SRLN 2021 Forms Competition

A giant congratulations to our SRLN 2021 Forms Competition Winners!

Automated Forms Category: UMKC School of Law, Bloch Law Library

Static Forms Category: Minnesota State Court Administrator's Office

About the 2021 Forms Competition

The Self-Represented Litigation Network hosted the 2021 Forms Competition between April and May 2021. In 2017 the SRLN Forms & Technology Working Group held its first ever Forms Competition. Courts, legal aid organizations, and their community partners endeavored over the last year to put up remote services for communities navigating the legal process, and forms like these were foundational to that work.

Please join us in celebrating our contestants and our winners, who all created forms responsive to the needs of their jurisdiction. Below we have highlighted trends across our 19 contestants, as well as fun facts about the composition of our competition. See the [SRLN 2017 Forms Competition](#) page for details about the 2017 competition.

View the [SRLN 2021 Forms Competition Recording](#)

Contestant Materials

Special Note: if you are testing forms please ensure you do not submit or file a form you do not intend to.

Contestant Organization	Category	Link to Submission (Interview Software Used)
Community Legal Services of Mid Florida	Automated	[Landlord-Tenant - Emergency Motion to Stay Eviction](#)* * This form is used by staff as part of the organizations case management software. The interview guides staff and assists in creating the form included below.
Illinois Legal Aid Online	Automated	[Consumer Debt - Collection Proof Letter (Docassemble)](#)
Iowa Judicial Branch	Automated	[Family Law - Divorce Without Children (LawHelp Interactive)](#)

Lagniappe Law Lab	Automated	[General Civil - Fee Delayer Application](#)
Legal Aid Center of Southern Nevada	Automated	[Landlord-Tenant - Tenant's Answer to Summary Eviction (Odyssey Guide & File)](#)
Michigan Legal Help Program	Automated	[General Civil - Application to Set Aside Conviction (LawHelp Interactive)](#)
Northwest Justice Project	Automated	[Family Law - Make a Parenting Plan (LawHelp Interactive)](#)
Ohio Legal Help	Automated	[Family Law - Divorce Without Children](#)
Suffolk Law School	Automated	[Domestic Violence - Application for 209A Restraining Order (Docassemble)](#)
Tennessee Alliance for Legal Services	Automated	[General Civil - Worker's Compensation (LawDroid)](#)
UMKC School of Law, Bloch Law Library	**Automated Category Winner**	[**Domestic Violence - Protection Order (JotForm)**](#)
State of Nebraska Administrative Office of the Courts and Probation	Static	[General Civil - Change of Contact Information](#)
Alaska Court System	Static	[Consumer Debt - Answer to Counterclaim to Complaint to Collect a Debt](#)

Indiana Legal Servces	Static	[General Civil - Adult Name and Gender Marker Change](#)
Baltimore County Circuit Court Law Library	Static	[General Civil - Petition for Judicial Review](#)
Colorado Courts	Static	[General Civil - Request for Fee Waiver](#)
Ottawa County Legal Self-Help Center	Static	[Family Law - Judgement of Divorce (Part of a Forms Packet)](#)
King County Law Library	Static	[General Civil - Intestate Probate (Part of a Forms Packet)](#)
Minnesota State Court Administrator's Office	**Static Category Winner**	[**Guardianship - Personal Well-Being Report**](#)

Fun Facts about Contestants

States represented in the competition	Alaska, Colorado, Florida, Iowa, Illinois, Indiana, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, Nevada, Ohio, Tennessee, and Washington

Case types covered by contestant forms	General Civil: Administrative, Fee Waivers, Probate, Name & Gender Marker Change, Expungement, Workers Compensation Family Law Domestic Violence Consumer Debt Landlord-Tenant Guardianship
Languages other than English	Spanish (most common), Somali, Vietnamese, Portugese, Chinese (simplified)

Obstacles contestants overcame and solutions they deployed:

Obstacles identified	• Resistance to change • Challenges communicating about resources • Challenges publishing the actual form/interview • Engaging stakeholders • Legitimizing forms • Integrating with longterm planning • Finding capacity and time to develop forms • Limitations providing language access • Limitations created by rules

Solutions deployed	• Cultivate relationships with stakeholders and involve them in design process • Cultivate relationships with form users and involve them in design process • Balance simple instructions & pragmatic navigation • Consider strategies for marketing and communicating about your form • Collecting use data to support your work and improve design • Invest in skills development to integrate maintenance with existing staff • Invest in translation services to expand language access – start with commonly spoken languages • Advocate for rules changes • Find a champion in your court system • Estabilsh a dedicated forms committee or role
User Testing approaches	• Involve existing ATJ working groups and committees • Start with observable data from frontline staff • Create channels for internal feedback • Create continuous opportunities for feedback like surveys and collect data over time • Engage staff to surface opportunities to get direct use experience • Reach out to community organizations helping people where their issues manifest

Maintaining updated forms	- Work to support a dedicated forms manager - Integrate updates with workflows as you create them - know how much capacity you are using - Track rule changes on commonly used forms - train about tracking rules - Establish a committee/working group with other organizations to share awareness - Engage subject matter experts to create buy-in and two way information channels for identifying necessary changes

Competition Details

Competition Categories

- *Best Static Form* - stand alone forms, print or digital, that self-represented litigants can download and use.
- *Best Automated Form* - forms produced from a type of guided interview, such as software like A2J Author, LawHelp Interactive, Guide & File, Documate, AfterPattern, and others.

The competition was limited to court, legal aid, non-profit or government organizations providing these forms to self-represented litigants.

Assessment Criteria

Judges will use the following components to assess submissions:

1. *Comprehensibility* - does the form deploy plain language? Does the form provide adequate information? Is its purpose clear? Are any accompanying instructions clear?
2. *Design* - is the form user friendly?

3. *Navigability* - can the form be navigated by the intended audience?
4. *Service Integration* - how well does the form fit within an existing process?

Judges will consider the effectiveness of the form as it is accessed by a user – this includes any accompanying instructions to static forms and the quality of automated interviews. <u>The most important criteria is plain language comprehensibility</u>.

Winner Awards

Winners received one free admission to the next in-person SRLN Conference.

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