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Legal Services

of NORTH FLORIDA

HOPE. JUSTICE. FOR ALL.



May 1, 2014

Angela Thornton, Program Counsel
3333 K Street, NW
Washington, DC 20007

Dear Ms. Thornton:

Thank you for the feedback you provided in your report and recommendations as a result of your visit to our program in October 2013. We were very pleased with the many positive things you noted about our program and will undertake our best efforts to make improvements based on the recommendations you have offered.

I would like to comment about the following issues identified in your report:

1. Although it is accurate that we have avoided layoffs and/or retrenchment, we had to shift a fairly substantial amount of work from our typically prioritized services in order to maintain the staff that we have been fortunate to retain. As a result, we have had to cut back on the number of services we were able to provide in various categories (which also reflects on the observation that our extended case load has gone down). All of this is a result of funding we have received to assist service industry workers with oil spill claims. The majority of that work has been in the advice and brief service area (and many of the cases that would be considered extended service are still pending as a result of the litigation related to the national class action settlement).
2. You noted in your observations about our legal needs assessment that judges, members of the bar, and board members who were interviewed by the PQV team were not aware of and/or were not directly involved in the legal needs assessment. As part of our survey process, we sent the survey to 50 attorneys who participate on our pro bono panel and to all of our board members. Unfortunately, only 4 of the 50 attorneys responded while 8 of our board members participated. In addition to the 8 board members who responded to the survey, our board discussed the needs assessment at two meetings in 2013. We have been unsuccessful in the past in obtaining feedback from the judges so did not include them this time. However, we will do our best in our next needs assessment to encourage their participation and more participation from our attorneys (who were selected throughout the service area).
3. Thank you for pointing out that the signage for designated handicapped parking at our Panama City office had become invisible over time – we will immediately correct that. We also are very concerned about privacy and confidentiality and will work with staff to ensure that information regarding clients' cases is not discussed in the reception area.
4. We will form a committee and undertake work to review our intake system and borrow from the experience of others. We will also undertake a review of our LEP policy in comparison with the policies available on the LRI website to consider suggested improvements. As a side note, we are fortunate that the FSU Law School has a high concentration of Hispanic students, many of whom have externed with our program and provided in-person translation services.
5. On the recommendation regarding case supervision policies, we have already discussed the identified need to re-implement a more formal case review process in the Tallahassee office as recommended and will remind all other offices of the need to continue those practices.

HOME OFFICE

2119 DELTA BOULEVARD
TALLAHASSEE, FL 32303-4220
850-385-9007 • FAX 850-385-7603
ADMINISTRATIVE FAX 850-205-6540
DEVELOPMENT FAX 850-385-5684

BRANCH OFFICES

121 NORTH JACKSON STREET
QUINCY, FL 32351-2316
850-875-9881 • FAX 850-875-2008

211 EAST 11TH STREET
PANAMA CITY, FL 32401-2938
850-769-3581 • FAX 850-785-2041

133 STAFF DRIVE, SUITE B
FT. WALTON BEACH, FL 32548-5050
850-862-3279 • FAX 850-862-6327

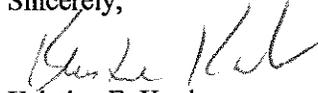
1741 NORTH PALAFOX STREET
PENSACOLA, FL 32501-2138
850-432-8222 • FAX 850-432-2329

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6. It was noted on page 16 that the roles and responsibilities of the board members did not seem to be clear. Attached please find specific responsibilities of board committees and of board members and officers that have been distributed to all board members and are provided to all new members.
7. Since your visit, LSNF has developed a transition plan to address future changes in the executive director position and already had a plan for the program administrator position.
8. In response to recommendation IV.3.19.1, as a result of the contract between Legal Server and LSNF, InLigo (our SharePoint consultant) and Legal Server will create a protocol that will link documents created in SharePoint to their respective Legal Server files and Legal Server documents will have a similar link to a SharePoint library.
9. Finally, in reference to recommendation IV.9.22.1, we will continue our efforts to reach out to NWFLS staff who we regularly invite to participate in our pro bono clinics and our outreach efforts. We will also continue to make referrals to their office and provide contact information to their clients who mistakenly call our office. Additionally, since your visit our managing attorney met with their executive director to offer ways to more closely collaborate including an offer to support their dissolution of marriage pro se clinic.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on your report.

