TIG FINAL EVALUATION REPORT

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Introduction

The Legal Aid Society of Cleveland (Cleveland Legal Aid) collects detailed and sophisticated outcome data on extended service cases and is a model for other legal services programs in doing so. The same rigorous assessment of Cleveland Legal Aid's limited service work for clients could not easily be accomplished in the past since attorneys seldom know what happens after only one contact with a client to provide advice or fill out a form. Legal Aid developed this Outcome Texting Project to test the efficacy of using text messages to follow up with clients after providing limited service and learn whether or not the assistance provided by Legal Aid helped solve the client's problem.

This Final Evaluation Report, organized into the sections listed below, details the reasons for our conclusion that texting with clients is a viable way to collect outcome data for limited services; and that in doing so, we will improve the effectiveness of the brief services offered.

    I.   Project Goals and Objectives
   II.   Evaluation Data and Methodologies
  III.   Summary of Major Accomplishments, Recommendations and Future Steps
  IV.   In-Depth Analysis of Accomplishments
   V.   Factors Affecting Project Accomplishments
  VI.   Strategies to Address Major Challenges
 VII.   Major Lessons and Recommendations

I. Project Goals and Objectives

The goal of Cleveland Legal Aid's Outcome Texting Project was to develop a system based on text messaging to gather outcome information about limited services, community education and emerging issues to inform strategic decisions and tell the Legal Aid story. We had three objectives in working toward this goal:

1. Develop a system, using texting, to gather outcome information about limited assistance and community legal education. Note that the technology and system to be developed for this objective and the second objective are the same; the data collected (outcome versus emerging issues), how it is integrated into Pika, and the way Legal Aid uses it to inform strategic decision-making differ.

2. Using the developed texting system, gather information from clients / recipients / participants about new and emerging issues.

3. Develop a system to incorporate outcome data about limited services and community education and input on emerging issues into the organization's strategic decision-making process and telling the Legal Aid story.

We largely achieved the goal set forth in this project by creating a system to text clients and collect outcome information about brief services provided to them. We also created a system for collecting outcome data about community education and learned a great deal about what works and what does not work in this context.

The one significant change to our initial goal and objectives was that we decided mid-way into our project that we should not test emerging issue questions as part of this initial texting project, although we still anticipate doing so in the future. The emerging issue questions were eliminated as we learned the importance of establishing a texting relationship with our client community, and recognized the potential for harming that relationship if the emerging issue question inadvertently led clients to believe Legal Aid would help with issues we do not currently address.

The details provided in the subsequent sections of this report illustrate the success of our Outcome Texting Project in terms of both accomplishing the goals and objectives set forth in the evaluation plan, and in terms of illustrating significant additional potential for using text messages to collect outcome data about limited scope services.

II. Evaluation Data and Methodologies

Cleveland Legal Aid relied on the methods anticipated and the data sets intended in order to evaluate the Outcome Texting Project and provide the findings in this report. Specifically, methodologies included:

- Evaluate and select appropriate technology
- Review professional literature
- Use brief services data to identify problems and brief services to include in pilot
- Use case management system (Pika) to identify recipients of text messages
- Draft text messages and schedule when to send them
- Consult with Advisory Committee and staff
- Establish new work flow and responsibilities for staff involved with project
- Send batches of outcome messages, automate information messages, enroll participants in community education messages
- Use data in strategic decision-making

The data collected and analyzed are:

- Pika data (including demographics of who does and does not agree to receives texts)
- List of information text messages
- List of community education messages
- List of outcome messages and schedule for sending them
- List of Advisory Committee members
- Feedback from Advisory Committee and staff
- Number and frequency of different messages sent
- Response rates
- Outcome data
- Examples of ways data are used in strategic decision-making

The following chart summarizes the scope of the Outcome Texting Project:

Total applicants with mobile phones agreeing to receive text messages	14,354
Total number of people who received any outcome text message	995
Total number of cases included in outcome text message activities	1,016
Total number of unique phone numbers that texted Legal Aid for information[1]	11
Total number of trainings where participants invited to enroll in text message group	25

Additionally, eight problems areas were identified where follow up with applicants/clients by text could be tested. The set of text message questions developed to send to people related to these eight problems are called "activities." The eight activities are:

01A – Judgment Proof	60B – Eviction w/ Claim for $ Damages
32A – Pro Se Divorce Clinic	67A – Foreclosure > 150% FPL
38A – Pro Se Child Support Clinic	67B – Foreclosure < 75% FPL
60A – Housing Conditions	89A – Criminal Record Sealing

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[1] The information message functionality of the Outcome Texting Project was not widely publicized; thus, the number of unique users who were not part of any other texting activity is relatively low.

III. Summary of Major Accomplishments, Recommendations and Future Steps

Cleveland Legal Aid successfully texted with clients who received information and brief services to learn the outcomes from the help provided. Over 60% of participants responded to the text messages sent by Legal Aid, a significantly higher response rate than achieved with paper surveys.[2] Data about the effectiveness of brief services in a variety of problem areas will inform decision-making about when and how we provide brief services to clients.

