

State of Vermont Access to Justice Coalition

Equal justice for all is a bedrock principle of the justice system in Vermont. In its September 2001 *Report on Investigation of Need and Assessment of Resources*, the Vermont Supreme Court's Committee on Equal Access to Legal Services found a pressing need to make a commitment to civil equal justice in Vermont.

The Equal Access to Justice Coalition was established in January 2004 and has worked since then to address the unmet need. The Coalition is a joint venture of the Vermont Supreme Court, Vermont Legal Aid, Legal Services Law Line of Vermont, Vermont Law School, the Vermont Bar Association, and the Vermont Bar Foundation.

The mission of the Coalition is to

- Increase public awareness of the need for civil legal assistance and serve as a voice for the civil legal assistance system in Vermont with members of the general public, government officials, and legislators;
- Promote coordination for maximum efficiency and effectiveness among the courts, members of the private bar, and providers of legal services to low-income Vermonters, and build partnerships with other potential stakeholders in expanding access to justice;
- Strengthen the civil legal services delivery system in Vermont to insure that it has the capacity to deliver a full range of services that address the legal needs of low income communities¹;
- Increase and support Vermont attorneys who provide free and reduced fee services to low income Vermont families;
- Provide a forum to discuss issues affecting access to civil justice among legislators, courts, government officials, the civil legal services community, bar leaders, funders, clients, and other interested parties;
- Encourage and support initiatives that help unrepresented litigants to understand the civil justice system in Vermont and to identify, articulate, and present their legal claims to courts and administrative bodies;
- Identify and work to eliminate barriers that reduce access to civil justice for disadvantaged Vermonters.

¹ See ABA Standards for the Provision of Civil Legal Aid (2006), Standard 2.3 (on Participation in Statewide and Regional Systems).