



National Legal Aid & Defender Association

August 28, 2013

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Sent by email to PAIRULEMAKING@lsc.gov

Mark Freedman
Senior Assistant General Counsel
Legal Services Corporation
3333 K St., N.W.
Washington, DC 20007

Re: Expression of Interest in Participating in September 17, 2013 PAI Rulemaking Workshop;
Comments

Dear Mr. Freedman:

The National Legal Aid and Defender Association respectfully requests the opportunity for John Whitfield to participate as a panelist on behalf of NLADA in the September 17, 2013 PAI Regulatory Workshop in Washington DC. In addition, Don Saunders and Chuck Greenfield from NLADA hereby register for in-person public participation at the same workshop.

On June 25th NLADA submitted an outline of key points and comments to the three topics identified in the May 10, 2013 Federal Register Notice. Mr. Whitfield intends to expand on NLADA's comments on all three topics and to make comments on the additional questions raised in the revised Federal Register Notice of August 12, 2013. He will make specific comments in the areas of (1) Scope of Part 1614; (2) Tracking and Accounting for Part 1614 Work; and (3) Support for Unscreened Work of Private Attorney Clinics.

NLADA's Regulations and Policies Committee will meet prior to the September 17th regulatory workshop to develop more detailed responses to the recent additional questions raised by LSC. Mr. Whitfield will be prepared to share those responses at the workshop.

Summary of Qualifications of John Whitfield

John E. Whitfield has served as the executive director and general counsel of Blue Ridge Legal Services since 1989. Prior to becoming the executive director, he served as law clerk, staff attorney, and supervising attorney since first joining the organization in 1980.

In 1981 he was awarded a Reginald Heber Smith Community Lawyer ("Reggie") Fellowship.

He was the 1998 recipient of the Virginia State Bar's Legal Aid Award and he was inducted as a Fellow of the Virginia Law Foundation in 2009.

In April 2012 John was one of 6 legal aid directors from across the country invited to participate in the White House Forum on the State of Civil Legal Assistance.

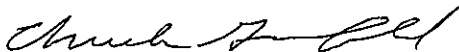
In October 2012 John was interviewed about his work as a legal aid attorney on *The Story with Dick Gordon*, a nationally syndicated public radio show produced by American Public Radio.

He is a 1977 graduate of the University of Virginia's College of Arts and Sciences, and a 1981 graduate of the University of Virginia School of Law. He is a native and resident of Staunton.

NLADA will be providing additional written comments to LSC on revising 45 CFR Part 1614 prior to October 17, 2013.

Please let me know if you have any questions. Thank you.

Sincerely,



Chuck Greenfield
Chief Counsel for Civil Programs

LSC PAI Rulemaking Workshop—September 17, 2013—Topics and Items for Discussion

Topic 1: LSC Pro Bono Task Force Recommendation 2(a) - Resources spent supervising and training law students, law graduates, deferred associates, and others should be counted toward grantees' PAI obligations, especially in "incubator" initiatives.

- How are legal service providers engaging new categories of volunteers? What are the needs of these new categories of volunteers?
- What are the obstacles to LSC grant recipients' full use of these volunteers?
- Should LSC implement conditions and guidelines to allow LSC recipients to claim PAI credit for the supervision and training of these volunteers?
- How can LSC ensure against fraud, waste, or abuse related to implementing this recommendation? What caution should LSC exercise to ensure against any unintended consequences?
- To the extent applicable, discuss how any approaches you recommend might be implemented.
- Other issues related to Topic 1

Topic 2: LSC Pro Bono Task Force Recommendation 2(b) - Grantees should be allowed to spend PAI resources to enhance their screening, advice, and referral programs that often attract pro bono volunteers while serving the needs of low-income clients.

- How are recipients currently using integrated intake and referral systems?
- Do LSC's current PAI regulations inhibit full use of integrated intake and referral systems?
- Should LSC implement conditions and guidelines to allow LSC recipients to claim PAI credit for the resources used to create and staff integrated intake and referral systems?
- How can LSC ensure against fraud, waste or abuse related to implementing this recommendation? What caution should LSC exercise to ensure against any unintended consequences?
- To the extent applicable, discuss your organization's ability to execute any recommended approaches.
- Other issues related to Topic 2

Topic 3: LSC Pro Bono Task Force Recommendation 2(c) - LSC should reexamine the rule, as currently interpreted, that mandates adherence to LSC grantee case handling requirements, including that matters be accepted as grantee cases in order for programs to count toward PAI requirements.

