



COMMON PLEAS COURT

GENERAL DIVISION

Richard E. Berens, Administrative Judge
David A. Trimmer, Judge

PRESS RELEASE

8/26/2020

On July 27, 2020, the General Division of the Fairfield County Court of Common Pleas was awarded a grant in the amount of \$50,000 by the Ohio Supreme Court’s Civil Justice Program to increase access to justice for self-represented litigants.

The Common Pleas Court submitted a grant application to the Ohio Supreme Court for consideration in February. The proposal requested funding for two programs over the course of two years. First, the Court sought to expand its CSPO Legal Assistance fund, a program that provides legal assistance to low-income individuals involved in protection order litigation. Second, the Court requested funding for The Belay Initiative, a new program designed to provide individuals with self-help resources and legal assistance to ensure financial stability and economic security.

“Through our Legal Assistance Fund and the Belay Initiative, we hope to help people overcome barriers to employment and success by easing the burden of navigating an often overwhelming and confusing civil justice system,” said Court Administrator Jillian Boone. “I am so grateful the Supreme Court recognized the potential of these programs to increase access to justice in Fairfield County.”

As part of the Belay Initiative, the Court will partner with Southeastern Ohio Legal Services (“SEOLS”) to provide free legal advice and guidance to qualified litigants.

“We are excited to partner with the Court to help folks who can’t afford lawyers understand their rights in garnishment hearings, address driver’s license issues, and learn more about sealing criminal records,” said SEOLS Managing Attorney, Joshua Goodwin. “We recognize how scary and complicated the court system can seem—especially if you don’t have an attorney—and we look forward to working with the Court to make the process easier for everyone involved.”

The Civil Justice Program awarded 19 various non-profit and government organizations a total of \$725,000 as part of its 2021 grant cycle. Fairfield County Common Pleas Court was one of only six courts to receive the award.

Individuals seeking further information about the Legal Assistance Fund or Belay Initiative may contact Court Administrator Jillian Boone at jillian.boone@fairfieldcountyohio.gov.

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