Monday, July 21, 2014
2:54 p.m.

Des Moines Marriott Downtown
700 Grand Avenue
Des Moines, Iowa  50309

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

Father Pius Pietrzyk, O.P., Co-Chair
Gloria Valencia-Weber, Co-Chair
Sharon L. Browne
Victor B. Maddox
Julie A. Reiskin
John G. Levi, ex officio

OTHER BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:

Robert J. Grey Jr.
Charles N.W. Keckler
Harry J.F. Korrell, III
Laurie Mikva
Martha L. Minow
STAFF AND PUBLIC PRESENT:

James J. Sandman, President

Lynn Jennings, Vice President for Grants Management

Ronald S. Flagg, Vice President for Legal Affairs, General Counsel, and Corporate Secretary

David L. Richardson, Comptroller and Treasurer, Office of Financial and Administrative Services

Carol A. Bergman, Director, Office of Government Relations and Public Affairs

Carl Rauscher, Director of Media Relations, Office of Government Relations and Public Affairs

Wendy Long, Executive Assistant, Office of Government Relations and Public Affairs

Jeffrey E. Schanz, Inspector General

John Seeba, Assistant Inspector General for Audit, Office of the Inspector General

Thomas Coogan, Assistant Inspector General for Investigations, Office of the Inspector General


Lora M. Rath, Deputy Director, Office of Compliance and Enforcement

Julia Kramer, Program Counsel, Office of Compliance and Enforcement

Janet LaBella, Director, Office of Program Performance

Althea Hayward, Deputy Director, Office of Program Performance

Bernie Brady, LSC Travel Coordinator
STAFF AND PUBLIC PRESENT (Continued):

Herbert S. Garten, Non-Director Member, Institutional Advancement Committee

Frank B. Strickland, Non-Director Member, Institutional Advancement Committee

Robert E. Henley, Jr., Non-Director Member, Finance Committee

Allan J. Tanenbaum, Non-Director Member, Finance Committee

Linda Morris, Client-Eligible Board Member and past President, Laurel Legal Services

Cynthia A. Sheehan, Executive Director, Laurel Legal Services

Susan Cae Barta, Secretary, Board of Directors, Iowa Legal Aid

Dennis Groenenboom, Executive Director, Iowa Legal Aid

Patrick McClintock, Iowa Legal Aid

Chris Luzzie, Iowa Legal Aid

Alan O. Olson, Iowa Legal Aid Board of Directors

Don Saunders, National Legal Aid and Defenders Association (NLADA)

Robin C. Murphy, National Legal Aid and Defender Association (NLADA)

Terry Brooks, American Bar Association Standing Committee on Legal Aid and Indigent Defendants (SCLAID)

Virginia Sipes, CRCRC and ISBA Access to Justice

Beth Hulett, Guest, Sioux City, Iowa
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Motions: 5, 6, 58
CO-CHAIR FATHER PIUS: My name is Father Pius. I, with Gloria Valencia-Weber, am one of the co-chairs of the Delivery of Legal Services Committee, and noting the presence of a quorum for our Committee -- although we're still waiting for Vic, but he'll be here soon -- I'll call this meeting to order.

First, if I could have an approval of the agenda. If I could have a motion.

MOTION

MS. REISKIN: So moved.

CO-CHAIR FATHER PIUS: Is there a second?

CO-CHAIR VALENCIA-WEBER: Second.

CO-CHAIR FATHER PIUS: All in favor?

(A chorus of ayes.)

CO-CHAIR FATHER PIUS: Anyone opposed?

(No response.)

CO-CHAIR FATHER PIUS: Good. The agenda is approved.

We have one minutes to approve, that from the last meeting in April. If I could have a motion to
approve those minutes?

MOTION

CO-CHAIR VALENCE-WEBER: I move to approve.

MS. BROWNE: Second.

CO-CHAIR FATHER PIUS: And Sharon seconds?

Okay. If there's no discussion -- oh, and I notice the return of Vic, so we're at full strength -- seeing no discussion on the motion, if I could have all the votes in favor of the approval of the minutes?

(A chorus of ayes.)

CO-CHAIR FATHER PIUS: And if there are any no votes?

(No response.)

CO-CHAIR FATHER PIUS: Good. Then they're approved.

Then we'll go just immediately to the main business of this Committee meeting, and that is the panel presentation on Performance Criteria Area Number Four, Criterion 1, Board Governance, something that has been of, I think, some interest to us for quite some time.

I notice Althea is here to provide the
presentations for us of the panel. So I will turn it over to you to introduce the panel and then get the discussion going about this performance criterion.

MS. HAYWARD: Thank you. Good afternoon, everyone. My name is Althea Hayward. I am the Deputy Director of LSC's Office of Program Performance. We're pleased today to have this opportunity to present to this Committee and to the Board a brief overview of a subject of critical importance to the successful governance of grantee programs, that is, the vital role of the engaged board membership, especially client-eligible board members.