- How are recipients currently using or supporting pro bono volunteers in brief service clinics?
- What are the obstacles to recipients' use of pro bono volunteers in brief service clinics?
- Should LSC implement conditions and guidelines to allow LSC recipients to claim PAI credit for the resources used to support volunteer attorneys staffing brief service clinics?
- If LSC were to allow recipients to claim PAI credit for the resources used to support volunteer attorneys staffing brief service clinics under circumstances where the users of the clinics are not screened for LSC eligibility or accepted as clients of the recipient, how could that change be implemented in a manner that ensures compliance with legal restrictions on recipients' activities and uses of LSC funds?
- How can LSC ensure against fraud, waste or abuse related to implementing this recommendation? What caution should LSC exercise to ensure against any unintended consequences?
- To the extent applicable, discuss your organization's ability to execute any recommended approaches.
- Other issues related to Topic 3

LSC PAI Rulemaking Workshop—September 17, 2013—Topics and Items for Discussion

A. Scope of Part 1614

Topic 1:

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| X | 1. Please provide specific suggestions for definitions, limits, or guidelines relating to the potential addition of law students, pre-admission law graduates, or paralegals to the scope of Part 1614 activities. |
| X | 2. Are there any other categories of non-lawyers whose work should be considered for inclusion in Part 1614? |
| X | 3. If you recommend changing the definition of a private attorney, then please provide specific recommendations addressing the scope of the definition and how the proposed definition relates to the purpose of the rule. |
| X | 4. Please provide specific suggestions relating to the potential inclusion in Part 1614 of underemployed attorneys receiving reduced fees (e.g., in "incubator projects") that may be their primary professional income. |
| X | 5. Please provide specific suggestions relating to the potential inclusion in Part 1614 of attorneys who are not authorized to practice law in the jurisdiction of the LSC recipient but who may provide legal information or other Part 1614 services if permitted under local bar rules. |

Topic 2:

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| X | 6. Should Part 1614 include the use of non-LSC funds as a subgrant to provide support to attorneys working at a staff-attorney model legal aid program that receives no LSC funds? This question specifically addresses the situation in Advisory Opinion 2009-1004. Please identify how involving attorneys at non-LSC, staff-attorney model legal aid programs relates to the purposes of Part 1614. |
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B. Tracking and Accounting for Part 1614 Work

Topics 2 and 3:

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| X | 1. What criteria and methods should LSC recipients use to identify and track Part 1614 services to provide sufficient information for reporting and accountability purposes about attempts to place eligible clients with private attorneys, or others, and the outcome of those efforts? |
| X | 2. Please identify what criteria should apply to referral placement organizations, such as bar association programs, for them to qualify for Part 1614. |
| X | 3. Please identify how LSC recipients can account for and track PAI services while not creating conflicts for the recipient regarding future representation of clients, consistent with local bar rules. |

C. Support for Unscreened Work of Private Attorney Clinics

Topics 3:

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| X | 1. Should LSC permit LSC recipients to obtain some credit under Part 1614 for support for these clinics if they do not screen for LSC eligibility and the clinics may provide services to both eligible and ineligible clients? Please provide specifics about screening concerns and methods to address them. |
| X | 2. Should eligibility screening in these clinics for Part 1614 be the same as regular intake screening for LSC recipients or different? If different, then please identify methods or criteria for screening. |
| X | 3. Please identify methods or criteria for LSC to ensure that LSC recipients providing support to these clinics, if permitted, are not improperly subsidizing either services to ineligible individuals or impermissible activities. |
| X | 4. Please identify methods or criteria to distinguish between permissible activities supporting other entities and attorneys, such as general trainings, and impermissible subsidization. |



National Legal Aid & Defender Association

June 25, 2013

EQUAL JUSTICE.
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Sent by email to PAIRULEMAKING@lsc.gov and by regular U.S. mail

Mark Freedman
Senior Assistant General Counsel
Legal Services Corporation
3333 K St., N.W.
Washington, DC 20007

Re: Expression of Interest in Participating in July 23, 2013 PAI Rulemaking Workshop; Comments

Dear Mr. Freedman:

The National Legal Aid and Defender Association respectfully requests the opportunity for Silvia Argueta to participate as a panelist on behalf of NLADA in the July 23, 2013 PAI Regulatory Workshop in Denver. In addition, Don Saunders and Chuck Greenfield from NLADA hereby register for in-person public participation at the same workshop.

