



Legal Services Corporation
Office of Program Performance

Final Report

From the

Program Quality Visit

to

Legal Services of the Hudson Valley
Recipient No. 233160

June 2-6, 2014

LSC Review Team

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INTRODUCTION

The Legal Services Corporation's (LSC) Office of Program Performance (OPP) conducted a program quality visit to the Legal Services of the Hudson Valley (LSHV) from June 2 - 6, 2014. The team members were Cheryl Nolan, Team Leader/OPP Program Counsel; David Bonebrake, Nancy Glickman, and Joyce McGee, OPP Program Counsel; and Doug German, and Carolyn Worrell, OPP Temporary Employees. The team was also joined by Michelle Chun, LSC Helaine Barnett Fellow.

Program quality visits are designed to assess the extent to which LSC grantees are providing the highest quality legal services to eligible clients. In conducting its assessment, the team carefully reviewed the documents LSC has received from the program including its grant application and renewal narratives for 2011, 2012 and 2013, its case service reports (CSRs) and other service reports (OSRs), the numerous documents the program submitted in advance of the visit, including advocates' writing samples, and an electronic survey of LSHV staff. On site, the team visited the White Plains, Mount Vernon, Newburgh, Peekskill, Poughkeepsie, Spring Valley, and Yonkers offices. In addition to speaking to most of the LSHV staff members, the team conducted telephone interviews or met in-person with a large sample of representatives from LSHV's board, judges, local attorneys and community organizations.

In performing its evaluation of the grantee's delivery system, 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 evaluation is organized according to the four LSC Performance Areas that cover needs assessment and priority setting; engagement with the low income community; legal work management and the legal work produced; and program management including board governance, leadership, strategic planning, resource development and coordination within the delivery system.

In response to LSC's recommendations on-site and in the draft report, LSHV has made many positive changes. LSHV's comments to the draft report are attached to this final report.

OVERVIEW OF PROGRAM AND SERVICE AREA

LSHV provides a full range of legal services to eligible low-income people in the seven counties of the lower Hudson Valley (Westchester, Putnam, Dutchess, Rockland, Orange, Ulster and Sullivan). At the time of the visit, LSHV employed 103 staff working throughout its service area.

In 2013, LSHV received \$1,603,904 in basic field LSC funding, which was a decrease from its 2012 LSC funding of \$1,685,307. In 2014, LSHV's LSC basic field funding decreased again to \$1,590,097. The program's non-LSC funding in 2013 was \$10,369,104, comprised of funding from New York State (NYS) IOLA, the NYS Judiciary Civil Legal Services fund, and grants from the city, county and state

appropriations, funding from other federal and state agencies, and local communities, organizations, foundations and donations.

The LSHV service area covers 4,121 square miles. Estimates from the 2009-2011 American Community Survey study show that LSHV has a poverty population of 205,198, which is 9.22% of its overall population. Over 5% of all households in the service area are linguistically isolated with Spanish being the primary language spoken in the home. The ethnicity of the poverty population in the service area is approximately 61% White – non-Hispanic, 17.6% African American, 6.2% Hispanic, .28% Native American, 2.89% Asian, .02% Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander, and 14.71% other.

The program's legal work is centered on advice and counsel, limited service, pro se/self-help and full representation in housing, mortgage foreclosure, welfare/public benefits, social security disability and SSI, education, employment, health, family and consumer law matters. LSHV operates specialized units serving low-income children, victims of domestic violence, seniors, persons with physical, mental and developmental disabilities, HIV/AIDS, individuals with cancer and military families as well as individual veterans. It also operates a private attorney involvement program.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

LSHV benefits from a highly dedicated, hard-working and experienced management team and board of directors, and has a group of very talented lawyers, paralegals, intake workers and support staff. LSHV has developed an excellent reputation with other legal services stakeholders, judges, bar officials and private attorneys.

While the program is providing valuable and important services to low-income clients, and it has gained the respect of its stakeholders and colleagues, there is a need to examine overall affirmative advocacy and workload distribution. LSHV might consider whether it is time to dedicate resources to a director of litigation position to help further its focus on affirmative advocacy and direct the work of its programwide substantive law practice groups. It recently engaged the pro bono assistance of an experienced litigator to work with the program's management staff on balancing individual case work with affirmative advocacy.

LSHV treats applicants and clients with dignity, sensitivity and respect in the provision of services. The program is engaged with its local communities. Its main and branch offices, specialized units, and intake staffing provide access to program services for many low-income clients in its service area. Intake is coordinated programwide and operated out of the White Plains office. It is supplemented by intake conducted by the local offices. LSHV has continued improving its coordinated intake to increase access for clients and enhance systems for staff. Examples of positive improvements include upgraded VOIP telephone technology and expanded hours of operation in the main office.

