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ILLINOIS LEGAL AID ONLINE WINS NATIONAL PRO BONO AWARD
Law Technology News honors ILAO with 2013 Innovation Award at LegalTech New York

CHICAGO, IL - February 5th, 2014 – This evening Illinois Legal Aid Online (ILAO) will be honored by Law Technology News (LTN), a national publication on the latest technologies for the legal marketplace, with a 2013 Innovation Award for most innovative use of technology in a pro bono project. Director of Technology, Gwendelyn Daniels, will accept the award at the 11th annual LTN Innovation Awards ceremony, which is being held at LegalTech New York. The Awards recognize outstanding achievement by individuals and organizations in integrating technology into legal work to help lawyers deliver better, faster and cheaper services.

The award winning project, the Statewide Online Access System, is a triage and intake portal for people seeking civil legal assistance in Illinois. The system determines the most appropriate available service for a user’s legal issue in their geographic area, and then directs them to that service. Depending on a user’s legal problem, location, and financial resources, the system may guide them to a nonprofit legal aid or pro bono program for representation, to a legal self-help center, to a private lawyer referral service, or to online self-help tools on IllinoisLegalAid.org.

The new Online Access System is available 24/7 from any web-enabled device. It helps people who can’t afford or find a lawyer to navigate a maze of services to find out what they qualify for, and then allows them to easily submit an application online. The system was built in collaboration with ILAO’s long-time partners, LAF, Land of Lincoln Legal Assistance Foundation and Prairie State Legal Services, and seamlessly connects suitable clients with these programs with the click of a mouse.

According to LTN, the Statewide Online Access system is "an invaluable contribution to pro bono efforts, one which could well be copied throughout the remainder of the nation.” In its announcement of award winners, LTN emphasized the project's scalability, citing it as a "highly customizable" system that "can be easily integrated into existing enterprise systems used by legal aid and pro bono programs." Over the next six months, the system will be expanded to support crime victims seeking legal help and immigration service providers, the latter through ILAO’s Spanish-language website, AyudaLegalIL.org.
Illinois Legal Aid Online Executive Director Lisa Colpoys says “the new system helps streamlines the delivery of legal services in Illinois and increases efficiency.” The main benefits include the following: 1) people seeking legal help are expediently directed to the best available resource for their problem, eliminating the need to inquire at numerous organizations; 2) the process of applying for legal services is more accessible for everyone, especially those who work; 3) people seeking legal help enter their own data into the system, which causes legal aid organizations to spend less resources on intake; 4) legal aid and pro bono programs spend more time helping people they can help instead of screening out people who don’t qualify.

About Illinois Legal Aid Online

Illinois Legal Aid Online is a groundbreaking, nationally-recognized nonprofit that uses technology to put the law within reach for millions of lower-income, disabled and vulnerable Illinois residents who can’t afford a lawyer. Four websites and two mobile apps link people in need of legal services to the law, volunteers to pro bono support resources, and members of the legal aid community to each other. For more information, please visit IllinoisLegalAidOnline.org.

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