In its regulations, particularly in 45 CFR 1607.3(c), LSC has made clear that its grantees must have an intentional approach to the recruitment of client-eligible board members. The regulation provides that:

At least one-third of the members of a recipient's governing body shall be eligible clients when appointed;

That they shall be appointed by a variety of appropriate groups designated by the recipient, such as
client-eligible neighborhood associations and community-based associations which advocate for and deliver services or resources to the client community served by the recipient; Recipients shall designate groups in a manner that reflects, to the extent possible, the variety of interests within the client community; and finally, That eligible client members should be selected so that they reasonably reflect the diversity of the eligible client community served by the recipient, including race, gender, ethnicity, and other similar factors. LSC really values the significant role played by client-eligible board members and the contributions they make with local grantees throughout the legal services community. Every local grantee that has been fortunate enough to have engaged, well-informed, and motivated client board membership has a critical tool for program development, for community relations, and for fundraising capacity. Client board members are the vital voices for program service delivery, and they help the program
provide services along with addressing issues that are relevant to the grantee's client community.

As LSC staff provides oversight to grantee programs, we are finding a need for increased focus on board development, and particularly the development of client board membership and engagement.

Representatives of two particular programs that have done a great job in providing support, education, and innovation as they have recruited and retained client board members are here with us today, and we've asked them to share some of the experience that they've had.

I'm going to share some introductory information. Of course, there is information in your materials generally about who they are, but I'd just like to tell you who you have here at the table.

From our host program, you have Susan Cae Barta. Susan has been a member of the Iowa Legal Aid board of directors since June of 2007, and currently serves as secretary of that board. Outside of her work at Iowa Legal Aid, Susan is a very activity member of her community of Sioux City, Iowa.
As you will see by her bio, Susan works in numerous capacities. She has been involved in the Sioux City Chapter of the American Indian Council since 1990, and is currently president of that group. Since 1996, Susan has served on the American Indian Employment and Training Board.

Next, from Iowa Legal Aid, we have Mr. Dennis Groenenboom. And of course, Dennis has introduced himself to us earlier. But I think it's important for us to know that Dennis has spent his entire professional career with Iowa Legal Aid.

He has worked as a staff attorney, senior attorney, managing attorney, and deputy director. He serves as the program's third executive director, a position he's held since 1992. And of course, you know that he is currently a member of the NLADA Civil Policy Group, and is currently the chair of that group.

Next we have representatives from Laurel Legal Services in Greensburg, Pennsylvania. Sitting to my right is Linda Morris, who is chair of the Laurel Legal Services board of directors. Linda has served on the Laurel Legal Services board since 2001. Prior to that
time, she served on the board of directors of Southern
Allegheny Legal Aid in Cambria County.

She also presents to us this afternoon a
regional and statewide perspective. While she serves
as chair of the board of the Laurel Legal Services, she
is also a member and current president of the Clients
Council of the State of Pennsylvania. Additionally,
she is currently serving as a board member of the
Pennsylvania Legal Aid Network.

Finally, to my left is Cynthia Sheehan, the
executive director of the Laurel Legal Services
program. She has been with that program as its
executive director since 2002, and has spent most of
her legal career at Laurel legal services, after having
a brief period as a law clerk in Beaver County,
Pennsylvania.

As you'll see by her bio, she has had an
extensive period or extensive work in the community.
Besides her work as executive director, she is a
founding member or a founding director for a domestic
violence center and rape crisis center in Indiana,
Pennsylvania, and as well, has founded a living
Mr. Groenenboom: Thanks, Althea. I guess from a challenge standpoint, it's important to identify clients who are able, to a certain extent, hold their own or participate in a board function, board meeting, with attorney members.

As you remember the map that I had on the thing, both our attorneys and client members don't really know each other and for the most part don't
really interact except in conjunction with Iowa Legal Aid's board meetings.

So we need to make sure that we've got people who are able to interact with each other. And having clients who have had prior board experience is certainly ideal, but that's often not the case for us.

So from a standpoint of recruitment of board members, what we do is we have these advisory councils, and our appointing authority for the client members of our board are those advisory councils. We have six client members on our board. We have ten advisory councils. So we pair two offices together, and we just rotate back and forth which office advisory council has the authority to appoint a client member to the board.

The sixth one, under our bylaws, has to be a client from Polk County. Polk County is the most populous county in the state, and we felt it was important to have a representative from Polk County.

Then in identifying who may be prospective client board members, there are a variety of things. We have a client satisfaction survey that I mentioned this morning. It asks whether people are interested in
volunteering, and it lists the various options that may be available, including service on an advisory council.

So that's our first step for it.

We ask our staff to identify clients and put a note in their Pika -- which is our case management system -- into the file to indicate whether they think this person would be a prospective -- maybe it's a good client story for the type of video you just saw, and maybe it's a client who they think would be a good volunteer to serve on the board. So we can go back and search for that.

I have individual discussions with managers all the time about identifying client members who can serve on advisory councils. But another one, our board, at their annual meeting, we do recognitions and awards for excellence in service awards and outstanding client service awards.

We try to identify three to four clients each year who we have been able to assist, and then they have gone on to do other things in their communities. And that's really been a good mechanism for us to identify clients who both have a connection with Iowa
Legal Aid, but also they've got connections in the client community and in their communities are large. Susan is a good example of that. Susan was one of the people, before she became a member of our board, who was identified and received the outstanding client service award for us.

So I think those are the types of things that we've identified as ways to identify clients. We have really not had a problem with retaining client board members when we have gone through that. Certainly things happen in people's lives, clients and attorneys, that would end their service earlier than what you would hope.

But I don't think we've had any more issues with that with client members than with attorney members of the board, and I think in part it's the mechanisms we go through to identify -- and the advisory councils really serve as a training ground for people who can then serve on the board.

So when functionally ideally, they've served on the advisory council, they know the system, they know the organization, and then they're appointed to
the board. That doesn't always happen, but that's the ideal system.