The program's website, <http://lshv.org/> is not currently translated into other languages, but is linked to the LawHelpNY statewide website, which provides detailed information about LSHV's services in Spanish and English. LawHelpNY materials are translated into several languages. A 2013 Technology Initiative Grant ("TIG") grant will enhance the LSHV-specific materials on both the program and statewide websites. LSHV also provides pro se assistance, community education and the provision of legal information.

The program's Volunteer Attorney Program (VAP) continues to build on past successes, offering referrals to pro bono attorneys as well as several clinic type initiatives. In 2013, LSHV reported 128 volunteer attorneys accepted case referrals. Referrals are made in all the priority areas of LSHV and the VAP attorneys provide a full range of services from brief advice to full representation. LSHV engaged pro bono support for its major casework from experienced litigators including attorneys from Morrison & Foerster and DelBello Donnellan Weingarten Wise & Wiederkehr LLP. The VAP has special pro bono projects with Boies, Schiller and Wilson Elser.

LSHV completed a comprehensive needs assessment in 2013, which involved staff at all levels, board members and relevant stakeholders. LSHV hired a consultant from the New York Council for Nonprofits to engage in a strategic direction planning process, which began in the spring of 2014.

LSHV is engaged and well-respected by the judiciary and its community partners. The executive director is well-received by staff, the board and members of the community. The LSHV management staff is skilled, experienced and dedicated.

The board is appropriately involved in overseeing the work of the program. Board members are conversant with the major issues facing the program and show a deep understanding of the mission and role of the organization. Board members demonstrated a working knowledge of the budget and were appropriately concerned with maintaining a fiscally sound program. The firm's financial management staff is experienced. The board is also involved with resource development.

LSHV has made significant progress in diversifying its funding. The executive director and LSHV's development staff and advocates are highly successful; the success of their fundraising is seen through the growth of the program, which has doubled staffing from approximately 50 to 100 staff over the last ten years.

LSHV is actively involved as a leader in statewide efforts to improve access to justice. LSHV coordinates with other providers, the bar, law schools and other relevant entities in seeking to ensure that support is provided to advocates and managers, including training, dissemination and exchange of information, and communication and coordination among practitioners in key areas of law and practice.

FINDINGS 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.

Finding 1: LSHV conducted a comprehensive assessment of legal needs in 2013. LSHV is responsive to reviewing and attending to emerging community needs.

LSHV completed a comprehensive legal needs assessment in 2013, which formed the foundation of its priorities. The program conducts comprehensive assessments and priority setting every two years and reviews priorities in the years between full assessments. LSHV's most recent needs assessment involved a more extensive written survey than in prior years (in English and Spanish), which was sent to clients, community groups, board members, staff and bar associations. Overall, the program's survey found that housing and public benefits were the two highest requested services, with increases in benefits, elder, health (including insurance and Medicare), children's issues, and consumer law. The results were also notably similar across the service area.

On an on-going basis, LSHV acquires information of client needs through its outreach efforts, by assessing the requests of clients contacting the program at intake, assessing census data, and from community organizations in the program area serving low-income clients. The program collaborates with other agencies and community programs that help identify the particular needs of certain low-income groups and special populations; including, children requiring special education and the Hispanic community.

The current priorities resolution passed by the board for 2014 are: (1) the delivery of legal services; (2) advice, brief service and referral; (3) preservation of housing and housing related needs; (4) maintaining, enhancing and protecting income and economic stability; (5) safety, stability and well-being; and (6) improving outcomes for children. In response to the priority-setting process, the program has established coordinated intake and case acceptance protocols, specific areas of practice to be addressed, and specialty units. The program has also identified locations where additional services are needed or growing needs that need to be addressed, such as the rural areas, domestic violence cases in branch offices, and emerging legal issues such as veterans' services and foreclosures. In this manner, the priority setting resolution adopted by the board encompasses methods of delivery and types of legal issues.

Finding 2: Strategic planning began in 2014 with significant progress made subsequent to the LSC visit.

In early 2014, LSHV retained a consultant from the New York Council for Non-Profits (NYCON) to guide its strategic planning process, to assist in developing a broad set of strategic directions outlining program goals, objectives, and strategies. This process includes a review of relevant program documents and an online strategic planning survey to the board, management, staff and other stakeholders in August 2014. Subsequent to the

LSC visit, the consultant conducted three focus groups with staff and three focus groups with management in August and September 2014. Results and findings from the survey and focus groups will be compiled in a report to be submitted to the executive committee of the board, which is serving as the strategic planning committee.

The program regularly assesses the effectiveness of its work in several ways. It reports on the progress of meeting deliverables as required by funders. It reviews its case services and case closing reports. It also analyzes the costs of handling cases per employee, as well as assessing the cost-benefit ratio of legal work and calculating the economic outcomes achieved for clients. Its assessments of benefits include impressive data on taxpayer savings associated with its eviction defense and domestic violence work. In 2013, LSHV reports that it generated \$13 million in taxpayer savings by preventing evictions and over \$3 million in taxpayer savings by helping survivors of domestic violence. Client surveys are used to assess quality of services. LSHV seeks feedback from other community organizations, the bar, the bench, and the public in general and reviews responses to outreach events.

