



**Legal Services Corporation  
Office of Program Performance**

**FINAL**  
Report from the  
Program Quality Visit  
to  
Southeast Louisiana Legal Services

Recipient No. 619081

December 6 - 10, 2010

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## **INTRODUCTION**

During the week of December 6 – 10, 2010, the Legal Services Corporation's (LSC) Office of Program Performance (OPP) conducted an on-site Program Quality Visit to Southeast Louisiana Legal Services (SLLS). The purpose of the visit was to assess the quality of SLLS's legal work and

its management, administrative, and legal work systems. The LSC team consisted of three LSC program counsel, three temporary employees and one College of Law Practice Management fellow.

Through its Program Quality Visits, OPP seeks to ensure that LSC grantees are providing the highest quality legal services to eligible clients. In performing its evaluation of the grantee's delivery system, OPP relies on the LSC Act and regulations, LSC Performance Criteria, LSC Program Letters, and the ABA Standards for the Provision of Civil Legal Aid. The team considered SLLS's narrative submitted in the 2011 competition cycle, case and other services reports, and other reports or documents submitted by SLLS to LSC over the past year. As a part of the assessment of program quality, the OPP team reviewed numerous documents submitted by SLLS in advance of the visit, including a survey of staff and writing samples submitted by advocates. OPP's assessment considered: SLLS's service delivery model, needs assessment and priorities, internal and external program evaluations, accessibility to clients and low-income populations, office and staffing structure, intake system, outreach to low income populations, engagement with low income populations, language access, legal work management and supervision systems, quality and quantity of legal work, experience and reputation, staff training, private attorney involvement, use of technology, program administrative structure and systems, management structure, board governance, leadership, resource development, strategic planning, and coordination within the Louisiana statewide delivery system.

During the course of the on-site visit, the team interviewed the program's executive directors, executive administrative and management staff, the program's legal and non-legal staff, and client and attorney board members. The team visited all four of the program's offices—Covington, Hammond, Marrero, and New Orleans. At the conclusion of the on-site visit, the team conducted an exit conference with the executive directors and the program's board president to share the team's preliminary observations regarding the program's strengths, challenges, and opportunities for improvement.

## **OVERVIEW OF PROGRAM AND SERVICE AREA**

SLLS is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation organized to provide free civil legal assistance to low-income and disadvantaged persons in the state of Louisiana. It has staffed offices in the cities of Hammond, New Orleans, Covington, and Marrero. The Hammond and Covington offices are referred to as the "north shore," while the offices in New Orleans and Marrero are referred to as the "south shore." In its present form, SLLS is the result of a 2003 merger with New Orleans Legal Assistance (NOLAC); both SLLS and NOLAC were LSC grantees at the time of the merger.

The service area contains 5,443 square miles and is comprised of ten parishes<sup>1</sup> in southeast Louisiana. At the time of the 2000 Census, the service area contained a total population of 1,489,076 and a poverty population of 275,265 persons (18.5% of the area's total population), which is consistent with the state's poverty ratio, but far greater than the concentration of persons living below the poverty line in the nation as a whole (12.7%). The

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<sup>1</sup> The service area is designated LA-12 and includes the following parishes: Jefferson, Livingston, Orleans, Plaquemines, St. Bernard, St. Charles, St. Helena, St. Tammany, Tangipahoa, and Washington.

2000 census ranked Louisiana number one for the percentage of persons living below the poverty line.

On August 29, 2005, Hurricane Katrina struck New Orleans and most of the SLLS service area with 145 mph winds. Eighty percent (80%) of New Orleans flooded after passage of Hurricane Katrina and six of the service area's 10 parishes were devastated. Katrina was the most destructive and costliest natural disaster in the history of the nation.

Less than a month after Katrina, the area was hit by Hurricane Rita and portions of SLLS service area were again flooded. Three years later, while the Katrina/Rita clean-up was still ongoing, Louisiana was again hit with back to back storms hit in the form of Hurricanes Gustav and Ike.

Since 2000, the population of New Orleans shrank by 140,845 persons, resulting in thousands of abandoned homes, commercial and institutional buildings. In 2010, the Census counted 47,738 vacant homes across the city. New Orleans is now a smaller city, having lost 118,526 African Americans and 24,101 whites since 2000, while gaining 3,225 Hispanics. Indeed the entire seven-parish metro area is more diverse with an influx of fully 33,500 Hispanics and 3,000 additional Asian residents. Housing units have decreased in the most heavily flood-damaged parishes and increased in outlying parishes, while vacant housing units have increased in every parish across the metropolitan area. Children under 18 were among the least likely to return after Katrina, representing only 23 percent of the total metro population, down from 27 percent in 2000.

## **SUMMARY**

SLLS is led by two effective executive directors with strong management capabilities. The board and staff understand and share the mission of the program. The board expressed the greatest of confidence in the executive directors, the program's administrative and support staff, and the program's advocates. The board of directors provides appropriate oversight, support and leadership. Board members are actively engaged in significant policy decisions.

SLLS has made significant progress in rebuilding its organizational and staff capacity following the devastation wrought by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita in 2005 and the other storms in succeeding years. The locations of program's four offices are appropriate. However, the current structure of the program's intake systems is a potential significant challenge that could adversely affect client access and the overall effectiveness of the program's delivery strategies.

The program adheres to practices and procedures that produce effective and high quality advocacy and representation of clients. The program has a diverse advocate staff of mixed experience. SLLS provides reasonable training to its staff appropriate to their functions and responsibilities. The program's CSRs are reasonable, both as to the number of cases closed and the distribution of closed cases by subject matter.

SLLS's private attorney involvement (PAI) efforts are reasonable. The program satisfies its PAI requirement through a variety of approaches, including Judicare, contract attorneys, a pro

bono subgrant in New Orleans, and an in-house pro bono program in Covington to augment the work of staff. PAI is an integral part of the program's work. The executive director for program operations is responsible for overall PAI supervision.

Within the constraints of the program's current financial and staffing resources, the delivery structure is reasonably coherent. SLLS is an active and respected leader in the state justice community.

## FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

**PERFORMANCE AREA ONE.** *Effectiveness in identifying the most pressing civil legal needs of low-income people in the service area and targeting resources to address those needs.*

**Criteria 1 and 2.** Periodic comprehensive assessment and ongoing consideration of legal needs, setting goals and objectives, developing strategies, and allocating resources.

**Finding 1:** SLLS is thoroughly aware of the service area's critical legal needs and is flexible and responsive to major new needs that emerge or develop between formal needs assessments.

SLLS's last legal needs assessment was completed in June 2007. The program relied on telephonic, in-person, and written survey responses from present and former clients, social services organizations, the courts, other legal services providers, the private bar, the program's board and staff. The survey instrument asked respondents to rank 58 civil legal problems in terms of how important it is for the program to handle cases related to each problem, how frequently respondents have encountered each problem, and the severity of problems encountered.

SLLS obtained input from all major segments of the service area's low-income population. Telephonic and in-person surveys were administered in Spanish and Vietnamese. SLLS participated in Spanish outreach fairs and there were focus group meetings with Hispanic and Vietnamese clients. It partnered with the national Asian American Bar Association and Boat People SOS. As part of a 60 agency network, SLLS's staff and partners informed the program of the critical legal needs of the homeless. To supplement census and socio-economic data, SLLS obtained hard to come by demographic data by using creative sources such as post-Katrina post office and school enrollment figures.

SLLS's adjustments in delivery strategies, legal advocacy, and collaborations with the judiciary, the private bar, law schools and law students, regional and national law firms, pro bono lawyers, and other legal and non-legal public interest organizations following Hurricanes Katrina and Rita are recognized as major accomplishments in civil legal aid and equal justice lore. As new legal needs emerged from the aftermath of the 2005 hurricanes, SLLS adjusted its case acceptance policies to meet the new developments and sought out appropriate partners at the local state, regional and national levels.

Following the April 20, 2010 explosion on the Deepwater Horizon drilling rig in Gulf of Mexico, SLLS joined with other LSC and non-LSC funded civil legal aid providers in Louisiana,

Mississippi, Alabama, and Florida (hereafter, Gulf States coalition) to begin developing a response to anticipated legal needs in the aftermath of the Gulf oil spill. Led by the Mississippi Justice Center, the Gulf States coalition submitted a proposal to the Gulf Coast Claims Facility, directed by attorney Ken Feinberg. The proposal was successfully funded with SLLS as the lead agency in Louisiana.

**Finding 2: SLLS has adopted legal priorities that are sufficiently broad to address the most pressing legal needs of the low-income population in the service area.**

Following the needs assessment, SLLS staff from the program’s various substantive law units analyzed the results of the surveys, the focus group meetings, other community meetings and interviews, available census reports, and other obtainable demographic data to develop a report for consideration by the board of directors. This analytical process was led by the director of program services.<sup>2</sup> Based on the needs assessment report by staff and program management, the SLLS board adopted broad program priorities.

The adopted priorities are reviewed by the board of directors annually and reflect the availability of other providers and resources available to low-income persons in the service area. Through regular communication and liaison with community organizations, social service agencies, state and local government agencies, the judiciary, bar associations, state justice partners, and the area’s law schools, SLLS receives constant feedback on its delivery strategy and learns of new and emerging needs.

**Finding 3: SLLS is ready to undertake a formal strategic planning process to ensure the continued growth, stability, and viability of the program as a responsive and valued institution for justice in service area and state.**

While SLLS has engaged in a variety of excellent planning activities<sup>3</sup> prior to and since the 2003 merger, none of the previous planning constitutes formal strategic planning. The program’s disaster recovery and capacity building activities during the first 24 months following Hurricanes Katrina and Rita are particularly noteworthy. At the November 2007 NLADA Annual Conference, the SLLS director for program services participated in a capacity building session and presented an excellent paper entitled, “Rebuilding Capacity After a Catastrophic Disaster—Starting Over from Katrina’s Ground Zero.” In the immediate aftermath of the hurricanes, SLLS appropriately delayed formal strategic planning in view of the unprecedented and overwhelming demands on the program generated by the storms.

