



Background: Illinois Supreme Court Commission on Access to Justice Forms Committee

The Statewide Problem:

- Individuals who wish to secure the protection of our civil legal system, often as a matter of necessity, choose to represent themselves. Courts across the country, including in Illinois, have seen an increasing number of people without lawyers who are representing themselves in legal proceedings.

Forms Committee Purpose:

- The Illinois Supreme Court Commission on Access to Justice Forms Committee ("Forms Committee") develops statewide plain language court forms to improve access to the civil justice system for all court users, particularly those who are low-income and vulnerable.
- The Forms Committee serves as the leadership and reviewing body ultimately approving all draft and final statewide standardized court forms that are released by the Illinois Supreme Court Commission on Access to Justice. The Forms Committee itself does not draft forms. This is done by various subcommittees.
- For more background information and examples of currently approved forms, please visit <http://www.illinoiscourts.gov/Forms/forms.asp>

Forms Committee Logistics:

- The Forms Committee usually meets once per month to review forms submitted by drafting subcommittees. There are currently eight drafting subcommittees: appeals, divorce, eviction, protective orders, criminal records, name change, civil asset forfeiture, and small claims.
- Most Forms Committee meetings take place on weekday afternoons, typically last 90 minutes, and take place via computer-conference.
- In between meetings, the Forms Committee must review detailed draft forms, orders and instructions and submit written comments about the same. This review is more time-consuming than the participation on the monthly calls requiring 5-8 additional hours per month.
- In order to participate as a member of the Forms Committee, each Forms Committee member must have access to a computer with an internet connection, access to a

phone line or a computer microphone, commitment to attending Forms Committee calls, and an interest in reviewing detailed documents for usability and legality.

Forms Committee Demographics:

- Current membership of the Forms Committee includes members of the judiciary, practitioners (including legal aid lawyers and members of the private bar), circuit clerks, and law librarians.
- In addition to recruiting justice system stakeholders with diverse backgrounds, the Forms Committee seeks geographic diversity of its membership—seeking representatives from urban, suburban, and rural court systems.

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