

OCEAN-MONMOUTH LEGAL SERVICES, INC.

MONMOUTH COUNTY OFFICE

303 WEST MAIN STREET, THIRD FLOOR  
FREEHOLD, N.J. 07728  
PHONE (732) 866-0020  
FAX (732) 866-9009  
TTY (732) 866-4178



OCEAN COUNTY OFFICE

599 ROUTE 37 WEST, SECOND FLOOR  
TOMS RIVER, N.J. 08755  
PHONE (732) 341-2727  
FAX (732) 505-3080  
TTY (732) 341-0526

WILLIAM REMPEL  
MARIA LA FACE  
GARY SILVESTRI  
REBECCA R. KOLAS  
KIMBERLIE A. FIERO  
JAMES ANDERSON  
TARA REDMOND  
STEPHEN D. GERMOND IV  
CLARE E. NOWLAN  
JOAN M. DONNELLY  
VEENA VALLYATHAN  
ANU ABRAHAM

PLEASE RESPOND TO THE FREEHOLD OFFICE  
JUNE 28, 2012

Janet LaBella, Director  
Office of Program Performance  
Legal Services Corporation  
3333 K Street, NW 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor  
Washington, DC 20007-3522

Re: Ocean Monmouth Legal Services, Inc.  
Program Quality Visit on March 22 – 30, 2012  
Recipient No. 331100

Dear Ms. LaBella:

Relative to the LSC PQV in March 2012, allow this to confirm that I have reviewed the Draft report and I have the following response and comments;

Page 6, finding two, third paragraph, last line: “its emphasis on eviction cases appears to have been influenced by the abbreviated amount of time the program takes to resolve such cases, almost as much as by the extent of client need.” A review of our 2011 case statistics demonstrates the significant discrepancy to this finding. Our statistics show that 5,141 cases were closed with 1,495 as evictions, which reflects approximately 30% of our total cases. This clearly reflects the clients’ needs in our geographical area.

Page 7, recommendation 1.2.2.2: OMLS will investigate adding a link to our web page with the understanding that we are part of a state-wide system administered by LSNJ and all technological modifications are subject to influences outside of our control.

Page 8, recommendation 1.2.3.1: OMLS will develop a 5-year strategic plan commencing in late 2012.

Page 8, recommendation 1.4.4.1: OMLS will expand its survey of clients to ensure client satisfaction and program quality.

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Page 9, paragraph 2, line 7: OMLS is in the process of investigating a call back feature to eliminate waiting time on our phone system. OMLS is technologically supported by LSNJ and we will seek input, advice, support, and coordination in an effort to effectuate these goals..

Page 9, paragraph 4: OMLS has relied on an informal approach to intake supervision based in part on the funding reality we have been presented with over the last three years. Nevertheless, we will work towards formalizing a supervision plan by January 1, 2013.

Page 10, recommendation II.1.5.1: this recommendation is admirable but financially impossible at this time but we will retain this as a goal when funding increases.

Page 10, recommendation II.1.5.2: this recommendation again is admirable but a weekly training session for intake workers when most days we are minimally staffed and this is not realistic. Presently this would place an undue hardship on our clients and their needs. We realize the value of such training and meetings and will attempt to engage the entire intake staff on a monthly or bi-monthly basis.

Page 11, recommendation II.1.6.1: OMLS will continue to provide all employees information and training regarding our LEP policy and use of our language line.

Page 11, recommendation II.1.6.2: OMLS will prepare our annual report in Spanish as that is the predominant language in our geographical area. OMLS will continue to insure wide distribution of our report and other materials to our foreign language service providers, in particular, Hispanic Affairs and the Puerto Rican Action Board. OMLS will review the LSC Website to improve our service in our LEP communities.

Page 14, recommendation III.1.9.1: OMLS evaluates case distribution on a quarterly basis for each case handler.

Page 14, Finding 10, last sentence: "OMLS did not increase its total of housing cases. It handled 993 housing cases in 2011 compared to the 1, 136 in 2010." The numbers that the LSC relied on appeared to only include eviction cases. The actual number of housing cases handled in 2011 was 1,835 and in 2010 we handled 1,897.

Page 15, Finding 11, paragraph 3: OMLS will begin quarterly random case reviews in September, 2012, including but not limited to case analysis, case preparation, client interaction, and writing samples.

Page 16, Finding 11, first paragraph: the focus on stale cases was impressed on OMLS by the LSC in their most recent compliance review. Therefore, our focus has, in part, been

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placed on the avoidance of lingering cases. Closed cases will be reviewed for quality on a random basis beginning September, 2012.

Page 16, Finding 12: OMLS is committed to the generalist approach as we believe we are public-interest poverty lawyers and as such, many issues are comingled between areas of law. For example, the collection of SSI benefits will effect a child support obligation whereas a SSD benefit may effect a spousal support payment. OMLS believes it is imperative that each of its attorneys and staff have at least a working knowledge of all substantive areas. We are in the enviable position of having attorneys with specific expertise whom we rely on when needed.

Page 17, paragraph 2, 3<sup>rd</sup> sentence: "In addition, there does not appear to be any follow up once a case is settled to assist clients with obtaining emergency assistance to satisfy rent obligations". For those clients that we represent in "non-payment of rent" cases, who are eligible for rental assistance/emergency assistance, a companion entitlements file is opened. The paralegal in the Entitlements Unit will follow up and/or represent the client in a fair hearing for the benefits needed to prevent the eviction.

Page 18, recommendation III.1.12.2: OMLS is committed to holding periodic staff meetings with the least disruption of services to our clients. Unfortunately, we are not in a position to regularly turn off the phones and close the doors for formal meetings but will make every effort to have meetings in each office as frequently as possible.

Page 19, 3<sup>rd</sup> paragraph: many counties throughout the country and in New Jersey are fortunate to count mid to large size corporations as their neighbors. OMLS is not as fortunate as our counties have a dirth of corporations and this has affected our pro bono recruitment.

Page 23, 5<sup>th</sup> paragraph: OMLS will prepare and distribute a new Board handbook by early 2013.

Page 24, first paragraph: on June 18, 2012, OMLS invited two staff attorneys to discuss their important work with our Board and will continue to utilize this as a method to advise the Board on our legal work in all future meetings.

Page 26, paragraph 2: OMLS will prepare a written succession plan by January, 2013.

Page 26, Finding 18: OMLS will review its management functions in the next ninety days and determine if the present system is the most efficient and make any changes that we deem appropriate.

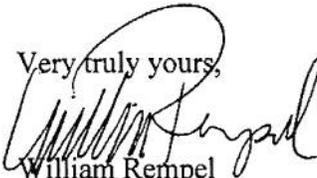
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Page 27, recommendation IV.3.18.3: OMLS believes this is an appropriate recommendation but our financial realities have forced us to operate with less supervision than we would like but we remain committed to adding supervision when our financial situation improves.

Page 29, recommendation IV.5.21.1: OMLS is committed to staff performance appraisals on a yearly basis.

Page 30, Finding 23: OMLS will investigate additional methods for fund development in the near future.

If you have any questions regarding the above, please feel free to contact me. Thank you for providing me with the opportunity to review your report and offer corrections and comments relative to the report.

Very truly yours,  
  
William Rempel  
Executive Director

cc: Christy Fisher  
OMLS Board of Trustees