



ESCAMBIA PROJECT

We'd like to introduce you to the Escambia Project. This is an ongoing initiative to expand Escambia residents' access to legal help for issues around family, housing, money, employment, driving, and more. We know that people have legal needs that they're not getting addressed -- whether it's around divorce, child custody, restoration of driver's license, housing issues, clearing criminal records, getting disability benefits, student loan debt, or more. Our goal is to make it very easy for people to find free or low-cost lawyers to help them.

We are an interdisciplinary team, supported by Pathways for Change, Legal Services of North Florida, and The Florida Bar Foundation, working with community members to identify key needs, and to devise new legal help services that are user-friendly and easy to access. We are conducting our project as a series of experiments -- launching first versions of these possible new services, seeing how people use them, collecting feedback on them, and then setting our strategy from there.

We have three initial services that we are trying out this summer and fall: Justice on the Block, Smart Intake, and One Stop Life Shop.

Justice on The Block is about getting lawyers out into the community where people need them. We are organizing volunteer or legal aid lawyers to come in-person or via videoconference to community events and centers. They can do initial consultations for free with people, and then get them set up on a path for other services and ongoing help. The first Justice on the Block event will be held on August 22, 3-7pm at Pathways for Change Family Center.

Smart Intake is focused on spotting people's legal needs, and then easily referring people to legal aid groups for help. The tool can be used by other social service, medical, financial, or religious service providers. It can help nonlawyer service-providers ask people a few questions, and listen to their stories -- to identify if there's a legal issue to pursue. The tool will then send the person's information to a legal aid group, so they can follow up with the person. We are implementing the Smart Intake tool at the Pathways for Change Family Center initially, and will expand out to other groups thereafter.

One Stop Life Shop is about coordinating the delivery of legal help with other services, all at one in-person event. Anyone can come to receive legal help and address court issues, housing, driver's licenses, financial care, and more. The services will be free, or at a reduced cost. The goal is for a person to come to one event, and get multiple problems solved (or at least started). The first One Stop Life Shop will be held on September 15, 9am-3pm at Pathways' Family Center.

We hope that you might be interested in partnering with us. That could mean:

- Informing your clients and community groups about these events,
- Attending these events yourselves, and if you are a service-provider, offering services at One Stop Life Shop
- If you are a lawyer, volunteering at Justice on the Block events, or using the Smart Intake tool to refer people to legal aid
- Becoming a Smart Intake partner, to help spot community members' legal problems and connect them with lawyers
- Other ideas you have for improving the community's access to legal help