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

Criterion 1. Dignity and sensitivity.

Intake

Finding 3: Intake through LSHV’s coordinated intake unit and local offices, along with other traditional methods of access, are the main access points for applicants seeking legal assistance. The program is launching a triage project.

LSHV services are accessible throughout its service area. LSHV provides applicants with a variety of access points, including its central toll-free phone intake, local office phone intake, walk-in intake at local offices, callbacks for referrals, off-site intake at community outreach and events, and intake conducted by attorneys during the course of their work and when the need arises. LSHV increased intake hours to 42 hours per week to expand access for working clients. They offer nine hours of regularly scheduled intake hours Monday through Thursday and six hours on Friday. At the time of the visit, the program was planning for the launch of a TIG-funded online triaging system via its website¹. LSHV does not currently have an online intake system integrated with LSHV’s case management system

The intake unit does not have a comprehensive manual for intake. Intake staff recognizes the need to develop a detailed intake manual, and reported during the visit that they were beginning the process of selecting an electronic platform and developing content for the manual. Staff interviewed expressed an understanding of the processes available for applicants seeking services. In general, applicants who contact LSHV are screened for

¹ LSHV launched the TIG-funded triage project subsequent to the LSC visit.

basic eligibility, legal problem and conflict of interest by paralegals assigned to intake and supervised by an attorney. Unless facing an emergency, applicants do not usually receive legal assistance at the same time as their initial intake screening. The majority of cases are sent to the branch office's attorney in charge (AIC) or a supervising attorney for further review and case assignment. The AIC assigns new applications to a staff member with a recommendation either to provide limited service or to accept for full representation. LSHV's Standards of Practice provide that for cases where service extends beyond telephone advice, a letter of case acceptance and copy of a signed retainer is mailed or handed to the client. Applicants are told varying wait times by intake screeners for being contacted by an advocate.

The phone system is well-designed to allow appropriate callers to quickly connect to a trained intake paralegal. The system utilizes a straightforward phone tree and recordings that present callers with important intake information and screen out individuals who clearly do not qualify for services. LSHV was an early adopter of hosted Voice Over Internet Protocol (VOIP) technology, and after a series of refinements, has developed a system that works well for coordinated intake. Benefits of hosted VOIP systems include lower cost of ownership, minimal IT support, enhanced features, and greater flexibility for mobile or remote work. The phone system also allows for a substantial number of available lines, ensuring that all callers at least reach the phone tree and receive some recorded guidance on how to proceed with their legal issue.

Overall, coordinated intake represents the most efficient and usually the most convenient form of intake for LSHV applicants. LSHV management is mindful of the caller experience by reviewing call data, making periodic enhancements to intake using phone trees and modifying queue depth to alleviate wait times. Call data and staff interviews generally indicate that callers do not experience significant wait times when calling the intake unit. However, callers who hold for more than 20 minutes are disconnected from the phone system. Once disconnected, callers must initiate a new call. During the week of May 25th, 2014, one visit team member contacted the intake line five times. The average call wait (*i.e.*, the time between the beginning of the call and reaching an intake paralegal) was around seven to eight minutes, and the team member was only forced to disconnect after 20 minutes once, on the Tuesday following Memorial Day.

Interviews with some staff indicate that a higher proportion of their cases derive from walk-ins than the coordinated intake system. In Yonkers, for example, some staff reported that non-emergency walk-ins are handled by the office and, at times, are scheduled for appointments when staff is unable to screen applicants at the time they arrive. Some Mt. Vernon staff reported a high volume of walk-in intake. It may be more efficient for the local offices to refer non-emergency walk-ins to the coordinated telephone intake unit, determined on a case by case basis.

The coordinated intake unit is moving towards providing more immediate advice to callers. In addition, the program plans to add a paralegal in the summer of 2014 and a

staff attorney soon after.² Further, the unit plans to expand its library of client letter templates to support the delivery of brief advice. Work on a 2013 TIG to expand the legal information resources available in the LSHV service area is well underway, which add plain language legal guides to the program's website and the New York statewide legal information website, LawHelpNY.org. Materials will be available in English and Spanish and will be promoted to the community through a webinar series targeted to libraries and nonprofits throughout the region.

Recommendations:

II.1.3.1.^{3*} Overall, given the efficiencies of coordinated intake for applicants and staff, LSHV should assess the volume and quality of access of the walk-ins and calls to the less-resourced local offices.

II.1.3.2.* LSHV should consider adopting an online intake system to supplement the TIG-funded triage project.

II.1.3.3.* LSHV should develop strategies to direct more individuals to its well-designed, efficient coordinated intake system. While policies to allow non-emergency, non-exceptional circumstances walk-ins in some offices are necessary at this juncture, transitioning branch office walk-in and telephone intake to the coordinated system and using a robust online application will be more efficient and effective.

