases presented in a particularly efficient, creative, and sensitive manner has made the Integrated Part a continued success. In 2011, 90 cases were heard in the Integrated Part.

In 2011, the NYS Courts Access to Justice Program updated its webpage: <http://www.nycourts.gov/ip/nya2j/diverseneeds.shtml#nycountyintegratedpart> to include information on the Integrated Part. Now the public is able to learn more about how this distinct Part serves a specifically vulnerable population by striving to fashion solutions that aim to address the “root cause” of the litigant's existing legal problems thus preventing recidivism.

THE POVERTY SIMULATION

With the recent economic downturn now more than ever it is important that court personnel be mindful of the plight of low-income New Yorkers. Each day, thousands of the 2.8 million New Yorkers who live in poverty interact with the court system in one form or another. In December 2011, over the course of two days and with the assistance of 50 volunteers, 90 Kings County Criminal Court Attorneys, Clerks, Interpreters, and Judges participated in the “Poverty Simulation” training program conducted by the NYS Courts Access to Justice Program. The goal of this training is to increase cooperation and team building while encouraging dialogue about the perception and treatment of people living in poverty. During the simulation, participants are assigned roles as members in low-or no-income families. They then live four 15 minute simulated weeks during which they have to do all the things families normally do on a regular basis – go to school or work, pay bills, shop for groceries, take care of emergencies, and so forth – essentially live life with the resources of those living at the poverty level. They do this by interacting with the various agencies, officials and retailers found in the community – the grocer, banker, teacher, policeman, etc. The different governmental agencies and community group roles are played by volunteers from organizations, such as Brooklyn Law School, the Center for Court Innovation, Silberman School of Social Work at Hunter College, CUNY School of Law Community Legal Resource Network, and volunteers from NYS Courts Access to Justice Programs, like the VLP Consumer, VLP Housing, RAP and GAL Programs, as well as current and retired court personnel.

“ I think that doing this with court personnel at all levels is really useful because it helps and it reminds all of us that in our interactions with the public, we cannot take people's personal situations for granted and we cannot be so judgmental without a sense of understanding.”

-Criminal Court Judge, Dec. 2011

The training is based on a Poverty Simulation program developed by the Missouri Association for Community Action. In the past, the NYS Courts Access to Justice Program modified the training for presentations to judicial and non-judicial staff in the

New York City Housing Courts and Family Courts. In 2011, the NYS Courts Access to Justice Program modified the simulation specifically for Criminal Courts by creating a booking officer role and a central intake Clerk role to simulate the experience of the people entering the Criminal Court. To work in tandem with these two new positions, an arraignment Clerk role was also developed, which expanded the role of the Judge and court. By redesigning the program for Criminal Court, the training was able to simulate the real life experiences that court employees have at work, further sensitizing them to the issues of those surviving on low-incomes. The NYS Courts Access to Justice Program plans to conduct the Poverty Simulation for the other New York City Criminal Courts in 2012. More information is available on the NYS Courts Access to Justice Program's website at: <http://www.nycourts.gov/ip/nya2j/povertysimulation.shtml>. Comments from participants including the following:

- ***Comments From Judicial and Non-judicial Staff:***
 - “This was a valuable opportunity to work with other members of the court community in a different environment and really think about the choices that people with less means have to make on a day-to-day basis in order to survive.”
 - “...being in poverty can rob you of a voice in society.”
 - “I had new insights into the intense level of sustained chaos the impoverished have to cope with on a daily basis. Moreover, I was confronted with ethical and moral questions which blessedly were new to me, but sadly, something that the indigent must confront constantly.”
 - “It was a very enlightening experience and more exposure to the population that is truly challenged to survive[.] [S]hould be made available to court employees.”
 - “BRAVO! I just wanted to say that today's program was quite good. I don't know if enjoy is the right word to describe the experience especially when one is talking about such a serious issue; but, I think that the program really makes an impression.”
- ***Comments from Volunteers:***
 - “While my work brings me in contact with people faced with poverty and other adversity, it does not give me a window in to the day-to-day challenges faced by the families of such individuals. The Poverty Simulation provided that extended insight, both into the intra-family interaction of individuals faced with poverty, and the day-to-day struggles of such individuals.”
 - “As a volunteer, it was great to see the impact on the participants - having to live with hardships that many poor families face.”
 - “I compliment the presenter, and the designers of the simulation itself, for creating a program environment that truly captures some of the urgency, and often helplessness, faced by those challenged by poverty in their day-to-day dealings in today's world.”
 - “I was happy to learn that employees of the court were being educated on real-life poverty scenarios. Especially, as the population they interact

with, and sometimes make life-changing decisions for, struggle with the issues surrounding poverty on a daily basis.”

