Ohio Legal Help Website: Leveraging Technology to Narrow the Justice Gap
June 12, 2019
Session Overview

This session will cover the following:

- How Ohio Legal Help will provide legal information and interactive tools for self-represented litigants and connect them to legal and local resources;
- How Ohio Legal Help will assist court staff and attorneys in interacting with self-represented litigants; and,
- How Ohio Legal Help will help educate Ohioans on the justice system, thereby increasing public trust and confidence in the judicial system and the perception of justice in Ohio.
Steering Committee

• The Supreme Court of Ohio
• The Ohio Judicial Conference
• The Ohio Legal Assistance Foundation
• The Ohio Clerks of Courts Association
• The Ohio State Bar Association (OSBA)
• The Alliance of Ohio Legal Aids
• The Ohio Library Council
• Consortium of Ohio County Law Libraries
• Ohio Domestic Violence Network
Research and Planning
Voice of the Stakeholder Survey

- Over 1100 Respondents
- Judges, magistrates, clerks, attorneys (legal aid, private, U.S. attorneys office, public defenders, non-profit), librarians, paralegals, law professors, and bar members, among several other professions

Findings

- Strong stakeholder support for a statewide portal and legal information website;
- Keen awareness of the impact of the justice gap on low-income Ohioans, self-represented litigants, and middle-income Ohioans, with 71% of survey respondents agreeing that gaps in access to justice for Ohioans is a critical and urgent problem;
- Stakeholders identified attorney costs, lack of access to legal aid, and confusion and lack of knowledge of the court system as the top three barriers to access to justice in Ohio; and,
- Stakeholders stated that the three highest areas of civil legal need were in the following legal areas family/domestic relations, consumer/debt, and housing.
Voice of the Consumer Survey

- 800 Respondents
- At least 50% making $30k/year or less
- Cost and confusion about the legal system were by far the biggest access hurdles
  - 61% of Ohioans taking the survey saw a need for more legal education;
  - 65% of Ohioans taking the survey indicated that they would pay some modest amount to obtain limited scope representation, with 35% indicating that they could not afford any amount; and,
  - Ohioans identified the highest areas of civil legal need were in family/domestic relations, consumer/debt including bankruptcy, and landlord/tenant including evictions.

- Target strategies to support Ohio Legal Help success/adoptions:
  - Directness and Simplicity – eliminating “the use of legal mumbo jumbo.”
  - Cost-savings – giving users valuable, contextualized information
  - Security protection – respondents desired to see a reputable, trustworthy website
User Journey
Need legal information, forms or a lawyer?

Start by choosing an area below:

- Money and Debt
- Housing
- Family
Housing →
Eviction, foreclosure, repairs, landlords, utilities, security deposits

Family →
What kind of help would you like for your Housing issue?

Select as many as you like:
- A lawyer
- Legal information
- Forms or letters

Next
What kind of help would you like for your **Housing** issue?

Select as many as you like:
- [x] A lawyer
- [x] Legal information
- [ ] Forms or letters

[Next]
Are any of these things happening?

- My landlord has changed locks, or turned off utilities (heat, water)
- I have a security deposit problem
What county do you live in?

Summit

What city/town do you live in?

Akron

Next

Skip

Previous Question
It sounds like you'd like help with When the landlord locks you out or shuts off utilities. Is that right?
How many people live in your household?

- I live alone
- I live with [ ]

Select [ ] people

About how much is your household income per month?

- Less than $1300

Next
Skip
I am a veteran of military service.

- Yes
- No

I am age 60 or older.

- Yes
- No

I am an agricultural worker.

- Yes
- No

I am homeless or at risk of becoming homeless.

- Yes
- No
When the landlord locks you out or shuts off utilities

A landlord is not allowed to change your locks or shut off your utilities to force you out. If this happens to you, take action immediately. Here's...
Understanding the Basics
See what you need to know to take action.
See More +

Legal Help and Lawyers
Find local organizations that can connect you with a lawyer.
See More +

Forms and Letters
Find forms and letters that you can fill out yourself.
See More +

Local Government and Community Resources
Find courts and helpful resources in your community.
See More +

Previously Visited
Understanding the Basics

See what you need to know to take action.

Close —

It doesn’t matter how far behind you are in your rent. It doesn’t matter what kind of fight you’re having with your landlord. In Ohio, it is illegal for a landlord to change your locks or shut off your utilities as a way of forcing you to leave. It’s against the law for them to even...
Legal Help and Lawyers

Find local organizations that can connect you with a lawyer.

Close —

Community Legal Aid

A non-profit law firm serving the legal needs of low-income individuals and families in central northeast Ohio.

Pro Seniors

Pro Seniors provides advice, representation and justice for seniors in Ohio. Pro Seniors' Legal Hotline provides free legal information, advice, and referral for residents of Ohio age 60 and over...

Akron Bar Association

Lawyer Referral and Information Service

The Akron Bar Association operates the Lawyer Referral and Information Service and provides referrals to local attorneys. You will receive up to a 30-minute consultation with an attorney for a non...

These resources are based on your answers:
Pro Seniors provides advice, representation and justice for seniors in Ohio. Pro Seniors’ Legal Hotline provides free legal information, advice, and referral for residents of Ohio age 60 and over, regardless of income or resources. Appointments are scheduled in 30-minute blocks for callers to talk to an attorney who handles Legal Hotline calls. They will work with...
Launch Schedule

• June: Soft Public Launch
  • The website will be accessible at OhioLegalHelp.org without a password.

• How you can help
  • Sign up for our newsletter to stay up to date throughout the summer on our progress.
  • Suggest the website as a resource to patrons.
  • Promote online training opportunities to your colleagues.
Launch Schedule

• Week of August 26: Public Media Launch
  • A statewide, coordinated media campaign will announce the launch of Ohio Legal Help to the public.

• How you can help
  • Sign up to receive a launch toolkit, which will include:
    • Sample social media posts
    • A link to the homepage, or other relevant content, for your organization’s website
    • A shareable video overview
    • Quick-start guides
    • Printed collateral for patrons
Questions?