The following is a brief outline of NLADA's key points and comments, followed by a statement of summary of qualifications and a completed checklist of the topics and items that NLADA will address at the workshop.

Brief Outline of NLADA’s Key Points and Comments Related to the Three Topics Identified in the Federal Register Notice

Topic 1: LSC Pro Bono Task Force Recommendation 2(a)—Resources spent supervising and training law students, law graduates, deferred associates, and others should be counted toward grantees' PAI obligations, especially in “incubator” initiatives.

NLADA is fully supportive of this recommendation. Legal aid programs often spend considerable time training and supervising law students, law graduates, paralegals, attorneys not admitted in the program’s state, in-house counsel and others. Programs have found that their investment in training and supervising these volunteers has generated increased involvement in pro bono activities during later periods of time.

Two opinions of LSC’s Office of Legal Affairs, OLA External Opinion # EX-2005-1001 (staff attorney time spent working with and supervising volunteer law students volunteering may not be counted toward PAI requirement) and OLA Advisory Opinion # AO –2009-1007 (payments provided to an attorney as part of an “incubator program” cannot be considered towards PAI requirement if the attorney has been employed as an attorney with the program for any portion of the last two years) unduly restrict the type of activities in which an LSC-funded program can engage that can be considered towards the 12.5% PAI requirement. We urge LSC to make it clear that 45 CFR Part 1614 does not have these limitations and barriers to effective, efficient and innovative pro bono efforts.

LSC should make clear what activities can be included toward the PAI requirement, but also allow enough flexibility for programs to create innovative PAI approaches. The use of “including, but not limited to” language where appropriate is encouraged.

Topic 2: LSC Pro Bono Task Force Recommendation 2(b)—Grantees should be allowed to spend PAI resources to enhance their screening, advice, and referral programs that often attract pro bono volunteers while serving the needs of low-income clients.

NLADA is fully supportive of this recommendation. Screening, advising and referring LSC-eligible applicants in support of the effective use of pro bono resources should be an allowable activity counted towards the PAI requirement. Through intake, referrals and other supportive efforts, LSC-funded programs provide invaluable support to local pro bono programs and develop close working relationships and collaborations with the organized bar and other groups. Their relationships with the private attorneys in their service areas is also greatly enhanced.

LSC Office of Legal Affairs Advisory Opinion AO-2011-001 (the dollar amount of time spent on advice and referral of LSC-eligible applicants cannot be counted toward the PAI obligation) is inconsistent with the underlying requirements of Part 1614 and fails to accommodate the flexibility provided grantees under Part 1614. (See attached August 4, 2011 letter from NLADA to Victor Fortuno, Vice President and General Counsel). LSC should ensure that the revised regulation rejects the approach of this opinion, much of which appears to be based on an unclear LSC policy determination.

Topic 3: LSC Pro Bono Task Force Recommendation 2(c)—LSC should reexamine the rule, as currently interpreted, that mandates adherence to LSC grantee case handling requirements, including that matters be accepted as grantee cases in order for programs to count toward PAI requirements.

NLADA is fully supportive of this recommendation. Mandating that PAI activity must be connected to LSC case requirements in order for the activity to be counted toward the PAI requirement constricts the ability of programs to operate effective, efficient and innovative pro bono projects.

LSC Office of Legal Affairs External Opinion EX-2008-1001 (persons served by pro bono clinics must be screened for eligibility in order for related expenses to be counted towards the PAI requirement) places significant limitations on an LSC-funded program's ability to develop creative and successful pro bono models. By requiring the program to consider clinic clients to be program clients, LSC would be acting to limit the legal assistance available to low-income individuals in the areas served by the clinics. This is counter-productive to, and inconsistent with, the goals of the PAI rule. (See attached May 14,

2008 memo from Linda Perle and Alan Houseman of CLASP to Karen Sarjeant and Victor Fortuno). LSC should ensure that the revised regulation rejects the approach of this opinion.

Protection against fraud, waste or abuse related to implementing the above recommendations.

