Jumping Aboard the Blockchain: What Lies Ahead for “Smart Contracts”?

By JON GORDON and JESSE WELSH-KEYSER

It is hard to open a newspaper, see tech company ads, or read a professional trade publication without encountering references to blockchain or cryptocurrency. While you may have read about Bitcoin, Ethereum, Litecoin, etc., you may be asking the question, “Why? What is all the hype about?” The answer lies in the technology introduced by blockchain and its applications.

Blockchain is the technology on which cryptocurrencies like Bitcoin and Ethereum are built. A blockchain is an open, distributed database of information and transactions that is continuously reconciled. Over time, the blockchain protocol has become an essential technology for many industries, such as financial services, health care, and supply chain management.

Blockchain technology offers a decentralized, tamper-proof ledger that allows for secure, transparent, and efficient record-keeping. This technology can be used to create smart contracts, which are self-executing programs that automatically execute when certain conditions are met. Smart contracts can be used to automate a wide range of processes, from buying and selling assets to providing legal and financial services.

In the world of commercial contracts, blockchain technology offers a potentially transformative approach to creating and enforcing contracts. With blockchain, smart contracts can be coded to automatically execute when certain conditions are met, providing a new level of transparency and efficiency.

Current IJP attorneys are experienced criminal defense attorneys who have extensive juvenile and adult trial experience. Those attorneys who wish to join IJP must complete a specific curriculum designed to insure competence in the juvenile delinquency system. Additionally, IJP hosts brown bag/half-hour for attorneys new to the program, and provides ongoing training and real-time support.

Los Angeles County Bar Association Establishes Independent Juvenile Defender Program

The Los Angeles County Bar Association (LACBA), one of the largest voluntary metropolitan bar associations in the country, has established the LACBA Independent Juvenile Defender Program (IJP) in partnership with Los Angeles County to provide legal services to youth charged with crimes in the Los Angeles County juvenile delinquency system.

We are extremely pleased to work with the Los Angeles County Bar Association to create the Independent Juvenile Defender Program. This innovative approach will provide a wide range of social welfare and legal services, with the goal of reducing recidivism among juvenile offenders,” said LACBA President Margaret P. Stevens.

IJP’s dedicated attorneys, Cory Yamashiro, said, “We are implementing a best-practices and holistic model of representing youth. LACBA Independent Juvenile Defender Program integrates psychological and familial assessments to identify the core reasons the minor has come into contact with the juvenile justice system. In addition, IJP provides our attorneys with ancillary resources to support their clients, including social workers, investigators, and appellate support, and academic and entitlement advocacy.”

“Before IJP appointed counsel was required to provide all ancillary resources from a single fee awarded by the court, approximately $350. Further, the attorneys had to petition the courts for funds to provide their clients with social workers, investigations, and appellate counsel. Now, these resources are readily available to them through our program,” Yamashiro adds.

IJP attorneys are available on site daily at each of the eight Juvenile Delinquency Divisions of the Los Angeles Superior Court—Compton, Eastlake, Inglewood, Lancaster, Long Beach, Los Padinos, Pomona, and Sylmar. In instances where both the Public Defender and Alternate Public Defender are conflicted out of a case, IJP attorneys will represent the juvenile defendant.

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Prior to accepting the appointment as directing attorney, Yamashiro was a professor and founding executive director of the Center for Juvenile Law and Policy at Loyola Law School, where he established the first juvenile delinquency policy and defense legal clinic and taught classes in advanced criminal litigation skills, juvenile law, and trial advocacy.

An experienced criminal trial attorney, Yamashiro had his own criminal defense practice and served as a Los Angeles County Deputy Public Defender. He has tried 52 cases to jury and litigated over 200 bench trials in municipal, juvenile, and superior court. L.A. County Superior Mark Bailey Thomas appointed Yamashiro to the Los Angeles County Probation Commission, where he served as president for two years. Yamashiro leads an in-house staff of eight, including:

• A staff attorney to answer practice questions and provide written legal support for attorneys and file writs on behalf of IJP clients;

• A resource attorney to provide attorneys support on entitlement issues ranging from academic support to mental health services and foster care, in addition to carrying his own caseload;

• A social worker to prepare psycho-social assessments of youth and their families for use in developing the duty and disposition stages of cases, and to oversee a network of juvenile-specific social workers to provide support for IJP clients;

• An investigator who carries his own case load and coordinates a network of investigators who are juvenile specialists.

Yamashiro estimates IJP will handle up to 2,000 cases per year.

Attorneys who are interested in joining IJP should contact Tracy Ansbacher at tandale@lacha.org or (213) 896-6429.

L.A. County Bar Association Establishes Independent Juvenile Defender Program

Jesse Welsh-Keyser

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