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<sup>2</sup> SLLS is led by two executive directors. One has the title “executive director for program operations” and the other “executive director for program services.” As discussed below under Performance Area Four, this management/leadership structure does not present any significant issues.

<sup>3</sup> These include state justice community planning, merger and reconfiguration planning, business planning, program planning, project planning, disaster planning, organizational capacity building, technology planning, and resource development planning.

During the on-site visit, the SLLS directors indicated that the time has come for the program to begin a significant transition from an intense focus on recovery from Katrina as the effects and vestiges of the current economic downturn in the national and state economies comprise the new reality of the service area. As a result, SLLS plans to launch a strategic planning process in 2011.<sup>4</sup>

We agree that the time has come for SLLS to engage in strategic planning to provide major direction for the program in the face of the rapidly changing service area, especially as to the future focus of the program's work on behalf of clients and low-income communities. It is expected that SLLS's planning will result in a written plan with measurable outcomes and that it will address, among other things, the coordination of activities with appropriate partners and supporters. And, of course, an effective evaluation of the program's operations and outcome measures for clients should also be included.

The SLLS directors recognize that it is critical that the board and staff be involved in the planning effort. Input from other stakeholders and the client community should be sought although their on-going involvement in the planning process may not be warranted or necessary. Because of the time commitment involved, some programs have found that it may be preferable to involve a committee of board members, which includes client board members, in the actual planning process with the final plan going to the full board for approval. In any case, the final plan should be a document that the SLLS board and staff take ownership of and are prepared to implement.

Information on strategic planning may be found on the LSC online library website at [www.lri.lsc.gov](http://www.lri.lsc.gov) and on the Management Assistance Program for Non-Profits' sites at [www.mapfornonprofits.org](http://www.mapfornonprofits.org) or [www.managementhelp.org](http://www.managementhelp.org).

**Recommendation:<sup>5</sup>**

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<sup>4</sup> The list of items for consideration during the strategic planning process include the following: 1. Maintaining SLLS's core capacities; 2. Multi-faceted advocacy (including direct services, impact litigation, policy advocacy, media advocacy, pro se assistance, and community legal education); and 3. New projects or strengths to be developed within the next one to two years, such as: a) Restoring staff in the Consumer Unit and Marrero office; b) Adding an attorney to the Tax Law Clinic or develop greater pro bono support; c) Expanding the Children's Law Project beyond child in need of care cases; d) Securing funding for title clearing project in partnership with Pro Bono Project and Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law; e) Developing attorney support for VISTA volunteers' BP Oil Spill disaster work and expand presence in affected communities; f) Securing funding for a social worker or paralegal to work on initial applications for benefits, primarily for the homeless, and to train other agencies' staff on initial application assistance (based on SOAR model, where S=SSD/SSI; O=Outreach; A=Access; and R=Recovery); g) Creating a specialized unit, staffed by a Spanish speaking attorney and support staff person, to specialize in problems faced by Spanish speaking clients; developing liaisons with Spanish speaking community, and more fully utilizing SLLS's current Spanish speaking attorney staff; and h) Continuing SLLS's work in pro se assistance on bar and Supreme Court committees, online pro se pleadings, developing web video on self representation in certain family law matters.

<sup>5</sup> In this report, recommendations are numbered as follows: The Roman numeral references the Performance Area followed by the Criterion number, the finding number, and lastly the recommendation number that pertains to the particular finding. There are two levels of recommendations in this report. Recommendations that are indicated

**I.2.3.1.\*** SLLS should undertake a planned program-wide strategic planning process to ensure the continued growth, stability, and viability of the program as a responsive and valued legal institution in the service area and state.

**Criteria 3 and 4. Implementation, evaluation, and adjustment of the program’s work.**

**Finding 4: While SLLS envisions a dynamic process for implementing its priorities, the program needs to improve the evaluation of its delivery strategies and provide more guidance to its advocates on addressing the choices and triage compelled by limited resources.**

To implement its adopted priorities, SLLS has established a list of cases it intends to address and the goals and objectives it will strive to achieve by addressing the legal problems identified.<sup>6</sup> An overwhelming majority of the program’s advocates are organized into specialty units and they all are keenly aware of the program’s broad priorities. In addition, SLLS has developed a list of the “common case types accepted” by each office and specialty unit. This list, however, does not amount to formal case acceptance guidelines or a triage system that addresses the prioritization within the broad priority categories.

The need for clear case acceptance criteria becomes even more important in view of the fact that demands for assistance far outstrip the program’s staffing and fiscal resources. Further, as we discuss under Performance Area Three below, because advocates’ caseloads are extremely high, the risk of missed opportunities for systemic work is a real danger, especially in the New Orleans office where demands for assistance are most acute.

**Finding 5: While SLLS has a history of analyzing and evaluating the effectiveness of its delivery strategies and work, there is some evidence that its internal evaluation process does not focus sufficiently on the results actually achieved compared with the outcomes originally intended.**

SLLS has a history of analyzing and evaluating the effectiveness of its delivery strategies and work. For example, in 2009 the program designed and conducted a 35 question Attorney Survey for the internal evaluation of its legal work and advocacy. While the SLLS internal evaluation instrument asks many good questions, it fails to get at the comparison of results

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with an asterisk are Level One recommendations and are intended to have a direct and major impact on program quality. In SLLS's next grant renewal and/or competitive grant application, the program will be required to report what actions or activities, if any, SLLS has undertaken in response to Level One Recommendations instead of submitting a full grant renewal or competitive grant application narrative.

<sup>6</sup> For example, under helping "low-income people have a decent place to live/protect housing rights," SLLS handles cases involving but not limited to landlord-tenant evictions, unlawful lockouts, predatory loans, home foreclosure, bankruptcy, subsidized housing terminations, housing discrimination disability or familial status, housing opportunities for the homeless, housing options for domestic violence victims and welfare-to-work clients, SSI and social security disability benefits for homeless persons, disaster recovery funds and related grant applications, home repairs, probate and successions, and boundary actions.

actually achieved in the program's work and the outcomes "originally intended", as recommended by the *LSC Performance Criteria* as a best practice.

While program staff, bar associations, and community organization representatives all report that SLLS has a reputation for providing excellent services and for treating clients with dignity and respect, client satisfaction surveys are conducted only sporadically. Unanimous or near unanimous reports of satisfaction from clients and other knowledgeable persons in the community do not eliminate the need for future client satisfaction surveys. In remedying this omission, SLLS should consult Standard 2.11 (On Provider Evaluation) of the *ABA Standards for the Provision of Civil Legal Aid*.

Even though current program practices do not fully reflect the *LSC Performance Criteria* best practices, we note that the on-site visit did not reveal any actual instances where the program or its advocates failed to change goals, objectives, strategies, or legal assistance activity in the face of direct information or relevant facts warranting an adjustment. The potential weakness is significant enough, however, for our raising it here.

### **Recommendations:**

**I.3.4.1.\*** SLLS should provide more guidance to its advocates by formally establishing case acceptance criteria within each broad priority category based on, among other things, each specialty unit's strategic goals and available program resources, to help advocates focus more effectively on clients' most pressing legal needs. Further, the case acceptance criteria<sup>7</sup> should be broadly publicized to the client communities, community organizations, social service agencies, and other partners to help direct the program's intake processes.

**I.3.4.2.** Each of SLLS's specialty units should consider adopting one or two strategic goals for the coming year based on identified needs in the service area and develop an advocacy plan to accomplish the adopted goals.

**I.4.5.1.** SLLS should amend its internal evaluation instruments to ensure that a comparison of "the results actually achieved with the outcomes originally intended" is a significant element of the program's critical self-evaluation process.

**I.4.5.2.** SLLS should begin using client satisfaction surveys on a regular basis to confirm that its clients are treated with dignity and respect, are being kept informed and properly consulted regarding the conduct of the representation, and are satisfied with the outcome in their cases.

## **PERFORMANCE AREA TWO. *Effectiveness in engaging and serving the low-income population throughout the service area.***

### **Criterion 1. Dignity and sensitivity.**

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<sup>7</sup> The case acceptance criteria should also address the level of services that will be offered in certain specified cases (i.e., what issues will be addressed by advice and/or brief service vs. extended representation).

**Finding 6: SLLS's intake procedures differ from office to office, within offices, and from specialty unit to specialty unit. In the New Orleans office, applicants are screened at first contact and again at an in-office intake appointment stage. And, with the exception of LCJC and the New Orleans office's public benefits intake, advice and brief service are not provided prior to an in-office appointment with an advocate.**

As a general matter, intake throughout the program is mostly handled as an open door policy, and most clients are initially seen as walk-ins. There are varying schedules in each office and specialty law units within an office. Some units limit the number of appointments per day, others see all comers. Applicants make initial contact with the program by telephone or walk in. In the New Orleans office, applicants generally undergo a double screening process--one at the first contact, whether walk-in or by telephone, and a second when they come into the office for a substantive intake interview. For the second screening, New Orleans applicants first complete a written application and then meet with an intake screener before seeing an advocate for a substantive interview where advice and counsel may be provided. As we explain below, there is some variation of this process by specialty unit.

Toll free numbers are available for all offices. The New Orleans office does outreach at 13 sites and makes about 38 outreach visits per month. The Marrero office conducts outreach intake in St. Charles Parish each week. The program has experimented with providing applications for assistance over the Internet, but only a very small number of intakes have been received.

#### New Orleans Office

Legal work and advocacy in the New Orleans office are organized by specialty units<sup>8</sup> and, as a result, the office's intake is organized around the specialization. Intake varies based on a unit's staffing levels and scheduling and the program has minimal written intake procedures.