- “I was just playing a part, but it really made me think about what people are going through. It made me ask myself "what would I do if I had children that needed to go to daycare? What would I do if I couldn't afford it?"
- “I think it was great. I'd love to do it again. It was good to see the court personnel get involved.”

PART IV: COMMUNITY OUTREACH

The continuing goal of the NYS Courts Access to Justice Program is to provide information to the public about the judicial system and to help remove barriers to justice for all citizens of New York State regardless of education, income, background or special needs. Toward this end, the NYS Courts Access to Justice Program develops and conducts outreach programs, such as Community Seminars, Community Law Day, Court Tours, and Free Legal Clinics, to empower communities through education. Similarly, the NYS Courts Access to Justice Program works hard to train community leaders, neighborhood agencies, and government offices on available resources through Community Leaders Roundtables and the Public Librarians' Program.



COMMUNITY SEMINAR SERIES

The NYS Courts Access to Justice Program continues to host a series of free seminars throughout New York City aimed at the needs of the unrepresented public. Live seminars are held and some are simultaneously video-conferenced to other courthouses. Signs announcing the seminars are posted throughout the courts and on the NYS Courts Access to Justice website, the Civil Court's website, OCA public events calendar and on Twitter. Seminars are also advertised through community organizations, bar associations, city council offices, local human resources offices, newspapers and public libraries. Presenters may be private practitioners, legal services lawyers, or representatives from various governmental agencies. Presenters graciously volunteer their time and expertise.

Due to budget cuts, fewer seminars were held and recorded in 2011. Highlights of the Community Seminar Series include:

- **Seminars Held:**
 - Pet Evictions: Bronx, New York, Queens, and Richmond County Housing Courts, January 2011.
 - Help for Parents Going Through a Separation or Divorce: New York County Family Court, January 2011, Kings County Family Court, February 2011, Queens County Family Court, March 2011.
 - Help for Immigrants who are Victims of Domestic Violence: Bronx Family Court, May 2011.
 - Tenant Harassment: Bronx, Kings, New York, Harlem, Queens and Richmond County Housing Court, June 2011.
- **Presenters:** Guest presenters included representatives from the law firm of Himmelstein, McConnell, Gribben, Donoghue & Joseph, the New York State Parent Education & Awareness Program, the Office of Alternative Dispute Resolution and Court Improvement Programs, Sanctuary for Families, The Legal

Aid Society, the New York City Family Justice Center and Bedford-Stuyvesant Community Legal Services.

- **New Community Seminar Series Webpage:** To make the community seminar series more accessible to greater numbers, the Community Seminar Series was added to the NYS Courts Access to Justice Program's website: http://www.nycourts.gov/ip/nya2j/Courts_Community_Center/communitySeminar.s.html. Past seminars from 2005 through 2011 on Civil, Housing and Family topics are available for viewing. Information on upcoming seminars, suggesting a topic, and volunteering to present a seminar, is posted on the site.

PUBLIC LIBRARIANS' PROGRAM

The objective of reaching into the community beyond the courthouse continued in 2011 with limited outreach to public library systems. The NYS Courts Access to Justice Program firmly believes that public libraries and librarians play an essential role in promoting and ensuring access to justice as they are often the first contact the public turns to for information about legal matters. The Public Librarians' Program conducts training to educate librarians about the access to justice resources which can be shared with library patrons. More information about the Public Librarians' Program is available on the NYS Courts Access to Justice Program's website:

"I feel more confident advising patrons on what is available to them for legal questions, etc."

-Public Librarian,
Rockland Co, Sept. 2011

http://www.nycourts.gov/ip/nya2j/Courts_Community_Center/publicLibrarians.shtml. In 2011, due to court budget cuts, staff layoffs and travel restrictions, public library presentations were considerably limited. Highlights include:

- **Public Librarians' Portfolios Updated:** The public librarians' portfolios called "Opening Courthouse Doors," available online, were updated to include new information on additional court programs available to the public. The Portfolios include: Guide To Court System Resources; Reference Guide for Common Questions; Criminal and Civil Court Structure; Jury Duty Information; Careers In The Court System; Opportunities for Student Involvement; the Court System's CourtHelp website; DIY (Do-It-Yourself) Form; Library Resources Available to the Public; Local Court Information; and numerous online resources for each Judicial District. The Librarians' Portfolios are available online at: <http://www.nycourts.gov/ip/nya2j/publications.shtml>
- **Presentations Held:** Presentations were made in the Third, Fifth and Ninth Judicial Districts outside of New York City with approximately 65 librarians attending one of these sessions. The presentations were held in computer labs and/or training centers to allow the public librarians an opportunity to go on the internet and learn how to navigate the court system's website. Librarians were given an opportunity to select one of the DIY Forms and navigate their way through completion of the form, thus, experiencing first hand the ease of use.