First, in order to collect these data, Cleveland Legal Aid identified FrontlineSMS as an expert partner in SMS technology and worked closely with their staff to develop a system for sending and receiving text messages with clients. In addition to learning the FrontlineSMS system, Legal Aid also established a texting number via Twilio, and implemented the necessary procedures at intake to obtain mobile phone numbers along with permission to send text messages to applicants.

Second, Legal Aid staff worked internally to identify the problem codes and other relevant variables from the case management system (Pika) that would enable us to identify people to receive certain text messages. At the same time, and with advice and input from FrontlineSMS staff, we developed the series of text message questions that people would receive, depending on the problem for which they contacted Legal Aid.

Third, Cleveland Legal Aid began sending messages and receiving responses. The responses were captured in FrontlineSMS, downloaded to CSV file, and analyzed in Excel. We have begun analyzing the results to inform decisions about what level of service to provide to clients for different types of problems.

Based on Cleveland Legal Aid's experience with texting thus far, we recommend:
- Work with an expert partners in SMS technology;
- Remember that texting and technology is a means to an end, not the end itself;
- Ask questions of clients that relate to the specific issue they are facing; and
- See input from program staff, external advisors and members of the client community.

The future steps Cleveland Legal Aid hopes to take with texting are numerous and include:
- Create an API between case management system and texting system;
- Improve data collection and storage in the text message system;
- Work with social scientist to maximize learning from these data;
- Develop process for texting in languages other than English;
- Create library of "activities" for all problem codes; and
- Use texting to explore emerging issues in the community.

This project demonstrated that texting clients for outcome data about brief services can be accomplished with moderate investment in technology and time. Additionally, the initial results show that brief services can effectively resolve legal problems for some people.

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[2] See Appendix H for a detailed comparison of text to paper surveys.

IV. In-Depth Analysis of Accomplishments

Cleveland Legal Aid achieved its goal for the Outcome Texting Project of creating a texting system through which we learned about the effectiveness of brief services delivered to our clients. Much was learned throughout the project that contributed to its success from internal dialog, expert advisors, FrontlineSMS partners, as well as trial and error. The vast majority of time was spent on the first objective of developing and piloting the texting process. The second objective changed midway into the project as we came to realize both the significance of the texting relationship with our client community and risks involved in asking about emerging issues. Finally, while less time has been spent thus far integrating these results into Legal Aid's strategic decision-making, it has started happening in limited ways and will be more comprehensively integrated going forward.

Objective 1: Develop a system, using texting, to gather outcome information about limited assistance and community legal education.

a. Hardware and software used in texting project

At the outset of the Outcome Texting Project (OTP), Cleveland Legal Aid explored technology needs with our technology consulting firm at the time, All Covered. We consulted Aaron Worley, author of Pika Case Management System, regarding Pika capabilities. We spoke with staff at other legal services programs engaged in SMS projects related to brief service outcomes. Cleveland Legal Aid identified eight potential vendors, issued an RFP to six of them, and received one response from Occam Technologies, Inc. (aka FrontlineSMS). Cleveland Legal Aid and FrontlineSMS initially executed a contract for software development needed to integrate and automate texting technology with Pika. Legal Aid anticipated FrontlineSMS would build an API to connect Pika and FrontlineSMS's texting platform but ultimately a manual process proved more viable.

We also evaluated whether to collect and analyze outcome data via text messages directly or with a link to a survey. Based on numerous discussions we learned direct messages would provide access to all mobile users, whereas survey links could only be accessed by smartphone users with data plans. Direct messages were also less burdensome to recipients.

Cleveland Legal Aid articulated our priorities for the OTP: to automate as much as possible so that minimal time was required of staff; that the system be accessible to the maximum number of clients; and that results could be linked to individual clients. These priorities in conjunction with the information learned from others resulted in our final decision to use short, direct text messages to collect outcome data.

Additionally, our preliminary discussions with FrontlineSMS prompted us to consider the need to establish a texting "relationship" with the client community prior to attempting to collect outcome data. A literature review and discussion with other providers confirmed the importance of this step. See an annotated bibliography in Appendix A.

FrontlineSMS CEO, Sean McDonald, recommended we use short, automated messages with standard but specific language to discrete groups to introduce the public to Legal Aid's text presence without significant burden on Legal Aid staff. He indicated that people need to

expect to exchange texts with Legal Aid before we can reasonably expect clients to provide outcome information via text. As a result, Cleveland Legal Aid created general informational text messages (e.g. intake hours, office locations, brief advice clinic schedule) as well as specific informational text messages (e.g. link to rent deposit process to clients who call about housing conditions issues). These steps were intended to "prime" our clients and the community at large for engaging with us via text regarding outcomes.

FrontlineSMS provides the platform for managing the text messages and links Legal Aid data with the process of sending text message via the carrier, Twilio. See a flow chart depicting the technical process for sending messages in Appendix B. Legal Aid set up a FrontlineSMS account as part of this project. Legal Aid chose Twilio as the company to provide the SMS number and send and receive text messages based on the parameters set up in the FrontlineSMS account. Legal Aid set up a Twilio nonprofit account which is free and comes with a credit of $500 plus a 25% discount. Typical costs are $1.00 per month plus $.0075 per text message (sent or received) of 160 characters; but with the nonprofit status, the cost to send 1000 messages per month would be $6.40 after using up the credit.

