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Press Release

**Access to Justice Nonprofit Enlists
State Chief Justices, Top Law Firms
For New Research in 50-State
Justice Index**

A year ago, NCAJ launched the Justice Index, www.justiceindex.org, to promote best practices for access to justice in the United States. Today NCAJ begins the process of updating the Justice Index findings: five teams of pro bono attorneys are determining the number of civil legal aid lawyers across the land and are corresponding with chief justices about how courts can help people with limited English proficiency, people with disabilities, and people who are self-represented.

New York, NY, March 19, 2015 – The National Center for Access to Justice at Cardozo Law School (NCAJ), www.ncforaj.org, is this week launching its 2015 research initiative to update the Justice Index, www.justiceindex.org. The Justice Index is the online resource that increases access to justice by researching and posting contemporaneous data on the presence and absence of best practices for assuring access to justice in the 50 states, the District of Columbia, and, this year, Puerto Rico.

Overview

Praised by New York Chief Judge Jonathan Lippman as an “extraordinarily useful” resource that reveals “commonalities in different states’ access issues that we can measure and compare through empirical analysis,” the Justice Index gathers data and ranks states based on their adoption of best practices for access to justice in four categories: (1) number of civil legal aid lawyers, (2) systems for self-represented litigants, (3) systems for people with limited English proficiency, and (4) systems for people with disabilities.

The 2015 Research Initiative - Updating and Expanding the Justice Index

For the 2015 update to the Justice Index, NCAJ is updating and expanding the criteria by which access to justice is measured. This includes examining practices related to people with mental disabilities, options for waiving court filing fees for indigent people, access to simple court forms in diverse matters and systems for tracking implementation of civil rights to counsel. The survey instrument that contains the research questions is available here, <http://ncforaj.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/Justice-Index-Survey-Instrument-2015.pdf>.

The Researchers – Five Teams of Pro Bono Attorneys and More Pro Bono Support

NCAJ is inviting chief justices across the country to support the 2015 Justice Index research initiative by answering questions contained in the Justice Index survey instrument at, <http://ncforaj.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/Justice-Index-Survey-Instrument-2015.pdf>. NCAJ has asked that the completed survey instrument be returned by email to justiceindex@ncforaj.org by March 31, 2015.

Justice Index researchers are reaching out to the chief justices and to court administrators in 52 jurisdictions to help guide this survey initiative and to help review and analyze the responses provided by each state's court administration. The researchers, attorneys, and paralegals are participating on a *pro bono* basis from five prestigious law firms, Kirkland & Ellis LLP, Morgan Lewis & Bockius LLP, O'Melveny & Myers LLP, Patterson Belknap Webb & Tyler LLP, and Simpson Thacher & Bartlett LLP. Additional attorneys from General Electric are participating on a *pro bono* basis. Deloitte Financial Advisory Services LLP, Pfizer Inc., UBS, and Cardozo Law School are also supporting the project.

The researchers are simultaneously conducting national research to develop a reliable estimate of the number of civil legal aid attorneys across the country and to determine the degree to which *pro bono* attorneys are expanding access to civil legal assistance in each state. To aid with those calculations, researchers are inviting input from statewide entities that fund and organize civil legal aid lawyers and *pro bono* attorneys in the various states.

The Impact of the Product

The Justice Index works to make state justice systems more responsive to the needs of the public. With its focus on the number of civil legal aid lawyers, systems for self-represented litigants, systems for people with limited English proficiency and systems for people with disabilities, the Justice Index ranks the states and thereby creates incentives for states to adopt best practices that increase access to justice and, accordingly, increase their state's rankings. The Justice Index has been influential in driving policy in the states and has attracted substantial media coverage, <http://ncforaj.org/?s=justice+index&searchsubmit=U>.

Timing

NCAJ has asked that the completed survey instrument be returned by email to justiceindex@ncforaj.org by March 31, 2015. NCAJ and the Justice Index researchers will review and analyze the data in April and a team from Deloitte Financial Advisory Services LLP (which, with Pfizer Inc.; Skadden, Arps, Meagher & Flom LLP,, Kirkland & Ellis LLP, UBS, students from Cardozo Law School and University of Pennsylvania Law School, and other NCAJ supporters, helped to create the original Justice Index, see <http://www.justiceindex.org/about-the-justice-index/>) will be providing support to help incorporate the new findings into the Justice Index site in May.

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