Promotional materials were distributed. Court Law Librarians participated in the presentations to inform the public librarians about their roles. This hands-on approach prepares the librarians to introduce the court's programs and resources to their patrons more effectively. 2011 Presentations:

- Third and Ninth Judicial Districts: In March 2011, two programs were coordinated with the Southeastern New York Library Resources Council to train public librarians from Columbia, Greene, Sullivan, Ulster, Dutchess, Orange, Putnam and Rockland Counties. The Principal Law Librarians from the Rensselaer County and Westchester County Supreme Courts conducted presentations on their respective law libraries.
- Fifth Judicial District: In May 2011, public librarians came from Onondaga and Oneida Counties to attend two presentations. The Principal Law Librarian for the Oneida County Supreme Court conducted a presentation on the law library. Presentations were made in Utica and Syracuse thanks to the generous funding of the Central New York Library Resources Council.
- Ninth Judicial District: In September 2011, the NYS Courts Access to Justice Program partnered again with the Southeastern New York Library Resources Council. Public librarians came from Dutchess, Orange, Putnam and Rockland Counties to the Finkelstein Memorial Library. The Principal Law Librarian for the Westchester County Supreme Court conducted a presentation on the law library.

COMMUNITY LAW DAY

Every year the NYS Courts Access to Justice program hosts Community Law Day celebrations in recognition of the May 1st National Law Day which celebrates the legal system and the freedoms that Americans enjoy. This annual event is celebrated in different locations throughout the state each year. More information can be found on the NYS Courts Access to Justice website at:

http://www.nycourts.gov/ip/nya2j/Courts_Community_Center/lawday.shtml. In 2011, celebrations were held in Kings, New York and Albany Counties:

- **Kings and New York Counties:** The events were co-sponsored by the New York City Bar Association's Legal Referral Service, and the New York State Court Officers Association. Various government and social service agencies participated in the event by staffing informational resource tables to inform and educate the public about the services that are available to meet their social and legal needs. Other participants included Safe Horizon, Rent Stabilization Association, Department of the Aging, and many other community organizations. More than 500 members of the public attended the 2011 Community Law Day events.
- **Albany County:** In collaboration with the Third Judicial District, the NYS Courts Access to Justice Program hosted a Community Law Day program at the Crossgates Mall. Partners in this program included: Legal Aid Society of Northeastern New York, The Legal Project, Empire Justice Center, New York

State Bar Association, Albany County Bar Association, Albany Law School Clinic & Justice Center, Rensselaer County Bar Association and the Capital District Black and Hispanic Bar Association. Numerous legal topics were covered including: landlord-tenant, mortgage foreclosure, unemployment insurance, consumer credit, food stamps, Medicaid, Medicare, tax, small claims real property assessment review, matrimonial, Family Court issues, veterans' affairs, wills, powers of attorney, health care proxies and the NYS Courts Access to Justice Program's DIY Form programs. Members of the public had an opportunity to meet and question the Administrative Judge of the Third Judicial District, as well as Judge Fisher.

COURT TOURS AND VISITS

The NYS Courts Access to Justice Program oversees the Court Tours program, which has been in operation in New York City and Westchester County since 1990. Court Tours provide an opportunity for the public to become familiar with the court system. Tours provide information about the courts, the jury process, types of cases, court careers, as well as a guided tour of the local court facility and observation of a trial. Written information, instructional materials, and promotional items are distributed. Information on requesting a court tour is available on the NYS Courts Access to Justice website:

http://www.nycourts.gov/ip/nya2j/Courts_Community_Center/index.shtml#courttours. In 2011, the Court

Tours program was deeply affected by the budget cuts to the Unified Court System. Court Tour staff members were often reassigned to assist with the backlog of daily court operations and many requests for court tours had to be declined, despite greater demand. Court Tour 2011 highlights include:

- **Increase in Demand:** Requests for court tours tripled in 2011. Tours were provided to various groups throughout the year, including students (4th grade - law school), summer youth programs, interns, community organizations and international groups.
- **International Delegations:** More international groups from court systems all over the world visited the courts in 2011. Delegations included: Russia, Portugal, Amsterdam, Dominican Republic, Mexico, China, Korea, and Germany.

COMMUNITY LEADERS ROUNDTABLE

The NYS Courts Access to Justice Program periodically holds roundtable discussions with New York City community leaders to provide information for participants to bring back to members of their community, religious congregations, senior centers, schools

“The tour was extremely well-organized and informative. The Court Tour Representatives were very professional and knowledgeable and compassionate...Thank you for your love and concern for our children.”

