

JUSTICE  
FOR  
ALL

A Tennessee Supreme  
Court Initiative



THE TENNESSEE  
FAITH & JUSTICE  
ALLIANCE

# TN Supreme Court Administrative Office of the Courts

**Anne-Louise Wirthlin**

Assistant Director;

Director of Access to Justice

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- The Tennessee Supreme Court made access to justice its number one strategic priority and formally announced their Access to Justice Initiative in December 2008.
- TN ATJ Commission mission statement is to provide collaborative leadership to create solutions and resources to ensure access to justice **FOR ALL**.
- <http://www.tncourts.gov/programs/access-justice>

# Access to Justice Initiative

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# TN Supreme Court directed ATJ Commission to develop strategic plan to:

- Educate the public about the legal needs crisis
- Identify priorities for improving access to justice
- Recommend projects and programs to enhance access to justice

## TN Supreme Court Rule 50

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- “Racism still exists and has no place in our society. Upon entering service in the judiciary, we swore to uphold the constitutions of the State of Tennessee and the United States. Thus, it is our moral obligation and our sworn duty to ensure that the people of Tennessee receive equal protection of its laws. Justice must be for all.”
- Directed TN ATJ Commission to establish new initiative to identify and eliminate barriers to racial and ethnic fairness and justice

# TN Supreme Court Statement ~ June 25, 2020



# TN ATJC Strategic Plan 2020 Update

The ATJ Commission learned valuable insights from the survey responses, one of which is that it must expand and improve its outreach to all members of the equal justice ecosystem in Tennessee. The ATJ Commission will address this by fine-tuning and sharing its story and role as one of leaders in the access to justice community. The 2020 Updated Strategic Plan focuses on bringing new voices into the ATJ Commission's work. Further, it recognizes that the ATJ Commission be responsive to identified needs of the Tennessee legal community and the general public, especially in rural and underserved areas. The ATJ Commission identified the increased need for timely and relevant data to make informed decisions on developing and triaging resources. By working towards the goals outlined in this Plan, the ATJ Commission will continue and strengthen its mission, to address and eliminate barriers to access to justice for all.

## Mission

To provide collaborative leadership to create solutions and resources that address and eliminate barriers to justice for all.

### Build and Equip the Network

#### Goals

**Establish** communication networks with rural bar associations and community organizations, specifically including organizations developed for racial and ethnic minorities  
**Create** system to allow targeted rural, black, and minority communities to meet underserved needs  
**Enlist** local champions in all types of communities

#### Impact

- Targeted and engaged communities of resistance
- Engaged communities in need (with a priority on rural areas and racial and ethnic minorities)

### Build and Refine Support Services

#### Goals

**Expands** reach and IDs issues  
 Bring juvenile and specialty Courts/Clerks to the table  
**Bring** new and diverse voices to the table while keeping active voices engaged  
**Bring** different types of professionals to the table

#### Impact

- Greater acceptance of use forms for self-represented litigants
- Meaningful use of technology
- Use of kiosks and assistance from clerks
- Expanded relationship with faith leaders and community leaders
- Meaningful use of court navigators

### Develop Mechanism to Measure Effectiveness

#### Goals

**Identify** data that is needed/helpful, specifically data on race, ethnic minorities, and poverty  
**Access** needed expertise

#### Impact

- Use of valid data to evaluate current programs and shape future programming
- Data-driven decisions
- Identify future needs with data

### Capture and Promote the Brand

#### Goals

**Define** our lane (using our website and other tools)  
**Utilize** PSA's regarding ATJ Commission's work and related court updates

#### Impact

- Better recognition of ATJ Commission and its work across Tennessee
- Support our partners as separate brands

### Build the Process for Funding

#### Goals

**Define** Commission's role and devise strategy for funding

#### Impact

- Financial security
- Develop and run a statewide Justice Bus



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# Access to Justice Initiative



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- The TJFA is a project of the Access to Justice Commission.
- It is an alliance of faith-based groups in Tennessee who commit to providing legal resources to their congregations and communities.
- The idea is to connect with people in need at places where they already go to seek help.
- <https://justiceforalltn.com/i-can-help/faith-based-initiative>

# TN Faith & Justice Alliance

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# THE FOUR PRONGS OF OUR WORK

The work of the  
Tennessee Faith &  
Justice Alliance has  
developed under four  
central priorities.



## TRAINING LEADERS

Training clergy to  
spot legal issues  
when they are  
listening to the  
concerns of  
parishioners.



## REFERRAL

Using a Referral  
Model designed  
to pair volunteer  
lawyers with  
congregants in  
need.



## CLINICS

Establishing  
inter-faith free  
advice clinics.



## EDUCATION

Providing  
community  
education.





## Courts, State Agencies Join Together to Host Innovative Eviction Summit



- Assembled group of State agencies to host Summit on October 1, 2020
- Morning plenary available at <https://youtu.be/fTK5RIS3NjQ>
- Focus on evictions moratoriums, existing resources for tenants and landlords, and access to free legal help
- <https://www.tncourts.gov/Eviction%20Resources>

# Evictions Summit



- TN Supreme Court & AOC Response  
<https://www.tncourts.gov/coronavirus>
- Court Order ~ March 26, 2020
  - No judge, clerk, or other court official shall take any action to effectuate an eviction, ejection, or other displacement from a residence during the effective dates of this order based upon the failure to make a rent, loan, or other similar payment absent extraordinary circumstances.
- [Training Video for Judges](#)

## COVID-19 Response

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- Created by the Alternative Dispute Resolution Commission (ADRC) and approved by the TN Supreme Court
- Assist courts facing backlog of civil cases due to COVID-19
- Uses existing mediation processes
- Makes mediation more readily available to civil litigants

# ADRPlan



- Quicker and less expensive, and potentially more satisfying alternative to litigation
- Mediation provided at no cost to indigent parties who are not represented by a lawyer
- TN Supreme Court Rule 31 mediation standards
- Community mediation centers
- <https://www.tncourts.gov/ADRPlan>

# ADRPlan

<https://www.help4tn.org/>

# HELP4TN

Find free legal help and social services in Tennessee  
A program of Tennessee Alliance for Legal Services

[Home](#) [About](#) [HELP4TN Blog](#) [HELP4TN En Español](#) [العربية](#) [Help with Legal Forms](#) [For Community Partners](#)

## Emergency Legal Help

 [COVID-19 Related Information](#)



English (United States)

# Statewide Civil Legal Resources



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**Have legal questions?**

**Free help starts here.**



**By phone at**  
**1-844-HELP4TN**  
(1-844-435-7486)

Talk to an experienced  
Tennessee attorney  
for free legal advice  
and referrals.

**Online at**  
**www.HELP4TN.org**

Email legal questions,  
see court forms,  
watch videos about legal  
issues and more.

Brought to you by Tennessee Alliance for Legal Services  
Supported by the Tennessee Supreme Court Access to Justice Commission

Legal Advice Helpline  
1-844-Help4TN  
(1-844-435-7486)

# Statewide Civil Legal Resources



**JUSTICE FOR ALL**  
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<https://tn.freelegalanswers.org/>



# Statewide Civil Legal Resources



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Questions or want to get  
involved? Thank you!