MS. HAYWARD: And Linda?

MS. MORRIS: First of all, I was appointed to the board to finish my mother, who is now deceased -- her name was Ethel Coleman -- and at that time, it was Southern Allegheny Legal Aid. So was fulfilling her term. And after that, I was elected by the Oakhurst Residents Council to serve as a board member for Laurel Legal Services.

At that time, I experienced, as being a client board member -- and I served on the board -- for 27 years I've been a client board member and have never missed a meeting. And when we were having meetings, I had a bad experience as being a client board member through the attorneys. I was elected to be president; I was the president-elect.

The president that went out ahead of me, when I went to the meeting in Pittsburgh, he asked me would I consider not taking a seat as the president. And I asked why, and I knew it was because I was a client, and I was the only minority that had served on that
board up until that time.

I told him that I'd like to know why you don't want me to be president of the board. And he said there was going to be chaos, probably, at the board meetings. And I told him that I live for that. So that was a challenge for me --

(Laughter.)

MS. MORRIS: -- as a board member, as a client board member, that I was facing. And I am now the president of Laurel Legal Services at this present time. So that was one of the barriers that we overcame as being a client board member through our board of directors.

How we pick our clients, we have a list that the clients give where the Laurel Legal Services has, through the community, like the women's health center, the churches, the Head Start programs, where we know clients are, is where we get these lists of names from to get these eligible clients.

We really don't have a problem retaining these clients because of the fact that when these clients do come to a board meeting, which it takes me about an
hour to get to the board meeting, but we do have child care, where the attorneys give up their child care money for the clients to be able to pay whoever is watching their child.

We have dinner at the board meeting. And the board meetings do not last that long, where the mother or whoever needs to get back right away because that board meeting is probably over like in 45 minutes to an hour, somewhere in there.

Our orientation, whenever a new board member comes on, we take and give that board member an orientation package that's sent out from the office. And Cynthia, who is my director, she goes over the packet with that individual.

If they call and they have a question pertaining to the packet, they read the packet and call her or whatever, or they come to the board meeting, to the committee meetings we have prior to the board meeting, and we allot time for -- if there's anything that a client needs to go over that they don't understand, financial statements and whatever is in that board orientation packet, then she goes over that
with them. And that's how we do as far as orientating that client.

Through being a client on a legal service board, I really learned a lot. I really have. I went to a lot of meetings, task force meetings, and that is really another thing that retains me on this board. And I don't plan to go nowhere until I retire.

But I went to a lot of meetings, task force meetings that were through legal service where we have the consortium, when it's the clients that meet. And we go to these meetings, and we have housing meetings, health meetings. Housing was one of my things that I really enjoy doing.

Through the housing, HUD has Section 8, which is a federal program. And through this federal program, the housing authority was not doing what they were supposed to be doing as far as the tenants were concerned because I would take the information that I would get from legal aid back to the community so they can use that information to better the community and themselves.

I would take that information back. And what
happened is whenever -- the contractors under the
Section 8 program was not doing what they were supposed
to do, and I was trying to make them do what they was
supposed to do.

I had an attorney from regional housing, legal
services out of Philadelphia -- his name was Art
Haywood -- who worked with Mark Schwartz. They
educated me on the Section 8 program. I went back to
Art and told him what was happening in my community,
which at that time I was living in the homes.

Art took time to help me file a complaint, a
federal complaint. And to make a long story short, it
was Linda Morris versus the United States of America,
and I won. The money that I got from that lawsuit I
took and put back into the community, and we took the
children to different places like the black wax museum,
places that I knew these children and I were going to
never get.

So we went to these places. We also ended up
building an Oakhurst Youth Recreation Education Center
for these kinds out of that monies that, through legal
services, I used that knowledge to do what I did.
MS. HAYWARD: Thank you.

Dennis, talk to us a little bit about how Iowa Legal Services provides orientation to its client board membership and about the continuing development of client board members.

MR. GROENENBOOM: There's one thing I want to add before I answer that question as far as the challenges for client board members. We also do child care reimbursement, as Linda was mentioning, and travel reimbursement. But it's not just reimbursement; we do an advance so that clients can get the funds to drive in to meetings, or hotel reservations.

I normally meet with clients, or always meet with client members of the board the evening before the board meeting. Our board always meets on Saturdays. And so they come in the night before. We go through the materials. And that's a way -- it really goes to your second question, which is orientation and ongoing support for board members.

We try to get our new board members, attorneys and clients, appointed before the annual meeting so that they come to the annual meeting of the board,
which is a much more informational meeting where they're hearing more from other staff. I have managers; all of our managers attend the annual meeting.

So new board members aren't seated until the conclusion of that meeting. But if we can get them there so they're sitting through that meeting, they get a much better sense of what the program's about.

We then do an in-person orientation session before the first meeting where they're actually voting as a member of the board for it. Those are done in person. We use the board and advisory council website that I had mentioned.

We also try to do a substantive presentation at each board meeting so all the board members, attorneys and clients, get a sense of what the impact is of their work. So I'll have somebody came in and talk about, as Chris did, domestic violence, or the work that we do in housing.

Then that not only educates and supports the board members in knowing that what they're doing has value, but it certainly educates the attorney members
as to what are the legal issues that our clients are facing and the clients who are sitting in the room with them are facing.

