



# **Legal Services Corporation Office of Program Performance**

## **Final Report from the Program Quality Visit to Legal Services of North Louisiana**

Recipient No. 619061

February 11 - 15, 2013

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## **INTRODUCTION**

During the week of February 11 – 15, 2013, the Legal Services Corporation's (LSC) Office of Program Performance (OPP) conducted an on-site program quality visit to Legal Services of North Louisiana (LSNL). The purpose of the visit was to assess the quality of LSNL's legal work, management, and administrative systems. The LSC team consisted of one LSC program counsel and three LSC temporary employees.

Through its program quality visits, OPP seeks to ensure that LSC grantees are providing the highest quality legal services to eligible clients. In performing its evaluation of the grantee's delivery system and operations, OPP relies on the LSC Act and regulations, LSC Performance Criteria, LSC Program Letters, and the ABA Standards for the Provision of Civil Legal Aid. The team considered LSNL's narrative and grant application documents submitted in the 2013 competition grant cycle, the program's 2011 and 2012 grant renewal documents, and case services and other grant activity reports. As a part of the assessment of program quality, the OPP team reviewed numerous documents submitted by LSNL in advance of the visit, including a survey of staff and writing samples submitted by advocates.

The on-site visit began in the Shreveport office with a presentation by the LSNL executive director that consisted of an overview of the program's service area and demographics, the program's staffing and offices, and the engagement of the program's leadership, staff, and board with partners and supporters throughout the service area. During the course of the on-site visit, the team interviewed LSNL's executive director, litigation director, the program's legal and non-legal staff, client and attorney board members, representatives and leadership of the Louisiana state justice community, members of the judiciary, and representatives and staff of social service agencies and community organizations.

At the conclusion of the on-site visit, the team conducted an exit conference with the executive director, litigation director, board chair, and managing and supervising attorneys to share the team's preliminary observations regarding the program's strengths, challenges, and opportunities for improvement. The litigation director and several managing attorneys of branch offices attended the exit conference presentation via the program's teleconferencing system. One of the most important developments during the course of the on-site visit was LSNL's embrace of the recommendation that the program undertake a formal strategic planning process to be driven by a committee of the board of directors, the executive director, and selected staff, with broad and significant input from strategic partners throughout the service area and from around the state.

The issuance of this final report follows LSNL's review of a draft of the report and an opportunity to identify any significant factual inaccuracies. In a letter dated June 27, 2013, LSNL states that it found no significant inaccuracies. Its letter is attached.

## **PROGRAM OVERVIEW AND SERVICE AREA**

Founded in 1978, LSNL is a 501(c) (3) nonprofit corporation organized to provide free civil legal assistance to low-income and disadvantaged persons in the state of Louisiana who

meet LSC eligibility guidelines. LSNL was known as Kisatchie Legal Services Corporation until its merger with the previous LSC grantee Northwest Louisiana Legal Services, Inc. in January 2002 to serve the newly reconfigured service area known as LA-11. The LA-11 service area was created by merging all three<sup>1</sup> of the then existing LSC service areas in the north Louisiana region of the state. The headquarters for LSNL were moved from the city of Natchitoches to the city of Shreveport. Since its founding, LSNL has received LSC funding continuously.

Immediately prior to the merger, there were six LSC-funded staffed offices in the north Louisiana service areas—Shreveport, Monroe, Natchitoches, Minden, Tallulah, and Jonesville. The Minden, Tallulah, and Jonesville offices were closed at the end of 2002 due to funding cuts. The existing Monroe office was operated by North Louisiana Legal Assistance (NLLAC), which did not join the merger. As a result, LSNL established a new Monroe office that continues in operation.

Also, immediately prior to the merger, the total LSC funding in the three north Louisiana service areas was approximately \$2,244,589.<sup>2</sup> LSC funding for north Louisiana in 2002 totaled \$2,097,514. Over the 11 years since the merger, the LSC funding available to LSNL declined slightly for the next seven years. Then, in 2010, LSNL's funding from LSC increased to \$2,168,346, but declined again in 2011, 2012 and 2013. LSC funding for 2013, after the census adjustment is \$1,605,403, which represents a 9.5% decrease from FY 2012.

The LSNL basic field service area is comprised of 26 of the state's 64 parishes, covering 26,219 square miles of central northwest, northwest, and northeast Louisiana.<sup>3</sup> According to the U.S. Census,<sup>4</sup> the service area contains a total population of 920,254 and a poverty population of 204,340 persons (22.2% of the area's total population). The service area's poverty rate is 1.1% greater than the rate for the state of Louisiana, the second-highest in the nation.<sup>5</sup> In terms of race and ethnicity, blacks compose 64.5% of the service area's poverty population, whites are 33.1%, and Hispanics are 1.4. As a percent of the poverty population, black residents are the predominant group in 20 of the service area's 26 parishes. Whites are the predominant group in the remaining six parishes.

## SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

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<sup>1</sup> At the time, each of the three service areas was served by a separate LSC grantee. While all three service areas were merged, only two of the three existing grantees merged to form LSNL to serve the newly combined service area LA-11. North Louisiana Legal Assistance (NLLAC) did not merge with the other two LSC grantees.

<sup>2</sup> This amount can be broken down as follows: LSNL \$473,533; Northwest Louisiana Legal Services \$903,386; and North Louisiana Legal Assistance Corporation \$867,670.

<sup>3</sup> The LSNL service area (LA-11) is the largest of the four LSC service areas in the state in terms of land and inland water square miles.

<sup>4</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 5-year estimates, Table S1701 by County (2006-2010).

<sup>5</sup> New Mexico has the country's highest poverty rate, 22.2%.

LSNL provides a full range of legal services in north Louisiana and is actively engaged with the state justice community. Its mission statement reads: "The general purpose of LSNL is to serve the individual legal needs of the community and establish the program as a responsive community service agency, while providing quality legal services to the eligible client population."

The last needs assessment conducted by LSNL was completed in 2003. The assessment was a mix of telephone and in-person interviews, surveys, and meetings to gather input from the client population, community organizations, social service agencies, courts, and the private bar. LSNL adopted its present priorities in January 2003, which are reviewed annually. LSNL's priorities are sufficiently broad to address the basic needs of the low-income populations and recurring legal problems in the service area. Family law cases continue to figure prominently in the program's priorities.

There is an urgent need for LSNL to undertake a comprehensive strategic planning process to thoroughly re-examine the program's mission, the critical legal needs of the client eligible populations, advocate staffing, and resource development challenges that could very well undermine the program's capacity to effectively serve the low-income populations and communities in the service area.

The locations of LSNL's three staffed offices are appropriate and strategic. The buildings are all handicap accessible, professional in appearance, and appropriately configured as a law office for both clients and staff.

Overall, LSNL has a reasonably diverse and experienced staff that comports with the relevant workforce in Louisiana and the southeastern United States. However, none of the program's advocate, intake, clerical or administrative staff has non-English language abilities to assist the service area's very small emerging bilingual populations. The program uses Language Line for telephonic interpretation.

LSNL does not have a single intake portal. While intake in each of the three offices is mainly done by telephone, the process is neither centralized nor coordinated program-wide and aspects of intake vary from office to office. Online intake is one of the options available.

Over a 12 month period, LSNL staff conducted or participated in 276 outreach or community engagement events. The number and kind of event varied from office to office. Two of the three offices focused heavily or exclusively on presentations and visits to councils on aging.

While LSNL has the minimum capacity and resources to provide a full range of services to the low-income population in targeted practice areas, there is much room for improvement, both in the short term and long term. The strategic planning process should address increasing extended representation work by the program's advocates beyond family law cases and issues. The program must also aspire to engaging in policy and strategic advocacy that improve outcomes for clients. LSNL has a litigation manual that contains case handling procedures from initial eligibility to appeals as well as legal work supervision standards. The challenge the program must face now is how to encourage staff's creativity in areas where the program has not

done a lot of work in the past and how to manage caseloads to facilitate more complex and time consuming work.

LSNL's CSRs for extended and actual contested cases are below the national median and may suggest a lack of focus by LSNL and its legal advocates. Quantitatively, the program's legal work is overwhelmingly limited service work with extended representation exceedingly focused on family law cases. In carrying out this legal work approach, the program's advocates practice in a variety of state court and administrative agencies forums, with little to no federal court work.

The nature of law practice in Louisiana requires far less brief and memorandum writing than the LSC team is used to seeing around the country. Overall, the writing samples submitted by LSNL advocates were sparse and, with a few exceptions, of average quality.

Despite the current fiscal constraints, LSNL provides reasonable training to its staff appropriate to their functions and responsibilities.

LSNL is striving to integrate private attorneys in its work in an effort to supplement the amount and effectiveness of the legal services offered. At the time of the visit, the program's private attorney involvement (PAI) included in-house pro bono and reduced fee compensated attorneys. Historically, LSNL has had a weak PAI program with participation by only a small percentage of eligible attorneys. At the time of the visit, the program was on the verge of forming a strategic partnership with the Shreveport Bar Foundation pro bono project.

All of LSNL's offices engage in community legal education activities. Also, the program is engaged with others whose activities have a significant effect on the low-income populations in the service area, such as the judiciary, the state bar and bar foundation, organized local bar associations, government agencies, social service agencies, and the other civil legal aid providers in the state. With the other LSC grantees in the state, LSNL actively supports the pro se efforts of the Louisiana Bar Foundation, the Louisiana Bar Association, and the Louisiana Supreme Court.

LSNL's 15-member board of directors is striving to provide appropriate oversight, support and leadership. Members need to become more active in fundraising, including making personal pledges. The board is appropriately supportive of the program's management.