-High School Teacher Court Tour attendee, New York Co., May 2011

and community-based organizations. 2011 Roundtable discussions focused on matters pertaining to family law and were held in Family Court buildings. Many thousands of families turn to New York's Family Courts each year seeking stability and safety. The Roundtable discussions give the tools and resources to community leaders to assist their constituents.

In 2011, the Community Leaders Roundtable program was heavily impacted by the drastic budget cuts in the court system. Many team building meetings and preliminary planning sessions were held for 2011 Roundtable events that ultimately could not be conducted due to staff layoffs. To continue this program in 2012, Roundtable discussions will take place in the community, rather than in the Family Courts. 2011 Community Leader Roundtable events included:

- ***Court Resources for Parents Going Through a Separation or Divorce:*** January 2011, New York County, 30 leaders participated; February 2011, Kings County, 25 leaders participated; and, March 2011, Queens County, 15 leaders participated.
- ***What Barriers do Immigrant Domestic Violence Victims Face When Responding to Abuse:*** May 2011, Bronx County, 45 leaders participated.

MOBILE LEGAL HELP CENTER

The NYS Courts Access to Justice Program partnered with the New York Legal Assistance Group (NYLAG), a not-for-profit legal services provider, to operate the first Mobile Legal Help Center in New York State. The Mobile Legal Help Center was financed by NYLAG via a grant through the David Berg Initiative, and is owned and operated by NYLAG. This Mobile Center was established to bring the services of court-based Help Centers into the community. It provides similar informational assistance, educational materials, and referrals to nonprofit agencies and organizations which are currently provided in existing court-based Help Centers. The Mobile Center is a 35-foot custom-built command center type vehicle and is staffed by attorneys from the NYS Courts Access to Justice Program Volunteer Lawyer Programs, recent CUNY Law School graduates, and NYLAG staff attorneys. The vehicle is equipped with video stations, and laptop computers to access the court system's website, DIY forms, and other self-help materials. It can be used as a mobile courtroom for emergency proceedings. The mobility of the vehicle permits it to travel to local neighborhoods, as well as remote geographic areas.

In 2012, schedules will be established to accommodate groups who may have difficulty in getting to a courthouse, such as the elderly, disabled, victims of domestic violence and the homeless. The Mobile Center will also be parked once a week in front of the Richmond County Family Court, which does not otherwise have space for a Help Center.

SPEAKERS BUREAU

The NYS Courts Access to Justice Program oversees a Speakers Bureau made up of Judges and non-judicial personnel. Throughout the year, speakers visit schools, and community and governmental agencies in New York City to speak about court-related issues. In addition to legal information, speakers also provide information about court procedures and distribute resource materials about the court. Speakers may visit local senior citizen centers, planning boards, public libraries, school assemblies, town hall meetings, street fairs, housing fairs and conferences. More information is available on the NYS Courts Access to Justice website at:

http://www.nycourts.gov/ip/nya2j/Courts_Community_Center/index.shtml#speakersbureau. In 2011, the Speakers Bureau continued to serve the community and sent speakers to:

- **Fieldstone Secondary School:** Career Day, Bronx County.
- **Department of Consumer Affairs:** Small Claims presentation, New York County.
- **P.S. 197:** Law Day Celebration, New York County.
- **J.H.S. 143:** Law Day Celebration, New York County.
- **National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP):** New York County.
- **Middle School 584:** History Makers, Kings County.
- **Jewish Association Serving the Aging (JASA):** Elder Abuse Conference, Bronx County.

COMMUNITY EVENTS

- **Community Day:** Due to the overwhelming success of the Community Law Day program held in Albany County in May 2011, a second community outreach program was coordinated with the Third Judicial District and held again in October at the Crossgates Mall. In addition to partners from the May Community Law Day program, the Prisoners' Legal Service of New York joined this community event.
- **Free Legal Clinics:** The NYS Courts Access to Justice Program coordinates legal clinics in an effort to provide free legal counseling to underserved sectors of New York City's diverse communities. This new 2011 initiative, "Bringing the Courts to the Community," was successfully launched in October 2011, as part of *Pro Bono* Celebration Week. By partnering with a different local organization in each of the five counties in New York City, each day of the week, the NYS Courts Access to Justice Program and its partners were able to provide 171 people with private legal consultations and an additional 75 people with legal and procedural information during the clinics. In 2012, the NYS Courts Access to Justice Program will partner with different

"Now I can move forward with what I need to do."
-Legal Clinic litigant,
Oct. 2011

organizations to hold these clinics on a monthly basis. The 2011 free legal clinics were held:

- Monday, October 24, 2011: Our Lady of Good Counsel Parish, Tompkinsville, Richmond County.
- Tuesday, October 25, 2011: The Upper Room Baptist Church, Bedford Stuyvesant, Kings County.
- Wednesday, October 26, 2011: Youth Ministries for Peace and Justice, South Bronx, Bronx County.
- Thursday, October 27, 2011: Interfaith Harmony and World Peace, Jackson Heights, Queens County.
- Friday, October 28, 2011: St. Mark's Church in the Bowery, Lower East Side, New York County.