II.1.3.4. To the extent the program proceeds with online triage or intake options, it should consider the benefits of providing access to intake screening through computer kiosks at branch offices with a high rate of walk-in applicants, particularly in the Yonkers and Mount Vernon offices.

II.1.3.5.* Consistent with the current LSHV intake system, LSHV should prioritize the completion of a comprehensive web-based intake policies and procedures manual.

² See November 3, 2014 Response to Draft Report for Program Visit to Legal Services of the Hudson Valley regarding the hire of a full-time intake paralegal on July 7, 2014 and a full-time attorney to provide advice and brief service for the intake unit on September 8, 2014. These expeditious hires reflect management's support for the role of intake to its overall service delivery.

³ Recommendations in this report will have a Roman Numeral to identify the Performance Area, followed by three numbers identifying, respectively, the Criterion addressed by the recommendation, the number of the finding and a number designating whether it is the first, second, third, etc., recommendation under that finding. For example, III.2.14.3 designates Performance Area III, Criterion 2, Finding 14, third recommendation under finding 14. There are two levels of recommendations in this report: Tier One and Tier Two. 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 your next grant renewal application or competitive grant application, your program will be required to report what it has done in response to Tier One Recommendations instead of submitting a full narrative.

Finding 4: LSHV treats its clients with dignity and respect.

LSHV staff treats applicants and clients with dignity and respect. Consistent with the applicable rules of professional conduct and funding requirements, and within the limits of the legal assistance that LSHV has agreed to provide a client, LSHV attempts to achieve each client's objectives. LSHV provides excellent services to the clients it represents. The program assesses clients' satisfaction with services by surveying the clients at case closure. LSHV shared survey results for April 2014; it received 96 responses. For that month, 95 reported that they were treated with respect, 94 reported that they better understood their legal issue or benefitted from the case handler's assistance and 94 reported they would return to LSHV or recommend the program to family and friends.

The service providers in LSHV's service area, including social services and community partners, collaborate with LSHV to refer applicants to the appropriate resource. For example, the local domestic violence shelters refer applicants to the Yonkers and Mount Vernon offices and vice versa. There is a solid network of providers in the region for housing, veterans and domestic violence matters. Program services, communications and activities are conducted in a culturally and linguistically competent fashion, and reach the significant low-income population segments, due in part to the program's explicit goals and objectives and allocation of available resources. This is especially seen in its services to domestic violence victims, people facing homelessness or eviction and the disabled.

Finding 5: LSHV's efforts on behalf of clients with limited English proficiency meet the needs of the community and their clients.

LSHV's language access efforts for Spanish-speaking people are sufficient. The waiting rooms feature legal educational materials in English and Spanish. LSHV's coordinated intake unit is staffed with bilingual Spanish-speaking staff, including the receptionist. Bilingual staff is present in some of the other offices. Bilingual staff helps with Spanish-language intake and translation for staff when necessary. Only the Kingston office does not have bilingual staff, but that office uses staff from other offices and Language Line. Programwide, staff typically relies on Language Line for telephone interpretation when bilingual staff is unavailable. The LSHV website homepage states that Spanish, Portuguese, Hindi, Italian, German, and French. The homepage links to a LSHV brochure in English and Spanish, and features LSHV's You Tube video outlining its services. Its "Helpful Resources" page links to self-help materials housed on LawHelpNY's website at <http://www.lawhelpny.org/>, which are translated into several languages.

Criterion 2. and 3. Engagement with the low-income population/Access and utilization by the low-income population.

In 2014, LSHV, along with the Legal Aid Society of Northeastern New York, and the Legal Aid Society of Western New York collaboratively transitioned from the TIME

database case management system to Legal Server. Legal Server's web-based system meets service delivery goals by improving screening and intake, providing flexibility for remote access and expediting the provision of legal information and relevant materials to the client community. This collaboration among programs maximizes client engagement and improves client access across their respective service areas and statewide.

The program's staff members are well connected with the service provider networks in their respective communities. The program has notable ties to the client community throughout the service area. LSHV works with a variety of community agencies including Safe Homes of Orange County, My Sisters Place, Student Advocacy, Centro Hispano, Hudson River Housing, CLARO, and the Family Justice Center, Pace Women's Justice Center. LSHV has developed a presence in the local veteran's community. LSHV is involved with other laudable efforts attending to its community ties. Examples are its work with the Westchester Bar Association, and its local county funding for representation of domestic violence victims. Staff members also serve on community non-profit boards.

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

Criterion 1. Legal representation.

Staffing and Expertise

Finding 6: Advocacy staff is dedicated and experienced, with a wide range of backgrounds.