The LSNL executive director is well-known throughout the state justice community as an active leader and helpful partner. She is highly respected by the board and staff. She is credited with unifying the program in the years after the merger.

The program appears to have good administrative systems, procedures and policies. There appear to be appropriate resources devoted to management functions, including human resources and financial administration. Program staff rate internal communication as good, but complains of too many face-to-face meetings. Staff morale around the program is good despite concerns about the program's fiscal health.

LSNL needs to make a lot of progress toward more effective use of technology, including its telephone and case management systems.

Within the constraints of its current financial and staffing resources, LSNL's delivery structure is reasonably coherent. The program is an active participant in the state justice community.

## FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

**PERFORMANCE AREA ONE.** *Effectiveness in identifying the most pressing civil legal needs of low-income people in the service area and targeting resources to address those needs.*

*Criterion 1. Periodic comprehensive assessment and ongoing consideration of legal needs.*

**Finding 1: LSNL's most recent needs assessment was completed in 2003.**

LSNL's last legal needs assessment was conducted in 2002 and completed in 2003. For low-income persons, the program's data collection methods included phone and in-person interviews, surveys, and meetings. For community organizations, data collection consisted of surveys and meetings and for social service organizations, courts, private bar, and other legal services providers, only surveys were conducted. Surveys and meetings were held for program staff and the board. Program staff tallied the surveys, compared the tally with closed case data, and analyzed the results.

Overall, the results from the 2002 assessment reflected that the greatest felt needs concerned obtaining and maintaining a safe and stable living environment, reliable income, and decent and affordable housing. In subsequent years, LSNL, the state's other LSC grantees, and state justice community partners have discussed changing needs throughout Louisiana following a series of natural disasters, a worsening state and national economy, the BP oil spill, and declining civil legal aid resources. These discussions are also designed to help the legal services providers make the difficult choices among very important needs of the state's low-income populations and the many possible activities providers could undertake to address the most compelling needs.

As a result of the ongoing collaboration with its partners, LSNL has concluded that the needs of its service area require a focus on family law, public benefits (income maintenance), consumer/finance, housing, and juvenile (the health, education, and well-being of children).

*Criterion 2. Setting goals and objectives, developing strategies, and allocating resources.*

**Finding 2: The LSNL adopted legal priorities, on their face, are sufficiently broad to address the most pressing legal needs of the low-income populations throughout the service area.**

Based on staff's analysis and recommendations, the LSNL board ratified the most critical legal needs identified by the 2002 needs assessment and adopted a set of broad priority areas that have been reviewed annually. The broad priority areas are domestic, income maintenance,

consumer/finance, housing, health, and juvenile. Further, the board adopted a priority provision for counsel and advice to all eligible clients in those subject matter areas in which the program is not prohibited from providing legal assistance. The LSNL priorities reflect the paucity of other providers and resources available to low-income persons throughout the service area.

Notwithstanding the very broad statement of priorities and objectives, LSNL understands that its limited financial and staff resources prevent the program from meeting more than a fraction of the need for its services and, as a consequence, a reasonable set of case service priorities must be established and observed. Staff interviewed throughout the program during the visit appeared to share this realization and knew the LSNL priorities.

*Criteria 3 and 4. Implementation of goals, objectives, and strategies and Evaluation and adjustment of goals, objectives, strategies, and desired outcomes.*

**Finding 3: Other than focusing broadly on the number of cases handled without regard to the levels of services provided, LSNL does not establish effective and measurable outcomes for individual clients and the service area's low-income population as a whole.**

While LSNL has broadly written case service priorities, the program has not established explicit written goals and desired outcomes to address the most critical legal needs of the service area. This omission contributes to the program's failure to analyze and evaluate the effectiveness of its delivery strategies, beyond some acknowledgement of the imbalance of family law in its advocates' caseloads. Staff and board members interviewed indicate recognition within the program that housing, income maintenance and consumer protection are underrepresented in the service mix. There is also a felt need for broader community outreach—beyond those done with the councils on aging community—as part of the effort to redirect program resources toward a more balanced mix of services.

The team recognizes that, at present, none of LSNL's funders requires that the program measure outcomes or record the amounts of back awards, monthly benefits and other one-time financial benefits obtained for clients in areas like Social Security, SSI, unemployment compensation, family law, consumer and other cases. Despite this lack of funder requirement, LSNL acknowledges that systematic outcome measuring would be a helpful tool for meaningful self-evaluation, which would greatly benefit the client communities. This should be a major focus of the recommended strategic planning process.

While LSNL's ongoing collaboration with its state justice partners has led the program to make some appropriate adjustments in its legal work and advocacy, the more significant challenge is that within LSNL itself there is no effective structure for internal evaluation of the program's work and operations. External collaboration alone is no substitute for a vibrant internal structure and process.

During the visit, the program's management and board members acknowledged that since the merger LSNL has not undertaken a formal strategic planning process.<sup>6</sup> This makes it impossible for management and the board to effectively evaluate the program's overall service delivery and advocacy. This is an appropriate time in LSNL's history to undertake such an effort. The program has successfully integrated the merged programs into an entity with a strong sense of unity. The program can now focus on how to use the program's resources most effectively to make a lasting difference in the lives of the people LSNL serves. This should include consideration of how to make a difference to the many eligible persons who will not be served by the staff through direct attorney-client relationships, given the limited resources available to the program.

For strategic planning to be effective, it is critical that the board and staff be involved in all facets of the planning efforts. Input from community partners and stakeholders and the client community should be sought. To be effective, the final plan must be one that the board and staff take ownership of and are prepared to fully implement.

LSNL's partners in the state justice community interviewed by the team expressed interest in collaborating with the program on any strategic planning process it decides to undertake. The program's partners understand the need for appropriate divisions of labor and avoidance of duplicative efforts to more fully serve the legal needs of the state's low-income population. It is important that LSNL share a draft of the strategic plan with the state justice partners and civil legal aid providers to insure, among other things, a larger discussion about which pressing legal needs should be addressed; how they should be addressed; by whom they should be addressed; which needs cannot be addressed directly because of resources or other limitations; and what other delivery approaches, other legal assistance activity, or collaboration with or referral to strategic partners, might be employed to provide some measure of assistance to low-income individuals and communities.

**Recommendation I.1.1.1.\*<sup>7</sup> LSNL should undertake a comprehensive needs assessment as an essential part of a strategic planning process to provide major direction for the program**

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<sup>6</sup> In its last grant application for LSC funding submitted prior to the visit, LSNL stated that it engages in informal strategic planning on a monthly basis at its managers' meetings where the program evaluates client satisfaction, intake, and legal work. The recommendation in this report is for "formal" strategic planning that produces a written plan with measurable outcomes for its advocacy and legal representation, and a plan that addresses, among other things, the coordination of activities with appropriate partners and supporters. Information on strategic planning can be found on the LSC Resource Library at [www.lri.lsc.gov](http://www.lri.lsc.gov) and on the Management Assistance Program for Non-Profits' sites at [www.mapfor nonprofits.org](http://www.mapfor nonprofits.org) or [www.managementhelp.org](http://www.managementhelp.org).

<sup>7</sup>In this report, recommendations are numbered as follows: The Roman numeral references the Performance Area followed by the Criterion number, the finding number, and lastly the recommendation number that pertains to the particular finding. There are two levels of recommendations in this report, Tier Ones and Tier Twos. Recommendations that are indicated with an asterisk are Tier One Recommendations and are intended to have a direct and major impact on program quality and/or program performance. In LSNL's next appropriate grant renewal and/or competitive grant application, the program will be required to report what actions or activities, if any, LSNL has undertaken in response to Tier One Recommendations instead of submitting a full grant renewal or competitive grant application narrative.

in the face of seemingly intractable challenges in the service area, especially as to the future focus of the program's work on behalf of clients and low-income communities.

**Recommendation I.1.1.2.\*** In its effort to obtain enhanced input from client eligible persons and community organizations, LSNL should explore the use of additional tools such as focus groups, the most recent demographics and employment data for the service area, case management system's data over at least a three year period, and GIS mapping.

**Recommendation I.1.1.3.** In its effort to obtain enhanced input from social service organizations, the courts, private bar associations, strategic partners, program staff, and board members, LSNL should explore the use of technology tools such as SurveyMonkey to facilitate easy compilation of data.

**Recommendation I.1.1.4.** Following future needs assessments, LSNL should share the findings from the assessment with its strategic partners for their information and appropriate comments.

**Recommendation I.3.3.1.\*** LSNL should engage in strategic planning that will result in a written plan with measurable outcomes and that will address, among other things, the coordination of activities with appropriate strategic partners and supporters.

**Recommendation I.3.3.2.\*** Following the recommended strategic planning, LSNL should implement a rigorous plan to diversify the caseloads of its advocates to ensure that the critical legal needs of clients beyond family law issues are addressed. As part of this effort, LSNL must allocate additional resources to support work in non-family law areas, such as housing, foreclosure prevention and consumer debts and finance.

**Recommendation I.3.4.1.\*** LSNL should ensure that all of its key strategic partners have the opportunity to provide broad input into the case service goals of the program, including measurable goals and objectives and outcomes, the allocation of resources to meet adopted goals and objectives, and appropriate responsible implementers who will be given the time to actually accomplish the stipulated tasks.

**Recommendation I.4.5.1.** LSNL should explore the development of an internal evaluation policy and procedure to ensure that a comparison of "the results actually achieved with the outcomes originally intended" is a significant element of the program's self-evaluation process.

**PERFORMANCE AREA TWO.** *Effectiveness in engaging and serving the low-income population throughout the service area.*

*Criterion 1. Dignity and sensitivity*

**Finding 4:** LSNL strives to conduct its work in a way that affirms and reinforces the dignity of its clients and applicants for its services.

