

JusticeServer's Michigan Prototype a reflection of Legal Services Delivery in 2020

[Atlanta, Georgia, February 10, 2021] – In December 2020, TechBridge and the Michigan Advocacy Project realized the impact that a JusticeServer prototype might have on legal services and came together to create a “JusticeServer Michigan Prototype.” The prototype is a customized case management pro bono portal that legal services organizations in Michigan are eligible to adopt for more connected, efficient, and effective case management. This will make it easier for vulnerable people to gain representation and legal aid -- a need that has been grossly exacerbated since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Michigan League for Public Policy reports, “The state’s unemployment issues for working families has, in turn, had a significant impact on the other needs of parents and their kids. Around 15% of Michigan households with kids have reported ‘sometimes or often’ not having enough food to eat in the previous seven days. The same percentage of Michigan parents say they have ‘slight or no’ confidence in paying their next rent or mortgage payment on time.”¹¹ Michigan legal organizations can assist Michigan families by helping them receive state and federal benefits in areas like hunger, housing, and more.

The JusticeServer Michigan Prototype reflects the greatest technological needs facing the delivery of legal services today, according to TechBridge’s Social Justice Leader Samantha Sanchez. “Organizations providing legal services are like all social service organizations right now: the size of the populations needing them has exploded while the organizations are strapped for financial resources and are out of the office for employee safety. Technology can be the difference maker in allowing these organizations to safely deliver more services. The JusticeServer Michigan Prototype is going to update and improve client intake to get more people to the right place more quickly and accurately. It will enhance legal organizations’ ability to use volunteer attorneys to extend their reach and will allow them

to work collectively to ensure that as many Michiganders as possible are served with the legal help they need.”

Data collection is a crucial element that JusticeServer will help address with Michigan legal service organizations. The Michigan Prototype has over a dozen different requirements to ensure reporting needs are met. Whether it is reporting cases by outcome and impact or by providing dashboards fueled by underlying reports, the ability to track impact is critical for all nonprofit organizations. Michigan’s legal organizations will also use data collection to track attorneys’ continued legal education to ensure they have the most up-to-date and accurate knowledge possible to protect Michiganders’ rights, whether through direct representation, limited advice and counsel, or clinics.

“The fight for social justice is, indeed, complex, and it takes the concerted effort of multiple organizations to deliver quality services to those who need them most. TechBridge is proud to offer JusticeServer as a way for legal service organizations to begin to tackle this issue,” says Nicole Armstrong, CEO of TechBridge. The Michigan legal services organizations’ desire to work as a unified group aligns with TechBridge’s support of the collective impact model. The Council of Nonprofits defines collective impact as, “an intentional way of working together and sharing information for the purpose of solving a complex problem.” JusticeServer was originally developed to allow organizations to bring in more pro bono volunteerism in Virginia. Today, it assists many organizations including California’s Health Consumer Alliance and Eviction Defense Collaborative. TechBridge is honored to announce Michigan as our next collaborative and is thrilled to see the important, necessary work that can be accomplished through this partnership.

References:

<https://mlpp.org/michigan-data-show-families-with-children-struggling-during-covid-crisis-unemployment-impacting-other-areas-of-security-and-mental-health/>

About TechBridge

TechBridge is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization that equips other nonprofits on the frontline of alleviating the causes of generational poverty with technology. TechBridge supports these nonprofits in expanding the impact of their mission for the millions of men, women, and children who are seeking aid in the areas of hunger relief, homeless support, social justice, and workforce development.