

2015 Access to Justice Conference Summary of Workshop

Workshop: Delivering Pro Bono Services to Rural Communities
Presenters: Tim Lui-Kwan, Michelle Acosta
Audience Participants: Sergio Acubilla and Valerie Grab

The workshop entitled, “Delivering Pro Bono Services to Rural Communities” was presented by Tim Lui-Kwan and Michelle D. Acosta who shared information and experiences on the delivery of pro bono services through the Senior Counsel Division of the Hawaii State Bar Association and VLSH. Audience participants Sergio Acubilla and Valerie Grab shared information on natural disaster relief efforts through a collaboration with the Legal Aid Society of Hawaii (LASH), Hawaii County Bar, and the Hawaii State Bar Association (HSBA).

Topics covered:

- a. Identifying rural areas within the State of Hawaii;
- b. Barriers to providing legal services: poverty; geography; isolation; connections to services; limited number of attorneys; and limited services
- c. The Senior Counsel Division (SCD) experience on Molokai

The SCD mobilizes retired attorneys to travel at their own expense to Molokai to provide free legal clinics to rural residents. SCD participants are well experienced attorneys with varying backgrounds and can offer information and advice on an array of legal matters that may not be readily available to Molokai residents. The SCD sponsored clinics are fairly low cost and provide participants an opportunity to gain an understanding of the rural community and fill a need.

- d. The VLSH experience in Ka’u and other rural areas through Pop-Up Legal Clinics

VLSH coordinated with Ka’u community leaders and social service organizations to host a Neighborhood Legal Clinic for advice and counsel in Ka’u. VLSH shared that the key to a successful delivery of service to rural areas is collaboration with community based organizations and leaders for the purpose of developing services that fit the community’s needs and culture.

- e. The Collaborative Experience between LASH, Hawaii County Bar and HSBA in responding to and preparing for natural disaster relief

During the 2014 hurricane season, LASH, HSBA and the Hawaii County Bar collaborated to update disaster relief brochures, establish a legal hotline and provide onsite disaster relief clinics on Hawaii Island. The collaborative effort was successful in mobilizing volunteer attorneys to meet the needs of Hawaii Island residents affected by severe weather and the lava flow. The 2014 experience has helped further develop brochures and volunteer training for the 2015 hurricane season.