Protection against fraud, waste or abuse with respect to each of these recommendations can and should be effectively addressed through the Independent Auditor procedures and compliance reviews otherwise utilized with respect to compliance activities. NLADA urges LSC to not create burdensome and unnecessary requirements in the name of protection against fraud, waste or abuse. It is particularly important to not discourage pro bono/private attorney involvement in effective programs and services that often occurs when burdensome documentation and detailed compliance requirements are imposed.


Summary of Qualifications of Silvia Argueta

Silvia Argueta is the Chair of the Regulations and Policies Committee of the NLADA. In this position, she works with committee members who are executive directors and senior managers in legal services organizations. The committee analyzes and makes recommendations to regulatory bodies regarding proposed new rules, regulations and policies as well as any amendments to those already in existence. Ms. Argueta is the executive director of the Legal Aid Foundation of Los Angeles since 2009. She has been an attorney for 23 years.

NLADA will be providing additional written comments to LSC on revising 45 CFR Part 1614 prior to October 17, 2013.

Please let me know if you have any questions. Thank you.

Sincerely,



Chuck Greenfield
Chief Counsel for Civil Programs



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MEMORANDUM

TO: Victor Fortuno, Vice President and General Counsel

FROM: Deierdre Weir, Chair, Civil Policy Group, NLADA
Don Saunders, Vice President, Civil Division, NLADA
Linda E. Perle, Director of Legal Services, CLASP

DATE: August 4, 2011

RE: Request to Withdraw OLA Advisory Opinion #AO 2011-001

This memorandum is written in our capacity as representatives of national legal services grantees and in particular those numerous grantees that are negatively affected by the conclusions reached in the Office of Legal Affairs "Advisory Opinion" #AO 2011-001. We write to add our support to the July 14, 2011 request of the American Bar Association (ABA) Standing Committees on Legal Aid and Indigent Defense (SCLAID) and Pro Bono and Public Service (the Pro Bono committee) that the opinion be withdrawn.¹ In doing so, we recognize that asking for the withdrawal of an advisory opinion is an unusual and rare request. However, given the depth of concern expressed by the ABA committees and the strength of their analysis and the adverse impact on grantees, it is critical that this request be given serious consideration.

Many LSC grantees have worked over the years in close collaboration with independent local bar associations and other service organizations, including interfaith groups, within their services areas to develop creative, efficient, and effective ways to involve private attorneys in the delivery of legal services to low-income clients. For example, in rural areas with few private attorneys, grantees have worked with these groups to develop creative models (*e.g.*, limited scope representation, self-help "plus" programs, same-day courthouse based advice clinics, advice clinics sponsored by faith-based entities, etc.), to encourage private attorneys to participate in the delivery of legal services to low income persons. While LSC grantees may mentor and support these programs, they do not uniformly operate or manage them. Often they are operated and managed by independent bar sponsored program bono programs.

One model that has proven effective in both rural and urban areas is to have LSC grantees do intake and referral of clients (including screening for eligibility and type of case) to bar

¹ To the extent that OLA External Opinion #EX-208-1000 takes the position that "cases referred to a recipient's PAI program remain cases of the recipient and the clients in those cases remain clients of the recipient," we also reiterate CLASP's 2008 objection to that opinion and seek once again to have it withdrawn as well.

sponsored pro bono programs, which then take over the direct delivery of legal assistance and representation. In these situations, the cases are not considered to be grantee cases for CSR purposes, and the grantee does not do continuing oversight of the cases.² Management and coordination of the pro bono programs and the cases that are referred by the LSC grantees remain the responsibility of those independent pro bono programs and the bar associations that sponsor them. Many grantees, particularly statewide grantees that are administered centrally, have found that private attorneys are far more willing to participate in pro bono programs operated and managed by their local bar associations (with which they relate professionally and share locally based affinities) than if the program is operated from a geographically distant LSC grantee location.

Through intake and referrals and other efforts, LSC grantees provide invaluable support to these local pro bono programs and develop close working relationships and collaborations with the organized bar and other groups as well as with the private attorneys in their service areas. This represents an innovative and creative approach to private bar involvement that relies on local bar investment in the pro bono commitment to our client service goals. In addition, these intake and referral efforts involve significant efficiencies by greatly simplifying the intake process for eligible clients who cannot be served directly by the grantee. They save time and effort for the pro bono programs, the private attorneys, as well as the clients who then only have to go through one intake process and eligibility screening before being referred to an attorney.

