

MAINE JUSTICE ACTION GROUP

The Justice Action Group is a coalition of individuals and organizations established in 1995 to provide leadership and coordination in planning for the provision of civil legal aid to low-income and elderly Mainers.

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ACCESS TO JUSTICE UPDATE

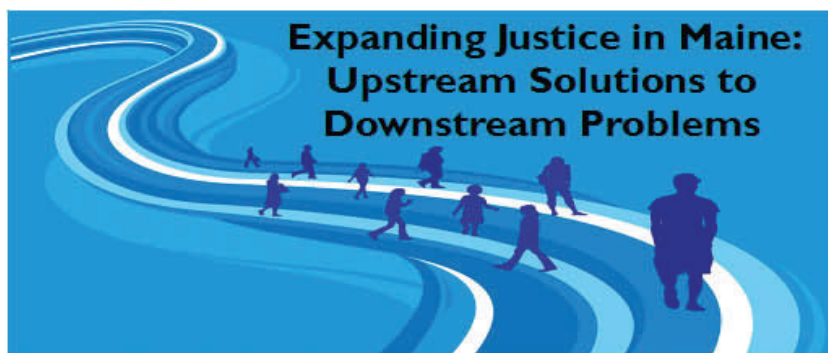
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The First Biennial Access to Justice Symposium *Expanding Justice in Maine: Upstream Solutions to Downstream Problems*

The Justice Action Group, in cooperation with the University of Maine School of Law, will hold the first biennial Access to Justice Symposium on October 2, 2009 at the Abromson Center of the University of Southern Maine in Portland. The Symposium is made possible through a lead grant from the Sam. L. Cohen Foundation and the support of several sponsors and patrons.

The Symposium's theme, *Expanding Justice in Maine: Upstream Solutions to Downstream Problems*, reflects one of the core recommendations of JAG's recent report of its statewide planning initiative *Justice For All: A Report of the Justice Action Group*: to intervene "upstream" to solve problems before they become legal crises. The Symposium will revisit the core mission of civil legal aid as it was originally envisioned in the context of the "War on Poverty" as a means to bring fundamental change to the lives of people living in poverty. Professor Peter Edelman of the Georgetown University Law Center, our keynote speaker, has been a national leader on access to justice for more than forty years and currently chairs the District of Columbia Access to Justice Commission. Panel discussions with national and local experts will examine the evolution of civil legal aid in Maine, its wide impact on policy affecting Maine residents, and the importance of ensuring that access to justice programs reach Maine residents of all races and backgrounds.

The Symposium will also feature workshops with interdisciplinary panels examining innovative upstream strategies, including: medical-legal partnerships; foreclosure diversion and affordable housing initiatives; and outreach to low-wage workers. We hope to attract participants from a range of disciplines and backgrounds to engage in these discussions.



For more information or to become a sponsor for this event please visit:

<http://mainelaw.maine.edu/news/conferences/justice/>

2009 SURVEY OF UNMET AND UNDERSERVED LEGAL NEED IN MAINE

The six primary legal service providers in Maine recently completed a two-month survey of their ability to meet the legal needs of clients who made contact with the various offices. This survey reflected whether there was sufficient staff to provide extended service, or, if limited service or brief advice was given, was that service sufficient to resolve the matter. On average, only 24% of those seeking aid had their needs met. For some legal problems, the gap was much wider.

These statistics indicate that legal service providers remain understaffed and underfunded to meet the needs of the poor and elderly who are seeking their assistance. These numbers have remained relatively unchanged in Maine since the 1990s.

For more information contact: nheald@ptla.org



Chet Randall, Esq., Pine Tree Legal Assistance
Chair of the Commission on Foreclosure Diversion

COMMISSION ON FORECLOSURE DIVERSION

On June 8, 2009, the Supreme Judicial Court's Commission on Foreclosure Diversion issued an initial report and recommendations. The Commission was formed by Resolution of the JAG Board of Directors based on a recommendation from JAG's Upstream Intervention Task Force. The goal of the Commission was the "development of an alternative dispute resolution process for prompt and fair resolutions of residential foreclosure cases."

This comprehensive and thoughtful report is the result of the dedication of the Commission's Chair, Chet Randall, Esq., Pine Tree Legal Assistance and the following Commission members: **Judicial Branch Members:** Hon. J. David Kennedy, Maine District Court Judge and Diane Kenty, Esq., Director, Court Mediation Service; **Executive Branch:** Patrick Ende, Esq., Legal Counsel to the Governor; **Legislative Branch:** Hon. Sharon Treat, Maine House of Representatives, Hon. Wesley Richardson, Maine House of Representatives, Hon. Cynthia Dill, Maine House of Representatives and Attorney General Janet T. Mills; **Stakeholder and Individual Representatives:** Richard Goldman, Esq., bankruptcy debtor interests, Bruce Sleeper, Esq., bankruptcy creditor interests, Carla Dickstein, Vice President, Coastal Enterprise, Inc., Christopher Pinkham, Maine Association of Community Bankers, Wendy Paradis, Esq., mortgage creditor interests, William Devoe, Esq., mortgage debtor interests, Jerrol Crouter, Esq., Maine State Bar Association, Peter Malia, Esq., Maine Association of Mediators, John Murphy, President, Maine Credit Union League, Jaye Martin, Esq., Executive Director, Legal Services for the Elderly, Juliet Holmes-Smith, Esq., Director, Maine Volunteer Lawyers Project, Debbie Johnson King, Maine State Housing Authority, Chris LaRoche, Housing Services, York County Community Action Group, William N. Lund, Esq., Consumer Credit Protection, Sara Gagne-Holmes, Esq., Executive Director, ME Equal Justice Partners, Inc.

You can view the report at: <http://www.mbf.org/justice>.

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