LSNL staff and board members have a strong sense of respect for clients, and recognize the need to treat them with dignity. The program's advocates receive high praise for their commitment to the low-income population. The team believes that the program is struggling to find the best way to provide maximum services consistent with that commitment, while operating with limited resources. At the same time, the team believes that finding a way to say "no" quickly and clearly, when resources are insufficient to help everyone, is in the long run more respectful of clients than a prolonged process ultimately resulting in a turndown.

**Finding 5: LSNL has a written policy and procedure on serving individuals with limited English proficiency.**

The service area's poverty population is overwhelmingly English speaking (97.3%) and only slightly diverse in terms of race and ethnicity beyond blacks and whites. There is a very small emerging Hispanic population and, at present, the program does not have any staff that speaks Spanish fluently. Spanish is spoken by 1.6% of the population in the service area. Nevertheless, LSNL has a written policy on serving limited English proficient (LEP) populations.<sup>8</sup>

All of the program's intake staff and advocates are charged with ensuring that the clients' primary language and any need for an interpreter are noted in the case file and that attorney-client privilege and the need for confidentiality are thoroughly explained to applicants, clients and interpreters. Very recently, the program provided a series of training for all staff in conversational Spanish in an effort to generate the capability to conduct its services, communications, and activities in a culturally and linguistically competent fashion.

LSNL subscribes to Language Line for telephone interpretation and has local agencies contacts for in-person interpretation when needed. The program's telephone system allows non-English speakers to access Language Line to communicate their need for assistance or other messages. In addition, informational materials about the program and community education materials are available in English and Spanish. The LSNL web site also offers English/Spanish web pages.

**Finding 6: LSNL's office-by-office telephone intake is basically an un-coordinated callback system.**

Intake in each of the three offices is done mainly by telephone, albeit separately for each office's portion of the service area. While walk-in applicants with emergencies and transportation challenges are seen at the time, it is widely published and communicated throughout the service area that LSNL's services should be sought via the telephone. Each branch office has a toll free number. Approximately 90% of the program's intake is done by telephone.

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<sup>8</sup> LSNL defines an LEP person as one who "cannot speak, read, write or understand" the English language at a level that permits them to interact effectively with healthcare or legal services providers and social service agencies.

In the Shreveport office, the general intake hours are 9:00 a.m. to 10:30 a.m., Mondays through Thursdays. The hours for emergencies and walk-ins are 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Mondays through Fridays.

In the Monroe office, general intake hours are 8:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m., Mondays through Wednesdays. The hours for emergencies and walk-ins are 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Mondays through Fridays.

In the Natchitoches office, the general intake hours are 9:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m., Tuesdays through Thursdays. The hours for emergencies and walk-ins are 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Mondays through Fridays. We note that while the Natchitoches general intake hours are listed as 9:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m., intake for this office is essentially a lottery as it is closed after the first 10 calls. Thus, some applicants may attempt to access the program's services day-after-day without success because they lose the race to be among the first 10 intake calls. Considering the difficulties getting through the intake system, it is surprising that more applicants do not choose to just walk in.

Despite the challenging approach to intake, we note that LSNL and its advocates place great value in helping those who get to them. As part of the recommended strategic planning process, LSNL should study the best practices of other legal services programs, especially those using the Kemps case management system (CMS). Also, as we discuss below, LSNL has already given some thoughts to improving overall intake for the program. It appears that the program has not been able to follow through on its earlier goals.

**Finding 7: LSNL is striving to complement its branch office intake systems with online intake.**

The LSNL web site contains a page that allows patrons to apply for legal assistance online. Applicants are cautioned, however that if they have an emergency, they should contact the office immediately after submitting their application. It is estimated that online intake accounts for less than one percent of all intakes program-wide. Other than appearing on the program's web site, it appears that online intake is not widely published in the client, social services, or legal community. LSNL's telephone system's recordings and other materials do not contain any references to applying for assistance online.

The online intake is not integrated with the LSNL case management system. Therefore, manual entry of the data already provided by the applicant is required. The applications are retrieved by the intake staff in the Natchitoches office and entered in the CMS, where a conflict check is run and eligibility checked. After the completion of the eligibility screening, eligible applications are referred to the appropriate branch office where an advocate is assigned to contact the online applicant for a substantive interview.

**Finding 8: In 2011, LSNL began a discussion of model intake procedures and embraced a set of intake principles that can now provide a framework for the intake component of its strategic plan.**

In 2011, LSNL undertook a revision of its intake manual and, in the process, embraced the intake principles adopted by the Louisiana state justice community as a starting point for a discussion of improving its own intake procedures to serve clients more responsively.

The first principle is that "intake systems should be 'client centered,' providing ease of access to legal services and prompt, high quality assistance or referral." As a result of reduced funding and limited staff, LSNL has simply delayed taking concrete action to provide ease of access and prompt assistance. Intake remains an office-by office matter; online intake is not widely known and has not been integrated with the CMS; and the program's telephone system that could support coordinated intake is not being used fully. As the commentary to the intake principles states, "Clients care about having their problems resolved, and not about which particular "unit, staff person, or outside agency handles the problem..."

For those applicants who successfully access the program for a full intake, LSNL needs to figure out a way of "saying no" in a timely manner to comply with the second intake principle embraced: "All intake systems should have an effective means of providing a prompt response to client inquiries regarding whether the program can provide assistance, and what level of assistance may be available. This may involve setting timetables for responding to client contacts with an intake, and also timetables for advising clients regarding the 'case acceptance' decision." At present, the program's stated goal of providing a decision on the level of assistance within 24 to 48 hours after application is not being met.

LSNL appears to comply with the third intake principle in that it has "protocols for identifying 'emergencies' [...and...] more quickly and efficiently connecting clients with the staff or other service agency which might address the client's emergency needs." In this regard, the Shreveport and Monroe offices use a 211 number, which allows quick referral of clients to non-legal providers.

The intake principles go on to address such issues as providing "timely legal advice or brief service for matters of common or recurring concern to members of the client community but for which the program does not have the resources to provide individual representation of clients, and where the client may be assisted in understanding his/her legal position, need for legal counsel, and/or ability to pursue some level of representation pro se if he/she is unable to locate counsel." At present, LSNL is not fully addressing this requirement.<sup>9</sup> The program needs

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<sup>9</sup> Other state justice community intake principles include, but are not limited to the following:

- Having client legal education materials available to provide to clients who request services which cannot be provided by individual representation, or who seek information about a particular legal issue without an articulated desire for immediate representation.
- Having materials available to client for pro se use in common or recurring areas of unmet client need for which the program is unable to provide individual representation, and in which the client may be able to proceed pro se with a greater likelihood of success than if the client took no action in the legal matter whatsoever.
- Having the capacity to make efficient referrals of clients whose needs must be resolved by representation in another legal services program service area, both within and outside of Louisiana.
- Making appropriate use of available technology to provide timely and efficient services to clients consistent with these principles. Such technology can be helpful in making referrals between offices and programs by

to establish case acceptance guidelines with the goal of spending less time on cases that will not be accepted, and increasing access by reexamining intake hours and intake cut offs.

***Criterion 2. Engagement with the low-income population***

**Finding 9: LSNL’s community outreach and engagement efforts by staff advocates are limited.**

The recommended strategic planning process should address increasing community education and outreach among the non-elderly segments of the low-income populations to help individuals and families learn how to protect their legal rights.

In preparation for the on-site visit, LSNL provided the team with a list of “community outreach, community education, and pro se activities performed in the last 12 months.” The list provided shows 276 events. Of these, 193 (70%) were presentations or visits to councils on aging. For the Natchitoches office, council on aging presentations comprised 100% of the staff’s outreach and community education work for the period. In the Monroe office, 84 (94.4%) of the 89 events listed were presentations or visits to councils on aging. Of 168 events for the Shreveport office, 92 (54.8%) were presentations or visits to councils on aging. The balance were to a variety of health fairs, community awareness events , public school and student events (head start, high schools, and school boards), veterans stand downs (Operation Stand Down), churches, and local government offices (including clerks of courts).

LSNL expects all of its LSC funded advocates to participate in community education and outreach. The expectation is explicitly stated in all job descriptions and extends to the executive director and litigation director. For new attorneys, the Litigation Manual states that during the first year they should “become knowledgeable about the client community and begin to develop formal relationships with client and community organizations.” Apart from councils on aging, the team did not observe evidence of “formal relationships with client and community organizations.”

***Criterion 3. Access and utilization by the low-income population.***

**Finding 10: LSNL maintains three staffed locations to afford broad access and utilization by low-income individuals and families.**

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transferring information; by quickly documenting and closing cases which require only advice or brief service; by generating appropriate advice/referral letters and providing legal information or pro se materials, etc.

- Making appropriate provisions for modifying intake to serve non-English speaking clients, or clients with special needs or limitations in communicating with or contacting a legal services office. This may include outreach provisions, as well as provisions for interpreters.
- Providing for regular review by a supervising attorney to ensure consistent and appropriate handling of client inquiries takes place, and to identify recurring or systemic problems affecting clients.
- Evaluating the effectiveness of services provided and client satisfaction. These may include periodic questionnaires, follow up call by staff, review of court records, and the results of pro se representation, etc.

LSNL operates from three staffed locations—a branch office and executive administrative office in the city of Shreveport; a branch office in the city of Natchitoches; and a branch office in the city of Monroe. All of the three office locations are population centers and are reasonably accessible to the low-income population of the service area. LSNL's hours of operation are Mondays through Fridays, 8:30 a.m. until 5:00 p.m. All of the program's offices are accessible to the physically handicapped, professional in appearance, and have physical layouts that are respectful and sensitive to client confidentiality.