One of the features Cleveland Legal Aid incorporated into its texting project required us to also create a Zapier.com account. Zapier allows different apps to coordinate with each other. In the case of our project, Zapier allowed for a specific text response from a client to trigger an email message to a designated Legal Aid staff person, informing that person an action needs to be taken, such as a call-back is needed to the client who texted. This step reduces the frequency with which Legal Aid staff needs to monitor our FrontlineSMS inbox. At the end of the pilot period, FrontlineSMS had developed a process for triggering the email alerts directly through its system and the Zapier account was no longer required.

Initially, Cleveland Legal Aid envisioned linking our case management system, Pika, with the FrontlineSMS system, through a custom built API. After FrontlineSMS learned more about the version of Pika we currently use, they advised it was not a good use of resources to build such an API. Cleveland Legal Aid anticipated upgrading its case management system in the near future, so postponed the complete automation of this process. In the meantime, a staff person uploads data files generated from Pika into FrontlineSMS and schedules initial messages to be sent to the relevant groups of clients. This additional step takes about 20 minutes one time each week. The reports run on a schedule and are delivered automatically via email on a weekly basis, and the process of uploading to FrontlineSMS is straightforward.

b. Description of pilot

The pilot portion of the OTP started February 6, 2017. Since May 2016 when Legal Aid intake staff began asking all callers for permission to text, 14,354 applicants have mobile phones and consented to receiving text messages as of October 12, 2017. A total of 995 people were included in the pilot between February 6 through October 12, 2017.

Cleveland Legal Aid incorporated three types of text messages into its project: outcome messages, community legal education and outreach (CLEO) messages, and information messages. Each of these worked slightly differently.

Outcome Messages: Eight issues were identified at the outset, and a corresponding "texting activity" was developed for each issue. Each activity was based on a specific problem code and the specific brief service delivered by Cleveland Legal Aid to applicants who called with that problem. An "activity" consists of the series of text question a person receives from Legal Aid. We considered using branching logic in the surveys so that only people who responded with a particular answer to the first question would receive the next question. We decided against such a system and instead sent all qualifying participants all messages.

A report was created to pull from the case management system clients who met the criteria for each activity. All clients included in the pilot consented to receive text messages from Legal Aid and identified English as their primary language. The other criteria for each activity were based on problem codes, specific problem codes, closing codes and dates, and who provided the service (intake staff, substantive group, volunteer). We limited the people included in each activity to those who received the exact same service in order to maximize the helpfulness of the data for improving our service delivery. A detailed list of each activity created, the text messages included in them, the timing of the text messages, and the criteria for inclusion in an activity is provided in the Outcomes Messages Handout in Appendix C.

The process for identifying clients, sending messages, and collecting data ran smoothly once implemented. Legal Aid's Data Analyst created the reports described above that identified the appropriate group of clients for each activity. The reports were delivered automatically via email each week. FrontlineSMS staff created an automated process in their system that allowed Legal Aid to upload the list of client (i.e. text recipients) and trigger with the click of a button the appropriate series of questions for the relevant activity. The timing of when each question would be sent was predetermined as part of the programming accomplished by FrontlineSMS. Messages sent and received can be viewed by Legal Aid staff by logging in to Legal Aid's FrontlineSMS account and viewing the inbox. The FrontlineSMS system keeps track of the messages sent and responses received, compiles high level summary data in tables for easy viewing, and makes detailed data available through exporting a CSV file. Legal Aid's Data Analyst used the CSV file to complete the analysis.

CLEO Messages: Two different sets of CLEO messages were developed and tested in the pilot. The messages sent to gather feedback about community education presentations were triggered by participants "enrolling" in a group. At the end of a presentation, participants were invited to text a key word to Legal Aid's number. By doing so, they would automatically be enrolled in a group to receive specific text questions. The two CLEO activities Legal Aid tested were for service providers who attended a "Legal Aid 101" presentation and job training participants who attended an "Employment: Know Your Rights" presentation. For a detailed list of the activities and corresponding questions, including timing, see the CLEO Messages Handout in Appendix D.

Information Messages: In order to promote texting with Legal Aid, we also began offering general information via text to our client community. We initially created 4 messages that are automatically sent in response to a person texting a key word to Legal Aid. For example, a person can text "hours" to learn our intake hours or "clinic" to find out the location of the next brief advice clinic. As referenced above, we did not publicize the information messages widely and initially only developed messages related to Legal Aid services. As a result, they were not used frequently. Going forward we are building more substantive information

messages and promoting them routinely with our client community. For a detailed list of the initial information messages, see Information Messages Handout in Appendix E.

c. List and schedule of outcome text messages

The process of developing the outcome activities was rigorous. Cleveland Legal Aid completed a comprehensive review of its extended service outcome questions in the middle of 2016, which helped us prepare for thinking about collecting brief service outcome data. We looked at all brief services cases closed as As and Bs over a three year period to determine which problems we most commonly addressed with brief service. See results of this analysis for Brief Services Closed Case Data in Appendix F. After identifying the most common 10 – 15 problem codes closed as As and Bs, we considered what specific service was provided to those clients. In order to ask about the outcome achieved, we determined it was important to know the specific information, advice or forms provided. Legal Aid also consulted FrontlineSMS about best practices in drafting text messages, and learned messages should be less than 160 characters, but longer messages would be tolerated provided the text clearly explained (1) why we were texting and (2) what we wanted the recipient to do.

