



2024

ANNUAL REPORT



Our Mission

The mission of the Utah State Bar Access to Justice Commission is to advance equity in the legal system and expand access to justice at all levels for people with lower incomes or who are disadvantaged. The members do this by facilitating access to justice, building community, providing opportunities to serve, and studying items of interest to lawyers, the public, and the courts.

2025 Commission Members

Hon. Christine Durham,
Co-Chair, Of Counsel
Wilson Sonsini

Amy F. Sorenson, Co-
Chair, Partner, Snell &
Wilmer

Hon. Charles Stormont,
Judge, 3rd District Court

Hon. Clem Landau,
Judge, SLC Justice Court

Hon. Richard Mrazik,
Judge, 3rd District Court

Kim Paulding, Executive
Director, Utah Bar
Foundation

Laura Kyte, Associate,
Mayer Brown

David McNeill, Researcher

Annika Jones, Partner,
Snell & Wilmer

Rhiana Medina,
Executive Director, Moab
Valley Multicultural
Center

Mark Olson, Attorney,
President, Olson Shaner

Nathanael Player,
Director, Utah State
Court Self Help Center

Sandra Carpio, 211
Managing Director

Nubia Peña, Director, Utah
Division of Multicultural
Affairs

Heather Thuet, CEO Key
Legal Group, Past
President, Utah State Bar

Darnell Crandall,
Attorney, Salt Lake Legal
Defenders

Meet The Team

The office is exceedingly grateful to the attorneys, legal professionals, and firms who contributed to bridging the justice gap in Utah.

This year, the office prioritized expanding access to justice through its established Signature Programs while emphasizing collaboration with the private bar and local nonprofits. By strengthening partnerships and fostering relationships within the community, the office aimed to broaden its outreach and ensure that underserved populations have greater access to vital legal support and resources.

These collaborations allowed for targeted outreach efforts, such as co-hosting legal clinics, sharing resources, and providing education on legal rights for a myriad of subjects. By working closely with trusted community organizations, the office was better able to identify and address specific local needs, ultimately increasing engagement and building trust within the populations it seeks to serve.

To continue to meet increasing needs and improve the office's efforts, the Access to Justice Office expanded its team by hiring internally for the roles of **Pro Bono and Outreach Manager** as well as **Trainings and Special Projects Manager**.



Megan Connelly, JD

Executive
Director



Kimberly Farnsworth, JD

Trainings & Special
Projects Manager



Dalia Morales

Pro Bono & Outreach
Manager

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

The Access to Justice Office, in conjunction with the Pro Bono and Access to Justice Commissions, remained steadfast in its mission to enhance legal resources and assistance for moderate and low-income Utahns in need.

1

Hosted the 6th Annual Access to Justice Summit, October 4, 2024. The event brought together 115 participants from various sectors of the legal community and beyond. This year's summit aimed to explore innovative solutions for ensuring access to justice, particularly for underserved communities. It also offered a platform for meaningful discussions on fairness, accountability, and the evolving role of technology in the legal landscape.

2

In partnership with ABA Free Legal Answers, this online service connects pro bono attorneys with eligible individuals needing civil legal advice. During 2023-2024, 94 attorneys helped 317 people, primarily with family law, housing, and debt issues. This year, the Access to Justice Office expanded the program to include "Free Legal Answers Power Hours," partnering with the University of Utah's SJ Quinney College of Law to allow law students to participate under attorney mentorship.

3

The Virtual Legal Clinic (VLC), which replaced the Tuesday Night Bar, continues to grow more and more each year. The program offers participants the opportunity to meet with attorneys virtually, either by phone or email, for brief legal advice. As a result, the program assisted 3,733 individuals, up from 1,307 participants.

4

The Modest Means Lawyer Referral Program connects individuals to attorneys offering reduced-rate services. In 2023-2024, the program facilitated 360 referrals to attorneys who provide services at rates between \$50-\$75 per hour based on the applicant's income level. These efforts were bolstered by outreach to over 63 attorneys, ensuring continued access to affordable legal representation for those in need.



6th Annual Access to Justice Summit



Scan the QR code
for a full report

BY THE NUMBERS

115 Total Guests

60 Different Organizations

10 Travel Stipends

36 People Received CLE Credit

14 One-Minute Blitz Presentations

The Wasatch Immigration Project won the People's Choice vote and was given \$1,000. A random drawing winner of a \$1,000 grant was NAACP Ogden.

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PRO SE DEBT COLLECTION CALENDAR

The Access to Justice Office provides limited scope legal representation under the Pro Se Debt Collection Calendar by providing limited scope representation to individuals in need of assistance with debt collection matters. These individuals are often in urgent need of legal advice and representation, as many appear at their initial hearings self-represented, with little to no understanding of how to defend themselves or their rights in these cases. This lack of knowledge frequently leads to default judgments and increased debt amounts. The Access to Justice Office manages this program closely with the courts to ensure these individuals have the opportunity to consult with an attorney, gain clarity on their legal rights, and better understand their situations.



Working tirelessly alongside volunteer attorneys every week, the Access to Justice Office strives to amplify the voices of these individuals, equipping them with the tools and information they need to navigate the challenges they face. In 2023–2024, 84 attorneys and law students donated their time to assist individuals with debt collection cases. These volunteer attorneys make this program possible as the demand for assistance under this program continues to increase each year.

PRO BONO COMMISSION



The Pro Bono Commission (PBC), co-chaired by Judge Michele Christiansen Forster and Judge Angela Foncesbeck, plays a critical role in supporting statewide pro bono efforts.

In collaboration with the Access to Justice Office, the PBC promotes innovative programs such as Bar Signature Programs and Pro Bono Case Circulation (Check Yes Program). The Commission also works to expand access to justice by engaging licensed paralegal practitioners and legal professionals across the state.

AWARDS & MORE



Nathanael Player receives inaugural Legal Professional Impact Award

Access to Justice was honored to award Nathanael Player for his outstanding contributions to the legal community and his tireless efforts to increase access to justice in Utah. Former Chief Justice Christine Durham, a long-time advocate for expanding legal access, bestowed the inaugural award to Player on behalf of the Access to Justice Commission.