When intake is fully open, one specialty unit or another in the New Orleans office does intake 8:30 a.m. – 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. Generally, applicants are routed to the secretary or administrative assistant for the specialty unit handling the kind of problem presented. The secretary screens the applicant for financial eligibility, case priority, and emergency.

#### *Consumer Law Intake*

The consumer law unit conducts intake on Mondays and Wednesdays. There are 3 to 4 intake slots on each intake day. In addition, the unit sees all emergency walk-in clients every day. At the time of the early December visit, future intake slots for the unit were filled through May 2011. In recent years, the unit has done foreclosures, bankruptcies, consumer collections

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<sup>8</sup> These include family, consumer, housing, public benefits, foreclosure, homeless advocacy, low-income tax clinic, medical-legal partnership.

work, home repair contractor work and student loans. The unit handles fewer cases now because it is so small.

### *Housing Law Intake*

For the housing law unit, walk-in intake is scheduled from 8:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday, and applicants are assigned a specific intake slot. We were told that the housing unit averages 9 to 10 applicants each day. If a non-emergency housing law applicant walks in without an appointment, the specialty unit's secretary will assess eligibility and, if available, the housing paralegal will speak to the walk-in and provide basic counsel and advice. The walk-in could also see the duty attorney if she is available. Although there is technically no formal specialization within the housing unit, each attorney tends to cover more of one area. For example, one staff attorney handles most of the public housing authority cases. He is on intake two days each month in the New Orleans office and does outreach once a week at one of the offices for the Housing Authority of New Orleans.

### *Homeless Advocacy Intake*

Applicants for the Homeless Advocacy Project can access the program by telephone by calling the program's main number. The receptionist transfers calls to the project's paralegal for screening. Emergency cases are routed to the managing attorney or the project's staff attorney. Non-emergency applicants are given the date of the next walk-in intake day. Walk-in intake is conducted on the first and third Wednesday of each month from noon to 5:00 pm Applicants are not given a specific appointment time; they are seen on a first come-first served basis. The maximum number of applicants scheduled for a particular intake day is ten.

### *Family Law/DV Intake*

The family law unit receives domestic violence cases from the Family Justice Center (FJC) – a partnering organization in which SLLS is active with Catholic Charities and other civil legal aid providers.<sup>9</sup> The FJC transmits referral forms, with conflict check information, to SLLS. If there is no conflict, the DV advocates contact applicants directly, complete the intake, set up an appointment, and explain the paper work for the protective order process.

### *Children in Need of Care (CINC) Intake*

The *Child in Need of Care (CINC) Project* is a new SLLS resource that provides legal assistance to children who are the subjects of child abuse or neglect proceedings. There is a right to counsel for these children and all of the LSC grantees in the state were asked by the state to take on this representation because of substantial dissatisfaction with the prior system of using private attorneys. The SLLS grant covers three parishes and one city court in a fourth parish. Intake and case acceptance are relatively straightforward because the cases are assigned to SLLS dedicated staff directly by the court. No LSC funds are used to support these cases.

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<sup>9</sup> A protocol has been developed as to which cases each participating organization will take. In the future, SLLS and the other legal providers will house staff in the Family Justice Center.

### *Employment and Public Benefits Intake*

The public benefits and employment unit conducts intake in the New Orleans office as well as the Tulane Community Health Clinic. Although there is a weekly case acceptance meeting, each advocate usually keeps the new cases for which they completed the intake interview. This unit is unique to the extent its advocates provide telephone advice without requiring an in-office interview as a matter of course.

### *Louisiana Civil Justice Center (LCJC)*

#### *--Telephone Intake, Advice/Brief Service, and Referral*

Louisiana Civil Justice Center (LCJC)<sup>10</sup> performs telephone intake for SLLS's Covington and New Orleans offices in the area of family law only. LCJC also screens the applicants for the Covington and New Orleans pro se divorce clinics.<sup>11</sup> The LCJC intake hours are Mondays through Thursdays, from 10:00 am to 5:00 pm. There are no evening or weekend telephone intake hours. LCJC lacks the capability to perform conflict checks for the Covington office, instead adverse parties and other information are emailed to that office for SLLS staff to perform the conflict check and email results back to LCJC. In case of emergencies, LCJC may telephone the office for conflict checks. The Covington office sends a monthly report to LCJC on disposition of the completed intakes with comments regarding the quality of work performed by the LCJC intake staff. This feedback is used by LCJC for its own in-house training of intake staff.

LCJC provides advice, counsel and brief service in family law cases not needing extended representation. These cases are not counted in SLLS's CSRs to LSC. The stated goal for LCJC is that it should become the statewide civil legal aid intake portal. In this regard, LCJC is a work-in-progress and much work remains to be done.

In theory, a central feature of the plan for the LCJC telephone intake<sup>12</sup> is a transfer system that allows LCJC to direct an intake for review/acceptance/rejection to a particular civil

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<sup>10</sup> LCJC was founded in 2006 by the Louisiana State Bar Association to, among other things, "institute and maintain legal aid facilities for the indigent and to facilitate the provision of pro bono and low fee legal services to the poor, distressed and underprivileged in the State of Louisiana, with priority given to victims of natural disasters such as Hurricane Katrina and Hurricane Rita. The Louisiana State justice community considers LCJC a major component of its disaster response plan; if another major natural disaster strikes Louisiana, LCJC will become a disaster hotline already in place. In addition to SLLS, during 2010 LCJC also conducted telephone intake for Capital Area Legal Services; the telephone intake did not include advice and brief services.

<sup>11</sup> The pro se divorce clinics are conducted in the Covington and Hammond offices during regular business hours. Using a non-traditional strategy, the clinic presentations are conducted one-on-one. In 2011, the pro se divorce clinics will expand to include the New Orleans office.

<sup>12</sup> In part, the LCJC telephone intake project was facilitated by the LSC Technology Innovation Grant (TIG) made to SLLS in 2005 for conversion to a uniform case management system (CMS) by the LSC grantee programs and other civil legal aid providers and partners in Louisiana. Subsequently, the Louisiana CMS partnering organizations decided to adopt Kemps Prime as the state's uniform case management system.

legal aid provider's office. The system is supposed to work as follows: When LCJC sends the transfer, a file is stored in a separate "holding" database pending acceptance. When a participating provider's office accesses the transfer database the office sees only the intakes intended for them. The participating office is supposed to be able to upload all of the intake data, including case notes, into its CMS. However, the transfer system does not work as intended. Specifically, we were told that staff was required to manually enter the intake data into the SLLS case management system. Also, LCJC had to resort to sending the case notes to the program by email, separate and apart from the automated transfer of the intakes. Staff would then copy and paste the notes into the CMS.

### *Covington Office Intake*

The Covington office only handles family law cases. The office's intake for family law problems is done by LCJC. The completed intakes for eligible applicants for extended family law representation are emailed to the Covington office by LCJC. The Covington office determines at the weekly case acceptance meeting whether a particular case will be handled by SLLS staff or referred to pro bono.

Even though the Covington office advocates only handle family law cases, the office conducts non-family law intake. With the exception of bankruptcies, all intake is done by telephone. The receptionist screens all walk-ins or incoming non-family law calls for eligibility.<sup>13</sup> Eligible and acceptable non-family law cases are referred to the Hammond office. The completed intakes are delivered to Hammond each week. Emergencies are immediately faxed over to Hammond. Of the 30 or so new cases that Hammond considers each week, approximately 10 are from the Covington office.

Some of Covington's non-family cases can be referred to the New Orleans office or referred to the pro bono program. If the Covington office determines that a non-family case may be appropriate for pro bono, that fact is noted in the case notes and the Hammond office may decide to keep the case or send it back to Covington for referral to pro bono. The reasons for this seemingly unnecessary step are not clear.

### *Hammond Office Intake*

The receptionist screens all incoming calls and walk-ins for eligibility. Applicants determined to be eligible are either scheduled for a later appointment to see the office's intake attorney or for a call back. The intake attorney is a PAI contract attorney who works three days per week for a total of 20 hours. Applicants with emergencies are seen immediately or receive an immediate call back, either by the intake attorney or other office attorneys.

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<sup>13</sup> In the Covington, Hammond, and Marrero offices, the receptionists are responsible for eligibility screening. They are supervised by the office's managing attorney.

The PAI intake attorney is authorized to dispose of appropriate cases with advice and/or a brief service. Powers of attorney were cited as an example. All completed non-family law intakes are given to the Hammond office's managing attorney for general litigation.<sup>14</sup> Completed family law intakes are routed to the managing attorney for domestic work. As indicated above, the Hammond office handles all the non-family cases for the Covington portion of the service area.

Public benefits cases are treated differently for intake. The receptionist routes applicants with public benefits problems (except unemployment) to the office paralegal rather than the PAI intake attorney. The paralegal handles the public benefits cases from initial intake to completion of the administrative process.

#### *Marrero Office Intake*<sup>15</sup>

Applicants can access the Marrero office by telephone or walking in. Voice mail is available for applicants to leave name and number for a call back. The two legal secretaries screen all incoming calls and walk-ins for eligibility. Eligible applicants are then scheduled for in-office appointments on Mondays, Wednesdays or Thursdays, between the hours of 9:00 am and 4:30 pm. If an advocate is available, emergencies are seen immediately or given a quick call back.

#### **Finding 7: SLLS has a written policy on serving limited English proficient populations that conforms to the guidance of LSC Program Letter 04-2.**

SLLS has a written policy on serving limited English proficient populations and our interviews with staff confirm that the program values the dignity of clients and makes an effort to serve them in a culturally competent manner. The SLLS staff is diverse and reflective of the community.

