

PINE TREE LEGAL ASSISTANCE, INC.

P.O. Box 547
Portland, ME 04112-0547
(207) 774-4753 V/TTY: 711 FAX (207) 828-2300

December 21, 2010

Nan Heald
Executive Director

Augusta Office
39 Green Street
P.O. Box 2429
Augusta, ME 04338-2429
(207) 622-4731

Bangor Office
115 Main Street
Bangor, ME 04401-6374
(207) 942-8241

Lewiston Office
37 Park Street, Suite 401
P.O. Box 398
Lewiston, ME 04243-0398
(207) 784-1558

Machias Office
208 Main Street, Suite 1
P.O. Box 278
Machias, ME 04654
(207) 255-8656

Portland Office
88 Federal Street
P. O. Box 547
Portland, ME 04112-0547
(207) 774-8211

Presque Isle Office
373 Main Street
Presque Isle, ME 04769
(207) 764-4349

**Farmworker and
Native American Units**
115 Main Street
Bangor, ME 04401-6374
(207) 942-0673

**Volunteer Lawyers
Project**
88 Federal Street
P.O. Box 547
Portland, ME 04112-0547
(207) 774-4348

KIDS LEGAL
88 Federal Street
P.O. Box 547
Portland, ME 04112-0547
(207) 774-8246

Cheryl Nolan, Program Counsel
Legal Services Corporation
3333 K Street NW
Washington, DC 20007-3522

Re: Draft Report of August 2010 OPP visit

Dear Cheryl:

Both the staff and Board have had the opportunity to review the draft report from the visit conducted by the Office of Program Performance on August 16 – 20, 2010.

We welcomed the opportunity to showcase our program for your team and valued the unique perspectives brought to the evaluation by each of its members. The draft report admirably serves the intended purpose of providing Pine Tree with a comprehensive and thoughtful review of program services and operations. The Report recommendations will be integrated within the program's overall strategic planning process as we move forward in 2011.

There were only minor inaccuracies contained in the report, but I wanted to bring them to your attention now, since they either involved factually inaccurate statements or might be misconstrued by a reader unfamiliar with the program.

Summary of Findings: "The Executive Director has served in this position for 21 years...."

I have been in this position for 20 years, starting in June of 1990.
(Also, the Report on page 20 references my experience as "almost 20 years.")

Finding #8 "PTLA does *not* use toll-free numbers..."

Actually, Pine Tree uses toll-free numbers for all of its statewide

projects, including the Maine Volunteer Lawyers Project, KIDS LEGAL, the Native American Unit, and the Farmworker Unit.

Finding #8: “Advocate/paralegals *and support staff* in the smaller local offices primarily handle their own intake.”

The smaller local offices are staffed exclusively by “advocate/paralegals.” The only Pine Tree staff without intake responsibilities who function in a traditional “supportive” role are employed in the Administrative Office.

Finding #9...“PTLA’s telephone technology does *not* have call queuing features or automatic distribution. Offices use individual phone systems.”

Pine Tree uses a voicemail system in its Portland, Lewiston and Augusta offices that does have call queuing features and automatic distribution for those who are logged into the system. It receives the most significant usage in the Portland field office where four paralegal advocates and several interns use the system. In both Lewiston and Augusta, intake calls are currently handled by a single paralegal advocate.

Finding #9: “It appears that a comprehensive review of the intake system has *not* yet occurred.”

The Board and staff prioritized a comprehensive review of the intake system in 2009. The review included a comparison of intake data by office and project, discussion of local office variations in intake delivery, and local “focus groups” with low-income individuals to identify areas of concern. A statewide “intake conference” was then developed by staff from Pine Tree and other legal aid programs to build on this review, including discussion of “best practices”. The conference is scheduled to be held in October 2010.

Finding #21: “The Board also has a committee for the Muskie *Friend for Legal Service* Dinner.”

The “Muskie Access to Justice Dinner” is an annual event benefitting all six legal aid providers in Maine. A special Dinner Committee is formed each year to address fundraising for the Dinner. While a Pine Tree Board member traditionally serves on the Committee, most Committee members are unaffiliated with Pine Tree or its Board.

(Note: The Dinner is incorrectly named at several places in the Report.)

Finding #25: "Other than the executive director and the fiscal officer, the staff management team is *not* involved in the annual budgeting process."

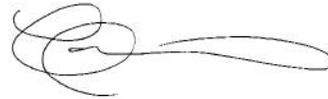
For over 25 years, Pine Tree has relied on an internal "Program Advisory Committee" [PAC] to address a range of issues affecting the program as a whole. The PAC meets 4 times a year and includes program management staff, as well as representatives of both collective bargaining units. Budget issues are reviewed and discussed at each PAC meeting.

Finding #26 "The RIL is a contract with staff that allows for additional leave accrual."

The RIL is a contract with staff that allows for additional leave accrual in return for an agreement to remain employed with the program for an additional two years. Staff who depart before their two-year commitment has been met are required under the contract to repay a *pro rata* portion of paid RIL time.

Again, we appreciate all the hard work that is represented by this comprehensive evaluation of program services and operations and look forward to using this Report as a resource in coming years.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Nan Heald", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Nan Heald
Executive Director

cc: Pine Tree Legal Assistance Board of Directors