Each of the LSNL branch offices is led by a managing attorney and is staffed by three or more staff attorneys and legal secretaries. At the time of the visit, the Shreveport branch office was staffed by a managing attorney, two supervising attorneys, seven staff attorneys, an office manager, and four administrative/support staff, and two intake workers. The Shreveport staff is complemented by a volunteer attorney who contributes 10 hours each week. In the Natchitoches office there were a managing attorney, three staff attorneys, an office manager, and two legal secretaries. The Monroe office had a managing attorney, four staff attorneys (one assigned half-time as PAI coordinator), one and a half intake workers, an office manager, and three support staff/legal secretaries.

**Recommendation II.1.5.1. LSNL should continue to monitor the growth of the limited English proficient Hispanic population and, as resources permit, strive to hire at least one bilingual intake worker and staff attorney.**

**Recommendation II.1.6.1.\* The LSNL strategic planning should include a critical assessment of the program's current approaches to intake and exploration of other more effective forms of intake and outreach strategies.**

**Recommendation II.1.7.1. LSNL should take all necessary steps to enhance the technology essential for the smooth and seamless operation of the intake.**

**Recommendation II.1.7.2. LSNL should publicize its online intake option so as to provide more access to applicants and to streamline its intake system.**

**Recommendation II.1.7.3. As resources allow, the online intake applications should be integrated into the Kemps case management system. LSNL should explore this with its state justice community partners as all of the programs in Louisiana are now using Kemps.**

**Recommendation II.1.8.1.\* LSNL should actively participate in the efforts of the Louisiana state justice community to explore telephone intake as part of a larger plan to establish a single point of entry for applicants seeking civil legal aid through a seamless operation of shared technology from locations throughout the state.**

**Recommendation II.1.8.2.\* During the recommended strategic planning process, LSNL should draft case acceptance guidelines that identify the core cases that will be handled by all offices. The guidelines should identify those cases appropriate for referral to PAI, those appropriate for advice only, and those appropriate for legal information only. Further, a summary of the guidelines should be widely published throughout the client communities,**

among community organizations, among social service agencies, and among other partners to help direct the LSNL intake process.

**Recommendation II.2.9.1.\*** As part of the recommended strategic planning process, LSNL should explore ways to enhance its outreach and community preventive legal education activities far beyond the current councils on aging focus.

**PERFORMANCE AREA THREE.** *Effectiveness of legal representation and other program activities intended to benefit the low income population in its service area.*

***Criterion 1. Legal Representation***

**Finding 11: LSNL's advocate staff is diverse and sufficiently experienced to implement the goals, objectives, and strategies adopted for the program's casework.**

LSNL has a reasonably diverse and experienced staff that mirrors the relevant workforce in the state of Louisiana and the Southeastern region of the nation. They have excellent reputations among the judges, administrative agencies, social service agencies, and community organizations interviewed. They are viewed as committed, caring professionals who value their work and clients.

Excluding the executive director,<sup>10</sup> LSNL's attorneys have an average of 15 years of experience in the legal profession and an average of 9.6 years with the program. The litigation director has 34 years of legal experience, 34 years with LSNL or its predecessor, and 6 years in the position of directing litigation. Twelve of the 20 attorneys fall into the senior-level experience category, having 12 or more years of legal experience; six are in the mid-level experience category, having four to 11 years of experience; and the remaining two are in the new attorney experience category, having less than four years of experience. In the Monroe office, one of the staff attorneys serves as the PAI coordinator.

Three of the 20 attorneys are managing attorneys—one in each staffed office. As a group, the managing attorneys have an average of 18.7 years of experience in the legal profession; an average of 17 years with LSNL or its predecessor; and an average of 8.3 years of experience as a managing attorney. Two of the three managing attorneys are women.

In addition to three managing attorneys, LSNL has two supervising attorneys. Both are in the Shreveport office. They have an average of 15.5 years of experience in the legal profession; an average of 10 years with LSNL or its predecessor; and an average of 8 years of experience as a supervising attorney. One of the supervising attorneys is a woman.

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<sup>10</sup> The LSNL executive director is a woman with 39 years of legal experience, 21 years of experience in Legal Services in Louisiana, and 13 years of experience as an executive director.

The program's attorney staff diversity is reasonable compared to the diversity of the service area. Blacks are 64.5% of the service area's poverty population; whites are 33.1%; and Hispanics are 1.4. Eleven of LSNL's attorneys are black (55%) and nine are white (45%), Fifteen (75%) of LSNL's attorneys are women and the remaining five (25%) are men.

At the time of visit, LSNL did not have any paralegals on staff. This is a decline from 2002 when the program employed five paralegals.

**Finding 12: Oversight of legal work is mainly done by managing attorneys, with the assistance of supervising/staff attorneys in one office. There are legal work management and supervision policies and procedures, but they are not uniformly followed.**

In general, the overall legal representation and advocacy are overseen by the executive director and the litigation director. But on a day-to-day basis, oversight of legal work is done by each office's managing attorney, except that in the Shreveport office two supervising/staff attorneys are responsible for legal work supervision in addition to the managing attorney.

LSNL has a litigation manual that contains guidelines for representation of clients as well as standards for evaluation and supervision of legal work. The written policies and procedures contained in the manual are based in part on the *LSC Performance Criteria (2006)* and the ABA's *Standards for the Provision of Civil Legal Aid (2006)*. They are not uniformly followed. While there were no reports of any critical deadlines being missed, the team was informed that program advocates do not consistently comply with the requirement that "attorneys ...establish and maintain a tickler or reminder system on CMS for keeping track of deadlines for filing, court appearances, critical notices to clients, discovery, investigation, witness production, responses due from others, and work plan tasks." The program's policy requires both managing attorneys and the litigation director to check whether deadlines have been met. There was no evidence of the litigation director moving proactively to ensure compliance by advocates and their immediate supervisors.

In addition, despite the program's explicit written supervision standards, there is little formal oversight of the program's legal work beyond that of new attorneys. The team acknowledges that a majority of the program's attorneys have substantial legal experience in the areas in which they practice. But, as both the LSNL policy and the ABA Standards recognize, experience does not supplant the need or the legal obligation for oversight in the case of "staff practitioners."<sup>11</sup> The managing and supervising attorneys are required to confer regularly with staff attorneys concerning case status and caseload priorities. They generally perform their

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<sup>11</sup> See Commentary to ABA Standard 5.3 (on Maintenance of Records), Standard 6.3 (on Responsibility for the Conduct of Representation), and Standard 6.4 (on Review of Representation). The ABA Standards and Commentary can be accessed at:

[http://www.legalaidnc.org/public/participate/legal\\_services\\_community/ABA\\_StandardsfortheProvisionofCivilLegalAid\\_Aug\\_2006.pdf](http://www.legalaidnc.org/public/participate/legal_services_community/ABA_StandardsfortheProvisionofCivilLegalAid_Aug_2006.pdf)

Also, the LSNL's Litigation Manual (Revised December 2011) makes the same point in setting forth a "Supervision Policy for Attorneys with More than One Year Experience with LSNL."

oversight responsibilities through an open door policy and episodic meetings, reviewing cases through the case management system, and providing input for the annual performance evaluations. The litigation manual cautions that “merely listening to reports on cases is not a sufficient basis for competent supervision of a beginning attorney. The supervisor must review the actual case files under review.” Moreover, the manual states that “the supervisor should be familiar with the case file, and be able to exercise independent judgment in evaluating each case. The team would add that this principle is also applicable to mid-level and experienced attorneys, although the frequency of review may differ.

In addressing the supervision of attorneys with more than one year experience with LSNL, the litigation manual contains the following: “Experienced attorneys will be provided with supervision necessary to ensure that they effectively use their skills and expertise to assist clients, and continue to develop their legal skills and knowledge to enable them to engage in complex legal, policy and community work expected of experienced attorneys.” Co-counseling with supervisors and peers is a recommended method of promoting the development of less experienced attorneys.

In addition to their supervisors, advocates reported discussing their cases with one another, especially with very experienced colleagues around the program. Managing attorneys supervise the acceptance and assignment of cases. Hands-on quarterly case file reviews and closed case file reviews are required. Compliance with this requirement is infrequent in all offices and nonexistent among some managers, except with the cases of new attorneys. The team notes that the litigation manual makes no exception for closed case file review.<sup>12</sup>

The manual states the program's philosophy for legal representation and advocacy, which include “[providing] high quality and effective services to clients and [making] equal justice a reality; [striving] for the best possible outcomes for clients; [and appreciating that] even an ordinary case may present opportunities to benefit clients and to bring about change. . . .” This philosophy was borne out among a few advocates, as we discuss in more detail below.

**Finding 13: At the present time, LSNL has a director of litigation to provide program-wide leadership and coordination of legal work.**

According to the LSNL job description, the litigation director is generally responsible for the overall legal work of the program and is charged with handling difficult and complex litigation, assisting with attorney staff evaluations, and coordinating and assisting with attorney trainings. He serves as the immediate supervisor of the managing attorneys. According to the LSNL litigation manual, “prior to filing an appeal, federal lawsuit or complex or potentially expensive litigation, the attorney must complete the Litigation Approval form” and present it to the litigation director as well as the executive director for approval.

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<sup>12</sup> According to the manual, “The supervisor must review all case files prior to the case being closed in the case management data base. The supervisor must review the case closing memo and assess whether the LSNL case closing protocol has been followed.”

The litigation director's time is mainly split between the Shreveport and Natchitoches offices. He rarely visits the Monroe office. As stated above, along with the executive director, the litigation director conducts the monthly litigation meetings.