The primary language spoken by most applicants and clients is English, but there are also significant Hispanic<sup>16</sup> and Vietnamese communities. Other languages spoken by groups in the service area include Portuguese, Cambodian, Laotian, and some Russian and Polish. The SLLS New Orleans office now has one attorney in each unit who speaks Spanish, and one paralegal whose first language is Vietnamese (and who has excellent contacts in the Vietnamese community). In addition, the New Orleans office has an intake telephone line dedicated to Spanish-speaking applicants. The dedicated line is mainly designed to facilitate a callback by one of the program's Spanish speaking attorneys. Applicants calling the line hear a recorded

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<sup>14</sup> There are two managing attorneys in the Hammond office. One is designated managing attorney for general litigation and the other is managing attorney of the office's family law/domestic violence unit.

<sup>15</sup> The Marrero office is staffed by a managing attorney, two staff attorneys, two legal secretaries, a paralegal, and two VISTA volunteers (working on the BP Oil Spill Project).

<sup>16</sup> According to Census data released in October 2009, fully 6.3% of the metro New Orleans area is Hispanic, up from 4.4% in the 2000 Census. The social service community reports that Spanish is the first language for a growing number of Hispanics in the region.

message in Spanish reciting the number to push to access the specialty unit that corresponds to the caller's problem. There are times when a Spanish speaking attorney is available to answer the Spanish speaking line directly.

The visit confirmed that the client retainers, grievance forms, and intake applications are available in Spanish and Vietnamese, and the website has a Spanish component. As part of its outreach and public awareness efforts, SLLS publishes articles about the program's activities in the local magazine serving the Vietnamese community. At the time of the visit, SLLS was working with Mississippi Center for Justice (MCJ) on Vietnamese language outreach to BP oil spill victims.

**Finding 8: SLLS's offices are reasonably located to achieve broad access and utilization by low-income individuals and families.**

SLLS currently operates four basic field offices located in the cities of Hammond, New Orleans, Covington, and Marrero. In addition to the staff of advocates and support staff, the Hammond office also houses the executive director for program operations and a program-wide administrator. The New Orleans office houses the executive director for program services and the program-wide director of litigation, in addition to the staff of advocates and support staff. Also, all of the managing or senior staff attorneys who lead specialty units or special projects are housed in New Orleans. The day-to-day operation of the Covington and Marrero offices are led by a managing attorney in each office.

All of the SLLS offices are located in population centers that are reasonably accessible to the low-income population throughout the 10-parish service area. In 2005, Hurricane Katrina necessitated the closure of the office in Chalmette. The program conducts outreach intake on a regular basis in three parishes--St. Bernard, St. Charles, and Plaquemines.

In terms of their physical structure, the program's offices are accessible to the physically handicapped. All of SLLS's offices were clean. But only three of SLLS's four offices were professional in appearance. While the Marrero office has been recently brightened with new paint, it is seriously in need of repair in some areas. The accessible side door has a broken glass panel to outside. There was a bare light bulb in the hallway. The cable/telephone box in the kitchen area has no cover so wires are exposed. One board member informed the team that "the [Marrero] office is inadequate and the office needs to be relocated to better space."

**Recommendations:**

**II.1.6.1.\*** SLLS should establish a program-wide work group to analyze intake as it is done now and how it could be improved. This should include strategizing about ways to streamline the process from the initial call to the decision regarding extended representation, as well as the minimum staffing necessary to process intake efficiently. To the extent feasible, uniform procedures for all offices and units should be explored.

**II.1.6.2.\*** SLLS should direct more of its intake to a telephone system for determining eligibility and case screening. Applicants should not be required to walk in to the offices for routine intake.

**II.1.6.3.** SLLS needs to re-evaluate all case acceptance guidelines with the goal of spending less time on cases that will not be accepted, and increasing access by eliminating extremely restricted intake hours and intake cut offs.

**II.1.6.4.** SLLS must actively work with LCJC and other state justice partners to resolve the problem of the telephone intake transfer bank. That LCJC cannot successfully transfer client data to SLLS offices and other providers through the computerized case management system defeats the purpose of a statewide intake portal for civil legal aid providers as a state justice project.

**II.1.8.1.** SLLS should take all necessary steps to ensure that all of its offices are professional in appearance and reasonably accessible to clients. The physical layout of offices should be reasonably designed to preserve client confidentiality.

**Criteria 2 and 3. Engagement with the low-income population; access and utilization by the low-income population.**

**Finding 9: SLLS is reasonably engaged with the client population throughout the service area and strives to incorporate their perspectives in the program's work.**

SLLS is known in communities throughout the service area. Community organizations and groups, social service agency personnel, domestic violence shelters, and state and local government view the program as an important and critical resource for low-income persons. The program's advocates are respected and have good reputations with the bar and bench. In the aftermath of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita in 2005, SLLS reinvigorated its collaboration and engagement with an abundance of community organizations and social service agencies throughout the service area.

SLLS staff makes community legal education presentations to address housing and consumer issues in collaboration with a variety of partners. Program staff participate in meetings, trainings, and ongoing discussions with these partners to improve services and coordination. Many serve on boards of directors of community organizations, on listservs and task forces (such as the state Family Law Task force, the Mayor's DV Advisory Task Force, and the Louisiana Supreme Court Pro Se Litigation task Force).

**PERFORMANCE AREA THREE. *Effectiveness of legal representation and other program activities intended to benefit the low-income population in its service area.***

**Criterion 1. Legal Representation.**

**Finding 10. SLLS's advocate staff is diverse and highly experienced.**

SLLS's staff of 42 attorneys includes a good balance of more and less experienced advocates. Of the 42 attorneys, 11 are managing attorneys, 28 are staff attorneys, two are executive directors, and one is the program-wide litigation director.

The managing attorneys have an average of 21 years of experience in the legal profession and an average of 15.7 years with the program. All but one of the managers are women; five are white; five are black; and one is Asian/Pacific Islander. In terms of practice areas, nine are specialists and two are generalists. Four have extensive appellate experience.

The staff attorneys have an average of eight years of experience in the legal profession. Nine attorneys have three or less years in the profession. According to the SLLS workforce analysis for 2010, 60.7% of the staff attorneys are white, 21.4% are black, and 17.9% are Hispanic. Twenty-one (75.0%) of the staff attorneys are women and seven (25.0%) are men.

There are seven paralegals program-wide. All but one of the seven have more than 30 years of experience in the profession and with the program. The least experienced paralegal has 11 years of experience in both the profession and with SLLS. Five of the paralegals are black, one is white, and one is Asian. Five are women and two are men.

The program's advocates have an excellent reputation among judges, administrative agencies, community organizations, and state justice community partners. They are viewed as committed, caring professionals who value their work and clients. We heard high praise for the expertise exhibited by the program in the areas of public and subsidized housing, disaster recovery on behalf of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita victims, and domestic violence work.

**Finding 11. While SLLS employs a cadre of talented and hard working advocates, the program could benefit from a better supervisory structure for the management of legal work.**

Oversight of legal work at SLLS is mainly done by the managing attorneys of the specialty law units in the New Orleans office and the managing attorneys of the Hammond, Covington, and Marrero offices. SLLS's written job description for managing attorneys states that, among other things, they supervise the staff attorneys, paralegals, and clerical staff in their unit or office. Major duties include facilitating "high quality legal work within the unit/office by regular supervision of staff, including advice, periodic case reviews, case closing approvals, review of case management information reports, etc."<sup>17</sup>

SLLS has established legal work management and supervision policies, procedures, and systems to ensure that the program's legal work is conducted in an effective and high quality fashion. These include an advocacy manual that offers guidance on the topics covered by the pre-2006 ABA Standards for Providers of Civil Legal Services to the Poor, that are expressly

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<sup>17</sup> In addition, the managing attorney "regularly provides feedback and performs evaluation of supervised staff as required by the firm. Orients new staff. Identifies staff's training needs and supports needs and works with other management to address those needs. Participates in assessment and improvement to address these needs. Participates in assessment and improvement of the unit's / office's productivity. Identifies and implement better ways to perform the work."

designed for practitioners.<sup>18</sup> Appendices to the manual include a non-engagement letter format, an opinion letter format, a deposition witness preparation checklist, a list of common federal and state attorney fee statutes, the program's appeal approval form, and a Limited English Proficiency Clients-Staff Guide.

Other guidance includes a briefing memorandum on *in forma pauperis* rights in Louisiana, a checklist for drafting state court judgments, a checklist for taking appeals that outlines how to evaluate the state's process. Appeals require the review and approval of either the director of litigation or the director of program services. There is an open case file review form that seeks to identify funder-related compliance issues and evaluate case file organization, case planning and issue identification, communications with clients, document preparation, fact investigation and discovery, prosecution of the case, and outcomes or results achieved and sought.<sup>19</sup>

The units and offices engage in case acceptance meetings that range up to several hours weekly. Generally they are used to discuss acceptance of cases, level of service to be provided and case assignment. While they are generally appreciated by the staff as providing training opportunities, they are not an efficient use of staff time considering the limited resources and demand for services.

As we indicated above under Performance Area Two, SLLS's legal work and advocacy in the New Orleans office are organized by specialty units. Thus, below we will provide a brief review of the legal work supervision that occurs in each New Orleans office specialty unit and that of the other three offices.

#### *Family Law Unit*

The manager of the family law unit supervises her staff primarily through an open door policy and she strives to meet with each supervisee monthly to discuss their cases. She signs off on all closed case files and reviews quarterly case lists for inactivity and/or need to close. The writings of new advocates are reviewed as a matter of course. Experienced advocates must affirmatively request review of their writing. About twice each year, the managing attorney conducts a partial caseload review with each supervisee by randomly selecting 25 case files. Full caseload reviews are not conducted. Observation of advocates in court may occur when the managing attorney also has some business in court. There have not been any formal evaluations of staff in the family law unit.