Draft messages were reviewed by multiple groups, including the Advisory Committee, staff, and FrontlineSMS. Substantive groups helped identify messages that may not be relevant to all people receiving them, which we then omitted or corrected. FrontlineSMS staff reviewed multiple versions of the messages and provided crucial feedback about whether to use branching logic (we did not), and how to keep users engaged via text throughout an activity. We continued consulting with staff from other legal services programs as well, and learned primarily that it is hard to generate reasonable response rates.

Ultimately, a small team of Cleveland Legal Aid staff worked closely to ensure that based on coding in Pika, we could be confident that each person receiving a message actually got the service from Legal Aid related to the outcome questions sent via text.

d. List of information text messages

As described above, Cleveland Legal Aid did not initially plan to develop information text messages as part of this project but based on the advice received from FrontlineSMS and the experiences of others attempting to use text messages to collect data from clients, we determined it was a necessary first step in this project. The first set of information messages we developed provide basic information about Legal Aid to users. Anyone can text Legal Aid to learn our hours, intake options, grievance process, office locations, etc. A person must send a text starting with LAS followed by a key word to trigger a reply with the automated information message.

The most frequently used information message provides the date and location of the next Brief Advice Clinic offered by Legal Aid. Development of this message required coding that would pull the relevant clinic information from Legal Aid's website into the automatically generated text response. Some modifications were necessary to Legal Aid's website to make this possible, and certain security concerns needed to be addressed in reaching a solution to make this message work correctly. FrontlineSMS was excited to develop and resolve the

problem because pulling website feeds into text messages is technology with broad application beyond Cleveland Legal Aid's texting project.

We also began offering substantive information via text as well. The substantive information messages provide users with a link to Legal Aid's website where detailed Frequently Asked Questions, self-help or Know Your Rights materials are posted on numerous topics. Currently two messages are active: 1) using the rent deposit process to address housing conditions problems; and 2) lead poisoning rights, remedies and resources.

e. Results of pilot

For the period February 7, 2017 to October 12, 2017, 995 people received outcome text messages from Legal Aid and 616 responded to at least one message (other than opting out), for an overall response rate of 61.9%. For a detailed report with complete pilot results, see Appendix G.

The number of people eligible to be included in each of the eight activities varied significantly, as did the activity-specific response rates. The largest group of clients in the pilot were those who received advice letters about why Legal Aid did NOT recommend bankruptcy and instead suggested alternative options for managing debt. The "Judgement Proof" activity questions were sent to 521 people, only 32 opted out, and 305 responded to at least one of the series of questions (58.5% response rate). In response to Message A, asking if the advice was helpful, 115 people said yes (63%) and 68 said no (37%). When we asked in Message B if the person took any of the recommended steps, 78 said yes (51%) and 75 said no (49%). Finally, Message C asked if the person's problem was resolved; 22 said yes (17%) and 108 said no (83%).

The activity with the highest response rate in the pilot – 79.2% - were those who received help from Legal Aid through our pro se divorce clinics. Of the 45 who received the last question asking if they obtained a divorce, 15 replied "yes." Engagement was also high in the "Criminal Record Sealing" activity. Messages were sent to 53 people, only 3 opted out, and 32 responded to at least one of the series of questions, for a response rate of 60.3%. In response to Message A asking if the person filed the papers we prepared, 24 said Yes, 6 said Not Yet, 0 said No. In response to Message B offering additional help, 2 people texted back a request for help. In Message C we asked if the record was sealed and 8 people said Yes, 4 people said Not Yet, and 1 said No.

Responsiveness to text surveys is significantly better than paper surveys mailed to clients. See a comparison of paper and text surveys in Appendix H. Additionally, the text surveys can be more easily administered close in time to when services were delivered to a client, and can be more easily tailored to the specific problem a client faced when coming to Legal Aid. The text surveys are also less expensive to administer than paper. These results indicate text surveys are more effective, efficient, and cost less than paper surveys.

The initial results provide the first set of data for Cleveland Legal Aid to begin a thorough analysis of the effectiveness and efficiency of brief services provided to clients. In anticipation of the significant benefit these data will provide to our program planning, we

have renewed our contract with FrontlineSMS and intend to develop text surveys for all cases closed as As and Bs.

f. Demographics of potential text recipients compared to all applicants

The vast majority of people applying to Cleveland Legal Aid for help have mobile phones (86.4%) and of that group, most give us permission to send them text messages (84.4%). Given that some applicants do not have mobile phones or do not want us to text them, as part of this project we looked at how similar or different the group of potential texting participants is to the full group of applicants for service. Overall, the two groups are very similar. We compared them on several demographic characteristics: race/ethnicity, gender, housing situation, language and age (by decade).

