

# MAINE JUSTICE ACTION GROUP

The Justice Action Group is a coalition of individuals and organizations established in 1995 to provide leadership and coordination in planning for the provision of civil legal aid to low-income and elderly Mainers.

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## ACCESS TO JUSTICE UPDATE

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### VIDEO EDUCATIONAL OUTREACH: THE PFA PROCESS

Pine Tree Legal Assistance recently released a web-based video to help clients navigate the Protection from Abuse process in the Maine District Courts. The video is narrated by Superior Court Justice Andrew Horton and was created by Hugh Calkins and Kathleen Caldwell at Pine Tree Legal Assistance. This video exemplifies the recommendation found in the 2007 Statewide Access to Justice Planning Initiative to educate the public about the law, courts and the legal system.

View the video at: [http://www.helpmelaw.org/sub/pfa\\_video.htm](http://www.helpmelaw.org/sub/pfa_video.htm)

### SURVIVING THE MAINE WINTER

The Upstream Intervention Task Force has launched a working group that is currently identifying types of legal issues likely to flow to low-income Mainers from the unpredictable costs of energy. The Task Force is conducting in-house training for staff and has also compiled a list of resources for clients in need of assistance. This proactive strategy is an effort to educate clients to avoid legal crises, and to educate providers to ensure speedy and effective access to legal services as recommended in the 2007 Statewide Access to Justice Planning Initiative.

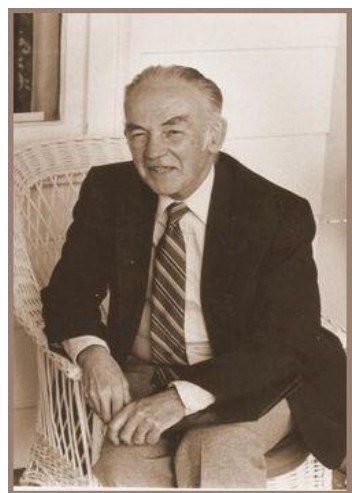
See the resource list at: <http://www.mejp.org/heat.htm>



The Honorable Frank M. Coffin and the Coffin Fellows at the November 17th reception held in Judge Coffin's honor

### JAG SYMPOSIUM

The first bi-annual JAG Symposium, entitled *Expanding Justice in Maine: Upstream Solutions to Downstream Problems*, will be held on Friday, October 2, 2009 at the Abromson Center on the Portland Campus of the University of Southern Maine. Peter Edelman of the Georgetown University Law Center is the scheduled plenary speaker. Please save the



The Honorable Frank M. Coffin  
Founder of the Maine Justice Action Group

### IOLTA Update

On November 21st, the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation announced that it would include IOLTA accounts in the Temporary Liquidity Guarantee Program (TLGP). IOLTA accounts will now enjoy the unlimited insurance coverage of TLGP. All financial institutions with FDIC coverage will automatically be enrolled in the TLGP. Details of the coverage and process may be found at <http://www.fdic.gov/news/board/08BODtiqp.PDF>

The Maine Bar Foundation and the many clients of legal aid programs thank you for your letters of support for this effort. This is truly an example of the legal community working together to preserve access to justice resources.

### PROVIDER UPDATE

The Volunteer Lawyers Project (VLP) is currently working to facilitate the court process for self-represented family law litigants with The Court House Assistance Project (CHAP). CHAP is a clinic model that was started by VLP at the Portland District Court. At CHAP, self represented family law litigants are given limited legal assistance, including help filling out forms, guidance on process and individualized strategic advice. In Portland, six *pro bono* attorneys staff the clinic on a rotating schedule, along with two undergraduate volunteers who help with intake and on the ground organization. The clinic runs for three hours one afternoon per week with an average of fifteen clients per week.

Staff has found that it is important that the clinic be there at the same time and place each week to build a trusting client base and a group of committed volunteers. Clients may return as many times as may be necessary to the clinic, and clients whose first language is not English may make an appointment at the VLP office at a time when an interpreter will be available. The CHAP model has proved so successful for the clients and the volunteers, and, as it is now sustainable into the foreseeable future, VLP has recently expanded CHAP in to Biddeford District Court. Further, in January 2009, a CHAP clinic will be opening in Lewiston District Court as part of a collaboration with the Court, the Androscoggin Bar and Bates College. Each CHAP clinic takes time to plan and launch, and ongoing sustainability must be given attention, still VLP has strong hopes for continued expansion through Maine over the next couple of years.

VLP's efforts in the CHAPS program reflect the call in the 2007 Statewide Access to Justice Planning Initiative to ensure meaningful assistance to individuals who do not have the services of a legal professional. The Planning Initiative recognized that failure to provide such assistance "imposes its own higher costs on the broader community, including represented litigants and members of Maine's business community, who must wait longer for the resolution of their own matters, incurring additional time, expense and opportunity costs."

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