

Self-Rep Committee Minutes

Meeting: 10/5/23

ATTENDEES

1. Beth
2. Alison
3. Dawn
4. J Welch Odonnell
5. Judge Mciff Allen
6. Nicole Gray
7. Leslie
8. Sean
9. Shannon
10. Verenice
11. Amy
12. Brooke
13. Jeri
14. Judge Jan
15. Nathanael Player
16. Amy Hernandez (as a guest)

MINUTES

Judge Welch O'donnell moved to approve the April and June minutes. Shawn Newell seconded. The minutes were approved.

ROUNDTABLE CHECK IN

- We are seeing an influx of cases where a private party, a relative or grandparent, files a petition for permanent guardianship and custody
 - In those instances, the parent isn't entitled to counsel b/c there isn't a threat of termination of parental rights
 - These often have to proceed to trial with respondents being self-represented and petitioners with counsel
 - The committee should make recommendations to address this concern
 - WINGS is looking at finding counsel for district court adult guardianship cases
 - There are forms coming for family adoption
 - The committee might want to look into this and propose some solutions
 - In the 5th district, it is hard to find and appoint lawyers in cases like these, but they do have a lot of lawyers .
 - → could there be a CLE to address this issue?

- There is a problem with a lack of lawyers in adult guardianship proceedings
 - There can be some potential conflicts of interest and collusion of counsel
- There was at least one hearing where a parent is communicating with their parent in sign language, but there was no interpreter in court for that
 - This raises concerns about what the child understood and whether they really understood what was happening
 - Leslie says the guardianship forms for the court are being revised and will ensure that a question regarding language access is included in the new forms
- There seem to be fewer people signing up to volunteer on the family law pro se calendars
 - The commissioners seem to struggle to get volunteers
 - Perhaps more sign ups and a more relaxed atmosphere where folks can sign up could be effective
- There was a hearing where someone could have appeared remotely but instead drove several hours to a hearing
 - This happens, but not super frequently
 - There was a court kiosk in Blanding, but it seems to have been removed
- There is a shortage of attorneys in the Uinta Basin and it is cost-prohibitive for lawyers to drive out there
 - Letting people appear remotely helps to alleviate these concerns
 - In Duchesne, the default is remote, in Vernal, the default is in-person but requests for remote hearing are liberally granted
- Re: remote hearings
 - Some judges have refused to let parties appear remotely under any circumstances
 - It might be worthwhile to revisit this question and to reiterate the value of remote hearings for rural areas and pro bono counsel

Nathanael said he would try to find who runs parental termination cases and get someone to talk about that

UPDATE REGARDING NAVIGATORS

The Committee not address this question.

COLLECTING DATA

- Do you know what the next step in your case is?
 - What you need to do to move your case forward?
- Self-reps – did you feel comfortable representing yourself or do you wish you had a lawyer?
- Did you feel you were treated courteously?
- Do you understand what happened?
- Did you know where to find things on the website?
- How did the judge/clerk treat you?
- Obstacles to get to court?
- How did you feel about being on WebEx?

- How did you file your papers today?

INTRODUCING VERENICE RAMIREZ

The Committee enthusiastically welcomed Verenice.

BRINGING COMMUNITY VOICE TO THE COURTS

While no formal motion was made, the Committee generally felt that if community members were added to existing committees, community members to check in with us at regular intervals would be worthwhile and make sense.