So those are some of the things that we do to train and support board members. But I think the Friday evening sessions with client members -- I bring in dinner. We sit down in a private setting. First of all, we catch up personally so that there's a feeling of camaraderie among the group.

But it also gives me a chance to find out what's on their mind and make sure that their voices are heard, and if they've got any particular questions about the materials, that we address them. It then also allows me to clue in the board president the next day to say, these are the particular areas where we might want to make sure we're drawing out the client members because this is an area they have particular interest or concerns about.

MR. LEVI: This sounds like a wonderful best practice, and I wonder how widely that's being shared with your colleague organizations.

MR. GROENENBOOM: I've talked about it a
number of times. And for us it works because our meetings are on a Saturday, so we're bringing people in on Friday evenings, the client members of the board. But it really has worked very well.

I think it's helped us also with retention of board members because they get a better sense of the value of what they're doing and the fact that we are investing in them, just as we are asking them to support and invest in us.

MS. HAYWARD: We do have a number of programs, Mr. Levi, that do practice that particular outreach to client board members. They convene a separate time for client board members to meet with both the board chair and the executive director prior to the regular board meeting so that they can have an opportunity to ask questions about the upcoming board again and to bring before both the executive director and the board chair items of concern about the program, about the community. We are finding that as we visit our programs.

Thank you so much, Dennis and Linda.

Once client-eligible board members are
recruited, boards must keep them engaged, and that is critical. We have to have their engagement in order for the ongoing work of governing the program to proceed.

So I'm going to ask Cynthia and Susan to talk to us. Can you please take a few minutes to address the importance of engaging client board members in the meaningful roles on the board that they should have? Tell us a little bit about how your programs have benefitted from the recruitment and retention strategies that you've employed.

MS. SHEEHAN: Well, I think Linda mentioned consortium meetings. And what she was referring to, in Southwestern Pennsylvania there are three programs that work closely together as a consortium, three LSC programs. And the clients have their own group called the client consortium.

Three or four times a year, we convene that group, which consists of all the client board members of the three programs, for a two-day meeting in one of the counties served by one of the three programs. We try to rotate it around.
At that meeting, the clients have a business session, at which they do their organizational structural things and talk about the issues that they would like to discuss and what they would like to see addressed within the three programs.

Then we also provide either leadership training or substantive law training, either one on Friday afternoon and one Saturday morning, or two events on Saturday morning. And those over the years have been on things such as public benefits, health insurance issues, mortgage foreclosure, unemployment benefits.

If the clients ask for a particular issue, we try to find somebody from a specialty program to address it. I remember giving one on identity theft and the census. So it depends on what kinds of issues they'd like to see.

We also send our clients to the Client Council meetings of Pennsylvania, and as it was mentioned, Linda's been president of that organization. They also have training there of a similar nature on a statewide basis, substantive law from the statewide legal
specialists and some leadership/governance training.

If it's a year in which the statewide Pennsylvania Legal Aid Network training is occurring, one of the consortium meetings takes place there and the clients are permitted to attend that. And they also have a client track where they discuss governing issues and leadership issues. So that's part of the training part of it.

We generally meet with the clients, if they are there, before the board meeting. There's always someone participating in one of the committees. All of our board committees have at least two or three client board members; at least a third of the committee composition are clients.

So they are there when the committee's discussing the issue that's going to be presented to the board, and if there's time between that and the board meeting, we can discuss personally any concerns that they may have.

The other thing that we've done, and it's not a mandatory part of our bylaws but it's more a tradition in our program, that we have alternated the
presidency of the board between the attorneys and the clients so that a client is always either the president of the board or the president-elect. And then they are also usually the secretary. So they are half of the executive committee.

So when the executive committee makes decisions, which they make a lot of in between the board meetings, which only occur now four times a year, half of that committee are the client board members.

One thing I've learned in the course of preparing for this and coming out here are things I didn't know about Linda, including her lawsuit, because that occurred while she was at the other program prior to merging one county of that program with our program, her county, Cambria. So I was really happy to hear about that.

But the other thing I didn't know about was the thing that she mentioned about having had it suggested that she resign as president, or president-elect, by a board president. And that happened, I think, a little bit before I became director or right around the time.
But she never shared it with me at the time, although I think she sought advice from some other legal services directors in the state about it. But I do recall that at that time, she said the man described it as the board being in chaos, and that was probably a pretty accurate description.

At the time I became director, there was just a lot of tension various ways -- between the attorneys and the clients, between the various counties, because there was one big county and a lot of little counties, and between the established program and the county they were taking on, which happened to be Linda's. So there were a lot of issues there, and there were some unpleasant board meetings. And the one way that we chose to deal with that was we finally, consulting with various people, decided we really needed professional help for this group.

So we hired a consulting firm, and a man came, John Scanlon, who used to work with Ken Smith, who now runs The Resource. And he attended some board meetings, and then he finally ended up doing a two-day retreat with the board and did a lot of little
exercises.  

I think when he was coming to the board meetings he did that, too; before each board meeting, he would run a little exercise, a little interactive thing, where he'd have people meet in small groups and try to address an issue.

The goal of all of this was to bring people to the realization that we really were trying to achieve the same things; they just had different views as to how that would best happen. And I think the end result of that was a very positive thing.

In all the years that I have been director since that occurred, since 2003 we probably had that retreat, I think the relationships have been really great and clients are treated with great respect. Everybody's very eager to have them take their turn as officers, and probably more so that they don't have to do it.

