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www.brlls.org

October 15, 2010

Michael Genz, Program Counsel
 Legal Services Corporation
 3333 K Street, NW 3rd Floor
 Washington, DC 20007-3522

**Re: Blue Ridge Legal Services Program Quality Visit Draft Report
 Recipient # 447081**

Dear Mr. Genz:

I am writing to officially acknowledge receipt of the Legal Services Corporation's Draft Report from its visit by the Office of Program Performance of Blue Ridge Legal Services in July, and to provide a number of minor suggestions for revision to the report to clarify certain facts.

Before addressing the content of the draft report, however, I thank you and the other members of your team, Willie Abrams and Carolyn Worrell, for your pleasant professionalism and friendly interaction with our staff and Board. It has been a genuine pleasure to work with each of you throughout the course of this review process.

The Draft Report is very well done. It is generous in its discussion of our program's strengths, and it is restrained and extremely fair in its discussion of our program's weaknesses and areas for improvement. It is thorough, accurate and helpful in its findings and recommendations. I have shared and discussed its contents with our staff and Board, and there was widespread agreement that the Draft Report was a fair, thorough, and accurate assessment.

As requested, I have reviewed the Draft Report for any factual inaccuracies. I also requested that our staff and Board do likewise and forward any proposed suggestions for revision to me. I am setting the few suggestions I discerned or received from others below. It is a tribute to your team's careful work and attention to detail that there were so few minor possible errors in such a detailed description of our program. All of the suggested revisions are essentially inconsequential, not at all questioning the validity of the Draft Report's findings and recommendations. They are so minor I hesitate to bother to send them to you, except that I know you would prefer your final product to be entirely accurate.



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The suggestions for revision/correction follow.

- On page 2, under “Program overview,” line 3: “Maryland line” should read “West Virginia panhandle”. I am certain this mistake in fact derived from my own description of our service area that I provided the team and reflects my apparent ignorance of the geography of the northern Shenandoah Valley. Our Winchester office managing attorney pointed out this error to me.
- On page 7 there is a discussion of the use of questionnaires in the intake process, and a suggestion that these may be a source of unnecessary delay for folks applying for our services. In Harrisonburg, we do use questionnaires in the intake process for certain types of legal problems. However, our intake paralegal (and college students who assist her) actually take this information from the clients over the phone and fill in the questionnaires as part of the intake process, so that it really does not delay the clients’ progress at all. In Winchester and Roanoke, the questionnaires are used for non-emergency bankruptcies and divorces. In these situations, they are mailed to the clients to complete and return.
- On page 8, in the fourth full paragraph, the first sentence should include not only Harrisonburg and Lexington, but the Winchester office as well. Our Winchester office managing attorney assures me that they do in fact hold weekly case acceptance meetings where the decision is made whether to take a case. She also asks that the second sentence of that paragraph therefore be deleted, as it is incorrect.
- Continuing in correcting that apparent misunderstanding, the last sentence in the fifth full paragraph on page 8 should be revised to read as follows: “And, as noted above, in Winchester, cases are initially assigned at the time of application but may be reassigned at the weekly case acceptance meeting.”
- On page 10, in the second full paragraph, there is a reference to a “bilingual social worker.” There was a concern voiced that this might lead the reader to believe that the bilingual social worker was a BRLS employee. To be clear, it might be helpful to add “...who works for a local domestic violence shelter.”
- On page 12, in the second full paragraph, the sentence that reads “The meetings in Winchester are not used to make case handling decisions” should be deleted, we believe, for the reasons stated previously.
- On page 13, under Finding 12, the first bullet point, the statement “the cases were subsequently settled” is not entirely accurate. Some of the cases have settled, but there are a few that are still pending, awaiting the result of the pending Virginia Supreme Court case our *pro bono* attorney is handling.

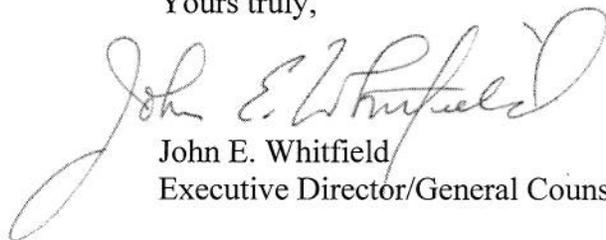
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- On page 19, quite a number of staff protested that the bald assertion that “[t]he program does not have a plan for the continuation of operations in the event of a disaster” totally overlooked our staff’s innovative contribution to the state of the art in zombie attack disaster planning.
 - On page 21, on line 4, “8:15” should read “8:30.”
 - Also on page 21, under Finding 22, in the third paragraph, “foreclosure/consumer” should be changed to “eviction/consumer” and “annual board campaign” changed to “annual attorney campaign.”

Like I said above, none of these suggested changes affects the Draft Report’s findings and recommendations in any way and are essentially inconsequential. However, they would remove all factual inaccuracies that we could identify (or will admit to).

If you have any questions regarding these suggested revisions, please feel free to contact me. We look forward to receiving a copy of the final report.

With kindest regards, I remain

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "John E. Whitfield". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the printed name and title.

John E. Whitfield
Executive Director/General Counsel