PARTNERS & FRIENDS

There are many who are responsible for enabling the NYS Courts Access to Justice Program to increase access to justice for unrepresented litigants. This list would be infinite if court personnel and individuals were singled out in this report. Our efforts are bolstered by our many partners and friends outside the court system. We thank all of these agencies, nonprofit organizations, charitable organizations, government offices, *pro bono* organizations, bar associations, law firms, law schools, social work schools, colleges, and public libraries throughout New York State for their tireless efforts and assistance to the NYS Courts Access to Justice Program in 2011.

Albany County Bar Association Pro Bono Program
Albany Law School Clinic & Justice Center
Alston & Bird LLP
Association of Corporate Counsel, Greater New York Chapter
Arent Fox LLP
Asian American Bar Association
Bank of America
Bedford Stuyvesant Community Legal Services
Benjamin N. Cardozo School of Law
Berkeley College
Briarcliffe College
Brighton Neighborhood Association Inc.
Bronx CLARO
Bronx County Bar Association
Brooklyn Bar Association Legal Referral Service
Brooklyn Bar Association Volunteer Lawyers Project
Brooklyn Center for Independence of the Disabled, Inc.
Brooklyn Children's Museum
Brooklyn CLARO
Brooklyn Housing and Family Services
Brooklyn Law School
Brooklyn Legal Services Corporation A
Brooklyn Public Library - Clinton Hill
Brooklyn United to Preserve Affordable Housing and Tenants Rights
Buffalo & Erie County Public Library
Bushwick Housing and Legal Assistance Program
Cadwalader, Wickersham & Taft LLP
Capital District Black and Hispanic Bar Association
Central New York Library Resources Council
Children's Law Center
Citigroup
City Bar Justice Center
The City College of New York Skadden Arps Honors Program in Legal Studies
Colgate-Palmolive Company
Columbia Law School Tenants' Rights Project
Columbia University School of Social Work
Cooley, LLP
CUNY School of Law
CUNY School of Law Community Legal Resource Network
Debevoise & Plimpton LLP
Dechert LLP
Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, Bureau of Veterinary & Pest Control Services
Department of Labor
DLA Piper
Disability Advocates, Inc
Eric F. Fromme, PLLC
Empire Justice Center
Feerick Center for Social Justice at Fordham Law School
Greenberg Traurig LLP
Himmelstein, McConnell, Gribben,

Donoghue & Joseph
Housing Court Answers (formerly known
as City-Wide Task Force on Housing
Court)
Hughes Hubbard & Reed LLP
Immigration Equality
Interfaith Center of New York
Interfaith Harmony and World Peace
Internal Revenue Service, Taxpayer
Advocate Service
Kings County District Attorney's Office
Latino Justice PRLDEF
LawHelp/NY
The Legal Aid Society
The Legal Aid Society of Mid-New York,
Inc.
The Legal Aid Society of Northeastern
New York
The Legal Aid Society of Rochester, New
York
Legal Assistance of Western New York,
Inc.
The Legal Project
Legal Services NYC
Legal Services NYC Brooklyn Branch
Neighborhood Office for the Aging
Legal Services of the Hudson Valley
Legal Services for the Elderly, Disabled
or Disadvantaged of Western New
York, Inc
LIFT
Locke Lord Bissell & Liddell LLP
Manhattan CLARO
McCarter & English LLP
Mercy Center Legal Advice Program
MFY Legal Services
Morgan, Lewis & Bockius LLP
Morrison Foerster LLP
Nassau County Bar Association
Nassau County Coalition Against
Domestic Violence
Nassau County Library System
Nassau / Suffolk Law Services
Committee, Inc.
Neighborhood Economic Development