Sincerely,



Kristine E. Knab
Executive Director

BOARD OFFICERS & COMMITTEES

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE: This committee has the authority of the board in the management of business of the corporation between meetings, should such business be necessary. (Should be composed of all three officers and two additional members.)

PERSONNEL/GRIEVANCE COMMITTEE: This committee is charged with (1) reviewing all matters pertaining to personnel rules and regulations; (2) reviewing and conducting staff or client grievances; (3) evaluating performance of the Executive Director; and (4) recommending to the board salary changes or bonuses for the Executive Director.

FINANCIAL OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE: This committee is charged with (1) keeping the board abreast of the program's financial position; (2) reviewing current budget and making recommendations to the board for the upcoming budget year; (3) studying/evaluating the program's internal accounting control; (4) meeting with external auditors to review and evaluate the program's financial position; and (5) reviewing the board's investment policy biannually.

NOMINATING COMMITTEE: This committee is to make recommendations to the board concerning the election of officers.

GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE: This committee is responsible for ongoing review and recommendations to enhance the quality and future viability of the board of directors. It will lead the board in regularly reviewing the board's statement of its role and areas of responsibility, and the expectations of individuals, including board and staff interface.

DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE: This is an ad hoc committee that meets as needed to support the resource development committee.

Roles of Board Officers

A. President (and Vice-President in President's Absence)

1. Preside over meetings
2. Interact with media on occasion
3. Participate in LSNF events. Examples:
 - a. Pro Bono Celebration—Introduce keynote speaker
 - b. Jazz for Justice—Volunteer and motivate other board members to participate
 - c. Motivate board and others to contribute to LSNF in a variety of ways
 - d. Represent LSNF at Founders of Justice events
4. Review and sign grant applications
5. Review reports from grantors
6. Meet with auditor; meet with funders during monitoring visits
7. Appoint board committees (except Executive Committee to be appointed by board at February meeting at recommendation of President)
8. Lead board strategy to gain support from elected officials and community for LSNF
9. Sign real property purchase agreements (or designate Secretary/Treasurer or Executive Director)
10. Perform other duties as outlined in the Bylaws

B. Secretary-Treasurer

1. Chair Financial Oversight Committee
2. Meet with auditor
3. Review financial statements in detail each month
4. Assist in signing paperwork, such as bank statements authorized by Board Resolution supporting employee check-signing signature authority
5. Perform other duties as outlined in the Bylaws

EXPECTATIONS OF BOARD MEMBERS

1. Actively participate in board meetings—review materials beforehand and actively participate in board discussion of agenda items
2. Actively serve on board committees
3. Attend LSNF events and assist as appropriate
4. Assist in securing support and resources (pro bono, monetary, etc.) for LSNF
5. Make financial contribution to LSNF
6. Assist in identifying and attracting new board members and orienting new board members
7. Participate in presentations to funders, such as the United Way
8. Assist in developing and implementing board strategy to gain support from elected officials and community for LSNF
9. Perform other duties as outlined in the Bylaws and/or at the request of the president

Mentor and Mentee Obligations

A "senior" board member will be assigned the role of mentor each time a new member comes onto the Board. If possible and to the extent practicable, the Mentor should be located geographically close to the Mentee. The official mentor/mentee relationship will be in place for a year.

Upon the new member's initial appointment to the board, and again at the time of committee assignments being made by the president, it is preferable that the new member be placed on the same committee(s) that the mentor is placed on.

Roles of the Mentor

1. Provide personal contact information to Mentee and agree to make yourself available for calls and emails from Mentee regarding Board procedure, policy, etc.
2. Reach out to the Mentee to welcome them to the Board prior to the first meeting and offer to arrange a time to meet or teleconference and discuss Mentor's experiences on the Board and answer any questions Mentee may have. The primary goal being to make the Mentee comfortable with at least one member of the Board prior to the meeting.
3. If Mentor and Mentee appear in person at first Board meeting, take the initiative to make introductions on behalf of Mentee (perhaps be assigned the task of making the formal introduction of the Mentee to the board, brief bio and so forth).
4. Agree to contact the Mentee before each Board meeting during the first year via telephone or in person (dependent on geography) to "remind" Mentee of the meeting and see if Mentee seeks any input regarding procedure, policy, etc. This would really just be a way to open the door for some communication.

Roles of the Mentee

1. Be receptive to communications from Mentor.
2. Agree to make Mentor first point of contact for issues regarding procedure, policy, etc.