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<sup>18</sup> While the SLLS manual is based on the pre-2006 ABA Standards for Providers of Civil Legal Services to the Poor and the prior edition of the LSC Performance Criteria, the essence of the guidance provided by SLLS was not changed by the subsequent ABA and LSC revisions.

<sup>19</sup> A memorandum from the director of program services accompanies the case file review form and lists the program's expectations under each review factor.

Staff attorneys consult the director for program services and the litigation director for assistance with substantive law expertise and skills in areas such as appellate practice and aspects of procedure.

The family law managing attorney consults the executive director for program services, if she has questions about her own work. The managing attorney has never had all of her cases reviewed by her supervisor. On the other hand, the executive director for program operations has generated lists from the CMS for all of the managers' cases to highlight case files that have been open for a long period of time and/or appear ready for closure.

#### *Children In Need of Care Project (CINC)*

The CINC project is staffed by a managing attorney, one SLLS staff attorney, and two contract attorneys. The procedures and practices of the project are determined by the Louisiana Supreme Court's Special Rules for Child Abuse and Neglect Cases. The project is responsible for addressing legal needs of their clients beyond those related to their foster care case, and attorneys in the project work with attorneys in other substantive SLLS units when their clients have other legal needs. The CINC managing attorney performs quarterly case file reviews with the contract attorneys.

#### *Consumer Law Unit*

At present, the consumer law unit consists of the managing attorney and one staff attorney. The unit is thoroughly aware of the pressing consumer/finance issues that confront the client community. They discussed the post-Katrina problems resulting from unlicensed contractors who came from Texas, collected deposits for restoration work and then failed to do the work. They also discussed the current phenomenon of what may well be collusion between homeowner insurance companies and mortgage companies to raise insurance rates. The managing attorney meets with her supervisee once a week to talk about cases and trends.

#### *Housing Law Unit*

The housing law unit has seven attorneys, a paralegal, and a secretary. The managing attorney strives to closely supervise his supervisees. He signs off on each closed case file and uses a case closure checklist. He reviews cases in the CMS quarterly to check case activity and status. This is required by the SLLS supervisory feedback policy. SLLS does not have a formal caseload policy—at one point, a staff attorney in the unit had 160 open case files. In addition to case acceptance meetings, there is a monthly unit meeting where various housing issues are discussed.

The unit handles some complex work, including expropriation cases<sup>20</sup> and cases emanating from the Road Home<sup>21</sup> and FEMA.

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<sup>20</sup> In Louisiana, expropriation is used in the taking of private property for public use under the right of eminent domain.

### *Homeless Advocacy Project*

The Homeless Advocacy Project is staffed by a managing attorney, one staff attorney, a paralegal, and a law student volunteer. The managing attorney described her approach to supervision as an open door policy. Case acceptance meetings are held weekly jointly with the Public Benefits and Employment Unit, which are attended by the litigation director. While the focus is mainly on new cases accepted during the week, the meetings are also used to discuss new developments in issue areas of concern to the homeless. As of the date of the on-site visit, the project's managing attorney had been in her position for two months and no quarterly review of cases had occurred.

### *Public Benefits and Employment*

The mission of public benefits and employment unit is to maintain and increase household income. The unit handles a wide range of government benefits matters as well as employment and school discipline matters. In recent years, the unit has seen an increase in unemployment and food stamps cases. Post-Katrina benefits like Road Home and FEMA have also been a focus of the unit. The unit has recently added expungement of criminal records to its priorities. And, one of the unit's major projects is the Medical-Legal partnership.

The public benefits/employment unit is staffed by a managing attorney, 1.5 FTE staff attorneys, a paralegal, and a secretary. The managing attorney's supervision of the unit is described as mostly informal. She has an open door policy to discuss cases with her supervisees and is more hands-on with newer attorneys than with experienced attorneys. She reviews all appellate pleadings and reviews other papers that are filed in court unless they have been drafted by a highly experienced attorney. She does written performance evaluations for probationary attorneys before the end of the probationary period, but not for other attorneys.

### *Covington Office*

Case file reviews are conducted twice a year by the managing attorney. All closed case files for Covington are reviewed by the executive director for program operations.

### *Hammond Office*

There are two managing attorneys in Hammond--one oversees family law work only and the other oversees all non-family legal work (referred to in SLLS as "general litigation"). The family law manager makes case assignments to the one staff attorney she supervises. Since there are only the two handling family law matters in the office, the supervision approach is mostly informal; there are no case acceptance meetings, no formal case file reviews, and no reviews of

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<sup>21</sup> The Road Home program, a project of the State of Louisiana, utilizing funding from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, provides benefits to victims of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita regarding uninsured or underinsured losses to real property.

cases on an ongoing basis through the CMS. Like Covington, all closed case files in Hammond are reviewed by the executive director for program operations.

The Hammond general litigation unit consists of the managing attorney, two staff attorneys, and a paralegal. The managing attorney conducts case acceptance meetings and uses the CMS to review case activities. While the Hammond advocates are not specialized in a formal sense, each member of the general litigation unit has assumed particular areas of interest. One attorney handles all evictions, contractor cases, and some wills and estates. A second attorney handles all credit card cases, land issues, and unemployment. The managing attorney handles bankruptcies, successions, wills and estates, and some contract cases. The paralegal handles all public benefits except unemployment.

#### *Marrero Office*

The managing attorney strives to perform a comprehensive review of case files at least once each year. There are weekly case acceptance meetings. She uses the CMS to review case activities. The attorneys are in court at least two times a week. There have been no performance evaluations over the last two years.

#### **Finding 12. The legal work of managing attorneys is supervised by the executive director for program services.**

The executive director for program services is responsible for the overall substantive legal work of the program and his duties include supervision of the program's 11 managing attorneys and oversight of attorney training. The director performs his supervisory responsibilities by reviewing the cases of managing attorneys through the Prime case management system. There are no formal or regularly scheduled managing attorneys meetings and no formal evaluation of managing attorneys.

In addition to overseeing the work of the attorneys, paralegals, and clerical staff in their specialty unit, managing attorneys carry a caseload. Caseload sizes vary considerably with the majority appearing to be too high as many advocates feel overwhelmed. Rarely was a caseload below 60 and many were over 100. Timely closure of cases upon completion of representation is the exception and not the rule among managing attorneys.

SLLS's written evaluation policy states that a supervisor should provide "routine informal feedback" to supervisees for "both good work and problems." The policy goes on to state that "at least quarterly" a supervisor should meet with his/her supervisees to discuss their work and that "annually" a supervisor of case handlers should conduct a review of all open cases and an in depth review of at least 24 open case files.<sup>22</sup> The two executive directors and the director of

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<sup>22</sup> The case reviews and in depth review of case files are done in connection with an evaluation conversation regarding eight factors: "1. Quality, quantity, and impact of your work; 2. Problems in doing your work; 3. Training you need or would like to have; 4. Ways the supervisor and firm could help you do a better job; 5. Things you could do to improve your work; 6. Answers to questions you have about firm policies and procedures; 7. New goals you or your supervisor wish to set for you; and 8. What level of job satisfaction you have."

litigation strive to review at least 25 case files from each supervising attorney. A larger number of case files are reviewed if a supervising attorney has a substantial number of cases that are more than one year old.

**Finding 13. The director of litigation serves as a resource and consultant on litigation for attorneys throughout the program, but he has no supervisory responsibilities.**

SLLS has a litigation director who works 80%time. In addition to carrying a small caseload, the litigation director acts as a resource and consultant on litigation for the other program attorneys. He supports advocates throughout the program by assisting with some legal research, co-counseling, strategizing, and by reviewing pleadings, briefs and legal memorandums. Occasionally, the litigation director may assume total leadership of litigation from other program advocates. At the time of the visit, he was co-counseling in 12 cases. He has no supervisory authority over any other advocate. He participates in the case acceptance meetings of the following four specialty units: housing, employment and benefits, homelessness, and foreclosure.

Program advocates described the litigation director as a great resource and view his role as mainly to help with big impact cases and appeals. In terms of substantive law expertise, he is described as a “Medicaid and Medicare whiz”. While the litigation director is housed in the New Orleans office, he is accessible to the other three offices by email and telephone. He does not visit the other offices on a regular basis

In its 2011 competitive grant application narrative to LSC, SLLS explained its emphasis on "identifying systemic problems and pursuing solutions that will benefit a broad group of low-income people beyond the individual client." In the initial orientation of new advocates, the litigation director and the director of program services conduct in-house training on how to identify systemic issues through an actual case study. The on-site visit confirmed that most systemic issues arise in housing and public benefits. The litigation director and director of program services have extensive backgrounds in these areas.

**Finding 14. SLLS provides its advocates ongoing and comprehensive training to ensure high quality, effective legal advocacy that responds to the critical legal needs of the service area’s low-income population.**

All of the advocates interviewed confirmed that SLLS affords staff sufficient opportunities to attend CLEs. The executive director for program services oversees all substantive law and skills training for program advocates, as well as PAI and pro bono attorneys. The SLLS policy states that the program "encourages and supports relevant employee training" and supervisors are charged with discussing the training needs of staff on a regular basis. Advocates reported attending the Louisiana Bar Foundation’s annual access to justice conference each year, Children in Need of Care (CINC) training, Veterans SOAR training,<sup>23</sup> Louisiana

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<sup>23</sup> SOAR means SSI/SSDI Outreach, Access, and Recovery. This is a requisite training for the SLLS Homeless Project.

protective order registry training, NLADA Litigation Directors training, and National Health Law Program (NHELP) conferences.

In addition to external training events, SLLS conducts a lot of in-house trainings as well. For example, the litigation director has conducted in-house trainings in the areas of attorney fees, Medicaid managed care, and homestead exemptions. The litigation director and the director of program services send e-mail alerts to advocates on new developments and emerging issues.