The characteristic where the two groups differ most is age. Not surprisingly, older adults are less likely to be in the group of potential text recipients. Additionally, language also reflects differences we will need to explore further. Spanish speakers were somewhat less likely to be included as potential text recipients but those speaking languages other than English or Spanish were significantly less likely to be included in the group that could receive texts. See the comparison of the two groups on each demographic variable at Appendix I.

g. Internal operations required to support texting project

Responsibility for managing the Outcome Texting Project belonged to Cleveland Legal Aid's Managing Attorney for Community Engagement. She worked closely with the Executive Director, Deputy Director for Advocacy, Data Analyst, and Intake Supervising Attorneys on a regular basis throughout the project. The vast majority of time was spent by this group preparing and planning for sending text messages to the general public, applicants and clients. Once the process was established, operation of the texting project required minimal time from the Managing Attorney for Community Engagement, Data Analyst, and Intake Supervising Attorneys.

The planning and preparation for the texting project required a variety of tasks. Throughout the entire planning process, Legal Aid engaged with FrontlineSMS staff on a regular basis for input, answers to questions, and technical expertise. Additionally, the Executive Director and Managing Attorney for Community Engagement met bi-weekly to discuss the status of the project and maintain ongoing progress.

- First, the intake staff had to start asking applicants for mobile phone numbers and permission to text them. Integrating this step into the intake process required development of the question, addition to Pika, and training for Intake Specialists.
- Second, the Managing Attorney for Community Engagement and Data Analyst worked closely with the Deputy Director for Advocacy and Intake Supervisors to identify appropriate brief service cases for inclusion in the project, draft the text messages and schedule for sending them, and identify the correct variables in Pika to use to identify recipients of each text message.
- Third, the Managing Attorney for Community Engagement and Data Analyst learned to use the FrontlineSMS system, including creating information messages,

loading and sending outcome messages, enrolling people in CLEO group messages, and downloading data.

Once FrontlineSMS built the system that could deliver text messages in the way Legal Aid envisioned, and after Legal Aid staff learned how to use it effectively, the time and work required to operate the texting project lessened significantly. The texting system operates in an ongoing, two-step process, described below.

Step 1:
The Managing Attorney for Community Engagement receives automated emails with CSV files for each texting activity on Mondays. The reports include all new people in Pika since the prior week who "qualify" for a given activity. She uploads these to FrontlineSMS, then initiates the relevant text messages. This process takes approximately 30 minutes.

Embedded in some of the activities are messages that offer the recipient an option to text for additional help. When a person texts back to the system with the key words that trigger a request for more help, an email is automatically sent to the Managing Attorney for Community Engagement. In some instances, she will call the person to provide the follow up help but in many cases, the attorney with responsibility for the relevant brief service. Anecdotally, these follow ups rarely require more than one call that lasts no more than 10-15 minutes. Only 13% of participants utilized the option to text for more help.

Step 2:
Analyzing the data Legal Aid is collecting via text is more time consuming. To date, the Data Analyst has twice downloaded all of the data in the FrontlineSMS system, cleaned it, and created reports to illustrate the results. He is the only staff person with the requisite skills to do this task, and it requires approximately 12 hours. In the future, it may be possible to eliminate the process of manually coding nonconforming messages (e.g. identifying "yeah" as a "Y" response or "It was not helpful" as an "N" response). A preliminary analysis of one activity suggests that the results do not differ significantly whether manually coded responses are included or not. Alternatively, and if necessary, we will work with FrontlineSMS to develop a more refined data collection process and more efficient way to analyze them. See the analysis with and without manually coded responses in Appendix J.

The reports created by the Data Analyst are then used by Legal Aid's Management Team as part of strategic decision-making. Once a sufficient quantity of data is collected, the reports will inform decisions on both the types of brief service delivered (in person clinics, advice letter, pro se forms) as well as the substance of brief services (debt, eviction, family law). This information will be relevant as different groups within Legal Aid think about the level of service to provide in different types of cases.

h. **Advisory Committee**

Cleveland Legal Aid established an Advisory Committee including representatives from the client community, the Board of Directors, staff, service providers, local universities, funders, and technology experts. Almost thirty people were invited to participate, and while not all attended, they uniformly expressed interest and enthusiasm for the project. Advisory

Committee meetings occurred on November 2, 2016, May 10, 2017 and October 30, 2017. After the first meeting, the feedback provided by this group was incorporated into revisions of the text messages and into the design of the project. Subsequent discussions provided helpful suggestions related to analyzing and presenting the results.

Advisory Committee members were also invited to "text to register" to become part of the user testing group (along with staff). The "text to register" feature is used to collect outcome data following community legal education presentations. Establishing a UX group in this way allowed us to experience how this feature would work. Twelve people registered and helped test the information messages and the first "activity," or series of outcome messages. In so doing, we learned that a message requesting additional help from Legal Aid was not working correctly and were able to fix it. We also received feedback on expanding the list of information messages to include substantive specific texts. For a list of Advisory Committee members and a description of the committee see Appendix K.

i.   Summary of Advisory Committee feedback

The Advisory Committee asked questions, suggested changes and expressed great enthusiasm for the OTP. Feedback focused on analysis of the data and ways to get good feedback, including the suggestion to give more context to the process an applicant goes through for those not familiar with legal services, to look at whether responsiveness changes at the end of a month compared to the beginning when people may have run out of minutes on their phone, and to look separately at the data for users who respond to the complete set of questions for a given activity.

