

Tennessee Alliance for Legal Services

Strengthening the Delivery of Civil Legal Help to Vulnerable Tennesseans



www.tals.org

500th Attorney Volunteer Joins Online TN Justice

Nearly 5 years into the project, Tennessee's virtual legal advice clinic, www.onlineTNjustice.org, has reached a new milestone – 500 Tennessee attorneys have registered to volunteer with the site. Volunteers provide pro bono service by answering civil question posted by low-income Tennesseans.

The Tennessee's Supreme Court's Access to Justice Commission envisioned Online TN Justice (OTJ) would help Tennessee attorneys engage in pro bono service by accessing in-need clients from anywhere with an internet connection. OTJ Volunteer Attorney Jill Thrash finds that to be true, "It really is a great system for lawyers to give back to the community in a way that is convenient and accessible to all parties." Low-income Tennesseans who face barriers to attending traditional walk-in clinics also benefit from the 24/7 opportunity to reach volunteer attorneys about their civil legal issue. One user thanked a volunteer saying, "Thank you so much for the rapid response to my question. It removed a great deal of anxiety about the situation. I can't thank you enough for your service!"

Since its launch in April 2011, more than 10,800 questions have been posted to the site. Now, more than 500 Tennessee attorneys can login and provide an answer. Attorneys can submit a single response or have a dialogue with the user through the site. In 2014, law students also began participating in OTJ by pairing with registered volunteers to research and draft answers during Law School Virtual Legal Advice Clinics. All six Tennessee laws schools have or have scheduled to host multiple clinics and 100% of law students and volunteer attorneys who shared feedback said they'd do the events again. Brad Morgan with The University of Tennessee's College of Law said of the experience "OTJ allows volunteer lawyers and law students to remember why they came to law school in the first place- to help people."

OTJ has reached further than Tennessee. Other states have asked to use the site's software to start their own statewide virtual legal advice clinics. The demand was so high that the American Bar Association approved the creation of a national platform of virtual legal advice clinics based of the OTJ program in 2015; more than 35 states have already committed to joining. The national site, ABA Legal Answers, is expected to launch in August 2016.

OTJ a joint project of the Tennessee Alliance for Legal Services and the Tennessee Bar Association made possible through the technical support of Baker Donelson. For more information on Online TN Justice, contact [Site Administrator Samantha Sanchez](#).

Printed: September 25, 2022

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