There are statewide task forces that meet monthly, usually by telephone conference, where new developments and trends are discussed in a systematic way. Many of the task forces are led by SLLS staff.

Not only do SLLS advocates attend excellent trainings, they participate in many events as trainers. A Covington staff attorney teaches an annual domestic violence CLE at Loyola law school.

Management and supervision training for managing attorneys is an area of significant weakness for SLLS. None of the managing attorneys attended management training within the last three years.

**Finding 15. SLLS provides ready access to computer assisted research and resources, specialized legal expertise, and timely updates on new developments.**

Through the Internet generally and Westlaw and Fastcase<sup>24</sup> in particular, SLLS advocates have access to a vast array of computer assisted research and ready access to materials such as federal and state statutes, state and federal reporters, law review articles, pertinent treatises, poverty law reporters and other writings on legal issues facing low income persons. Advocates are encouraged to participate in Internet-based discussion groups and listservs. Advocates seek support and assistance from one another throughout the program as well as appropriate sources outside the program. SLLS has a long history of collaborating with national, regional and state research and advocacy groups, public interest law firms and similar organizations that provide co-counseling, research, advocacy coordination, and training.

In addition to Westlaw and the Internet, advocates have access to hard copy source materials such as the Louisiana Legal Services and Pro Bono Manual (2005 edition) and poverty law practice manuals from the National Consumer Law Center (NCLC) and the National Housing Law Project (NHLP). The Clearinghouse Review's table of contents is circulated to all advocates by the litigation director. He also sends email notices of case and legislative developments.

Advocates mentioned relying on the pro bono net website and the "W" shared drive. A forms book is available for family law and domestic violence cases.

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<sup>24</sup> Fastcase is the online legal research services provided free to all Louisiana State Bar Association members in good standing.

**Finding 16: The overall quantity of legal assistance provided by SLLS is reasonable. The amount of extended service representation is a significant strength of the program.**

The quantity of legal work performed by SLLS is reasonably related to the program's staffing and financial resources. For calendar year 2010, SLLS reported closing 6,008 LSC eligible cases which is slightly less than the number of cases it closed in 2009.<sup>25</sup> Of the cases closed, 35.8% were for extended service, which is also slightly less than the program's performance in 2009.<sup>26</sup> The proportion of extended work is higher than the national average of extended service cases closed, which was 21.2% in 2009. In 2009, the number of cases SLLS closed per 10,000 poverty persons was slightly less than the national median. The precise median for 2010 is not yet available, however, it is expected that SLLS will again perform slightly below the national median.

**Finding 17. SLLS has developed a culture among its advocates that they are to think creatively about their cases and advocacy work. The quality of the legal work by SLLS is generally extremely good.**

The reputation of SLLS's advocates in the legal community is one of committed, energetic professionals who value their work and clients. They are considered competent, courageous, and creative. The team found SLLS's advocates to be very knowledgeable of the areas in which they handle cases, and several are considered experts in their areas of practice.

In preparation for the visit, we asked SLLS to provide a writing sample from each advocate that is representative of the advocate's best work in the last 24 months and reflects the advocate's legal research, analytical and written communication skills. In response, we received 39 advocacy writing samples and two non-advocacy writings.<sup>27</sup> The legal advocacy samples included writings in the areas of family law, housing, consumer/finance, income maintenance, and employment. The samples also represent a variety of legal writings--appellate briefs in both the Louisiana Courts of Appeal and the Louisiana Supreme Court, various memorandums of law and advocacy pleadings in the district courts,<sup>28</sup> motions or responsive pleadings with incorporated memorandums of law in city courts, letter briefs to hearing officers and administrative agencies, in-house legal memorandums, and community education advocacy on fair housing.

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<sup>25</sup> In 2009, SLLS closed 6,223 LSC eligible cases, which amounted to 226 cases per 10,000 poverty population.

<sup>26</sup> Each year LSC computes the national medians and national averages for several aspects of CSR data comparison. While both national medians and the average are computed, LSC program performance staff follow the generally accepted view of statisticians that "medians" are better indicators than "averages" in contexts like CSR data comparison. Comparing a program's case closing statistics to the national median may or may not lead to specific conclusions.

<sup>27</sup> The Technology Initiative Grant Final Report and the Grant Application Narrative to the Louisiana Bar Foundation do not fall within the writing sample request.

<sup>28</sup> We note that the district court is Louisiana's trial court of general jurisdiction.

Many of the writings involve complex factual and legal issues, and displayed solidly developed legal writing and research skills. Where factual discussions were employed, most laid out a clear and compelling story (both factually and legally) to support the arguments and requests for relief. Most were well organized, had an appropriate tone, were short and concise and displayed the effective communication skills that are essential to competent legal practice. A number of samples could have benefited from a supervisory review prior to submission.

All staff that we interviewed exhibited dedication to the service of low-income clients and we believe share the values of the profession that we should strive to achieve both clients' objectives and lasting results that respond to the low-income communities' most compelling legal needs. The advocates interviewed made it clear that they seek to address structures and practices that produce some of the recurring and seemingly intractable legal problems experienced by low-income persons.

**Recommendations:**

**III.1.11.1.\*** SLLS should ensure that its formal legal work supervision policy is implemented by managing attorneys.

**III.1.11.2\*** SLLS should examine its use of case acceptance meetings to streamline their use to discussions of only the most significant cases. Routine cases should not be brought to weekly meetings involving all staff's time. Clearer case acceptance guidelines would assist this process.

**III.1.11.3.\*** SLLS should take the necessary steps to ensure that the caseloads of its managing attorneys permit ample time to perform their supervisory duties, including such tasks as quarterly case reviews and more frequently for newer advocates, yearly in depth case file reviews and more frequently for newer advocates, at least yearly observation of court/administrative advocacy by newer advocates, and appropriate review of written advocacy.

**III.1.12.4.\*** SLLS should ensure that its formal legal work supervision and evaluation policies are implemented by the executive directors.

**III.1.12.5.** SLLS should revisit the decision to have the executive director for program services directly supervise all managing attorneys in the program. Options the program may want to explore include assigning supervision of some managing attorneys to the current litigation director.

**III.1.14.6.** As resources permit, SLLS should take the necessary steps to afford its managing attorneys the opportunity to attend management training by such entities as Management Information Exchange or procure a management specialist to conduct management training in-house.

**III.1.14.7.** Managing attorneys from the different specialty units/offices should periodically meet to discuss procedural and management issues, share best practices, and updates on substantive law/trends/issues.

**Criterion 2. Private Attorney Involvement.**

**Finding 18: Private attorney involvement is an integral part of SLLS's delivery system and provides a reasonable level of high quality, economical and effective legal assistance to eligible clients.**

SLLS uses both compensated PAI and pro bono to expand the work that can be done on behalf of clients. The program has developed a PAI plan that describes the models used to involve private attorneys. The program's work reflects the plan. In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, SLLS demonstrated tremendous resilience in its capacity to use hundreds of out-of-state volunteer lawyers and law students to deliver effective legal services to individuals and families affected by the storm and in need of FEMA assistance, among other things. The program and pro bono attorneys (mostly from out-of-state) geared up to address an avalanche of probate (successions).

Program-wide PAI is supervised by the executive director for program operations. There are PAI or pro bono coordinators in each office. In Marrero, one of the two legal secretaries serves as the PAI coordinator.

In New Orleans, the PAI approach includes a pro bono model, a compensated component, and its attorneys co-counsel with private attorney volunteers. An administrative assistant and a paralegal are the PAI coordinators.

Each year SLLS enters into a subgrant agreement with the Pro Bono Project. The necessary follow up and oversight are in place. SLLS and the Project are striving to diversify the kinds of cases to be placed with volunteers beyond family law. We heard from SLLS staff that there is a pressing need for volunteer lawyers to work with the low income tax clinic and in the consumer law field.

In the Covington office, PAI includes both a compensated (reduced fee) component and an in-house pro bono project. Both are coordinated by a part-time experienced attorney. She is responsible for recruiting volunteers, placing cases, conducting follow up, offering support, and providing recognition. The cases placed with private attorneys include uncontested divorces, uncontested custody, bankruptcy, wills, succession, housing, and consumer. All of the non-family law cases selected for PAI in Covington are first sent to the Hammond office for review, then back to Covington for referral to a pro bono attorney. The coordinator checks case status monthly by contacting the private attorney directly or reviewing the court records. The coordinator is striving to expand the types of cases being referred. She attends bar association meetings and has had PAI expansion placed on the agenda in two parishes.

In Hammond, PAI consists of a compensated (reduced fee) approach, which is coordinated by a non-attorney under the supervision of the director of program operations. She is responsible for placing cases and conducting follow up. In addition to the coordinator, the Hammond office employs two PAI attorneys. One conducts intake and the other handle family law cases.

The Marrero office uses the Pro Bono Project in New Orleans, placing a number of cases each month. In addition to the Pro Bono Project, the office places some cases with private attorneys in Marrero or on the Westbank as the area is called.

SLLS provides support to the volunteer attorneys--malpractice coverage, sample pleadings and forms on ProBono.net, staff support, some administrative support if they need it, and a variety of training opportunities in collaboration with the Pro Bono Project. The PAI plan also mentions providing office space if needed. Also, the Legal Services and Pro Bono Desk Manual (2005) (the statewide poverty law manual) is available for the volunteers. Staff report no significant problems with follow up and oversight of the referred case -- they get information they need from the attorney or court records.

There are approximately 9,000 attorneys eligible to participate in PAI in the SLLS service area. Of this number, 304 members actively participated last year as pro bono attorneys. Eight private attorneys worked for SLLS as PAI contract attorneys and the program had four deferred associates within the last year. Eight hundred cases (13.3%) closed by SLLS in 2010 were PAI cases.