We believe that Advisory Opinion #AO 2011-001 (and EX 208-1001) fails to accommodate the flexibility provided grantees under Part 1614. We further believe that lack of flexibility will impair grantee private bar involvement efforts, particularly where support for pro bono participation is locally driven or hostile to the idea of having pro bono work managed or overseen by LSC grantees. This is especially true in those jurisdictions where LSC funding is not a primary source of financial support for the local private bar pro bono program.

We also believe that this opinion, which seems to be premised on a deliberately determined (but not previously published) LSC “policy”, is inconsistent with the underlying requirements of Part 1614 (see §1614.3(c)) of the LSC regulations, and undermines the goals of the December 20, 2007, LSC Program Letter 07-2. Program Letter 07-2 urges programs to use “effective, strategic, and creative engagement of private pro bono attorneys” and further urges grantees to “...evaluate how those resources that do exist could be used effectively,” notwithstanding the varied needs and resources of service areas. Specifically, LSC writes: “This Program letter encourages grantees to undertake renewed, thoughtful and strategic efforts to leverage private attorney resources in order to address more of the civil legal needs of low income persons and communities... and [urges that] LSC programs be encouraged to create a range of options that allow private attorneys to volunteer efficiently and effectively, and that produce successful outcomes for clients.”

² This is similar to when grantee programs provide support to clinics run by local bar associations and religious groups, but do not manage or run the clinic and the clients are the clients of the clinic and the private attorneys who participate in the clinics.

In light of the diminishing resources available nationwide to meet the increasingly varied legal needs of low-income persons, it is critical that Part 1614 be interpreted in a way that gives LSC grantees the greatest flexibility possible to expand the capacity and involvement of private attorneys in the delivery of legal services to low-income communities. By differentiating and mutually excluding the direct delivery of legal services from support for private attorney involved services, Advisory Opinion #AO-2011-001 frustrates and inhibits the capacity building goals underlying Part 1614. LSC grantees should be permitted to meet their required private attorney involvement obligations in a wide variety of ways that they and the organized bar and private attorneys in their service areas have determined will be most effective.

For all of the reasons stated, and for the reasons presented by the ABA SCLAIID and Pro Bono Committee, we join them in asking that Advisory Opinion #AO-2011-001 be withdrawn.

cc: James Sandman
John Levi

Memo

To: Karen Sarjeant
Victor Fortuno

From: Linda Perle and Alan Houseman

Date: 5/14/2008

Re: OSLSA Finding on PAI

We are writing this memo on behalf of Ohio State Legal Services Association (OSLSA). OSLSA is questioning the conclusions reached by the LSC Office of Compliance and Enforcement (OCE) and the Office of Legal Affairs (OLA) with regard to whether OSLSA is permitted to count certain costs associated with its pro bono clinics toward its PAI allocation, and we urge you to reconsider these conclusions.

Background

In order to set the context for this memo, it should be noted that OSLSA operates in a rural area of Ohio where there are few private attorneys and where it has been difficult to establish successful PAI programs in the past. In recent years, in coordination with local bar associations, judges, religious organizations, and other local entities such as local departments of job and family services, OSLSA has been able to help organize a number of pro bono clinics (including many "interfaith clinics") where private attorneys provide limited services to residents of these rural areas on a pro bono basis.

OSLSA's participation in these clinic activities is not intended to be viewed as "the direct delivery of legal assistance to eligible clients..." under 45 CFR 1614.3(a), which is only one aspect of PAI activity.¹ Rather, OSLSA's participation is limited to the kind of support activities intended to be provided under 45 CFR 1614.3(b)(2) which states that "[a]ctivities undertaken by recipients to meet the requirements of this part may also include, but are not limited to ...[s]upport provided by

¹ OLA External Opinion #EX-2008-1001 presumes that OSLSA's support activities are the direct delivery of legal assistance to eligible clients under §1614.3(a), ignoring the fact that Part 1614 clearly recognizes that support activities under §1614.3(b)(2) are a separate category of PAI activities that may also be allocated to fulfill a program's PAI requirement.

the recipient in furtherance of activities undertaken pursuant to this Section including the provision of training, technical assistance, research, advice and counsel, or the use of recipient facilities, libraries, computer assisted legal research systems or other resources....”