While eight attorneys have over 20 years' experience, thirteen have two or less years' experience. The team was routinely impressed with the advocates interviewed, based on both the experience of the tenured attorneys and the zeal of the newer ones. The overall experience level averages close to ten years. The advocacy staff respects each other's expertise and routinely seeks assistance and support from colleagues throughout the program. Paralegal staff is equally experienced.

While the experienced attorney staff has expertise in a wide range of program priorities, such as foreclosure, housing, and public benefits, both the team and a number of interviewees noted a lower level of case work and less staff expertise in the consumer area, which reduces the overall breadth of the program's work and impacts issue-spotting and available advocacy in other cross-over issues such as consumer claims and defenses in housing law. LSHV's basic field and pro bono closed cases showed consumer cases being handled primarily in bankruptcy, debt collection creditor harassment. However the total number of cases was lower than housing, family laws and public benefits. A larger

proportion of consumer law cases were advice and counsel and brief services.⁴

Quality of Legal Work

Finding 7: LSHV uses a range of advocacy tools from negotiation through trial and appeals to meet clients' needs. Advocates are well-respected by the judiciary, the social services community and agencies throughout its service area; writing samples demonstrate capable representation and significant individual advocacy.

The program and its work are well respected by the judiciary, the social services community and agencies throughout its service area. The judges interviewed during the visit describe the attorneys as highly knowledgeable, professional, respectful of their clients, and always well-prepared to the extent that they are consistently better prepared than opposing counsel. The writing samples covered family law, housing, public benefits and consumer cases. They were replete with examples of significant individual advocacy including motions to set aside or stay evictions, motions to dismiss, and petitions to the Supreme Court of administrative agency appellate decisions. The writing samples evidenced a practice centered in state courts, as only one of over 50 submitted samples, a bankruptcy motion, was filed in federal court and none were filed in state appellate courts. The writing samples reviewed were sufficient to meet the purpose for which they were intended. Some could have benefitted from a supervisory review.

As reflected above, LSHV advocacy staff engage in a high volume of extended service work. Team interviews with advocates, coupled with their case list and writing sample submissions, reflected that the program's cases primarily involved individual representation, some of which covered recurring themes. Various interviewees stated a desire to engage in more challenging advocacy that would address many of the issues confronted by clients in a more comprehensive way. These interviewees stated that they felt they lacked sufficient time or resources to pursue these strategies due to grant requirements.

Some advocates expressed to the PQV team their perception that an emphasis on grant deliverables translates into less management support for broader based advocacy. However, senior management shared they are highly supportive of engagement in such advocacy. As one example, management plans to transition more advice services to the intake unit to free experienced advocates to handle extended services. Also, many of the program's individual case outcomes inure to the benefit of the low-income community. In the area of public benefits, LSHV advocates have successfully resolved individual cases where the outcomes changed administrative policy or procedures to positively impact the lives of recipients. The differing perceptions may be due to a lack of clear communication regarding management's position on strategic advocacy.

⁴ Subsequent to the visit, LSHV strengthened its consumer law work including developing affirmative litigation addressing Federal Debt Collections Practices Act violations by landlord-petitioners in housing court matters. Additionally, LSHV is developing CLE-eligible consumer law training for all case handlers.

The program has identified the need for attorneys to engage in collaborative efforts surrounding various substantive areas by creating practice groups. The practice groups bring together staff programwide based on area of practice, and are led by experienced attorneys. These practice groups will be one mechanism for identifying broader issues and complex advocacy requiring attention. The family law practice group is active, well-developed and led by a capable, engaged, and experienced attorney. This practice group is a model for LSHV's other prominent areas of practice.

Aside from the family law practice group, the practice groups, however, appear to differ in their meeting frequency and content. Some staff reported that there had been one housing meeting, not all housing attorneys were invited, and the meeting did not involve strategizing on cases. Rather, it was a discussion on certain tax credit properties, which was not relevant throughout the whole service area. Also, some staff reported that there used to be foreclosure attorney meetings, which ceased when an experienced practitioner left the program.

LSHV submitted examples of three cases that demonstrate a significant impact on large segments of their client community in the areas of housing and special education. In the first case, LSHV advocacy prevented the potential eviction of several elderly and disabled tenants in a Yonkers federally subsidized housing project, due to the landlord's unlawful exorbitant sub meter electrical charges. The second case is a multi-plaintiff special education matter involving violations of the IDEA, the ADA, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, 42 U.S.C. Section 1983 and violations of state law by the Mount Vernon School District handled on behalf of disabled children. As of the date of this report, the matter was in litigation and pending trial. The third case involves a client's potential loss of her Section 8 voucher after failing to locate an apartment during the allotted time limit. The failure to locate an apartment was due to the inability to find landlords willing to accept vouchers, the incredibly high rate of poverty in those communities that do accept vouchers resulting in clearly uninhabitable conditions and numerous condemned buildings—leaving her with no options. The client received no assistance from the Section 8 provider as required under its obligation to affirmatively further fair housing. After this case settled, subsequent clients were able to maintain their vouchers without having to file administrative hearing requests.