A diverse group of Legal Aid staff from a variety of practice groups also provided input. One area of interest to staff in particular was the option in some activities for clients to text a key word which would result in receiving a call back for additional help from an attorney. While only about 13% of users took advantage of this opportunity, staff noted that if the project was expanded to all brief service clients, the time required to make these calls could be significant. Staff also noted that the call backs could be done by a volunteer attorney.

The Advisory Committee and staff offered several other suggestions Legal Aid is considering in the short and long term administration of the texting project. We realized in some instances asking a client whether the brief service provided "solved" their problem is not a fair question. For example, when a client called Cleveland Legal Aid to request help filing bankruptcy, and in response we advised that they should not file bankruptcy at that time, we did not "solve their problem" per se even though the advice we provided may have been helpful. Also, the suggestion was made to add more substantive information messages. Another person suggested letting people know at the end of a series of text messages how to contact Legal Aid in the future if additional help is needed with a new problem. Additionally, Legal Aid received feedback about how to better engage attendees at community education presentations to improve responsiveness to those text message surveys. Another critical point required to scale up the texting project is figuring out how to send and receive messages in languages other than English. Finally, discussion is also ongoing between Cleveland Legal Aid and FrontlineSMS about how to more fully automate with an API the process of exchanging data between a legal services case management system (such as Pika or Legal Server) and the text message system FrontlineSMS.

Objective 2: Emerging issue questions

As part of the initial plans for the Outcome Texting Project, Cleveland Legal Aid envisioned using text messages to learn about issues of concerns to our client community. Our idea was that where problems exist that do not fit into Legal Aid's routine work, people would not likely report them to us. If we solicited input about new problems from our client community, then we might be better able to effectively respond. We were not able to accomplish this part of the project as part of the TIG but intend to do so under the new contract we entered into with FrontlineSMS.

We continue to believe there is potential for using text messaging in this way, but realized it required us to accomplish some initial steps before we would be well positioned to do so. First, we needed to create a texting relationship with our client community. People need to know that information about Legal Aid is available by text, and that Legal Aid staff will use text messages to communicate with clients. We started building this relationship by creating the Information Messages, but we have not yet promoted them widely and there are still a limited number of them.

Second, we need to define some boundaries around emerging issue questions rather than simply invite texts about common problems in the community. An open-ended invitation would likely produce unwieldly qualitative data that could not easily be used to identify trends. Additionally, open-ended questions could create an impression for the person texting that someone receiving the text will reply immediately and engage in back and forth messaging.

Third, asking questions about emerging issues inherently creates an expectation that Legal Aid is going to do something about the issue identified. Before embarking on this type of text message, we want to think carefully about what we can and cannot offer to people and make clear in our message the limitations that exist and the help available.

The current plan for texting emerging issue text messages relates to justice system debt. We know based on other research and public data that court costs, fines and fees that result from involvement with the justice system disproportionately burden low income communities and exacerbate the barriers already facing people returning to the community from jail or prison. These debt cases do not routinely present themselves at Legal Aid intake or neighborhood advice clinics. But, one of the most frequent requests for help we receive is for filing bankruptcy. Our plan is to use text messages to find out from those who have requested help filing bankruptcy whether any of their debt resulted from justice system involvement. Additionally, we may be able to learn the specific cause of the debt, and whether the debt has triggered other problems such as license suspension, ineligible for record sealing, or even additional incarceration.

Objective 3: Texting and strategic decision-making

Cleveland Legal Aid routinely relies on data as part of our decision-making processes. For several years we have tracked outcomes in extended service work that help guide our planning. Additionally, we rely on external data on a regular basis. For example, when we

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decided to focus some of our work on particular vulnerable populations, we collected and reviewed extensive data about many different groups within the low income community before identifying which populations to focus on initially. We have long recognized the benefits of incorporating outcome data into the organizational decision-making process about brief services, we just have not had good data to use for this purpose. Now that we are starting to collect such data through the Outcome Texting Project, it will become one of many types of data we use on a regular and routine basis at Legal Aid.

The data collected via text message will ultimately help Legal Aid answer a variety of questions related to brief service work. Some of those questions include:
- What substantive problems are most effectively addressed through brief service?
- What level of brief services (pro se forms, advice letters, clinics) are most likely to resolve a client's problem?
- What outcomes can we expect from various types of brief services (i.e. what is success)?
- Does offering limited additional phone support impact the effectiveness of brief advice delivered?
- What groups of clients (based on demographics) are best positioned to benefit from brief services?
- What is the cost / benefit of providing limited service to many compared to extended service to few in a particular substantive area?
- How does texting with clients affect Legal Aid's ongoing engagement with its client community?
- Do community legal education events help low income community members better know their rights and advocate for themselves?
- Do legal education trainings for services providers help them better serve their clients and improve access to the civil justice system?

