

Perspectives of Blind Attorneys in North Carolina

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Sponsored by the North Carolina Administrative Office of the Courts (NCAOC)

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Moderator

- Patricia Shields, Hedrick Gardner Kincheloe & Garofalo LLP

Panelists

- Derek Dittmar, Hedrick Gardner Kincheloe & Garofalo LLP
- J. Locke Milholland IV, North Carolina Department of Justice
- Elizabeth Troutman, Brooks, Pierce, McLendon, Humphrey & Leonard, LLP

Description

This presentation is designed to expand awareness of the experiences, capabilities, perspectives, and accommodation practices of persons with visual impairments in relation to the North Carolina state courts. Viewers will gain an understanding of the types of accommodations, technological developments, and other practices available to better accommodate members of the blind community as they engage with the justice system. Topics include areas where blind persons may need accommodations, best practices for communicating with and assisting members of the blind community, and personal experiences of blind North Carolina attorneys.

Best practices for engaging with a member of the visually impaired or blind community

- Introduce yourself – “This is Jane Smith.”
- Offer to help, but do not insist on helping.
- Speak to the person, rather than to their companion, assistant, or service animal.
- Never grab or touch a blind person without consent, including taking their hand to guide or moving their items. Offer verbal directions instead.
- Offer documents in an electronic and searchable accessible format ahead of time.
- Ensure that your web offerings are accessible, for example by ensuring they comply with the most recent version of the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines.
- Do not interact with the persons guide or service animal unless you are given specific consent.
- Be curious about accessible technology but try not to interrupt a blind or visually impaired person at inappropriate times (E.G., while they are actively working).

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“It is okay not to know, but it is not okay not to care.”