OSLSA provides a variety of support services to the clinics such as training the private attorneys, providing reference materials and pro se packets, answering questions from private attorneys about poverty law, providing laptops with frequently utilized court forms, and providing access to legal research as needed. These support services are generally not related to legal assistance to specific eligible clients. They are, however, clearly the kind of support services that are anticipated to be provided under 45 CFR 1614.3(b)(2). OSLSA’s support for the clinics is very limited in scope and remains “behind the scenes” so that the sponsorship and “ownership” of the clinics rests firmly in the hands of the local bar and the interfaith community that recruits the lawyers who agree to participate as members of the local legal communities or as congregants of the local churches that sponsor the interfaith clinics.

These pro bono clinics meet the mandate of 45 C.F.R. 1614.2 that PAI funds be “expended in economic and efficient manner.” They also represent precisely the kind of effective, strategic, and innovative effort to engage the private bar in the delivery of legal services to members of the low-income community that President Barnett encouraged LSC recipients to undertake in her December 20, 2007 Program Letter (07-2). That letter specifically encouraged programs “to undertake renewed, thoughtful and strategic efforts to leverage private attorney resources in order to address more of the civil legal needs of low-income persons and communities.” These pro bono clinics have succeeded in engaging private attorneys to provide legal assistance in an area of the state where, in the past, that has been very difficult to do using conventional PAI techniques. Even when OSLSA has tried to contract directly with private attorneys to take cases at a reduced rate, few responded and those that did only agreed to handle domestic relations cases. In contrast, the clinics have resulted in numerous private attorneys providing advice and brief service in a wide range of legal areas.

Because OSLSA’s role has been limited to the kind of support anticipated in §1614.3(b)(2) of the LSC regulations, the local bars and religious entities that sponsor the clinics have had much more success in recruiting their members to participate than would be true if OSLSA had tried to do that directly and if OSLSA ran the clinics. In part because its participation in the clinics is so limited, and in part because of the issues discussed below, OSLSA has not claimed the clinic cases as PAI cases for CSR purposes and seeks only to continue to have the time spent in its support efforts count toward its 12.5% PAI allocation.

OLA Opinion

OCE has ordered OSLSA to stop allocating the staff time that the program devotes to supporting the pro bono clinics to PAI unless the clinics do eligibility screening of the clients who are assisted by the private attorneys through the clinics and the program “counts” the cases handled by the private attorneys as OSLSA cases. OSLSA objected to the imposition of these requirements and sought an opinion from OLA on whether they were appropriate. OLA recently

responded to OSLSA's inquiry with an External Opinion (EX-2008-1001) that concluded that "in order for OSLSA to allocate toward its Part 1614 requirement the resources it provides to the clinics, the persons served by the clinics must be screened for eligibility, determined to be eligible and considered clients of OSLSA."

The OLA opinion focused its analysis on the requirements of 45 CFR §1614.3(a) which says that "[a]ctivities undertaken by the recipient must include the direct delivery of legal assistance to eligible clients...." The opinion does not even mention §1614.3(b)(2) which is the section on which OSLSA relies. That section does not specifically mention eligible clients but does describe the kinds of support activities that OSLA provides to the clinics. If §1612.3(b)(2) is not designed to encompass these kinds of support activities, it is unclear why the provision is in the rule at all and what kinds of activities it was meant to include.

Requiring Clinic Participants to Be Treated as OSLSA Clients

Even assuming the clinics were willing and able to screen for financial and alien eligibility and priorities,² OCE and OLA have also taken the position that OSLSA cannot count its support for the clinics as part of its PAI allocation unless the clients whose cases are handled by private attorneys as part of the pro bono clinics are considered to be OSLSA's clients, claiming that it "has been the longstanding interpretation and practice of LSC that cases referred to private attorneys pursuant to a recipient's PAI program remain cases of the recipient and the clients in those cases remain clients of the recipient." The opinion does not cite any regulatory provisions to support this proposition. In fact, the only support given by either OLA or OCE is a footnote in the OLA opinion that references the preamble to the 2005 revision of Part 1611. However, this preamble discussion deals only with the question of whether retainer agreements are required in PAI cases where clients are referred by LSC recipients to private attorneys. It is not relevant to the question at issue and does not address the situation of clinic clients whose only relationship is with the private pro bono attorneys who serve them.

