



PRESS RELEASE

**New York State
Unified Court System**

**Hon. Lawrence K. Marks
Chief Administrative Judge**

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Court System Obtains Grant to Advance Progress in Closing NY's Justice Gap

New York – The New York State Unified Court System has been awarded a one-year \$100,000 “Justice for All” grant from the National Center for State Courts (NCSC), with the support of the Public Welfare Foundation, to develop a strategic action plan to achieve further progress in narrowing the state’s justice gap. The strategic planning process will be headed by members of the court system’s Permanent Commission on Access to Justice, established to improve access to justice for low- and moderate-income New Yorkers and led by former President of the Legal Services Corporation Helaine M. Barnett.

The Commission, made up of representatives of the Judiciary, the business community, government, private law firms, bar associations, civil legal services and pro bono assistance providers, law schools and funders, has had a significant impact in expanding access to justice statewide, with its recommendations leading to increased public funding for civil legal services for matters involving life’s essentials; a boost in pro bono efforts; enhanced use of technology to aid in the delivery of legal services; and simplification of court forms and processes, among other achievements. Still, approximately 1.8 million litigants annually appear in New York state courts without counsel in matters affecting housing, safety, health care and other basic necessities; at best, only 37 percent of civil legal needs are currently being met.

Seeking to build on its accomplishments to date, the Commission will cultivate a coordinated and viable strategic action plan – a legal services delivery plan that prioritizes the state’s competing components and resources in an effort to move New York even closer to

providing meaningful access to justice for all and create a successful structure that could benefit other states.

To that end, a consultant will be engaged to provide technical assistance and facilitate the planning process. Working with the consultant, the Commission will gather and analyze relevant data and resource information for use in the assessment process. Additionally, the Commission will participate in a full-day, facilitated conversation to develop the goals of the strategic planning process, with the overarching aim to design a delivery system that has a well-integrated, coordinated supporting infrastructure. The Commission will also solicit input from the larger stakeholder community by convening a full-day convocation. Additional input will be sought via webinars, surveys and other appropriate venues. A draft plan will be developed, and a second full-day convocation of stakeholders held to present the plan and elicit feedback before publishing a final plan, which will be submitted to the Chief Judge and Chief Administrative Judge for review.

New York is one of seven states to receive the NCSC's Justice for All grant.

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