(Laughter.)

MS. SHEEHAN: But everybody's happy to pass it on and roll it over. And I think that the clients are respected, and they treat the attorneys with respect,
which I couldn't say always happened, either, before, there was just so much tension there previously. So I always think that that would be a best practice when there's that much tension in a board. It would be to enlist help from someone who knows how to deal with those situations, and an objective third party, because as director at the time, I was right in the middle of it, and it really was impossible for me to do that. We really needed an intervention. And I think it's all going well now.

Other than that, we do some of the same sorts of things that Dennis spoke of. We don't have advisory committees, but we do have these meetings with the clients several times a year.

We do meet for dinner, have it brought in before the board meeting, so people are sitting around chatting and exchanging pleasantries and asking about each other's families. And it creates a comfortable atmosphere for the clients.

The clients who don't want to travel -- and some of them would have to drive about two hours -- can participate by phone, and some of the attorneys do that
as well, so they're not the only ones on the phone.

I think in general, our clients have come to feel comfortable on the board, and certainly comfortable enough to run for office and to be the officers. So I think we pretty much have solved that problem.

Our clients then take all the information that they gain of the training that we do for them and with them, and they take it back to the groups that they interact with and participate in.

Some of them are with their own little welfare rights groups in some of their counties, and they do a lot of information-sharing with people that call them because people in the community know that they do that and they get calls and they share information.

They'll call us up and ask us for additional help and refer the client on to us if that becomes necessary. They all have access to our public benefits specialist to call and ask questions. The housing issues, they'll call about those, too.

Another thing that the client group did in Pennsylvania statewide, and Linda was involved in this,
too, they participate in advisory committees with the State Welfare Department, medical assistance, and public assistance, TANF.

They also have done their own work with the State Welfare Department to try to get grants for legal services. A few years ago they obtained one to work with TANF recipients for legal services. The money came to the legal services program, but the clients were instrumental in getting the state to issue this grant because they felt it was a needed service.

So they've been very helpful with the fundraising. They're helpful in disseminating information and bringing clients in, and in serving as liaisons with the community organizations that are nominating them and that they work with.

MS. HAYWARD: Thank you.

All right. Susan?

MS. BARTA: Thank you for having me be here today. It's an honor to sit amongst all the giants in our communities that help the poor people.

My parents were at the forefront of human rights struggles in Northwest Iowa and beyond, so my
earliest memories of Iowa Legal Aid was at the age of 16, when my father used to refer clients to legal services. I saw that it made a difference in their lives during their need of crisis and time, and it instilled in me a passion for social justice and the necessity for an effective legal services, and the effectiveness that legal services play in our scenario.

As an adult, I found myself in need of legal services and unable to afford legal services, which brought me to Iowa Legal Aid. It was at that time -- and that is why I got involved in Iowa Legal Aid today, is because I wanted to pay back the services that were given to me to help me with my employment issue.

I wanted to make sure that our services were there with people with similar situations, employment issues and other issues. And so that is why I got on the board.

Many people think that only criminals need legal assistance. They don't. The truth of the matter is that most people need legal services at least one time in their life, whether it is someone who is just starting out or someone that is just struggling for a
Legal services may be necessary, but then the money part of it isn't in their budget. And so the cost of not having appropriate legal information can be devastating to the client or the individual or the family involved.

Client board members are important because they are the grassroots of the organization. We've lived through experiences, legal experiences, and had to humbly -- and it's really hard to go into a place and say, I need help, I don't have any money, and this is what's going on.

So just know that when our clients walk into those doors, it's tear-jerking. It's sad. We don't want to do it but we have to do it because we don't know where else to turn.

We know the distress and we don't know where to turn. But when you become a client board member, maybe you haven't had any board experience, for example. Personally, I did. I had best practices, and have been presidents of organizations in Sioux City.

But a lot of the times, our client board
members don't have the necessary board training or have ever participated. I believe that a board organization is as strong as its leadership and as strong as its membership.

So Iowa Legal Aid has several strategies to maintain client board member commitment: A, training and development of board members; B, meaningful leadership and effective committees; C, creating and maintaining a comfortable environment for client member participation; and D, encouraging client member program ambassadorship.

A, training of board members, is important because of the limited board experience of many of the client board members. Each new client board member is assigned a client board member mentor, someone that's been on the board before, to help them make a smooth transition into their board position.

The new board member training covers the mission of the organization; the organizational structure; their role as a board member, including reading and understanding board packet information. Board member development prepares us for our roles as
board members. We learn how we can become active board
members. Board development is very important to get
the client members active.

Board development defines our roles,
functions, and limitations as client board members.
Planning and adherence to our mission statement is
critical to maintaining a healthy organization. All
board development focuses on how best to carry out our
mission, providing critical legal assistance to low
income and vulnerable Iowans.

B, good direction from the board president and
executive director effectively guide the board to
properly implementing the purpose of the organization.
Communication needs to be read and understood. Any
shortfalls can be overcome by developing good working
relationships among board members.

Committee assignments are key, and they focus
on everybody's individual strengths. Committees break
down the overwhelming task of running the organization
into manageable tasks. Committees monitor, advise, and
make recommendations to the total board.

All committees meet prior to the board with a
set agenda and a board chairman that leads that target, and this is held via telephone conference because it's hard to get everybody together at once. This process alleviates long, drawn-out meetings.