Advocacy Project
Neighborhood Legal Services, Inc.
Neighbors Helping Neighbors
New York Appleseed
New York City Bar Association
New York City Bar Association Legal
Referral Service
New York City Commission on Human
Rights
NYC Department for the Aging
New York City Department of Consumer
Affairs
New York City Family Justice Center
New York City Housing Authority
New York City Human Resources
Administration
New York City Paralegal Association
New York County Lawyers' Association
New York Law School
New York Legal Assistance Group
New York State Attorney General's Office
New York State Bar Association
New York State Court Officers
Association
New York State Department of Labor
New York State Parent Education &
Awareness Program
New York University Silver School of
Social Work
Niagara County Legal Aid Society
Nigerian Lawyers Association
Northern Manhattan Improvement Group
Office of the Mayor of the City of New
York's NYC Service
Orrick, Herrington & Sutcliffe LLP
Our Lady of Good Counsel Parish
Pace University School of Law
Partnership for Children's Rights
Pfizer Inc.
Pratt Area Community Council
Pro Bono Net
Pro Bono Partnership
Proskauer Rose LLP
Prisoners' Legal Services of New York
Queens CLARO

Queens Volunteer Lawyers Project, Inc.
Reed Smith LLP
Rensselaer County Bar Association
Richmond County Bar Association
Rochester Regional Library Council
Ropes & Gray LLP
Safe Horizon
Sanctuary for Families
Self Represented Litigation Network
Shearman & Sterling LLP
Silberman School of Social Work at
Hunter College
Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom
LLP
South Central Regional Library Council
Southeastern New York Library
Resources Council
Southside United HDFC (Los Sures)
Staten Island CLARO
Staten Island Women's Bar Association
St. John's University School of Law
St. Mark's Church in the Bowery
Stroock & Stroock & Lavan LLP

Suffolk Cooperative Library System
Suffolk County Bar Association Pro Bono
Foundation
Sunset Park Redevelopment Committee,
Inc.
TimeBanksNYC
Touro Law Center
Urban Justice Center
U.S. Small Business Administration
Upper Room Baptist Church
Volunteer Lawyers for the Arts
Volunteer Legal Services Project of
Monroe County, Inc.
Volunteers of Legal Services
Wagner College
Western New York Law Center
White & Case LLP
Willkie Farr & Gallagher LLP
Worker Justice Center of New York
Yeshiva University Wurzweiler School of
Social Work
Youth Ministries for Peace and Justice

EXHIBIT A: ENGLISH AND FRENCH DIY USER SURVEYS

NYS DIY Forms User Survey

Thank you for taking the time to fill out this quick survey. Please return it with your completed papers.

- How comfortable are you using a computer and/or the internet?
 - Not comfortable
 - Comfortable
 - Very comfortable
- Do you have the internet at home?
 - Yes.
 - No.
- Where did you use this program?
 - Home
 - Court Clerk's Office
 - Court Help Center
 - Court library
 - Work
 - Other: _____
- Were the questions, definitions and "learn mores" clear to understand?
 - Yes.
 - No. Which weren't clear? _____
- Did you listen to the "guide" speak during the program?
 - Yes.
 - No.
- Have you used a court DIY Forms program before?
 - Yes. Which ones? _____
 - No.
- Do you think the DIY program saved you time?
 - Yes.
 - No.
- How did you learn about this program?
 - Word of mouth
 - Internet search
 - Court employee
 - Poster, sign, postcard, etc.
 - Other: _____
- We really appreciate your help. Do you have any suggestions or comments to add?

Optional questions:

- How old are you?
 - Between 18 and 24
 - Between 25 and 34
 - Between 35 and 44
 - Between 45 and 54
 - Between 55 and 64
 - 65 or older
- What is your annual income?
 - Less than \$19,999
 - \$20,000 to \$34,999
 - \$35,000 to \$49,999
 - \$50,000 to \$64,999
 - \$65,000 to \$79,999
 - \$80,000 to \$99,999
 - \$100,000 to \$124,999
 - \$125,000 to \$149,999
 - \$150,000 or more

Office Use:
 Court Clerk: Fax this survey to Deputy Chief Administrative Judge Fern A. Fisher at (212) 295-4931 or mail to New York State Courts Access to Justice Program, 111 Centre Street, 12th Floor, New York, NY 10013 or digitally send to DIYfeedback@courts.state.ny.us
 Albany County Guardianship 17A printed on 12/08/2011

Sample English User Survey

NYS DIY Forms User Survey

Nous vous remercions d'avoir pris le temps de remplir ce questionnaire. Soumettez-le, s'il vous plaît, avec vos documents complets.

