



ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE of PENNSYLVANIA COURTS

News for Immediate Release

March 5, 2015

Supreme Court launches pilot program to enhance the availability of legal aid

HARRISBURG — A pilot program that links lawyers who want to volunteer their services with clients unable to afford legal help was created today by the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania.

The program provides a centralized clearinghouse of lawyers willing to participate and a communications network for them to make their services known to those in need.

Provisions of the program outlined in an order issued today call for an appointed coordinator to administer a statewide list of lawyers with appellate court experience who are interested in providing free, or *pro bono*, representation to indigent litigants.

The coordinator will provide and regularly update the registry to the western, middle and eastern offices of the Supreme Court prothonotary — the state high court's chief record keeper. David R. Fine, a Harrisburg attorney who spent six years on the Supreme Court's Appellate Court Rules Committee, was appointed coordinator in today's order.

Participation in the program is limited to those representing themselves, or *pro se*, who have filed petitions of discretionary appeal in the Supreme Court from the Commonwealth or Superior courts. Those eligible may include parties in both criminal and civil cases — such as someone facing involuntary termination of his or her parental rights.

An order accepting an appeal involving a qualified self-represented litigant will trigger the coordinator to contact potential attorneys on the list. An attorney from the list would be approved by the prothonotary with the litigant's consent.

After a nine-month trial period, the coordinator will evaluate the program to determine if it ought to continue as is — or change — and forward the recommendations to the Supreme Court for consideration. The pilot program is based on one used in the federal courts.

A copy of the order can be found on the Judiciary's website: www.pacourts.us

Media contact: [Art Heinz](#), 717-231-3317

www.PACourts.us