In addition to the three cases reported above, the program is providing quality services to individual clients. The program is commended for several unique model projects addressing specialized client needs for its most vulnerable populations including those affected by HIV/AIDS, children (via the Lanza Children's Center) and the disabled. LSHV created the Veterans Advocacy Project, and forged a new partnership with the Westchester Community Opportunity Program (WESTCOP) on their VA-funded Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) Program. Domestic violence services are provided through a new Single Stop collaboration with Westchester Community College and a collaboration with Safe Homes of Orange County.

Finding 8: Through aggressive resource development, LSHV has greatly expanded its advocacy capability. Some funding for specific advocacy is focused on local offices resulting in an uneven distribution of advocates as compared to poverty population among offices and service delivery.

LSHV's purposeful efforts to develop additional resources and expand the program's reach have been very successful. The number of attorneys has grown from 50 in 2010 to 60 (including program senior management staff) at the time of the visit. While some of the expansion was service area based, such as the opening of the Peekskill and Spring Valley offices, much has been the result of funding for earmarked advocacy such as domestic violence and foreclosure, often tied to specific localities. This has led to some disparities in coverage. For example, at the time of the visit, there was a lack of a domestic violence attorney in Kingston. Subsequently, LSHV hired a staff attorney to handle domestic violence in that office.

Some case lists reflected that case types did not match the assigned specialty of some attorneys, often the result of grant changes and staff reassignment. Numerous attorneys interviewed by the team worked in two or more different grant funded positions within the last year. The impact of earmarked funding on advocacy, beyond simple case assignment, was a common theme throughout interviews. Senior management shared during the visit that many case handling staffing decisions were made to accommodate staff who expressed a desire to gain experience in various areas of law. Additionally, the various levels of local funding led to an uneven distribution of advocacy staff. For example, while Westchester County comprises 38% of the poverty population within the program's service area, a greater percentage of the program's non-management case handling attorneys serves the county and 56% of all LSC eligible closed cases were for residents of Westchester County. The team recognizes that resource development outside of Westchester County is a greater challenge. Further, as much of the resources come from Westchester County, those resources are likely tied to its locality. Program management is seeking to equalize access among priority services throughout the region by focusing on consistent representation in all priority areas and seeking new funding and expanding existing grant coverage in those areas.

Legal work management and supervision

Finding 9: The program has a solid system for the management and supervision of its legal work evidenced in its Standards of Practice.

The program's Standards of Practice include written case handling and supervision procedures with clear explanations of the rationale supporting each standard. The staff reported consistent use of the Legal Server case management system, including complete case notes and documents uploaded to electronic client files. Staff sends letters to clients confirming advice provided. AICs review every case before it is closed. Case handling staff reported regular open case reviews that include discussion of substance as well as case status. Staff participates in periodic case review meetings both at the office and practice group level. In addition to the formal supervision structure, there is a culture of

supervisors using an open door policy and case discussions among colleagues. There is no uniform tickler system or consistent use of case-related reminders throughout the program or within all individual offices.

Training and Support

Advocates have access to a wide variety of sources of support for their legal work, including: the expertise of the senior attorneys within the program; internal and external listservs; a litigation fund; copies of regularly used materials such as practice manuals at advocates desks; and online resources such as WestNext. The recent addition of paralegal support in attorney case handling has greatly assisted attorneys in their cases. We should note however, that paralegals who serve dual roles, *i.e.* intake and attorney support, should have their time sufficiently structured to allow them to engage in concentrated and timely support.

Attorneys and paralegals are provided a myriad of training opportunities including the recent NITA trial advocacy training and the BLAST training for new attorneys. LSHV uses individualized development plans devoted to professional goals, including training and increased legal experience, for the next year. Individualized development and training plans are developed as part of the evaluation as evidenced by the attachment. At the time of the visit, some staff reported the lack of a uniform orientation for new advocates beyond that provided by human resources staff and individual office orientation. Additionally, interviews reflected that evaluations did not result in an individualized development/training plan. LSHV reported that they have begun developing a new protocol for the orientation, training, and professional development of new advocates following a model from Prairie State Legal Services, Inc. to ensure that all new advocates have a structured skill and substantive development plan.

Quantity of Legal Work

Finding 10: LSHV's 2013 overall LSC closed case statistics per 10,000 poor persons exceed the national medians for LSC grantees. Extended and contested case closures are well-above the national medians for LSC grantees.

In 2013, LSHV closed 264 LSC reported cases per 10,000 poor people as compared to the national median of 211. 2013 extended cases were 130 per 10,000 poor people as compared to 47, and contested cases were 94 per 10,000 poor persons as compared to the national median of 26. Although case numbers do not tell the whole story, LSHV's strong CSRs show a productive program that exceeds the norm for extended and contested cases.