C, creating a comfortable setting allows client board members to grow into a more effective board member faster. Mentorship, training, and board development help client members learn what is expected, and helps client board members share their ideas and input.

Participating in committees helps members become comfortable with the process in a small setting, so the individual committees that we are assigned to acclimate us, and it all comes together into one big committee. So our smaller committees do make the recommendations to the larger committee.

D, having had a client board member mentor assigned to each board member at the beginning of their term helps them to understand their role as board members. The mentor is available to answer questions about the organization or direct the new board member to staff for the correct information.
We always make sure that their questions are answered, any client board member or any board member. Identifying and sharing our own personal board experiences help the new client board member to feel comfortable and feel good about what they're doing as a board member.

We also know as client board members that it's important for us to be able to make donations to our organization because when we go out and talk to our funders, our foundation board goes out and talks to our funders, we want our foundation presenters to be able to say, our total board membership donates money to the organization. So that's very critical. We're all poor as client board members, but we manage to scrape a few bucks up, and we manage to donate. And that works well for us.

We also learn through training that when -- let me see. Training and development, understanding our mission, and personal struggles that brought us to Iowa Legal Aid help us make good ambassadors. We can reach diverse populations. As I said at the start, we are the grassroots of the organization.
I attend my advisory committee meeting at my local Iowa Legal Aid office in Sioux City to keep up to snuff on information, what's happening in our area. Maybe some information I need to take from that advisory committee to our main board to address to help our constituents in Northwest Iowa.

I never, as a client board member, when I do make referrals -- and I make a lot of them; I've made two already in Des Moines, and I didn't go say I was part of this organization. Somehow it's on my forehead where people ask me for information.

(Laughter.)

MS. BARTA: But anyway, I did make two referrals. However, I don't have the authority to say that we can help as a board member. Granted, I know I'm Dennis's boss, and I can tell him what to do.

(Laughter.)

MS. BARTA: I had him carrying around my to-go package last night for a while. But anyway, I never guarantee services because I don't know if clients are eligible. And so I don't ever want to put our team on the spot.
I work really good with the local offices, like I said, as far as like when we have activities in the community that can reach our constituents. I'll tell you what was really good is we partnered up with another community organization that made a housing and landlord/tenant book, and it was so grassroots we were up at a local quick shop in Sioux City, in inner mid-city, and out of the trunk of our cars we handed out this information and we reached a lot of people.

I attend a lot of meetings. I was just recently at a meeting a while back where I ran into Senator Courtney. Okay? It's important for me to reach out to my senators, congressmen. Anybody that will listen to me, I need to talk about how good this organization is and how much it helps people and how it helped me. I always share my personal experience with the senators and congressmen. I also send them birthday cards, too, and different things.

(Laughter.)

MS. BARTA: Because I like to keep that consistency up where you're not only hitting them up, hey, help us with this funding, but happy birthday,
too, you know, if something happens.

(Laughter.)

MS. BARTA: So it's important. I have a legal aid office out of my trunk of my car. I'm on the client member advisory or ad hoc committee for the community, where we distribute our literature on various programs. And we've helped a lot of people save their homes. Foreclosure was big for a while, and I did a lot of referrals there.

But I pass out literature about the Older Iowans program, our domestic program, the foreclosure program, anything that I can help people with. And so it's ongoing. It's ongoing for me.

Only through your service during our time in need, you gave us hope, dignity, and justice. And for that, we will always be grateful. By defeating oppression, we build self-esteem. That self-esteem makes a good client board member.

My hat's off to everybody, and my panelists, because the work we do is phenomenal. Thank you.

(Applause)

MS. HAYWARD: I would like to thank each of
our panelists for sharing, and open the conversation for any questions.

CO-CHAIR FATHER PIUS: I'll go ahead and moderate. And as the co-chair, I'm going to get the first privilege. So I have a few questions.

Fascinating. Thank you all for this. This was lots of interesting ideas, lots of very good information, and helpful for me, because one of the things I keep thinking about, and looking, as the Board knows, I've been thinking a lot about the performance criteria that we have and ways to improve those.

We're not going to do it this year, but I think we will one day -- but to think about and ask you each if you've looked at them -- and if you want to email me later, that would be great, too -- but looking at the performance criteria and asking whether that adequately captures what it is we think board members should look like.

I'll take a couple of examples just from the talks. We work well partly because we do a lot of work in committee. And I think most boards must have an audit committee. If you don't have one, you really
should.

But there's nothing, for example, in the performance criteria about the use of committees or the effective use of committees. That, I think, is an oversight, and one that we should continue.

I think in your discussion, because we have a third of our members who are client members who often don't have or don't have a legal background -- probably there are a few client members that have a legal background -- we have to often treat client members a bit differently and provide an orientation that's different. And that's, I don't think, adequately captured in the performance criteria.

So if you've got anything to say about that, if you've had a chance to look at the performance criteria, if you have anything to say. If not, that's fine. But if you want to email me something later through the Board, I would appreciate it. I do want to start thinking long-term about ways in which we can improve these.

MR. GROENENBOOM: If I could address your point about the committees, we had a member of our
board probably ten or twelve years ago who was
corporate counsel for Wellmark, and he did a lot of
work on -- he was general counsel for Wellmark.

So he'd given a lot of thought to this, and
his contributions -- he was only able to serve one
three-year term on the board -- but during his term of
service, we actually wrote committee charters for each
of the committees.