For 2010, the largest category of PAI cases by subject matter is family law, in which SLLS closed 621 cases, comprising 77.6%. This is 14.4 percentage points higher than the 63.2% family cases closed in 2009. These CSRs tend to confirm the perception that SLLS's PAI and pro bono efforts need to focus on diversifying the kinds of cases referred to volunteer lawyers. As SLLS's goals and priorities indicate, low income persons and their communities have needs that are far more pressing than some of the family law being sent to pro bono or PAI volunteers.

### **Recommendations:**

**III.2.18.1.** With the Pro Bono Project, SLLS should explore meaningful ways to diversify the kinds of cases volunteer lawyers are willing to accept, including opportunities to participate in pro se clinics, handle LITC and other tax cases, Earned Income Tax Credit issues, food stamps, health access, predatory lending, consumer fraud and others.

**III.2.18.2.** To help augment the LCJC limited telephone intake attorney staff, SLLS should explore with the local and state bar associations and state justice partners a pro bono attorney recruitment effort -- aimed especially at retired attorneys and corporate counsel -- to assist with the LCJC counsel and advice cases, and to help identify cases that are eligible for extended representation and referral to SLLS and other civil legal aid providers in the state.

**III.2.18.3.** SLLS is encouraged to review the number of steps and expenditure of staff time in connection with the referral of PAI cases in the Covington office.

**Criterion 3. Other program services to the eligible client population.**

**Finding 19. SLLS supplements its representation of individual clients with community outreach, preventive community legal education activities, and assistance for self help activities and pro se appearances. The Internet and websites also provide information for clients and community organizations.**

The main focus of the program's work is directed at individual representation in the core poverty law areas, outreach in select parishes, and preventive legal education activities with a number of well-established community organizations and social service agencies.

In addition to community legal education, SLLS offers assistance for self-help activities and pro se appearances for uncontested divorces. Also, the statewide website, which is supported by the program in partnership with other legal aid providers, offers materials regarding family and children, consumer issues, housing, employment, government benefits, disability, seniors, health, taxes, wills and life planning, civil rights, schools, the legal system, and disaster relief and hurricanes.

**Criterion 4. Other program activities on behalf of the eligible client population.**

**Finding 20: SLLS actively collaborates with the judiciary, organized bar, government agencies, academic institutions, community organizations, social service agencies, and state, regional and national legal advocacy organizations on activities designed to have a beneficial effect on systemic legal problems and economic opportunities of the eligible client population.**

The program is actively engaged with the judiciary, organized bar, government agencies at both the local and state levels, academic institutions like law schools and clinical programs, regional legal advocacy organizations like the Mississippi Center for Justice and the Southern Poverty Law Center, and national legal advocacy organizations like the Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights Under Law.

In addition, many SLLS staff work with a large number of community and social services groups on outreach, referral and community education and policy advocacy. For example, the CINC managing attorney is active in state bar and legislative activities that are geared to addressing problems in Louisiana's child welfare system.

**PERFORMANCE AREA FOUR. *Effectiveness of Governance, Leadership and Administration.***

**Criterion 1. Board Governance.**

**Finding 21: The SLLS board of directors provides appropriate oversight and shares the mission of the program.**

SLLS is governed by a 15-member board of directors composed of 10 attorneys<sup>29</sup> and five client members. The members are diverse in terms of race and gender. There is no limitation on the number of terms board members can serve. A core group of the members is very active. The by-laws have been amended to enable the board to remove members who have more than three unexcused absences from board meetings. Board officers are elected to one year terms, which can be renewed. The board has a finance and audit committee, as well as personnel, client grievance, and nominating committees. A quorum of members has attended each scheduled board meeting within the last 24 months. There is a written policy that addresses conflicts of interest or potential conflicts of interest.

The minutes reflect appropriate oversight and engagement. An agenda and board packet are sent to members by both email and U.S. Mail one week before meetings. The board meets at least four times each year. Most meetings are in New Orleans although one meeting is held each year in Hammond. Members are encouraged to attend meetings in person, rather than by telephone conference call, unless there is a compelling reason. Committee meetings are scheduled, as necessary, from 4:30 – 5:30 pm, immediately before board meetings. At other times, board committee meeting may be held by telephone conference call.

The staff and board provide an orientation to new board members. Usually this orientation is followed up by a board retreat/training. Members are given copies of the LSC Act and regulations, and the LSC Performance Criteria. The board conducts self-evaluations, sets goals for itself, and strives to actively support the mission of the program. The last board training/retreat took place in August, 2010. Usually an outside expert makes a presentation on some related topic, such as board self-evaluation, and then the board discusses it and decides whether it needs to take any action. The training is usually followed by a regular board meeting. The board's self-evaluation and training has led to new energy that has been noticed by other non-profits. In fact, the Louisiana Bar Foundation has begun board training for other civil legal services programs in the state.

As a result of self-evaluations, there is now agreement among the board members that part of their role is to help raise money for the program and to help raise the profile of the program in the legal community and the larger community. Board involvement in fundraising has already resulted in a filing fee add-on for legal services in St. Bernard's Parish and a foundation grant in Covington to provide money to help administer a pro bono program in conjunction with the local bar association.

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<sup>29</sup> While the tenth non-client member position on the SLLS board does not require that the member be an attorney, the current occupant is in fact an attorney.

Client members are active participants in board meetings. One client member reported that the board works well with its client members and listens to their ideas. She went on to report that if the client members have questions, they feel comfortable contacting one of the executive directors. A group of client members recently attended a "client board member training" in Tennessee. Attorney members interviewed reported that client members make important contributions to the work of the board by providing the client community perspective. They all confirmed that the clients participate actively in the meetings.

As to the major issues facing SLLS going forward, the board members interviewed cited the need for increased fundraising to support the mission of the program and the need for additional public relations efforts to further educate the legal and business community as well as the general public about the importance of the work being performed by SLLS and other civil legal aid groups.

The executive directors, other administrative staff, and the leaders of specialty units and projects make regular reports to the board. Monthly financial reports are provided to the board treasurer and quarterly financial reports are provided to the board as a whole.

**Finding 22: The SLLS board of directors has not undertaken any organized or formal strategic planning to guide the direction of the program in a rapidly changing environment.**

As we noted in our discussion under Finding 3, Performance Area One above (see p. 8), none of the excellent planning activities conducted by SLLS thus far amount to organized or formal strategic planning in the classic management/organizational development sense. Five years after Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, and seven years after the major merger with NOLAC, SLLS is a stable organization and its current leaders recognize that a need for strategic planning exists. The principal responsibility for strategic planning lies with the SLLS board of directors and we strongly encourage the board to pursue it.

**Recommendation:**

**IV.1.3.1.\*** The SLLS board of directors should undertake a formal strategic planning process to ensure the continued growth, stability, and viability of the program as a responsive and valued institution for justice in service area and state.

**Finding 23: As part of its role of oversight, the board evaluates the co-directors each year.**

The board evaluates the executive directors each year. Both directors are under the direct supervision of the board. All members participate in the evaluation of the directors; members receive a form and are asked to respond to various questions and to rate the directors. There is also a section for general comments. The ratings and comments are gathered together by a board committee and the results are discussed with the two directors.

Members of the board, staff, and the state justice community partners all agree that the co-directorship for SLLS works well. The reputation of SLLS is very good in the legal community throughout the service area. Both executive directors work well together and are

respectful of each other, even when they disagree on an issue. If there is a major policy disagreement, each will present his side to the board and the board makes a decision.

**Criterion 2. Leadership.**

**Finding 24. SLLS has effective leadership in its executive directors, other executive administrative staff, and managing/senior attorneys.**

SLLS is led by two executive directors, both with over thirty years of legal and civil legal aid experience. They have separate and distinct job descriptions that provide for a sound and reasonable division of labor. The executive director for program operations, based in the Hammond office, oversees the program's financial and administrative operations, grant writing, compliance with governmental regulations and grant requirements and reporting, technology, and contracted legal work. In addition, he serves as the regional executive for the program in the five north shore parishes: Livingston, St. Helena, St. Tammany, Tangipahoa, and Washington.

The executive director for program services oversees the program's provision of legal services, including all advocacy of the program. He is responsible for overall planning, supervision and delivery of legal services. In addition, he serves as the regional executive for the program in the five south shore parishes: Jefferson, Orleans, Plaquemines, St. Bernard, and St. Charles.

Staff, board members, and state justice partners interviewed are overwhelmingly of the opinion that the executive directors are effective leaders. A vast majority of the staff interviewed stated that SLLS was a cohesive law firm and that the lines of authority in the program are clear. This is significant because SLLS, in its current form, is the result of a 2003 merger with the former LSC grantee, NOLAC, and the service area grew from five to ten parishes.

Despite enlargement of the program and service area, the executive directors do not hold monthly management meetings with key staff such as the litigation director, managing and senior attorneys, and central administrative office staff (the human resources manager, the information technology manager, and the program administrator). While the visit confirmed that the executive directors move quickly to address changes or new problems in the service area, we heard from a significant number of staff that the directors do not always communicate planned changes sufficiently in advance so that staff can provide meaningful input.

**Recommendation:**

**IV.2.24.1.** The executive directors should consider holding quarterly management meetings that are attended by the litigation director, the managing/senior attorneys, and any central administrative office staff (e.g., human resources manager, the information technology manager, and the program administrator).

**Criteria 3, 4, 5 and 6. Overall management and administration; internal communication; financial administration; and human resources administration.**

**Finding 25: Overall SLLS is well managed and administered, with good staff-management relations, but technology is a significant challenge that needs addressing.**

*Technology*

SLLS describes its technology planning as ongoing and part of the program's overall budgeting process. The program uses technology to support its management and administrative systems, the provision of legal representation and advocacy, and other services to the low income population. Throughout the visit technology was mentioned time and time again as an issue for improvement.