- Comment trouvez-vous l'utilisation de l'ordinateur et/ou l'internet?
 - Pas facile
 - Facile
 - Très facile
- Utilisez-vous l'internet à votre domicile?
 - Oui.
 - Non.
- Où avez-vous utilisé ce programme de service en ligne?
 - À votre domicile
 - Au greffe du tribunal
 - Au centre d'aide du tribunal
 - À la bibliothèque du tribunal
 - Au travail
 - Ailleurs: _____
- Est-ce que les questions, les définitions, et les rubriques "Pour en savoir plus" sont faciles à comprendre?
 - Oui.
 - Non. Précisez celles qui ne le sont pas: _____
- Avez-vous écouté le "guide" au cours de l'utilisation du service en ligne?
 - Oui.
 - Non.
- Avez-vous déjà utilisé les formulaires du service en ligne du tribunal?
 - Oui. Lesquels? _____
 - Non.
- Est-ce que le service en ligne vous a fait gagner du temps?
 - Oui.
 - Non.
- Comment avez-vous été mis au courant du programme de service en ligne?
 - Par le bouche-à-oreille
 - Par des recherches sur l'internet
 - Par un employé du tribunal
 - Par affiches publicitaires, posters, cartes postales etc.
 - Autrement: _____
- Nous apprécions vos suggestions et remarques si vous en avez.

Questions facultatives:

- Quel âge avez-vous?
 - Entre 18 et 24 ans
 - Entre 25 et 34 ans
 - Entre 35 et 44 ans
 - Entre 45 et 54 ans
 - Entre 55 et 64 ans
 - 65 et plus
- Votre salaire annuel est:
 - Moins de \$19,999
 - Entre \$20,000 et \$34,999
 - Entre \$35,000 et \$49,999
 - Entre \$50,000 et \$64,999
 - Entre \$65,000 et \$79,999
 - Entre \$80,000 et \$99,999
 - De \$100,000 à \$124,999
 - De \$125,000 à \$149,999
 - \$150,000 ou plus

Office Use:
 Court Clerk: Fax this survey to Deputy Chief Administrative Judge Fern A. Fisher at (212) 295-4931 or mail to New York State Courts Access to Justice Program, 111 Centre Street, 12th Floor, New York, NY 10013 or digitally send to DIYfeedback@courts.state.ny.us
 Queens County NYC Civil tenant affidavit printed on 12/08/2011

Sample French User Survey

EXHIBIT B: DIY PROMOTIONAL CARDS

District, City, Town and Village Court DIY Programs:

www.nycourthelp.gov

Access To Justice
AT PROCEEDING COURSE OF LAW

**New York State Courts
Access to Justice Program**

Welcome! Use a computer program to make your court papers or get more information to help you in court.

Visit www.nycourthelp.gov and try DIY Forms.

It's free!
It's helpful!
It's easy to use!

2 Your Information

Continue

1 Do-It-Yourself Forms (DIY Forms)

DISTRICT, CITY & JUSTICE COURT FORMS

DO-IT-YOURSELF
NYS DIY Forms

Free and easy guided step-by-step programs to help you fill out Landlord-Tenant court forms.

These computer programs ask you questions. The program then uses your answers to prepare instructions and court forms for your case or to give you information to help you in court.

AVAILABLE NOW!

- ▶ **Tenant Vacate Default Judgment**
- ▶ **Small Property Owner Nonpayment Petition**

Check for these and others on www.nycourthelp.gov

ACCESS TO JUSTICE
NY STATE COURTS

Supreme, Family and Surrogate's Court DIY Programs:

www.nycourthelp.gov

Access To Justice
AT PROCEEDING COURSE OF LAW

**New York State Courts
Access to Justice Program**

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Visit www.nycourthelp.gov and try DIY Forms.

It's free!
It's helpful!
It's easy to use!

2 Your Information

Continue

1 Do-It-Yourself Forms (DIY Forms)

DISTRICT, CITY & JUSTICE COURT FORMS

DO-IT-YOURSELF
NYS DIY Forms

Free and easy guided step-by-step programs to help you fill out court forms.

These computer programs ask you questions. The program then uses your answers to prepare instructions and court forms for your case or to give you information to help you in court.

AVAILABLE NOW!

- ▶ **Support Modification Petition**
- ▶ **Paternity Petition**
- ▶ **Support Enforcement / Violation Petition**
- ▶ **Small Estate Affidavit**
- ▶ **17-A Guardianship Petition**
- ▶ **Name Change Petition**

Check for these and others on www.nycourthelp.gov

ACCESS TO JUSTICE
NY STATE COURTS

New York City Civil Court Civil and Housing DIY Programs:

www.nycourthelp.gov

Access To Justice
AT PROCEEDING COURSE OF LAW

**New York State Courts
Access to Justice Program**

Welcome! Use a computer program to make your court papers or get more information to help you in court.

Visit www.nycourthelp.gov and try DIY Forms.

It's free!
It's helpful!
It's easy to use!

2 Your Information

Continue

1 Do-It-Yourself Forms (DIY Forms)

NEW YORK CITY CIVIL COURT FORMS

DO-IT-YOURSELF
NYS DIY Forms

Free and easy guided step-by-step programs to help you fill out NYC Civil Court forms.

