

# The Court Navigator Program

NON-ATTORNEY ASSISTANCE WITHIN NEW YORK STATE COURTS



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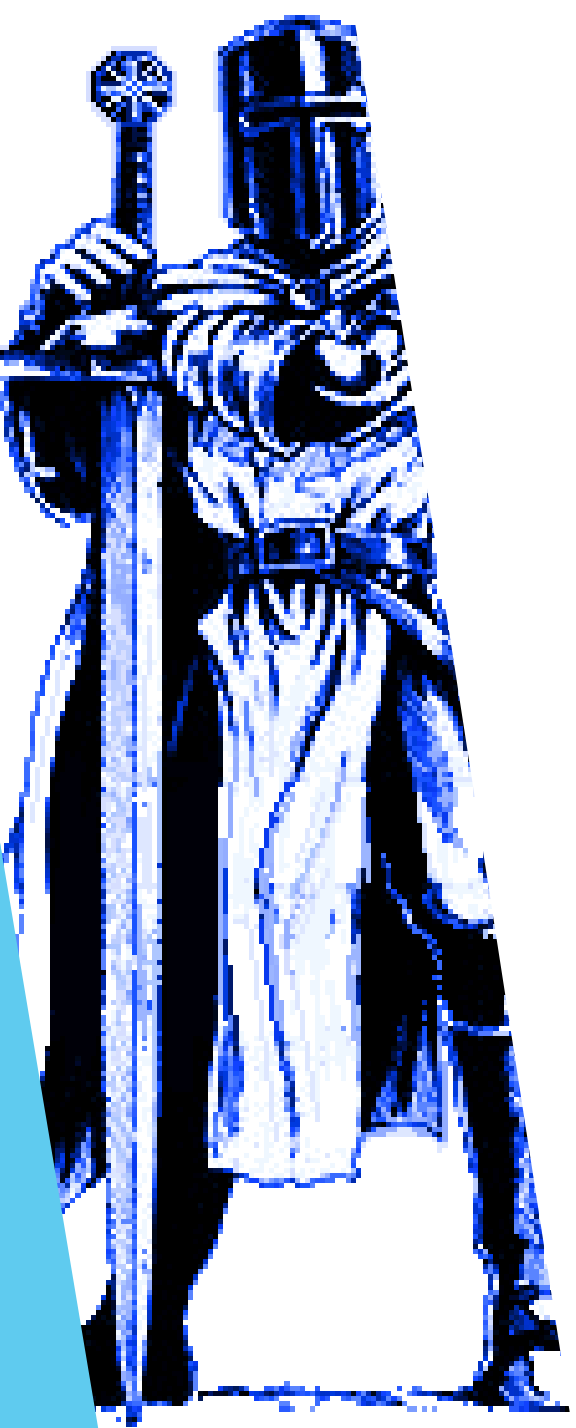
# What is the Court Navigator Program?

- ▶ Trains college students and other volunteers to assist unrepresented litigants during their court appearances.
- ▶ Currently operates in New York City Civil Court to assist people with nonpayment and consumer debt proceedings.
- ▶ Navigators provide moral support and guidance to unrepresented litigants on both sides of a case.

# How it Works: Day to Day Operations



- ▶ The program currently operates in Brooklyn, Bronx, Queens and Manhattan for Housing cases and in the Bronx for Consumer Debt cases
- ▶ Court Navigators sign in and receive a badge identifying them as a Court Navigator to litigants
- ▶ They then check in with the Court Navigator Coordinator in the courthouse.
  - ▶ The Coordinator informs the courtroom of the presence of the Navigators and what assistance they are able to provide.
  - ▶ The Coordinator also is there to answer any questions or concerns that arise during the day.
- ▶ Court Navigators approach and are approached by litigants seeking their assistance.
- ▶ Court Navigators sign out and return their badges.



# What Do Court Navigators Do?

- ▶ Guide litigants to appropriate resources available to them
- ▶ Help litigants check-in for their cases
- ▶ Explain the roles of the people in the courtroom
- ▶ Help litigants organize their paperwork and thoughts
- ▶ Provide moral support
- ▶ Sit in on conferences with the other side both in the courtroom and in the hallway during hallway negotiations
- ▶ Remind people of the issues most important to them when facing the other side
- ▶ Accompany litigants in the courtroom before the court attorney and the judge
- ▶ Help litigants complete court forms
- ▶ Assist with the Do-It-Yourself Forms on court computer terminals
- ▶ Report inappropriate behavior by the other side

# What Are The Benefits of the Court Navigator Program?



- ▶ Unrepresented litigants gain knowledge of court procedure and a greater understanding of the court process
- ▶ Empowers unrepresented litigants with their court cases
- ▶ Unrepresented litigants learn where to go in the courthouse and beyond to get the information and services they need in their court cases

# Looking Forward

- ▶ Integration of technology with the Navigator's Compass
  - ▶ A smartphone app
    - ▶ Currently in development with Georgetown University Law Center's Technology Innovation and Law Practicum
    - ▶ Created in partnership with LAWNY, Pro Bono Net & Legal Services NYC
- ▶ Expansion and Replication
  - ▶ Similar programs are being replicated in other jurisdictions across the country and worldwide
  - ▶ Planning to expand to other New York City courts in the near future.



Please See the Evaluation of the Program  
Conducted by the American Bar Foundation,  
Public Welfare Foundation and  
National Center for State Courts  
for More Information:

<http://www.americanbarfoundation.org/research/summary/29>



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