Advocates state that the litigation director is an accessible resource and assists with individual cases when they seek his advice. He does not carry a caseload unless it becomes necessary upon the departure of case handling attorneys. The litigation director usually works alone on all of his cases; this includes handling appellate cases without co-counseling with other attorneys in the program. As noted above, the LSNL litigation manual explicitly addresses co-counseling, albeit in the context of the development of new attorneys. Also, the litigation manual contemplates the litigation director teaching complex lawyering skills and assisting with the development and supervision of new attorneys.

**Finding 14: The overall quantity of legal assistance provided by LSNL is below the national medians. Relative to the service area's poverty population, the program's total closed cases are reasonable but its extended representation and contested cases are significantly below the national median.**

In preparation for the program quality visit, LSNL submitted to LSC an open case list for each advocate. Excluding the program's children in need of care grant (CINC) cases,<sup>13</sup> the combined LSC case lists show a total of 370 open cases as of January 31, 2013—being handled by the program's 14 LSC-funded attorneys, excluding the executive director and litigation director. Accordingly, the average caseloads for the LSC-funded attorneys were 26.4. The caseloads were skewed heavily toward family law (60.8%). In terms of actual numbers for individual attorneys, caseloads ranged from a low of 8 to a high of 61, with the majority carrying 27 cases or higher. The caseloads of managing attorneys and the LSC-funded supervising attorney fell in the low to moderate range—caseloads of 18, 24, 27, and 40.

As far as the team could tell, the open caseloads of LSC-funded staff did not contain cases not reportable to LSC or cases that were factually or procedurally complex. In connection with the recommended strategic planning, the quantity and diversity of caseloads should be examined to ascertain relative evenness in work load distribution, complexity of legal work, and effectiveness of legal representation and advocacy.

For 2012, LSNL reported closing 3,891 LSC eligible cases. This is the culmination of a steady decline in total number of cases closed that the program has experienced since 2003, the second year of the merger. The total closure for year 2012 amounts to 191 closed cases per 10,000 poor persons for the service area (hereafter, per 10k poverty population or per 10k)

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<sup>13</sup> At the end of 2009, the Louisiana Bar Foundation, at the urging of the Louisiana Supreme Court, began receiving appropriated funds for the state's CINC program for pass through to the LSC grantees in the state in addition to a small number of other providers. LSNL and the other CINC grantees do not conduct any LSC financial eligibility determination in connection with the representation of the children involved. Therefore, the representation of these children is not part of the range of legal services required under the LSC grant and captured by the LSC case service reports (CSRs).

compared to the national median of 245.<sup>14</sup> This performance also represents a steady decline over the last six years.

LSNL's 2012 actual extended closed cases per 10k poverty population is 29 compared to the national median of 57, which represents 50.9% of the national median. The program's extended closed cases per 10k have experienced a steady decline over the last four years—42 per 10k in 2008, 40 per 10k in 2009, 37 per 10k in 2010, and 34 per 10k in 2011.

LSNL's 2012 actual contested closed cases per 10k poverty population are 10 compared to the national median of 28. The achievement here is only 35.7% of the national median. Following discussions prior to and during the on-site visit, LSNL management has agreed to explore adjustments of its legal representation and advocacy approaches and strategies to achieve higher levels of performance.

**Finding 15: The diversity of the legal work performed by LSNL does not appear to be reasonably related to the most pressing legal needs in the service area.**

Presently, there is a significant lack of diversity in LSNL's legal representation and advocacy. This state of affairs is readily acknowledged by the program and LSNL plans to undertake an ambitious strategic planning process to examine its approaches and delivery strategies. A major focus will be to move the program's legal work beyond advice and counsel and increasing extended representation beyond family issues.

Of the 370 open cases as of January 31, 2013 being handled by the program's 14 LSC-funded attorneys, excluding the executive director and litigation director, 60.8% were in the area of family law. That open cases immediately prior to the visit were skewed heavily toward family law is consistent with the program's historic lack of caseload diversity, dating back to at least 2006. With the exception of 2006, the program's family law cases have exceeded 62.0% during the past eight years.

The skew toward family law cases becomes even more pronounced when examined in the context of contested court decisions. For 2012, LSNL reported a total of 119 cases involving a contested court decision. Family comprised 115 of the 119 cases, which amounts to 96.6%. In 2011 and 2010, similar results prevailed. LSNL reported 109 cases involving a contested court decision in 2011; 99 (90.8%) were family. Total contested court decisions were 145 in 2010; family comprised 139 (95.9%).

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<sup>14</sup> The number of closed cases per 10K poverty population is one measure of program performance traditionally used by LSC to evaluate productivity on a program-wide basis. The comparison is made to the national median for the particular calendar year in question. Comparing a program's case closing statistics to the national median may or may not lead to specific conclusions. A program's case closing statistics can reflect a number of factors, including the inexperience of staff, demographics, the geography of a service area, the program's case priorities, the program's policy on the levels of services provided, and the focus of program resources on work that is not captured in the CSRs, among others. However, as part of a program's periodic evaluation of its performance, LSC encourages programs to compare their case closing statistics in a variety of categories to the national median, looking for any revelation that may raise a flag that should be examined further.

Thus, it will be a noteworthy goal of LSNL's strategic planning process to explore ways to curb the quantity of family law cases and to garner support from the program's advocates, board members, client and social service representatives, the judiciary and organized bar, and other strategic partners to diversify its practice areas and focus on other identified pressing needs of the area's client eligible populations.

**Finding 16: The quality of the legal work performed by LSNL is mixed.**

LSNL's attorneys appear competent in and knowledgeable of the areas in which they handle cases. They have good reputations among the judges, attorney board members, other legal services providers, social service agencies, and community organizations the team contacted. Advocates practice in a variety of forums that include the state's trial and appellate courts, state and federal administrative agencies, and the federal district courts.

The program's legal representation consists of a mix of limited and extended representation. And, as noted above, the percentages of extended and actual contested representation are below the national median, suggesting a need for further scrutiny.

In preparation for the visit, the LSC team requested a writing sample from each case handling advocate, selected by the advocates as representative of their best work in the last 24 months and reflecting their legal research, analytical, and writing skills. We received 19 responses (samples from the LSC-funded advocates as well as the CINC advocates and the director of litigation). Because of the nature of law practice in some Louisiana courts, requiring fewer memoranda and briefs, the writing samples were sparse.

The samples covered the following substantive and procedural areas: consumer sale and collection, a variety of family law cases (adoption, divorce, child custody, child visitation, and termination of parental rights), guardianship, juvenile (abuse and neglect determinations), SSI, Social Security widow's benefits, unemployment benefits, trial and appellate practice, personal jurisdiction, and in forma pauperis challenges. They included the following types of legal writings—appellate briefs (all in one of the State's five courts of appeal), trial court memorandums in the State's district courts (courts of general jurisdiction) and one city court (courts of limited jurisdiction), several district court pleadings and motions, a brief to a Social Security Administration administrative law judge, and a memorandum of law in a Social Security appeal to the United States District Court.

With a few exceptions, the writing samples submitted were of average quality. The appellate and federal court briefs were well written. They exhibited the effective communication skills that are essential to competent legal practice; and the arguments advanced appear sound. Where appropriate, the writings cited the evidentiary support for facts asserted. The issues addressed in the appellate briefs included unemployment benefits, denial of indigent status for court costs, and wrongful CINC adjudication by the state.

**Finding 17: LSNL is striving to provide its advocates reasonable training and other resources and support to ensure effective legal advocacy.**

LSNL advocates have access to necessary law library and research resources. All advocates have access to Westlaw for legal research, listservs in the subject matter areas in which they work, and they participate in the statewide task forces. While there are informal methods for sharing prior relevant work produced by advocates, there is neither a comprehensive pleadings bank nor a widely used document preparation system.

A few advocates expressed frustration at the ability to access and use experts in developing and prosecuting some cases. They reported that management routinely cites the lack of funds for such expenses. For calendar year 2012, LSNL allocated a total of \$15,000 for litigation.<sup>15</sup> This amounted to 0.51% of the program's total budget for that year. At the end of the year, LSNL reported that total expenditures in the litigation category were \$10,436. The program is also projecting \$15,000 for litigation in 2013.

All of the advocates interviewed stated that LSNL affords sufficient opportunities to attend training. Training remains important despite the fiscal constraints the program faces. Staff reported attending a variety of training events including local, state, and national training. Such events included basic legal advocacy training, community lawyering, fair housing and HUD housing counseling, NLADA annual conferences, consumer law training, TANF training, and MIE training. The Louisiana state justice community holds an annual statewide conference where a variety of training is offered. All of the program's advocates attend. In 2012, LSNL budgeted \$47,000 for staff training and expended \$29,323.

## **Criterion 2. Private Attorney Involvement.**

**Finding 18: The program is striving to effectively integrate private attorneys in its work in order to supplement the amount and effectiveness of its representation and other services and achieve its goals and objectives.**

LSC's basic-field general recipients are required to devote an amount equal to at least 12.5% of their basic field funding to the involvement of private attorneys in the delivery of legal services. LSNL was unable to expend the total required amount in 2009, 2010, and 2011; the program sought and obtained waiver from LSC for those years. The requirement for 2012 was met. At the time of the visit, LSNL satisfied its private attorney involvement (PAI) requirement through a mixed system of contract attorneys (compensated PAI or Judicare) and an in-house pro bono project.<sup>16</sup>

A very small percentage of the eligible private attorneys in the LSNL service area participate in the program's PAI efforts. According to the 2000 Census' EEO data for resident attorneys in Louisiana by parish, approximately 1,455 attorneys resided in the service area at the

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<sup>15</sup> The program's total budget for 2012 was \$2,928,759. Its total expenses for the year were \$2,730,037.