There was some disparity among cases closed when viewed by county. The cases closed for Westchester and Dutchess County were far higher than the other counties and this appears to be a function of locality based funding streams.⁵ Office-based case services

⁵ The actual closed case numbers per county were derived from the source data to GIS maps generated for this visit.

reports indicate that priority area case closures varied among counties as well. Individual caseload size likewise varied among staff categories between offices. Attorney active caseloads ranged from single digits to a few near to 100 open cases. The higher caseloads were found in several areas of LSHV's practice including private landlord-tenant and subsidized housing, public benefits, Social Security Disability and family law. While many of the lower numbers were of newer attorneys who were in training or building up a caseload, some of the higher caseloads were also seen among new attorneys in the same office. Thus, there appeared to be little adjustment of case assignment to assist with parity among attorneys with similar experience levels.⁶ LSHV management reported plans to address case assignment procedures in the coming year and involve the AICs in a balancing of case assignment.⁷

Recommendations:

III.1.6.1. LSHV should consider ways to increase consumer law cases to fully effectuate its priorities.

III.1.10.1. To further support LSHV's work to balance advocate case loads and to encourage more complex work, the program should continue its assessment of which advice and brief service cases make the most sense to transition to the coordinated intake unit.

III.1.10.2.* Caseload size, high or low, should be reviewed and addressed accordingly.

III.1.10.3. Following the example of the family law practice group, LSHV should continue developing other practice units that include uniform and recurrent meetings with ample time given to both training and discussion of case strategy. Strategic collaboration among all staff in related practice units should be encouraged.

III.1.10.4.* The program should establish a uniform tickler system for all offices in order to meet the requirements of its malpractice insurance policy.

⁶ LSC was informed that some of this disparity and the high numbers of open cases were caused by delays in case closing resulting from the transition from TIME to Legal Server.

⁷ Subsequent to the LSC visit, LSHV began working to address this aspect of its delivery. A partner and experienced litigator from a large White Plains law firm agreed to lead LSHV's affirmative litigation efforts on a pro bono basis. The pro bono attorney leading this work is a former LSHV board chair, and thus, understands LSHV's work. He has handled litigation in federal and state courts, is expert in trial and appellate work and was the solicitor general of NYS and Chief of the Public Advocacy Division of the NY Attorney General's office. A first meeting was held for staff programwide via videoconference. LSHV reported this effort will begin by identifying legal issues for court or regulatory challenges that would best be raised to against patterns of institutional practices negatively impacting the client community.

Criterion 2. Private attorney involvement (PAI).

Finding 11: LSHV's Volunteer Attorney Program (VAP) unit is implementing new projects to increase volunteer participation, particularly in the rural areas of the region.

LSHV pro bono work is handled by its VAP unit. The VAP is developing an innovative, comprehensive PAI initiative. In 2013, LSHV reported that 128 attorneys accepted cases. As the result of receiving funding from the Judiciary Civil Legal Services (JCLS) fund and the state courts implementation of programs to encourage pro bono participation, LSHV was able to expand its staff and increase its pro bono program. Staffing of the unit is overseen by a newly hired pro bono director, a pro bono coordinator, and an executive secretary. Previous turnover of pro bono staffing hindered the unit's ability to operate fully and effectively.

In 2013, there were 209 cases closed by the VAP attorneys, 162 were family law cases. In 2013, the VAP unit closed 10 cases per 10,000 poor persons, compared to a national mean of 21. LSHV's VAP closed seven extended cases per 10,000 poor persons, which is the same as the national median. It closed five contested cases per 10,000 poor persons exceeding the national median of two.

The overall low number of cases closed by the unit compared to national medians is attributed to the changes and vacancies in VAP staff, and the high proportion of extended and contested matters. Despite the low number of pro bono cases, LSHV has engaged pro bono services in support for its major casework from experienced litigators including attorneys from Morrison & Foerster and DelBello Donnellan Weingarten Wise & Wiederkehr LLP. The VAP has special pro bono projects with Boies, Schiller and Wilson Elser.

Now that LSHV VAP unit is fully staffed, the program reports a goal of doubling the number of participating attorneys receiving cases. Future developments include continuing its work with large law firms to have associates handle certain types of cases such as uncontested divorces. At the time of the visit, the VAP unit shared plans to submit an application for LSC's Pro Bono Innovation Funding (PBIF) in collaboration with five other legal aid programs in New York State. Subsequent to the visit, LSC awarded this PBIF grant.

LSHV works closely with Pace Law School to implement New York State's new requirement that all prospective attorneys and law students in New York perform 50 hours of pro bono work as a requirement for admission to practice law in New York. Next year, LSHV will participate in the New York State Judiciary's Pro Bono Scholars programs which allows students in their final year of law school to devote their last semester of study to performing pro bono service for the poor through an approved externship, law school clinic or legal services provider. LSHV will host two pro bono scholars beginning March, 2015.

