

ANNUAL REPORT
COMMITTEE ON THE DELIVERY OF LEGAL SERVICES
TO PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES
Kathryn Wissel and Tara Ford, Co-Chairs

As stated in our Petition to Continue the Committee on the Delivery of Legal Services to Persons with Disabilities submitted in September 2009, the Committee has accomplished the following:

1. The Committee Demonstrates the State Bar's Commitment to Access to Justice for Persons With Disabilities.

Persons with disabilities comprise a relatively low incidence population. As a result, many individuals who do not have experience with loved ones who have disabilities may not be exposed to the important, and unique, experiences of persons with disabilities. As a committee, we have worked hard to provide lawyers with information that they need to be able to analyze the needs of persons with disabilities who access legal services. The sponsorship of this Committee by the State Bar demonstrates the Bar's commitment to ensuring that, as a profession, we are paying attention to the unique needs of persons with disabilities.

2. The Committee has Identified Practical Solutions to Issues Facing Lawyers Representing Persons with Disabilities.

One of the service needs identified through the Committee was the need to enable lawyers to access interpreter services when they are serving clients who are deaf or hard of hearing. While we continue to hope that this program can be expanded, currently the program enables lawyers to seek reimbursement for interpreter services when they are providing pro bono legal services to individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing.

3. The Committee has Amplified the Voices of Clients with Disabilities in an Effort to Make Sure Lawyers are Taking Into Consideration the Unique Needs of Their Clients with Disabilities.

One of the primary projects of the Committee during the past two years has been to plan, film and edit a CLE for lawyers describing some best practices for lawyers working with people with disabilities. The State Bar supported this project by funding the filming of the project and has sponsored the CLE for professionalism credit. It is our understanding that this CLE has had positive evaluations and will continue to be shown throughout 2009.

4. The Committee Supports Law Students and New Lawyers Interested in Disability Law.

The Committee has several new lawyers who have just become active members of the Committee. In addition, several law students have supported the work of the Committee, including assisting the Co-Chairs in editing the 8 hours of video for the CLE project. The Committee serves as an important forum for individuals who have an interest in learning about disability issues and provides opportunity for new lawyers to connect with other lawyers who have interest or connection to disability law.

In terms of on-going activities: Having finished the CLE video project, the Committee is actively working to identify its scope of work for the upcoming year. The Co-Chairs will be resigning and the Committee will be recommending successor Co-Chairs. The current Co-Chairs look forward to invigorating new ideas as a result of new leadership.

Kathryn Wissel and Tara Ford
Co-Chairs.