<sup>16</sup> At the time of the visit, LSNL and the Shreveport Bar Foundation were on the verge of entering into a subgrant agreement for the latter to provide pro bono assistance to clients. Also, the LSC team heard that the Monroe Justice community is interested in establishing a similar pro bono project.

time.<sup>17</sup> Over the three year period 2010-2012, an average of 32 attorneys accepted cases each year. This included an average of 20 (62.5%) pro bono attorneys and 12 compensated attorneys.<sup>18</sup> Overall there is a significant gap between the number of private attorneys who agree to participate in the program's PAI and the actual number of attorneys who accept cases during any particular year. For example, 106 private attorneys agreed to participate in PAI in 2012, but only 35 (33%) accepted cases that year. In 2011, only 26 (17.6%) of the 148 attorneys who agreed to participate accepted cases. And, in 2010, 36 (24.7%) of 146 attorneys who agreed to participate accepted cases.

Consistent with the small number of attorneys who actually accept cases, a very small percentage of LSNL's cases are closed with the assistance of private attorneys. For example, of the 3,891 LSC eligible cases closed in 2012, only 143 (3.7%) were PAI cases. In 2011, of the 4,250 cases closed, 193 (4.5%) were PAI. And, in 2010, 169 (3.9%) of the 4,383 closed cases were PAI.

In terms of substantive areas, 92.3% of LSNL's 2012 PAI cases were in family law; 5.6% were consumer/finance; and 1.4% housing. This performance represents a significant increase in family law. In 2011 and 2010, family law was 77.7% and 78.1% of PAI cases respectively. Until 2012, consumer/finance was a significant area of work by PAI attorneys, the majority regarding bankruptcy and debt relief. In 2011 LSNL closed 42 PAI cases in the area of consumer/finance, which amounted to 21.8% of all cases closed by the program that year. And, in 2010, the program closed 36 PAI cases in the consumer/finance category, 21.3% of all closed cases.

As to the level of service provided by PAI attorneys, 90.9% of LSNL's 2012 closed PAI cases involved extended service. None of the extended service work involved contested court decisions that year. From 2008 through 2012, LSNL's extended service PAI cases included a grand total of 10 contested court decisions, despite the fact that 94.3% of closed PAI cases involved extended service in 2011, 85.2% in 2010, 91.0% in 2009, and 89.2% in 2008.

Prior to placement or referral, LSNL's staff screens the cases for merit and financial eligibility. Cases appropriate for PAI placement are identified by the managing attorney following completed intakes. Each branch office has a PAI coordinator or coordinators. In the Shreveport office, the PAI coordinator is a non-lawyer supervised by the executive director. In the Monroe office, the coordinator is a staff attorney with some case handling responsibilities. And, in the Natchitoches office, PAI is coordinated by the managing attorney and the office manager.

LSNL has case oversight and follow-up procedures to ensure the timely disposition of cases placed with private attorneys. PAI coordinators are required to obtain updates on the status

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<sup>17</sup> Census 2000 EEO Data Tool, U.S. Census Bureau, at <http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/eeoindex/overview.html>.

<sup>18</sup> Over the ten year period 2003-2012, an average of 43 attorneys accepted cases each year. This included an average of 25 (58.1%) pro bono attorneys and 18 compensated attorneys.

of cases at least quarterly. At the conclusion of cases, the PAI attorneys are requested to notify the program of the relief obtained and to provide copies of final court orders or judgments. Thereafter, the case file is reviewed for closure by the managing attorney and a satisfaction survey is sent to the client.

Most of the program's attorneys attend meetings of local bar association in the cities where LSNL branch offices are located. The executive director attends some local bar annual meetings and state bar meetings. LSNL host law student interns in some offices during the summer months in collaboration with the state's law schools' efforts to foster appreciation for pro bono.

### **Criteria 3 and 4. Other program services and activities.**

**Finding 19: While LSNL appears to undertake a reasonable level of community education and outreach in the service area, the focus is heavily on seniors and the program is just beginning to consider a significant role in the area of pro se assistance in collaboration with the state justice community and other LSC grantees in the state.**

LSNL's community education and outreach activities are heavily skewed toward seniors because of funding grants from eight councils on aging. These aging grants account for a very small percentage of the program's annual budget, only 1.5% in 2012 and 2.0% is projected for 2013. In 2012, except for churches, the program's staff made very few community education visits and presentations at sites and organizations of community groups outside of the aging grants community.

The program also displays and distributes brochures produced by LSNL as well as other providers and government agencies. In addition to intake workers and the attorneys, support and administrative staff reported distributing brochures at schools, beauty salons, and barber shops. The brochures cover subjects such as LSNL's services, child custody, child support, divorce, evictions, pension counseling, SSI disabled child benefits, unemployment benefits, used car purchases, and wills. Some of the brochures are available in Spanish. It is the team's opinion that the brochures are not written in plain language or at a reading level consistent with the target populations.

Despite an approach to client services that reflects an overarching belief that one-to-one client assistance is best, at present LSNL does not offer legal clinics and does not emphasize the use of web-based information by the client eligible populations. We note, however, that LSNL has agreed to work with the Access to Justice Committee of the Louisiana State Bar, the Louisiana Bar Foundation, and other state justice community partners on establishing self-help centers and court-approved forms in Shreveport.

**Recommendation III.1.12.1.\* LSNL should insure that all staff review and follow the existing legal work case handling policies and procedures contained in the program's Litigation Manual.**

**Recommendation III.1.12.2. LSNL should explore best practices within the program as regards electronic calendaring and tickling and should develop and follow a uniform**

electronic system of calendaring and tickling cases (manual systems may still serve as redundant back-up systems).

**Recommendation III.1.12.2.\*** LSNL should insure managing and supervising attorneys fully comply with the program's legal work supervision policies and procedures.

**Recommendation III.1.12.3.\*** LSNL should review the current oversight procedures used by the litigation director and the executive director to ensure that established legal work management and supervision policies and procedures are in fact being implemented properly.

**Recommendation III.1.13.1.** Under the leadership of the litigation director, LSNL should seek out opportunities for advocates to co-counsel on appellate and other new, unique, or impact advocacy cases as a means of teaching complex lawyering skills to future leading litigators.

**Recommendation III.1.14.1.** LSNL should regularly generate comparative closed case reports of the cases closed by attorneys in each office. These could be discussed during the monthly managers' meetings.

**Recommendation III.1.14.2.** LSNL should closely monitor the volume of extended service cases and contested cases undertaken and closed by its advocates.

**Recommendation III.1.15.1.\*** During the very early stages of the planned strategic planning process, LSNL should adopt strategies designed to move the program's extended legal work beyond family law issues, including establishing explicit annual goals for non-family law extended cases, and discussing with its strategic partners how best to garner the necessary support of leaders and representatives of the client and social service communities, the local judiciary, and organized bar associations.

**Recommendation III.1.17.1.** In budgeting for litigation support, LSNL should insure input from the litigation director, managing and supervising attorneys, staff attorneys, and other relevant staff.

**Recommendation III.1.17.2.** LSNL should insure that its litigation, training, and legal resource budgets reflect the program's adopted goals and priorities, including but not limited to the level and quality of legal representation required and expected.

**Recommendation III.2.18.1.\*** LSNL, along with its state justice and other strategic partners, should continue to explore meaningful ways to increase the number of recruited private attorneys who actually accept two or more pro bono cases during the calendar year.

**Recommendation III.2.18.2.\*** LSNL should work closely with the Shreveport Bar Foundation and Bar Association to explore innovative delivery approaches for the pro bono project, including legal clinics designed to alleviate demands on program staff regarding routine cases.

**Recommendation III.2.18.3.** In conjunction with the Louisiana Bar Foundation and other state justice partners, LSNL should help develop a satisfaction survey instrument to obtain feedback from pro bono attorneys to, among other things, help increase recruitment, case placements, and caseload diversity.

**Recommendation III.2.18.4.** LSNL should work closely with the judiciary, bar associations and private attorneys, legal administrators and paralegals, law schools and law students, and other strategic partners to encourage increased participation in pro bono projects and efforts throughout the service area and state.

**Recommendation III.2.18.5.** LSNL should work with state justice partners to evaluate annually the goals, objectives, and outcomes of its overall PAI efforts.

**Recommendation III.2.18.6.** With its law school and state justice partners, LSNL should continue to encourage pro bono among the state's law students.

**Recommendation III.3.19.1.\*** LSNL should take the necessary steps to insure that its legal information and community education brochures are written in plain language and at a reading level consistent with the target populations.

**Recommendation III.3.19.2.\*** LSNL should consider offering legal clinics to help meet the legal needs of the eligible client populations. These clinics should be conducted by LSNL staff as well as pro bono attorneys where available.

**Recommendation III.3.19.3.** With its state justice partners, LSNL should take the necessary steps to publicize to the client eligible populations and community organizations throughout the service area the availability of legal information on the statewide website.

**PERFORMANCE AREA FOUR.** *Effectiveness of Governance, Leadership and Administration.*

**Criterion 1. Board Governance.**

**Finding 20:** LSNL is governed by an appropriately diverse board of directors that provides appropriate oversight and shares the mission of the program.

LSNL is governed by a 15-member board of directors<sup>19</sup> composed of 9 attorneys and six client-eligible members, who are diverse in terms of race and gender. Board representation is geographically dispersed throughout the service area. Members are appointed to three-year terms and may be reappointed to an unlimited number of consecutive two-year terms. It is

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<sup>19</sup> The executive director is a non-voting ex-officio member of the board and is not counted as one of the 15 members.

common for members to serve consecutive two-year terms as the bylaws permit. Turnover is very low. While continuity has benefits for the program, the depth of members' involvement is as important as the duration of their service. The members interviewed—clients and attorneys—are highly experienced, dedicated, and committed to the program's mission. This appears to be a strength on which the program can draw as it moves forward.