Some examples of work we are currently undertaking pursuant to our strategic plan that will be informed by the outcome texting data are:
- Evaluating what brief services are provided by the substantive practice groups and what would be more efficiently provided by the Intake and Volunteer Lawyers Program at point of contact;
- Investing in training service providers on accessing and navigating the civil legal system;
- Expanding our presence in community settings to offer brief advice in more accessible locations;
- Establishing a new debt collection clinic to assist pro se litigants in defending themselves in collection lawsuits;

The reports presenting the data from the Outcome Texting Project will be available to managers on a regular basis. The managers may use them when planning with their groups for the upcoming year or when making changes to the services delivered. Additionally, the management team will review these data as part of its responsibility to effectively allocate resources of the organization. Finally, these data will be included along with numerous other data in our upcoming strategic planning process in 2019.

V. Factors Affecting Project Accomplishments

The Outcome Texting Project progressed largely according to plan and produced numerous positive results, even while some unexpected changes were required throughout. The five factors that impacted on the project's accomplishments to some extent were 1) decision not to build an API; 2) challenges related to analyzing the raw data from FrontlineSMS; 3) suspension of Legal Aid child support clinics; 4) partner organization rule not allowing cell phones in presentations; and 5) perception by users that text messages were personal rather than automated.

1) The most significant factor affecting how this project developed was the determination early in the planning process that building an API between FrontlineSMS and Cleveland Legal Aid's version of Pika did not make good sense. Although this changed the technology component of the project, the lack of automation did not affect the underlying utility of the project or in any way limit the data obtained via text messaging with clients.

2) The process for collecting, storing and downloading text message data via FrontlineSMS impacts Cleveland Legal Aid's ability to analyze the data. For example, we realized in the early weeks that some data related to "opt outs" and information messages was not being captured and stored, and we were able to correct that with a request to FrontlineSMS staff. They also added a time-stamp to enable sequencing of messages by user in the data analysis. Lastly, while the text messages sent request a reply of simply Y for yes, N for no, or NY for not yet, users do not always adhere to these directions. Responses ranging from smiley face emojis to strings of expletives convey the client's positive or negative response as well.

3) One of the text message activities included in this project at the outset was for brief services provided to people trying to modify child support orders. Legal Aid had long offered assistance in this area through an assisted pro se clinic. For reasons unrelated to the texting project, we temporarily suspended this service in the spring of 2017 just after starting the OTP.

4) When determining the initial text messages to use to collect data on community legal education and outreach (CLEO) presentations, we decided to focus on a series of Employment: Know Your Rights presentations that Cleveland Legal Aid staff give on a regular basis to participants in a program run by one of our long-time partner organizations. We believed that our regular presence at these presentations, the relationship we have with the partner, and need to coordinate with just a few colleagues at Legal Aid improved our chances of successfully implementing this project with this group. After developing a draft of the text questions, we shared them with the leadership at the partner organization and they supported the effort. Legal Aid staff who give the presentations were all trained on the texting project and how to invite participants to enroll in the text group to provide feedback. Despite all of these plans and follow up efforts, hardly anyone enrolled.

5) Finally, as we reviewed the text messages sent back to Legal Aid, it became clear over time that some people were under the impression that the messages were personal

and thus that a person was at the other end reading and responding (or not). We queried to what extent this perception might impact a person's ongoing engagement with us and their likelihood of responding to future text message questions.

VI. Strategies to Address Major Challenges

None of the factors affecting Cleveland Legal Aid's Outcome Texting Project constituted major challenges. We addressed each of them in the following ways:

1) As a result of not building the API between FrontlineSMS and Pika, Legal Aid staff had to manually upload the Pika data to FrontlineSMS on a weekly basis. Once this process was developed, it worked smoothly and required minimal time. The need to do this step manually may have forced us to focus in a helpful way on who we included and what we asked them than had we been able to so automatically. The lack of an API does make the process of linking data obtained via text message back to Pika data more cumbersome, however.

2) The issues with capturing, cleaning and analyzing the FrontlineSMS data required an investment of time by Legal Aid's Data Analyst. He reviewed such "non-conforming" messages to identify those where the user's intent is clear and to include them in the data. A more nuanced process for interpreting text message responses could result in greater numbers of useable responses, and potentially more accurate results. Preliminary analysis in one activity indicates manual coding may not be necessary as the results are comparable whether manually coded responses were included or not. As we accumulate more data, we will do comparable analysis in other activities to determine if the manual coding process is necessary.

3) As a result of suspending our child support clinic temporarily, we have almost no data for this activity. Once we resume providing this service, we will review the messages to determine if they are consistent with the new way we help people in this area. Our intention is to continue collecting outcome data via text for this group of clients.

4) With regard to the CLEO presentations about rights in the workplace, when we solicited staff feedback at the end of the pilot, a paralegal new to Legal Aid informed me that the partner organization does not allow participants to have cell phones with them during the presentation. Our hope was to have participants send the text to enroll while still in the presentation, but we learned with this information from our paralegal that this expectation was not realistic. Better communication between leadership at Legal Aid and the partner organization may have prevented this oversight. We will not make any conclusions about the effectiveness of the CLEO messages in light of this realization, and will continue trying to test it in other settings or with a different plan at this organization.

