



# MINNESOTA JUDICIAL BRANCH

## Legal Paraprofessional Pilot Project Implementation Committee

### Meeting Summary

June 24, 2019 | 1:00 pm – 4:00 pm

#	Topic	Facilitator(s)
1.	<b>Welcome and Introductions</b>	<b>Justice Thissen Judge Rodenberg</b>
2.	<b>Family Law presentations and discussion with guests</b>	<b>Justice Thissen Judge Rodenberg</b>

Members reviewed updated information on the creditor/debtor and housing information shared at the May 2019 meeting.

Family law simplification concept covered by guests. The goal of this effort is to provide informal family court options to address some of the same needs driving this paraprofessional project. Some other states that are doing something similar in family law include Alaska, Iowa, Wyoming, and Utah.

Key concepts of the family law simplification effort is to offer an informal trial without cross-examination and relaxed rules of evidence. Both parties are required to opt-in. Attorneys are permitted, but this could also be a good opportunity for paralegal representation.

It can be difficult to get the information to parties about the informal model without providing legal advice. This also seems like an area that could make a nice connection with the paraprofessional pilot.

The committee next heard from the legal services representatives about how they use paralegals and could possibly use them more to enhance their services. Currently they have certified paraprofessionals who assist with immigration court and initial client interviews, drafting documents, etc. There are cases that legal services can't take that would probably be excellent candidates for participating in this paralegal pilot.

The MSBA Family Law section leadership shared some comments with the committee. They see a need for this project; from people who can't afford a private attorney but make too much for legal services, to others who are financially eligible for legal services but legal services doesn't have resources to take their case. A couple of concerns they shared for the committee's consideration as requirements are developed, include the skill level of the paralegals, whether some attorneys might exploit the system and convert it to a money making venture therefore making it again inaccessible to low to moderate income individuals. There is also concern about sufficient training and experience since if the work by the paralegal is poor that could be detrimental to the person's case.



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The committee also discussed that there seems to be a particular need for a program like this in rural MN where there are fewer attorneys. Perhaps the program can encourage the use of technology to assist parties. Such as remote connections, satellite offices staffed by paralegals, etc.

The committee discussed the idea of using a request for proposal type process to solicit suggestions, proposals, and recommendations for how to implement the pilot. The committee discussed what this could look like, what types of questions to ask, and so on.

In order to inform the RFP-type process perhaps the committee could solicit input from stakeholders through a survey.

### 3. Next steps discussion

**Justice Thissen**  
**Judge Rodenberg**

The committee discussed what kind of information they need to continue the discussion about a possible solicitation process, including what kind of information to request via a survey. Discussion included requesting data about how paralegals are currently utilized, and whether or not there are opinions about whether one of the three areas of law in the order seems to be the more appropriate area for focus than the others.

### 4. Adjourn

#### Member Roster & Attendance

- |                                     |   |                                   |
|-------------------------------------|---|-----------------------------------|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Justice Paul Thissen  | Co-Chair                          |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Judge John Rodenberg  | Co-Chair                          |
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | Thomas Nelson   | MSBA                              |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Sally Dahlquist   | Inver Hills Community College     |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Maren Schroeder   | Rochester, MN                     |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Tiffany Doherty-Schooler                                    | Duluth, MN                        |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Pamela Wandzel  | Minneapolis, MN                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | Christopher O. Peterson                                     | Minneapolis, MN                   |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Bridget Gernander   | State Court Administrators Office |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Liz Reppe   | State Law Library                 |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Guests:   |                                   |
|                                     | ▪ Judge Sarah Hennesy, 7 <sup>th</sup> Judicial District    |                                   |
|                                     | ▪ Tifanne Wolter, MSBA Family Law Section Chair (2019-2020) |                                   |
|                                     | ▪ Brad Frago, MSBA Family Law Section Chair (2018-2019)     |                                   |
|                                     | ▪ Ann Cofell, Deputy Director MMLA, St. Cloud Office        |                                   |