A quorum requires six members at any regular or special meeting. While typical attendance is only about half the membership, a quorum of members has attended each scheduled board meeting within the last 24 months. Meetings are held quarterly and are rotated between the three cities where the program maintains staffed offices—Natchitoches, Monroe, and Shreveport.

At present, there are six standing board committees: 1) an executive committee; 2) budget and audit; 3) priority and community education; 4) personnel; 5) litigation; and 6) building technology and compliance.<sup>20</sup> The board and program leadership appears to be vigilant regarding the fiscal integrity of the program. The budget and audit committee meets regularly, sometimes monthly. In carrying out its fiscal oversight responsibilities, the board has access to the services of a pro bono CPA. Members receive fiscal information before each board meeting.

In view of the program's significant financial and resource challenges alluded to throughout this report, noticeably absent from LSNL's list of standing board committees is a resource development committee. In the past, most board members have not been encouraged to play a significant role in resource development, though some board members have played a major role in this area recently. The team notes that one board member was instrumental in securing a matching grant that allowed LSNL to renovate its offices.

Client-eligible board members appear to be full participants and feel free to contribute during meetings. For example, both the budget/audit committee and the priority and community education committee have been chaired by client members. Orientation and training are provided to new board members. Members are given copies of the LSC Act and regulations, and the LSC Performance Criteria. Members appear to understand their role as ambassadors to the legal and client communities. Attorney members see program staff in court and receive feedback from the judiciary about advocates' reputations and performance. Members reported unanimously that the program and its advocates are well respected by the bench and private bar.

While the team was told that the board regularly receives verbal reports of the program's client service activities and accomplishments, these reports are made by the executive director. The board and staff could both benefit from including in board meetings a regular rotating line staff presentation about the day-to-day work and impact of the program's services. This would enhance the board's service as the program's ambassadors to the legal, governmental, philanthropic, and client communities as well as reinforcing the appreciation of the board for the work of dedicated staff.

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<sup>20</sup> At present, board officers consist of a chairperson, vice chairperson, secretary and treasurer. They are elected to one year terms that can be renewed without limitation.

The board evaluates the executive director approximately annually. The process includes some staff input as well as input from all board members. The executive director provides a variety of reports to the board at every meeting. The reports cover new developments from the major funders like LSC and Louisiana Bar Foundation, and financial and budgetary matters. Along with the executive director, the program's chief financial officer always attends board meetings.

As the program embarks on its strategic planning process, the board must take a leadership role in ensuring that a meaningful process is undertaken and completed as soon as possible, with full board involvement. Once the plan is in place, the board should take steps to review the activities of the program to determine the extent to which the activities are consistent with the plan. To the extent they are not consistent, the board should hold the executive director and staff accountable for bringing the activities into alignment with the adopted strategic plan.

## **Criterion 2. Leadership.**

### **Finding 21: LSNL's leadership is comprised of an executive director and a litigation director.**

LSNL has experienced leadership in its executive director, who has led the program in its current organizational form from January 1, 2002 to the present. In the months leading up to the merger, the director was hired by the body that eventually became the LSNL board to consummate the merger and lead the newly merged organization into the future. The board, staff, and state justice partners all agree that the director has done a very effective job of building a unified program post-merger and a cohesive staff. Little to none of the lingering strife that plagues merged organizations is present in LSNL or among existing partners and supportive groups in the service area.

Now that LSNL has been transformed into a unified organization as to every aspect of its operation, it is time for the program to build on this successful effort by carrying out an outward-looking strategic planning process to, among other things, develop a multi-year plan to obtain the adequate resources needed so desperately and to ensure growth, stability and viability. To successfully confront this monumental challenge, the executive director needs to re-examine the demands on her time to see how it can be used most effectively and what responsibilities can be shared or delegated. Based on our interviews with staff, state justice community partners, and others in the service area, it is the team's impression that too much of the director's time is spent in a variety of meetings. While some meetings appear essential, it is our view that some could be performed by others and some eliminated.<sup>21</sup>

### **Finding 22: While LSNL has developed a leadership succession plan for the executive director's position, it has not yet considered such a plan for the broader leadership of the program.**

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<sup>21</sup> For example, it does not appear to the team that the executive director needs to participate in most of the litigation meetings, let alone preside over them. This could be delegated to the litigation director.

The leadership structure of LSNL consists of the executive director, litigation director, chief financial officer, executive assistant, and the branch office managing attorneys. The personnel in these positions are highly-experienced people with significant leadership potential. An integral part of any program's organizational development process must be building the leadership capacity within the program, so that when leadership transition occurs it is not damaging to the program. The executive director, while a valuable program resource, does not have limitless capacity. Especially in a resource-challenged environment, it is essential that others at the staff and middle-management levels be encouraged to broaden their skills and develop their leadership potential.

The LSNL succession plan provides that in the event a vacancy occurs in the executive director's position, the board chair "will request that the Litigation Director become the Acting Executive Director" and "[if he/she] is unwilling or unable to assume the duties, the Chairperson will request in turn the Managing Attorney of the Shreveport Office." The plan goes on to provide for a transition team and a search committee, and lists seven "things to be done to make any transition better when it happens[.]"<sup>22</sup> We think it is significant that one of the items is "update and develop business/strategic plan."

It is also an essential part of any strategic planning process to review succession planning for the program leadership. This is particularly true for a program with so many highly experienced people in senior leadership positions. While it can be uncomfortable to discuss this, it is the fiduciary responsibility of both the board and the executive director to plan for succession before it is necessary. This issue is not limited to the executive director position. Broadening leadership capacity within the program will have beneficial impacts even before any transition occurs. Having broader and deeper leadership skills available within the program will enhance the program's ability to serve its clients, while also enhancing the job satisfaction of staff that are developing and utilizing their leadership capacity.

**Criteria 3, 5 and 6. Overall management and administration; human resources administration; internal communication.**

**Finding 23: Overall program management and human resources administration are good.**

The on-site visit did not identify any significant negative concerns regarding the overall management and human resources administration of the program, or related policies, procedures, and practices. The executive director is viewed as striving mightily, and with some visible

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<sup>22</sup> The list includes the following:

- A. Update job description and qualifications as needed;
- B. Review organization's salary structure and compare with similar organizations;
- C. Regular evaluation of Executive Director;
- D. Develop administrative calendar with major deadlines;
- E. Keep policies current: Personnel Policies; Board Policies; Written Standards of Practice for Legal Advocates and Case Acceptance Policies; Financial Eligibility Guidelines; and any others identified;
- F. Have double check in place for all codes, passwords, keys, etc.;
- G. Update and develop business/strategic plan.

success, to enhance the quality of the work place and the wellbeing of employees within the constraints of the program's finances. There is, however, one exception—the lack of pay raises over the last five years (with the exception of one, one-time bonus). Staff thinks well planned and strategically implemented resource development is long overdue.

Despite the above, staff and board members did not raise any overall program management and human resources concerns. It is our conclusion that LSNL is not experiencing any serious morale or other internal personnel problems at present. We think this is significant in view of the current state of civil legal aid funding and the state of the Louisiana economy in general.

**Finding 24: The program's overall technology is mixed, with some lingering challenges that have existed for some time.**

LSNL uses technology to support its management and administrative systems, the provision of legal representation and advocacy, and other services to the low income population. The program's written technology plan is derived from a plan developed in conjunction with all of the LSC grantees in the state, the Louisiana State Bar's Access to Justice Committee, and the Louisiana Bar Foundation. Broadly stated, LSNL's and the state justice community's goals include promoting technology collaboration among civil legal services providers in Louisiana and related partners to improve services to clients and extend the reach of their advocates. Their goals also include assisting civil legal services providers' staff and pro bono attorneys in collecting, managing, utilizing, and reporting on client and case information.

While LSNL strives to operate and deliver services efficiently through the use of technology, the state of the internal program technology is mixed, despite the lofty goals and principles articulated by the Louisiana state justice community. LSNL utilizes relevant representation support systems, including the KEMPS case management system (as part of a statewide initiative). This system provides several key features including: case-based document storage; document generation capabilities; calendaring; tickling; an internal IM client; and remote access capability. The utilization of these features seems to vary by staff member.

The type and use of a "tickler" scheduling system seems to vary by advocate and office (e.g. in KEMPS, in Outlook, in Google Calendar, or in various physical or paper calendars). Not all variations had the redundancy expected by best practices. Most work stations regularly used by staff members have been upgraded to Windows 7 machines, although a few are still running Windows XP.

LSNL network topology seems less than ideal as a legal work support system. It does not appear that the program's three offices are networked together as reported in the program's grant application and grant renewals to LSC in the past. The visit revealed that there are three separate office servers, each running a separate version of Exchange Server. Staff members that travel between offices have more than one email address due to this configuration, at times causing conflict and confusion. In addition, due to some combination of inadequate virus protection or inadequate staff training, the mail servers have been infected and subsequently blacklisted on several occasions. Some staff use personal email accounts because they believe the office system

is unreliable. Others stated that they just do not use email. Overall, Outlook seems to be underutilized, at least in part, because its power as an organization-wide tool is undermined by the network structure precluding the use of powerful features such as shared calendars, meeting availability, internal distribution lists, shared contact lists, etc.

In addition to participating in the Louisiana legal services' statewide web site (SWWS) ([www.lawhelp.org/la](http://www.lawhelp.org/la)), LSNL maintains its own separate site at [www.lsnl.org](http://www.lsnl.org). The site offers patrons a choice of English or Spanish and contains nine pages, including a page for online intake and a page with links to "other legal resources." The links to other legal resources are mainly to national legal and law-related organizations (including LSC), and government agencies and departments. Curiously, the links do not include the SWWS.