These individuals were never clients of OSLSA, and for those who may have originally sought help from OSLSA, the program has no continuing relationship with them after referral to the clinic. For those who sought assistance directly from the clinics or were referred there by the courts or other entities, OSLSA has had no direct contact with them at all. OSLSA's role is limited to helping the bar associations and religious organizations that sponsor the clinics to organize them, to providing technical support, training and materials, and to answering questions from the private attorneys regarding poverty law issues that may arise during the clinics. This support is generally not related to the specific clients who are helped by the private attorneys who volunteer their time to the clinics.

² While OSLSA has decided not to contest the issue of screening for eligibility at this time, I note that numerous other programs have contacted CLASP in response to the OLA opinion to indicate that they also provide support to a variety of pro bono clinics that do not screen those who seek help from the clinics for eligibility and do not count the clinic clients as their own. They have indicated that this opinion will have a major impact on their ability to fulfill their PAI obligations and to continue their support for these clinics.

OSLSA considers the issue of whether clinic clients are OSLSA clients to be crucial to the continued success of the pro bono clinic effort, primarily because of conflicts issues that arise whenever an individual enters into an attorney-client relationship with OSLSA. As was noted above, the areas served by these clinics are very rural, with a limited number of private attorneys who practice there, and no legal services providers other than OSLSA. In some instances, there are so few private attorneys practicing in the local areas served by the clinics that the attorneys who volunteer as part of the clinics constitute the great majority of the private attorneys who practice there. If the clinic clients are considered to be OSLSA clients, conflicts of interest would be created that would severely limit the availability of legal assistance to the low-income community in the areas served by the clinics.

Although the clinic attorneys provide assistance on a wide variety of subjects, the biggest demand for legal assistance in the areas served by the clinics is for help with domestic problems. Most often both parties in a domestic dispute are poor and unable to afford legal counsel. Every time OSLSA assists one poor parent in a domestic case, a potential conflict is created that bars the program from advising or representing the other poor parent on a range of legal problems, including, but not limited to that particular domestic issue.

As the clinics presently work, each side in a domestic case can get some free legal assistance from either OSLSA or the local clinic. If LSC were to require the clinics to be structured so that clinic participants had to be considered to be OSLSA clients, there would be only one source of free legal assistance, because the conflict rules would prevent OSLSA from providing legal assistance to an individual where the opposing party has been helped by the clinic and vice versa.

Perhaps a couple of examples would be instructive. If all of the clinic participants had to be considered OSLSA clients, OSLSA would be precluded from later representing any person with interests adverse to a clinic client. Thus, if a man goes to the clinic and gets advice from a private attorney about a divorce, custody, visitation, or support issue and his wife or girlfriend subsequently seeks assistance from OSLSA alleging domestic violence, OSLSA would be prevented from helping her if her husband or boyfriend were considered an OSLSA client because he had received assistance from the clinic. Similarly, if one party to a dispute over the sale of a used vehicle went to a clinic for advice on his rights regarding the transaction and the other party tried to get help from OSLSA, he or she would be turned away because there was a conflict of interest.

On the other side of the issue is the situation where OSLSA cannot accept a case in the first instance because of an existing conflict of interest. In that situation a referral to the clinic is usually the only alternative that the program or the local community can offer to that person. Thus, if OSLSA is representing a woman in a custody case and her ex-husband comes to the program seeking advice as to what his rights are in the custody matter, referral to the clinic is all that OSLSA or the local judiciary can now offer. If that avenue is barred because it would be

considered to be a conflict of interest when all clinic clients are considered OLSLA clients, then in most areas served by the clinics there are no other alternative private attorneys or other providers of legal assistance to whom he can be referred.

Section 1614.3(c) makes it clear that “[t]he specific methods to be undertaken by a recipient to involve private attorneys in the provision of legal assistance to eligible clients will be determined by the recipient’s taking into account the following factors:… (3) The actual or potential conflicts of interest between specific participating attorneys and individual eligible clients....”

Conclusion

By requiring OLSLA to consider clinic clients to be program clients, LSC would be acting to limit the legal assistance available to low-income individuals in the areas served by the clinics. This is counter-productive to, and inconsistent with, the goals of the PAI rule as well as Program Letter 07-02 which was intended to enhance private attorney involvement and to increase the number of low-income people helped by the private bar. It was certainly not intended to simply increase the number of OLSLA clients, and LSC has provided no compelling reason why these individuals should be required to be treated as program clients.