5) We recognize that some people who engage with Cleveland Legal Aid via text may be put off from doing so if they think they are texting with a person and there is no response, or later realize it was an automated message. Going forward, we plan to alert people who send messages other than survey responses that the system is automated and to give them a number to call to speak directly with a person. As part of our transition from Pika to Legal Server, we will also have the capacity to text with clients individually so can make clear the distinction between the automated information and outcome messages versus the personalized messages about a case.

VII. Major Lessons and Recommendations

The Outcome Texting Project afforded Cleveland Legal Aid an opportunity to test the efficacy of using text messaging to collect data on brief services in particular, but also to explore the use of text messaging in communicating with our client community more broadly. The major lesson we learned is that texting with clients has great potential for community engagement and this project is the first step in learning how to use texting technology in creative and effective ways to deliver legal services to low income clients.

In the course of developing, implementing and analyzing the Outcome Texting Project, we learned many lessons that will inform and guide our use of texting going forward.

- **People with low income will agree to receive text messages from Legal Aid and will respond to questions about the help provided.** At the outset we heard much skepticism about the likelihood that our low income clients would 1) have cell phones; 2) use valuable data to agree to text messages; and 3) respond when asked about services. Our results refute each of these concerns and demonstrate texting with low income clients can be done effectively.
- **Texting clients for outcome data can be accomplished by legal aid programs with moderate investment in technology and time.** The technology exists to use texting to collect outcome data, so the work involved is to adapt those technologies to legal aid settings, implement it, and establish responsibility for the internal operations required to manage the process.
- **Brief services can effectively resolve legal problems for some people.** The preliminary data indicates that brief legal services can be an effective option to solve some problems for some people. Once we collect more data, we will be better able to determine the types of brief service that are most effective, whether there are any demographic trends in who is most likely to benefit from brief service, and what substantive problem areas are most well suited to resolution via brief service.

Other legal services programs planning to implement a system to use text messaging to collect outcome data should consider the following recommendations:

- **Work with an expert partner in SMS technology.** FrontlineSMS provided invaluable advice in addition to the technological tools necessary to make this project a success.
- **Remember that texting and technology is a means to an end, not the end itself.** Be clear about what you want to use texting for and query whether texting is the best way to accomplish it. When trying to collect outcome data for brief services, this project provides substantial evidence that texting is an effective method. But, the API envisioned was not a crucial component to attain our end results.
- **Ask questions of clients that relate to the specific issue they are facing.** While we did not test how response rates compare for topic specific text messages to general messages, we believe part of the reason for the good response rates received is that our text messages were very specifically tailored to the problem they faced and services we provided. However, the process is more costly to use problem specific text activities as compared to a general text survey for all recipients of limited service.

- **Seek input from program staff, external advisors and members of the client community.** Although most of the work for the Outcome Texting Project was done by only a few staff members in conjunction with FrontlineSMS staff, we regularly provided updates via internal communications; we talked frequently about how the project was progressing, and periodically invited input from all of these stakeholders. As a result, they are all excited about the results and how we will move forward with texting at Cleveland Legal Aid.

Significant additional work could be done to further develop the technology that supports texting clients to collect outcome data from brief services. Some examples are:

- **Create an API between case management systems and texting systems.** While not crucial, developing an API to further automate the process of exchanging data between a case management system (e.g. Legal Server) and the text message management system (e.g. FrontlineSMS) would increase efficiency and possibly improve opportunity for data analysis.
- **Improve data collection and storage in the text message system**. Further investigation should be done on the percent of conforming and non-conforming responses necessary to produce reliable results. One option for increasing the number of useable responses may be integrating Artificial Intelligence technology into the data collection process. Better alignment of the data collected and stored in the text message management system with what legal aid programs need to evaluate brief services will improve the efficacy of the system.
- **Work with social scientist to maximize learning from these data.** The results presented in this report are a strong indication of the efficacy of texting for outcome data, but only begin to scratch the surface of what we may be able to learn through sophisticated analysis of such data.
- **Develop the process for sending and receiving text messages in languages other than English**. For purposes of piloting the Outcome Texting Project, Cleveland Legal aid only used English language messages. Staff and clients have reminded us from the outset that ultimately the system needs to work for LEP clients as well. Exploring how to add a Spanish language option, and potentially other languages, is a necessary and important next step in using text messaging to engage with clients.
- **Create library of "activities" for all problem codes.** If our impression is correct that texting clients specifically about the issue they are facing contributes to the high responses rate, and given that question about specific problems and services would yield more useful data than general questions, developing additional activities is valuable.
- **Use texting to explore emerging issues in the community.** Ideally legal aid programs are engaged in a two-way dialog with the low income community they serve. Offering texting as a way for members of the community to convey information about problems they face to legal aid programs should be one of many ways to foster that discussion.

Conclusion

The Legal Aid Society of Cleveland successfully completed the Outcome Texting Project it proposed and which the Legal Service Corporation funded with a Technology Initiatives Grant. This initial pilot confirmed the viability of using text messaging to collect outcome data for brief services and suggested numerous other applications for using texting to engage with our client community. We look forward to continuing our work with FrontlineSMS to build on this project, and welcome any opportunities to share our experience with others looking to engage in similar efforts.