We structured them so that each board member
is only on one committee unless they're also on the
executive committee. So we can go to board members and
say, this is your commitment. And if you're on the
executive committee, you've got two meetings.

So I think that having a written description
for the committees' responsibilities and dividing the
responsibilities so that board members aren't
overwhelmed and only serve on one committee was a very
good contribution that Mr. DuBray made for us.

CO-CHAIR FATHER PIUS: That's very helpful.

Cynthia, did you want to throw in anything?

MS. SHEEHAN: No. I agree, though, that doing
the work through the committees is important so it
isn't all just presented in a big long agenda at a
board meeting and nobody's ever thought about anything
before.

The more people that have had the prior
formalization with issues, the better off we are. And
we try to -- the big issues always come to committee
first.

CO-CHAIR FATHER PIUS: The other thing, just
continuing on the performance criteria, that I just
noticed was missing from it, one of the things that we
do as a Board and as Committee members is
self-evaluations, and that's not listed in the
performance criteria. I was just wondering if you do
those on your own boards, and whether or not they're
useful.

MR. GROENENBOOM: We do. And again, it was
Mr. DuBray who brought that to us. So we have two
evaluation instruments, one where we ask the board
members to evaluate themselves and their contributions
as board members, and then a second one where they're
evaluating the board as a whole.

We do that approximately every 18 months. We
have an outside person receive those, so it's not a
staff person who receives them, who then compiles them.
And it actually is Mr. DuBray, who now lives in Utah
but continues to do that for the board.
So that's been a very good addition as well,
and I think probably does make sense as a best practice
for boards.

CO-CHAIR FATHER PIUS: I think very much so.
And my last question, and then I'll it over to somebody
else, just reading this, I was going to raise it in the
other meeting but I thought I'd raise it at this one.
You talked about a TIG grant for board
communication. When I think of TIG grants, I usually
think of dealing with clients and intake and that sort
of thing. That's the first time I've heard of using a
TIG grant for board communication, which I thought was
very interesting. If you could just briefly talk a
little bit about that.

MR. GROENENBOOM: Yes. It was a TIG grant to
develop a board and advisory council website to
facilitate communication and training. And the use of
it varies depending on -- the younger board members,
who have more technology skills, are more apt to use it than our more senior ones that are kind of my vintage. So we post minutes on there. We put information on there. We have pictures so there's a way that people can -- just a short bio of board and advisory council members. The LSC regs are on there. So it's just a lot -- and then we have a training module about what's it like to be a board member? What are your responsibilities as a board member? So that was supported by a TIG grant probably four or five years ago.

CO-CHAIR FATHER PIUS: John, I think we should apply for a TIG grant and get of those for ourselves. (Laughter.)

CO-CHAIR FATHER PIUS: I'll open it up for questions from other people. Gloria?

CO-CHAIR VALENCE-WEBER: Yes. Thank you very much for that very informative set of information. I know that both of the grantee organizations have rural areas in which you have to seek client-eligible members.

I'm very impressed by what Dennis mentioned
about bringing in people the night before, the weekend
meeting, and the provision for child care, and other
things which alone keep many people from being able to
fulfill the client-eligible slot.

Is there anything that you have found is
particularly effective for, first of all, recruiting
and retaining people from more remote rural areas that
make it possible for them to really participate and to
continue participating as board members?

MR. GROENENBOOM: I guess a couple that I
would mention. One is that we have occasionally board
members who have maybe health issues, say. I can't
drive that far, or there are reasons why they can't
participate.

What I always tell them is, first of all, you
can always participate by telephone. So if that's an
option -- and we normally will have two or three board
members participating by phone in most board meetings.
So it's not just client members; it's attorneys as
well.

If there's some health issues, I've told a
client member a few years ago, saying, don't resign.
Why don't we just sit tight for the next one or two meetings? If you're sick, you can't come to the meeting.

Usually what's happened is that it's resolved and they've been able to stay on the board. That helps retain them because we invest in them and we're wanting them to invest in us as well. So giving them kind of leeway, I think, also works.

I think the biggest one is to make sure that everybody knows that they have a role to play and that they have a contribution to make. Our board members have great respect for each other. They function well together as a board. And they know that there are things that they can do that others can't do, and vice versa.

So they know that their valued. One of my -- Susan mentioned the legislature. I called her one time, and she basically said, I can't talk to you now. Senator Courtney is here, and he's the chair of the appropriations committee. I've got to go talk to him. So she knows that that was a valuable thing to do and that that's a contribution to the organization.
So I think it's building mutual respect and letting everybody know that they have a role to play. Yes, they can't serve the same role that an attorney who's got experience as an employment attorney can provide to us in a variety of issues we face. But they bring things to the table that are very important to us.

CO-CHAIR FATHER PIUS: Are there any more questions? Jim?

PRESIDENT SANDMAN: Thank you very much for the great presentation. And I especially want to thank Linda and Susan for your service on your boards. I have a question about training for board members, but not training for client board members, training for attorney board members, on how to be respectful and inclusive of clients. I myself have served on two boards that had client members, and the biggest problem I saw was the way lawyers treated the clients.

Lawyers can be elitist, and they can tend to speak in a jargon that is incomprehensible to people who haven't been trained in the law. And it's very
off-putting to people.

Cindy, I heard you talk about the facilitator that you had brought in and the difference that made. But I'm wondering if, in the training that you do for your new attorney board members, you do anything to educate them about the role of the clients on your boards and how they might think about their relationships with their fellow board members who are not lawyers.