Over the years since the PAI rule has been in effect, OLSLA and many other rural civil legal aid programs have struggled hard to develop effective PAI programs, often without much success. Once OLSLA realized that the key to a successful PAI program in its service area was to give “ownership” of the program to the local bar and to other local institutions, including faith based organizations, with much closer relationships to the private attorneys in their areas, private attorneys have been much more willing to participate in the effort and to provide pro bono services.

However, if LSC were to require that all of the clients served by both OLSLA and the clinics be considered to be OLSLA clients, much of the progress of the last several years would be undermined. Conflicts of interest rules would severely limit the ability of OLSLA to serve individuals where an adverse party had been served by one of the clinics and vice versa. The sense of ownership of these clinics by the bar and faith-based community that has contributed so greatly to their success would be significantly reduced. Rather than narrowing the justice gap by leveraging the resources of the private bar to handle additional clients, this requirement would have the effect of excluding many individuals who are now able to receive assistance from either OLSLA or the clinics.

LSC should be flexible in interpreting Part 1614 and should permit programs to use their creativity and imagination in order to achieve the goals of the PAI program to expand the availability of legal assistance through the involvement of private attorneys.

We urge LSC to reconsider this issue and to permit OLSLA to count the costs associated with its support for the pro bono clinics for purposes of its PAI allocation. We would like to have an opportunity to discuss this issue with both of you. Please contact Linda to set up a time for a meeting. She can be reached at 202-906-8002 or at lperle@clasp.org.

Name	NLADA – Silvia Argueta
Topic 1: LSC Pro Bono Task Force Recommendation 2(a) - Resources spent supervising and training law students, law graduates, deferred associates, and others should be counted toward grantees' PAI obligations, especially in "incubator" initiatives.	
X	How are legal service providers engaging new categories of volunteers? What are the needs of these new categories of volunteers?
X	What are the obstacles to LSC grant recipients' full use of these volunteers?
X	Should LSC implement conditions and guidelines to allow LSC recipients to claim PAI credit for the supervision and training of these volunteers?
X	How can LSC ensure against fraud, waste, or abuse related to implementing this recommendation? What caution should LSC exercise to ensure against any unintended consequences?
X	To the extent applicable, discuss how any approaches you recommend might be implemented.
X	Other issues related to Topic 1 (please specify in your submitted outline).
Topic 2: LSC Pro Bono Task Force Recommendation 2(b) - Grantees should be allowed to spend PAI resources to enhance their screening, advice, and referral programs that often attract pro bono volunteers while serving the needs of low-income clients.	
X	How are recipients currently using integrated intake and referral systems?
X	Do LSC's current PAI regulations inhibit full use of integrated intake and referral systems?
X	Should LSC implement conditions and guidelines to allow LSC recipients to claim PAI credit for the resources used to create and staff integrated intake and referral systems?
X	How can LSC ensure against fraud, waste or abuse related to implementing this recommendation? What caution should LSC exercise to ensure against any unintended consequences?
X	To the extent applicable, discuss your organization's ability to execute any recommended approaches.
X	Other issues related to Topic 2 (please specify in your submitted outline).
Topic 3: LSC Pro Bono Task Force Recommendation 2(c) - LSC should reexamine the rule, as currently interpreted, that mandates adherence to LSC grantee case handling requirements, including that matters be accepted as grantee cases in order for programs to count toward PAI requirements.	
X	How are recipients currently using or supporting pro bono volunteers in brief service clinics?
X	What are the obstacles to recipients' use of pro bono volunteers in brief service clinics?
X	Should LSC implement conditions and guidelines to allow LSC recipients to claim PAI credit for the resources used to support volunteer attorneys staffing brief service clinics?
X	If LSC were to allow recipients to claim PAI credit for the resources used to support volunteer attorneys staffing brief service clinics under circumstances where the users of the clinics are not screened for LSC eligibility or accepted as clients of the recipient, how could that change be implemented in a manner that ensures compliance with legal restrictions on recipients' activities and uses of LSC funds?
X	How can LSC ensure against fraud, waste or abuse related to implementing this recommendation? What caution should LSC exercise to ensure against any unintended consequences?
X	To the extent applicable, discuss your organization's ability to execute any recommended approaches.
X	Other issues related to Topic 3 (please specify in your submitted outline).