

**Collaboration Principles**  
**Washington State Access to Justice Board**  
**Adopted September 16, 2016**

The ATJ Collaboration Principles were memorialized during the development of the 2016 State Plan for the Coordinated Delivery of Legal Services.

*Purpose*

Coordination and collaboration underlie the Access to Justice Hallmarks and are at the core of Washington's civil legal aid delivery system and the Alliance for Equal Justice. The application of collaborative principles to the work of Alliance Providers results in improved coordination among providers, improves the delivery of services to eligible client communities, and helps to better leverage scarce resources. Collaboration also builds trust and goodwill across Alliance member organizations making for a more effective, stronger delivery system.

*Scope*

A collaborative approach assists Alliance member organizations to understand and consider the ways in which individual program decisions may affect services to the client community and also possible impacts on other providers. Similarly, a collaborative approach allows partner organizations to make timely and informed adjustments to organizational functioning as may be necessary.

Collaborative principles are intended for use in planning and decision-making by members of the Alliance for Equal Justice in the delivery of services to eligible community members. The use of collaborative principles is not intended to impinge on the ability of organizations to meet their legal or fiduciary duties to funders, clients, or the organization's mission and governance because decision making remains within the organization. Moreover, resources committed to collaboration are intended to be reasonable in relation to the scope and impact of the issue being addressed; and the principles are not intended to impose a burden on organizational participants or elevate form over substance.

*Principles:*

1. A core collaboration principle is engagement in regular and ongoing communication among organizational leadership members, their designees or representatives in ATJ Board activities and relevant and appropriate committees. Central to the collaborative effort is participation in the ATJ's Delivery System Committee where essential delivery system initiatives, functions and activities, including organizational changes having statewide service delivery impacts, are presented for comment and feedback to ensure consideration of client service impacts. Other ATJ committees, such as the Technology Committee and the Justice Without Barriers Committee, are also important forums for ongoing communication and collaboration among providers, community stakeholders and with the ATJ Board.

2. Collaboration is at all times premised on the need to enhance and maximize effective client service delivery. The ATJ Hallmarks and Washington's delivery system as a whole rely on a high level of coordination and specifically with respect to centralized client intake, with NJP-CLEAR serving as a the principal client point of entry. With respect to CLEAR, collaboration ideally requires that any substantial changes that become necessary or are proposed to enhance services be communicated to all affected providers in advance, with adequate time to allow for providers to comment and make needed adjustments. Similarly, for the coordinated intake function to be most effective, providers should also promptly and actively communicate updated referral criteria and case acceptance changes that affect referrals, and timely respond to information requests.
3. Insofar as collaboration is at all times premised on the need to enhance and maximize effective client service delivery, regular and ongoing communication is especially important at the local and regional level where Alliance providers share or overlap in client service functions. To this end, providers at local and regional levels should engage in ongoing communication about client service needs and emerging issues, engage in regional planning efforts, and keep each other informed, and where possible coordinate, local efforts around enhancements, reductions or changes in areas of service or service capacity.
4. Substantive advocacy collaboration is necessary and critical to effectiveness of the delivery system. Strategic advocacy collaboration among providers takes place in the context of Alliance-wide Taskforces, where participants are expected to contribute and support ongoing Taskforce work and other advocacy coordination efforts. Key to the ATJ Hallmarks and to substantive collaboration among Alliance members is awareness of funding limitations, which limit the ability of programs to engage in certain advocacy. Collaboration principles require a heightened awareness on the part of organizations free of restrictions and active engagement with Alliance-wide advocacy priorities to ensure that the breadth of client legal needs is considered when allocating unrestricted resources.
5. Lastly, Alliance providers endeavor to apply collaborative principles in resource development, whether cooperating in joint funding applications, sharing appropriate funding opportunities, coordinating fellowship applications, and supporting efforts to maintain and enhance public funding for civil legal aid.