Illinois Bar Foundation Promotes Innovation with Three-year $105,000 Grant to Illinois Legal Aid Online

CHICAGO, IL, June 13, 2016 – The Illinois Bar Foundation (IBF), the charitable arm of the Illinois State Bar Association, will provide a three-year, $105,000 special-project grant to support an innovative new program of Illinois Legal Aid Online (ILAO). The announcement was made following its April 1 board of directors meeting in Chicago. The funding is in addition to a $15,000 operating grant from the IBF.

With the funding, ILAO will launch the American Bar Association-sponsored Legal Answers, which is an online portal to allow people with civil legal problems to submit their questions securely to be reviewed by volunteer attorneys and receive brief legal advice. The program originated in Tennessee as Online Tennessee Justice and has been adopted by the ABA with the goal of expanding it to all 50 states this year.

The IBF’s grant will enable ILAO to hire an attorney part-time to launch the Illinois effort. ILAO, which is a national leader in using technology to help people understand their legal issues and enhance access to justice, will make the Illinois version of Legal Answers a new national standard, according to Lisa Colpoys, ILAO executive director.

The mission of the Illinois Bar Foundation is to ensure meaningful access to the justice system, especially for those with limited means, and to assist lawyers who can no longer support themselves due to incapacity. This fiscal year, the IBF will provide more than $750,000 in access to justice funding through grants to legal aid organizations across the state of Illinois and programs that provide navigational and procedural guidance inside courthouses, as well as support to attorneys and their families in need. The Illinois Bar Foundation is located at 20 S. Clark St., Suite 910, Chicago, IL 60603, and the phone number is (312) 726-6072.

Illinois Legal Aid Online uses technology to lower barriers to the law so that people can understand their legal options, make informed decisions, and represent themselves in court when they can’t afford a lawyer. ILAO puts the law within reach for all Illinois residents, regardless of their location, income and education, by simplifying our complex legal system and connecting people to legal information and assistance. Visit IllinoisLegalAidOnline.org for more information.

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