The program uses email as the primary communication device among offices and for advising staff of policy changes. The VOIP phones continue to have major issues which do not seem to be any closer to resolution. The program recently changed to Gmail for its email because of the unreliability of the local ISP's email. Another problem is the program's aging computers. Twenty computers were updated in New Orleans but many other computers also need to be replaced at a time when the program has little money to spend on hardware.

The Kemps Prime case management system (CMS) generates reports for oversight of legal work as well as to support SLLS's programmatic grants. The CMS is used to report on overall work for the program, to track time and to supervise case handlers. Implementation of the CMS as part of a statewide project has been difficult. One major issue has been customizing the system so that it can meet recording and reporting needs of the individual participating civil legal aid programs. Within SLLS, a recurring complaint is that Kemps Prime is very slow. It is not clear whether the problem is with SLLS's computers rather than Prime. Among SLLS staff around the program, not all of the features of the CMS are used consistently, such as the tickler system. In addition, many staff expressed the need for more training in the use of the CMS.

Staff in the New Orleans office complained that printers and copiers frequently jam. A few staff highlighted the fact that the program relies on an outside contractor for the bulk of its technology repair and upkeep.

*Internal Communication and Morale*

Informal communication/collaboration among staff, including among managing attorneys, is good, although some sentiment was expressed to systematize the flow of information downward to staff.

The program holds an annual all-staff meeting and has had social events such as picnics and holiday parties. These events seem to help engender the feeling among staff that they belong to a single law firm.

## *Financial Operations and Systems*

The executive director for program operations is responsible for the program's fiscal affairs. He is assisted by the program administrator. Based on the team's interviews with the management staff and board members, the program's fiscal operations and systems appear to run smoothly.<sup>30</sup> The SLLS budget process includes active participation by the board.

### **Recommendations:**

**IV.3.25.1\*.** SLLS should continue to assess its technology capacity to ensure that it is making the highest and best use of affordable technology, including but not limited to computers, printers, copiers and scanners.

**IV.3.25.2.** SLLS needs to redouble its technology planning efforts, both internally and with state justice partners; take advantage of available outside expertise and resources to assist its technology planning and implementation efforts; ensure that technology decisions are made strategically and will accomplish the desired goals and outcomes; and strive to ensure that changes to technology are implemented in a coordinated manner program-wide.

**IV.3.25.3.** SLLS should establish an in-house technology working group, consisting of staff with different aptitudes for technology, to help inform the program's technology planning at all stages.

**IV.3.25.1.** SLLS should increase training to ensure that staff and program practices maximize the capabilities of the Kemps case management system.

**IV.3.25.1.** SLLS should undertake a comprehensive effort to catalogue the recurring problems staff are experiencing with technology and maintain a log as to whether and when technology complaints are received and addressed.

### **Criterion 7. General resource development and maintenance.**

**Finding 26: Consistent with its mission, SLLS aggressively seeks to maintain and expand its base of funding, with the goal of increasing the quality and quantity of the program's services to eligible clients.**

The SLLS directors have proven to be capable and effective at resource development. During calendar year 2010, LSC funding in the amount of \$3,006,566 comprised 55.3% of SLLS's annual budget. The program's non-LSC funding amounted to \$2,427,587. In addition to the LSC grant, SLLS had 31 other sources of funding during 2010. They have avoided mission drift.

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<sup>30</sup> In its April 19-23, 2010 follow-up review of SLLS, the LSC Office of Compliance and Enforcement conducted a review of the program's internal control policies and procedures, and a limited review of accounting and financial records, and found that the SLLS policies and procedures compare favorably to LSC's Internal Control/Financial Criteria of an Accounting and Financial Reporting System (Chapter 3 - Accounting Guide for LSC Recipients).

At present, SLLS is pursuing a grant for a social worker for the Homeless Advocacy Project. We think the family law unit could also benefit from having a social worker on staff. If the current grant is not an appropriate avenue for addressing the needs of the family law unit, then SLLS should explore opportunities with area universities, perhaps a student with a professor supervisor.

**Criterion 9. Participation in an integrated legal services delivery system.**

**Finding 29: SLLS actively participates in, and work to expand and improve, a dynamic state justice community to achieve equal access to justice and to meet the civil legal needs for low-income persons in Louisiana.**

SLLS has a local, state and national reputation for being very responsive to the needs of low-income individuals and families who suffered damage as a result of hurricanes. The program has an affinity for constant change and experimentation.

The executive directors and program staff play a significant role in the Louisiana state justice community. There is a high level of SLLS staff involvement in the bar, including leadership positions.

In collaboration with Acadiana Legal Services, the Louisiana Office of Community Development, Capital Area Legal Services Corporation, the Pro Bono Project and the Louisiana Civil Justice Center, SLLS led the efforts to assist applicants for Road Home benefits following Hurricane Katrina. SLLS also leads the effort to assist low-income persons needing clear title in order to take advantage of the Road Home program and other disaster recovery benefits.

In New Orleans, SLLS's staff has conducted training for new judges (city court judges) on evictions for regarding tenants receiving housing assistance. SLLS houses the statewide website coordinator and works collaboratively with all of the state justice community stakeholders.

# ***APPENDIX***

LAW OFFICES OF

# SOUTHEAST LOUISIANA LEGAL SERVICES

RECEIVED  
MAY 9 2011  
SLLS SERVICES CORP  
RECEIVED

P.O. Drawer 2867  
Telephone: (985) 345-2130

1200 Derek Drive  
Suite 100  
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Hammond, LA 70404  
Website: [www.lawhelp.org/la](http://www.lawhelp.org/la)

May 5, 2011

Mr. Willie Abrams  
Legal Services Corporation  
3333 K. Street NW  
Washington DC 20007

Re: Draft Report from the Program Quality Visit of SLLS

Dear Willie:

Once again, I want to tell you how much we enjoyed the visit by you and your team. We appreciate the time they devoted to reviewing our efforts and their thoughtful ideas as to what we can be doing better.

Thanks for the opportunity to review the draft report and correct factual errors. Mark and I reviewed the report and we found the following factual errors.

1. Page 4 Last paragraph, second sentence "It (SLLS) is headquartered in Hammond." SLLS does not designate a "headquarters."
2. Page 6, first paragraph--The draft report says that "a significant *majority* of the program's closed cases are in the family law area." This is incorrect. Our closed family cases for 2009 only represented 35.5% of our total cases and 34.1% in 2010. Housing has represented 24% to 25% of our closed cases in recent years, followed by income maintenance and then consumer. (Maybe, report meant to say significant *minority* of closed cases?)
3. Page 6, second paragraph: The report states that we have an in-house pro bono project in Hammond. We do not. We have one in Covington.
4. Page 7, second paragraph—referring to the oil spill funding proposal, to be fully accurate, Report should add "which was successfully funded with SLLS as the lead agency in Louisiana."
5. Page 11 - outreach offices - Fails to mention that Marrero office staffs weekly intake at an outreach office in St. Charles Parish.

6. Page 13, first paragraph—The report says “SLLS’s grant for the New Orleans office covers three parishes.” The grant is for 3 parishes and one city court in a fourth parish, and it is not a grant for the New Orleans office. It is an SLLS grant.
7. Page 13, “LCJC”. “LCJC also screens applicants for the SLLS pro se divorce clinics.” - LCJC screens applicants for the Covington (and now New Orleans) pro se divorce clinics because they do family law intake for Covington and New Orleans. LCJC does not screen applicants for the Hammond pro se divorce clinics because they do not do family law intake for the Hammond office.
8. Same paragraph - “instead adverse parties and other information are e-mailed to the Hammond office...” This is true only for Covington, not New Orleans.
9. Page 14 - Covington office intake - The report fails to note that with the exception of bankruptcies all intake is done by phone.
10. . Page 15 - Hammond intake - “All completed intakes are given to the Hammond office's managing attorney for general litigation.” Domestic intake goes to the managing attorney for domestic work.
11. Page 16—first paragraph, last sentence—the Report says that Language Line is used in a non-intake context if Spanish speaking staff are not available. We use Language Line for languages that our staff members do not speak. We have not had to use Language Line for Spanish speaking clients because we have many Spanish speaking staff, and they are always available.
12. Page 16, Finding 8, paragraph 2—The report says outreach is conducted in some parishes where a staffed office is not maintained. To be accurate, we conduct regular outreach in St. Bernard, St. Charles and Plaquemines Parishes. We have staffed offices or regular outreach (weekly or biweekly) in 7 of our 10 parishes.
13. Page 22 - Hammond and Covington office - On Page 21 the last line referring to Covington is “all closed cases are reviewed by the executive director for program operations.” The same is true in the Hammond office but that sentence does not appear under Hammond office supervision.
14. Page 22 - Footnote 22, there is no mention of the file review done by the two executive directors and litigation director of 25 files from each of the supervising attorneys, and more if there was a substantial number of files more than a year old.
15. Page 23, second paragraph—Report says three branch offices. The word, “branch” is not correct since it implies that there is a main office.

16. Page 23, Finding #13 "SLLS has a litigation director who works 60% time." The LD works 80%.

17. Page 27, fourth paragraph—Report says New Orleans office relies "exclusively on the pro bono model." In fact, New Orleans also uses judicare model and its attorneys co-counsel with private attorney volunteers.

18. Page 29 last paragraph. SLLS is governed by a 15 member board composed of ten attorneys and five client members. - You report a 16 member board which includes a community member. The tenth attorney is not a McCollum attorney and the position does not require an attorney, but the person is an attorney.

19. Page 31 - First full paragraph. "Monthly budget reports are provided to both the Treasurer and to the board as a whole." In fact monthly reports go to the Treasurer and quarterly reports go to the board as a whole.

Please note that these comments include the ones identified by Mark Moreau, so there will not be an additional letter from him reviewing the factual accuracy of your report.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Brian D. Lenard". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the typed name.

Brian D. Lenard  
Executive Director, Program Operations