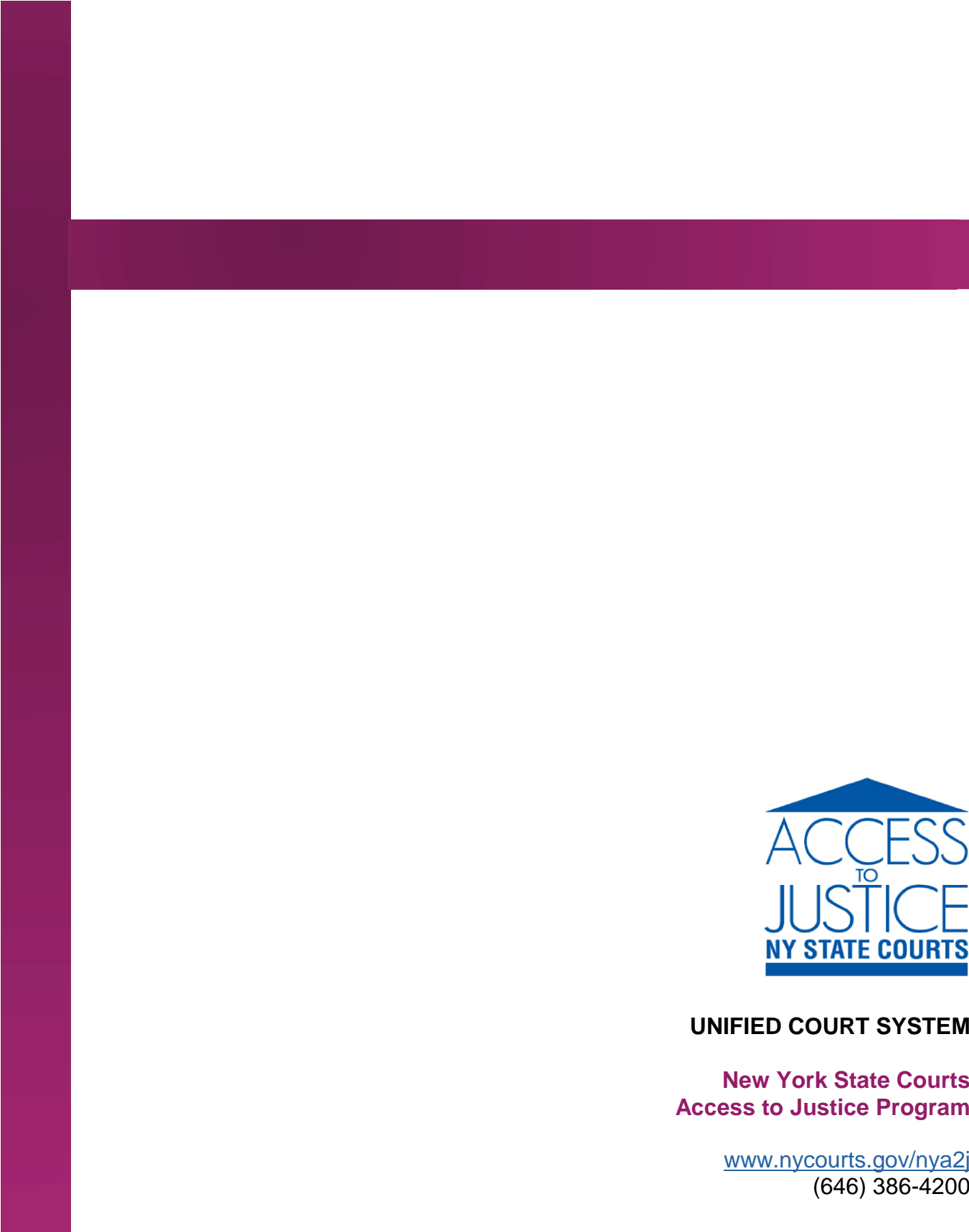
These computer programs ask you questions. The program then uses your answers to prepare instructions and court forms for your case or to give you information to help you in court.

AVAILABLE NOW!

- ▶ **Adult Name Change Petition**
- ▶ **Minor Name Change Petition**
- ▶ **Affidavit to Vacate a Default Judgment**
- ▶ **Nonpayment Answer**
- ▶ **Small Property Owner Nonpayment Petition**
- ▶ **Roommate Holdover Petition**

Check for these and others on www.nycourthelp.gov

ACCESS TO JUSTICE
NY STATE COURTS



UNIFIED COURT SYSTEM

**New York State Courts
Access to Justice Program**

www.nycourts.gov/nya2j
(646) 386-4200