**Finding 25: The program's staff-management relations are good. Communication among staff could be improved.**

Most important internal communications at LSNL are conducted in the context of meetings that are more often held at the central office location in Shreveport. Staff reported that these meetings are long and largely informational. Since the program has long achieved cohesion and unification as a regional law firm following merger, we noted that these meetings are neither the most productive use of the executive director's time, nor the most effective way to communicate basic information. In mature organizations like LSNL, meetings are best used in circumstances where input and dialogue are sought. Absent special circumstances, information exchange is most easily performed via an email memo or other written correspondence.

The executive director reported visiting the two outlying branch offices three to four times a year, and that there are events external to the branch office that may warrant her attendance. Other than back and forth between the Shreveport and Natchitoches offices, the litigation director does not visit the outlying Monroe office. The chief financial officer visits branch offices periodically to review client trust accounts.

At the branch office level, managing attorneys facilitate reasonably frequent communication among all staff. They all have open and direct communication styles, although there are infrequent staff meetings in the formal sense and input seems to be solicited informally. The Natchitoches and Monroe branch offices are very small compared to the Shreveport office—seven and 11 employees respectively, compared to Shreveport's 23, excluding the executive director and the litigation director. Collaboration on cases and other matters, albeit infrequently, occur among staff around the program via telephone, email, and fax.

**Criteria 4 and 7. Financial administration;<sup>23</sup> general resource development and maintenance.**

**Finding 26: Neither program staff nor board members expressed any concerns about LSNL's financial administration.**

LSNL appears to have appropriate fiscal management structures in place and employs a highly experienced chief financial officer (CFO). He has a B.S. in accounting and an MBA. The CFO is assisted by the program's compliance auditor and the executive assistant. These administrative staff appear to be qualified to perform the duties required. Staff and board members who were interviewed did not raise any financial administration concerns. The CFO attends all board meetings and staffs the meetings of the board budget/audit committee. Members reported that they receive appropriate financial information in advance of committee and board meetings. They are satisfied that the information enables them to carry out their fiscal oversight responsibilities.

While he has no responsibility for fundraising, the CFO closely follows all funding potentials and/or funding cuts experienced by the program. At the time of the visit, his greatest fiscal concern was the costs of health insurance premiums and their likely impact on the various segments of the staff.

**Finding 27: LSNL is struggling to expand its base of funding consistent with its mission.**

In 2012, LSC funding accounted for \$1,908,734 (68.4%) of LSNL's annual budget of \$2,788,685. The LSC amount included \$4,545 in attorney's fees. The program's non-LSC funding for 2012 was \$879,951. The non-LSC funding sources included Older American Act (grants from eight councils on aging), Children in Need of Care (CINC) through Louisiana Bar Foundation, IOLTA, Administrative Offices of the Court, Office of Elderly Affairs, United Way, Loyola Law School, Fourth District Bar Association, and Belk's (a regional department store).

Of LSNL's \$879,951 non-LSC funding, the CINC grant was \$467,467 (53.1%) and the IOLTA grant was \$296,927 (33.7%). Together, these two grants comprised 86.9% of LSNL's non-LSC funding last year. The remainder of the program's non-LSC funding was derived from fifteen other (smaller) grants that amounted to \$115,557. The non-LSC funding grants did not generate any attorney fee awards.

According to LSNL job descriptions, the principal responsibility for resource development is with the executive director, with a variety of assistance from the litigation director, managing attorneys, chief financial officer, and compliance auditor. The program does not use outside consultants or contractors for resource development. LSNL does not have a written resource development plan and does not establish explicit annual or multi-year

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<sup>23</sup> This visit was conducted by the Office of Program Performance (OPP) for the purposes set forth in the Introduction. OPP findings and recommendations under this criterion are limited to staffing, organization, and general functions. Assessment of fiscal operations is conducted by other offices at LSC.

fundraising goals. As stated above, the board as a whole is not actively involved in resource development efforts and, at present, there is no vehicle to garner support from members.

LSNL operates in a very challenging resource environment. The team is convinced that the executive director wants to expand the program's efforts to increase its resources. The director is devoting a lot of time attending meetings of current as well as some potential funding sources. Despite the commendable efforts of the executive director, the fundraising challenges exceed the capacity of the executive director alone to fulfill, especially considering her other responsibilities. The executive director and the board of directors need to adopt a more strategic approach. Present and former board members need to be tapped to contribute, to solicit contributions, and to use their contacts in the business and philanthropic communities to help build program resources.

LSNL does not produce annual reports to aid the program's resource development or public relations efforts. LSNL cites its web site, public service announcements, and the annual advocacy report that highlights interesting and significant cases handled by staff and PAI attorneys. In our view, none of these is a substitute for an annual report tailored to assist resource development. We also think that significantly diversifying LSNL's caseloads and adopting ways to quantify the benefits to the community from the program's work are essential to broadening the funding base.

In addition to protecting current program funding, the recommended strategic planning should result in a formal resource development plan that, among other things, commits LSNL to exploring the use of a professional fundraiser, establishing realistic annual fundraising goals, identifying new funding sources, including planned giving,<sup>24</sup> as well as a statewide cy pres awards initiative to identify law firms with connections to Louisiana that are engaged in class action litigation around the nation.

**Criteria 8 and 9. Coherent and comprehensive delivery structure; participation in an integrated legal services delivery system.**

**Finding 28: LSNL maintains a coherent and comprehensive delivery structure.**

Within the limits of available resources and the terms of its funding sources, LSNL maintains a delivery structure and approach that integrates staff, private attorneys, and other components. The program is striving to innovate and embrace creativity in delivery. Through its executive director's participation in state, regional, and national affinity groups and conferences, LSNL strives to obtain and consider current information and research concerning civil legal aid and related delivery systems.

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<sup>24</sup> The long tenure of a number of board members opens the door to planned giving, which would be a new facet of resource development for LSNL. Such long-time board members would be the ideal starting point for an effort to encourage members of the legal community to add a bequest in favor of LSNL to their wills. Such bequests need not be complicated. The fact that the executive director has a long relationship with board members makes her a logical person to start this effort, which need not be particularly time-consuming.

In conjunction with its strategic partners, it appears that the program is ready to confront the pressing civil legal aid challenges of the service area and state. The visit confirmed that the LSNL director is an active participant in the Louisiana state justice community. She collaborates with strategic partners like the Louisiana Bar Foundation, the Access to Justice Committee of the Louisiana State Bar Association, Southeast Louisiana Legal Services, Acadiana Legal Services, and the law schools in Louisiana in the ongoing effort to effect change to the civil justice system.

LSNL and its strategic partners are moving forward to accomplish change in the area of pro se, pro bono, and technology.

**Recommendation IV.1.20.1.\* LSNL should take all necessary steps to provide board members appropriate training regarding strategic planning and resource development.**

**Recommendation IV.1.20.2.\* Following appropriate training, the board should launch a strategic planning process with significant and broad input from staff and the program's partners.**

**Recommendation IV.1.20.3. Board members should become actively engaged in resource development for the program through, among other things, personal contributions, solicitation of contributions from their colleagues, and using their relationships with the governments at all levels, businesses and philanthropic organizations.**

**Recommendation IV.1.20.1. The board should consider establishing an advisory group consisting of well-connected members of the legal, business, philanthropic and political communities to help plan and implement a resource development plan.**

**Recommendation IV.2.22.1.\* The board should mandate the development of a leadership development plan for the top leadership positions beyond executive director.**

**Recommendation IV.2.25.1. LSNL should explore ways, at the staff level, to increase participation in resource development efforts of persons other than the executive director.**

**Recommendation IV.2.26.1.\* LSNL should consider holding some management and most staff meetings via teleconference and web based tools like “go to meetings” to lessen long distance travel by staff.**

**Recommendation IV.3.24.1.\* LSNL should regularly evaluate and adjust its technology plan to ensure that the program is making the highest and best use of affordable technology, including but not limited to computers, printers, copiers and scanners.**

**Recommendation IV.3.24.2.\* LSNL needs to take the necessary steps to retain affordable technology expertise to address networking its servers program-wide and full implementation of the VOIP capable telephone system.**

**Recommendation IV.3.24.3. LSNL should continue its technology collaboration and coordination with state justice partners; take advantage of available outside expertise and**

resources to assist its technology planning and implementation efforts; ensure that technology decisions are made strategically and will accomplish desired goals and outcomes; and strive to ensure that changes to technology are implemented in a coordinated manner.

**Recommendation IV.7.27.1.\*** LSNL urgently needs to redouble its efforts to increase the amount of non-LSC funding that supports its annual budget. In connection with the recommended strategic planning process, LSNL should develop a comprehensive resource development plan to expand the program's base of funding and increase overall resources devoted to client services. This effort should include, but not be limited to working with strategic partners to identify state, regional and national foundations that show any history of support for work such as LSNL's, and developing a detailed schedule for efforts to submit grant proposals.

**Recommendation IV.7.27.2.** LSNL urgently needs to begin producing an annual report to be used to educate the public and potential funders as well as to recognize contributors, especially private attorneys.

**Recommendation IV.7.27.3.** LSNL, along with its strategic partners, should strive to develop and maintain an overall media strategy tied significantly to resource development.

**Recommendation IV.7.28.1.** LSNL, along with its strategic partners, should explore developing a public relations/education campaign to enhance the image and increase public awareness and the needs of civil legal aid throughout the service area and state. This effort should include, but not be limited to the use of public service announcements (PSAs).