MS. SHEEHAN: We haven't been doing that. It's perhaps a good idea. I've found, in our experience, that once the problem was solved for the group, then a new person coming in would see that that was the cultural norm and act appropriately. It seemed to have solved that problem. But I could see it might be a useful part of the attorney training.

MR. GROENENBOOM: Maybe it's to a certain extent Iowa nice.

(Laughter.)

MR. GROENENBOOM: But I think it really hasn't been an issue. The jargon one is certainly a problem, and to a certain extent, we use acronyms. And so we
have on the board and advisory council website a list of the acronyms. We try to include that in the board materials occasionally as well.

But also, the Friday evening meeting helps with that as well because then I can go through some of the things as well with client members and see what questions they have.

But I do think it's something that our attorney members are sensitized to a certain extent because often, when we do orientation, it's with all new board members. So there's often -- not always, but often -- there's a client and attorney new board members being oriented at the same time. So I think that facilitates the understanding.

But this is a board that's really maybe different from many other boards I've served on before, just based on the composition.

CO-CHAIR FATHER PIUS: We're running a little bit low on time. But I just want to see if there are any questions. Julie?

MS. REISKIN: Just a follow up to Jim's. Without being mean, I'm interested from Susan and
Linda, have you ever experienced where the attorneys maybe felt that the clients weren't -- they were nice, but they felt like maybe you weren't capable of doing certain things? And what's your advice about how you train that?

Because if people think, well, if you don't have a degree or you don't have this or that, how could a client be capable of whatever? I know you experienced that with the chairmanship. But what are your thoughts around that? Is that an issue?

MS. MORRIS: I think it is an issue because of the fact that the clients aren't knowledgeable as an attorney. And as Mr. Sandman said, there have been times where, again, when we had that problem, where those attorneys, the language that they spoke, the clients didn't understand.

The clients felt like they were belittled because of the attorneys' reaction. And I do feel that there needs to be some kind of orientation that these attorneys should go through to be able to deal with the clients as well as the clients going through the orientation that they're going through because that
really does hurt.

MS. BARTA: I believe that while I've got to concur with what Dennis said, I've never run into that on any board that I sat on. And I never was intimidated by you all because you're attorneys.

(Laughter.)

MS. BARTA: And I have more board training than probably most of our people on our board. I have best practices. I've been president of several nonprofit organizations, board president. So I was very confident.

I also think that like in Iowa, when I reached out for help with my employment issue, that I was very welcomed and comfortable with our Sioux City office. So, see, that's when I filled out the client survey and said, I'd even come and mop your bathroom if you want me to. I just need to pay you back for helping me with my unemployment issue.

So the comfort starts at the initial intake when we might be prospective clients of the organization. So I never had that feeling. Feel free to come to one of our meetings because we have fun. If
I think there's something not right the way that meeting's going, I'll jump right in. But it usually is. And we all agree to disagree. That doesn't happen that much.

But I believe, like I said in my presentation, that you need strong leaders. You have to have a strong board president. If you don't have a strong board president, that's when you're going to have problems. And fortunately, we have a good, strong board president and we have for the last nine years, along with a very good executive director. Dennis, you owe me another cookie at our luncheon.

(Laughter.)

MS. BARTA: You know what I ask him on our Friday night when he walks into our luncheons, our suppers? Dennis, did you bring my cookie?

MR. LEVI: Well, I wish we could continue having fun with all of you because we have an Audit Committee that is standing by. But I'm going to leave that to the Committee chairs, to figure out how they can end this on a happy note and still fulfill their responsibilities. Okay?
CO-CHAIR FATHER PIUS: Seeing no further questions from the board, I want just to thank you, as one of the co-chairs here, for your presence here and your involvement in this.

For some of you who've come especially from a long distance, especially for Linda and Susan, the energy that you've shown, your absolute commitment to what these organizations do, and your ability to take that back to your community is really inspirational to us.

It doesn't take an expertise in every aspect of the law. You can have all of that, and if you don't have passion for this, then you're not going to do very much. And that really inspires us, and we really thank you.

And I want to thank Susan especially for one thing that I've learned, which is the next time I get a to-go box, Jim, you're carrying it.

(Laughter.)

CO-CHAIR FATHER PIUS: Thank you all for your time here. Thank you all for coming here.

MR. LEVI: And I think we should have gotten
some of the cookies.

(Laughter.)

CO-CHAIR FATHER PIUS: And please continue to take your passion, your energy, your love for service to the poor, back to your communities so that you might inspire a new generation to do the same. So thank you very much.

(Applause)

CO-CHAIR FATHER PIUS: Just two small points of business before we end this Committee. Is there any public comment?

(No response.)

CO-CHAIR FATHER PIUS: Seeing none, is there any new business or any other business that we need to consider or act upon?

(No response.)

CO-CHAIR FATHER PIUS: Seeing none, then, I will consider a motion to adjourn the Committee.

MOTION

MR. MADDOX: So moved.

CO-CHAIR VALENCIA-WEBER: Second.

CO-CHAIR FATHER PIUS: A movement, and a
second from Gloria. All those in favor please say aye.

(A chorus of ayes.)

CO-CHAIR FATHER PIUS: Are there any in opposition?

(No response.)

CO-CHAIR FATHER PIUS: Hearing none, then, the Committee is closed.

(Whereupon, at 3:57 p.m., the Committee was adjourned.)

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