Task Force to Improve Access to Legal Counsel in Civil (and Administrative) Matters

Outline/Bullet Points for Goals & Principles Working Group

- **Purpose of Task Force:** “to study the **nature, extent** and **consequences** of **unmet legal needs** of state residents in civil matters.”
  - What are fiscal consequences of unmet legal needs in civil matters?
    - For Public Entities (courts, schools, DCF, law enforcement, prisons, social services, public health)
    - For Private Entities (employers, hospitals, shelters, landlords, lawyers on the other side in pro se matters, law firms performing pro bono work)
  - What are human consequences of unmet legal needs in civil matters?
    - **Security/Bodily Integrity (Domestic Violence)**
    - **Parent/Child relationships**
    - Housing
      - Eviction
      - Foreclosure
    - Food
    - Marriages
    - Employment/Labor
    - Contract Collection
    - Health and Safety
    - Access to Education
    - Access to Healthcare
  - What are the societal costs?
    - **Undermining Public Trust in Courts**
      - Judges challenged to maintain appearance of impartiality when one side pro se
    - **Undermining Trust in the Rule of Law**
  - **Charge of Task Force:** “shall examine, on a state-wide basis, the **impact** that the lack of access to legal counsel in civil matters is having on the **ability of state residents to secure essential human needs**.”

- **Which state residents are the focus of our inquiry?** Residents of Connecticut who are:
  - Low and Moderate Income
  - Veterans
  - People with disabilities/mental illness/addiction
  - Juveniles
  - Immigrants
  - Limited English Proficient

- **What rights to counsel in civil matters have already been recognized?** What needs have been recognized by the legislature as sufficiently important (“essential”? ) that a right to counsel has been established?
  - Termination of Parental Rights (probate)
  - Attorneys for Children
  - Habeus
  - Contempt of Court (child support)?
  - Others (to be researched)
• Definition of Success: what would CT look like if state residents had sufficient access to legal counsel in civil matters that they were able to secure essential human needs?
  o Measure against financial goals?
  o Measure against social goals?
  o Measure against legal goals?
  o Is it enough if we make people more aware of the benefits of legal counsel, and provide information about options for obtaining counsel?
  o Is public awareness of the availability of pro bono representation enough, if we cannot guarantee that they will successfully secure pro bono services?

• What should be the priorities for allocating legal representation in civil matters?
  o Should we also work to rebuild a network of multidisciplinary helpers and service providers?

• What additional data is needed to decide:
  o Where priorities should lie; and
  o What benefits will be of allocating resources in various ways?