



ACCESS TO JUSTICE STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES AND GOALS

(Adopted by the Access to Justice Board on May 8, 2003)

Justice involves the determination and realization of legal needs, rights and responsibilities and the fair resolution of disputes. Access to justice is based on the following principles and goals.

Principles

- Access to justice is a fundamental right in a just society.
- Access to justice requires an opportunity for meaningful participation and deliberation whenever legal needs, rights, and responsibilities are affected. Legal issues must be adequately understood, presented, and dealt with in a timely, fair, and impartial manner.
- Access to justice depends on the availability of affordable legal information and services, including assistance and representation when needed.
- Access to justice requires adequate funding, resources, and support.
- Equal justice under the law requires that access to justice be available to all people. All persons or groups shall be afforded equal access to justice regardless of the popularity of the cause involved, status, or other considerations or characteristics.

Goals

- Persons and institutions involved in the justice system must make access to justice an essential priority.
- Adequate and sustained public and private funding, resources, and support must be provided to assure access to justice for low- and moderate-income and other vulnerable persons.
- Adequate and sustained public and private funding, resources, and support must be provided to maintain a strong, independent judiciary, the individuals, institutions, and organizations that provide or assure access to justice.
- The delivery of justice must be prompt, understandable, and affordable without sacrificing quality.
- A coordinated and comprehensive statewide system for delivering legal services must be maintained.
- Available and emerging technology and other resources must fairly and efficiently maximize access to justice.
- Barriers to access to justice must be prevented, removed, or reduced.
- The justice system must be inclusive and have the values, skills, and resources necessary to meet the legal needs of a diverse and multicultural population. Access to justice shall not be limited or denied for any reason of condition or status, including race, ethnicity, nationality, religion, creed, age, gender, sexual orientation, physical or mental ability, education, language or communication skills, finances, cultural background, or social status.
- The justice system must collaborate with other persons, professions, and organizations to meet the legal and law-related needs of the public.
- Public legal education must be provided to create and sustain an informed and empowered public and to build broad support for access to justice.