The pro bono unit receives its cases for placement through LSHV's intake systems. The AICs in each region refer cases to the pro bono unit using established criteria appropriate for volunteer attorneys. The pro bono unit also works with the court system in placing cases under its assigned counsel program that was designed to provide advice and counsel to low income litigants appearing before the court and in need of legal assistance.

VAP staff screens new case referrals, contacts applicants and potential volunteer attorneys, ensures the required forms are completed, checks for conflicts of interest, obtains relevant client documents, and records CLE credits earned by the volunteer attorney. Clients are advised of case acceptance within two weeks of the volunteer attorney reviewing the matter.

Support for participating attorneys includes training in poverty law, mentoring, and follow-up by VAP staff. In the future, participating attorneys will be able to access the program's brief and sample documents bank by going to the LSHV website. They will also be able to access client files and documents on the case management system.

Some staff interviewed reported the desire to improve pro bono in certain regions of the service area. The VAP unit recognizes the need to increase participating attorneys in the rural areas. Urban participation is satisfactory. Recruitment is accomplished through outreach to bar associations, articles in newsletters, and offering CLE trainings.

Participating attorneys are recognized for their contribution through two events each year, one during National Pro Bono Week; breakfasts and luncheons held in some counties; write-ups in bar journals; and events held by bar associations. Training for the handling of domestic violence cases is provided to ensure that domestic violence is identified as an issue if not self-identified by the client. The program's Domestic Violence Practice Unit mentors and provides support as needed.

Recommendation:

III.2.11.1. LSHV should assess whether its branch offices should be involved in the VAP's pro bono recruitment and support, or other ways to help expand pro bono in the rural counties.

Criterion 3 and 4. Other program services to the eligible client population and other program activities on behalf of the eligible client population.

Finding 12: LSHV staff and management demonstrated a high level of community involvement directly tied to other services to clients.

Involvement is evident with community organizations, not-for profits, and state stakeholders. The program has periodic *pro se* clinics in uncontested divorces and bankruptcy but only in a few locations. LSHV's newly hired pro bono director will be concentrating on enhancing their *pro se* clinic component by expanding substantive areas offered, increasing the regularity of scheduling, and making programs available

throughout the service area utilizing pro bono attorneys.

LSHV's periodic continuing legal education event, the Legalpalooza, trains community partners, lawyers and judges. Staff routinely present at local events relevant in the client community--a staff person expressed the client-centered culture with the saying "have tent will travel".

New York's statewide website, LawHelp New York, is a national leader in providing legal information and other self-help tools to New Yorkers who cannot afford an attorney. Staff is generally aware of LawHelp New York, and intake staff regularly refers clients to its resources. LSHV's current TIG will expand the legal information resources available to low income users in the Legal Services of Hudson Valley service area by adding plain language legal guides to the program's website and the New York statewide legal information website, LawHelpNY.org. Materials will be available in English and Spanish and will be promoted to the community through a webinar series targeted to libraries and nonprofits throughout the region.

PERFORMANCE AREA FOUR. Effectiveness of governance, leadership, and administration.

Criterion 1. Board governance.

Finding 13: LSHV's board demonstrates effective oversight and is actively engaged in decision making.

LSHV's board of directors has 20 members comprised of 14 men and 6 women. The board is mainly Caucasian with two African American and one Hispanic member. The board bylaws provide that no "director may serve more than two consecutive terms three year terms, but any such person may become a director again after a one-year interval." The bylaws further provide for a waiver of term limits by the board after a vote of not less than a majority of the board present at the meeting at which the waiver is made. Many board members have been on the board more than six years. A review of the minutes did not reflect that these waivers were used for long-term members whose terms had expired. The long-term members are widely seen as significant contributors and dedicated to the program. However, one such member acknowledged that the term limit waiver had not been utilized. In an effort to make the board more diverse, more representative of the rural areas and to fill open client eligible positions, LSHV's leadership filled several open positions after the visit.⁸

⁸ LSHV reported after the LSC visit that in August the board elected four new client members; all new client members are women of color, geographically diverse, and have personally experienced civil legal problems common to low-income clients. Prior to the next regularly scheduled meeting, the managers and some board members held a pre-board meeting to orient the new client board members. The pre-meeting orientation included a PowerPoint presentation detailing program information and financial background. New client board members are assigned board member mentors called "buddies." The pre-board meeting process will continue for each future meeting. With the addition of the new client board members, 37% of LSHV's board is comprised of client board members.

Overall, board members are active, dedicated and involved. Many members have been on the board for extended periods and are highly experienced. LSHV staff provides regular training to board members in aspects of fund development and the role and responsibilities of board members as well as facilitation in identifying and recruiting board members. The board is involved in fundraising and has been responsible for raising large sums of money through annual events. Board members often give substantial donations to the program.

Board meetings are held five to six times each year and convene at 6:00 p.m. Committee meetings typically precede board meetings. The board's Finance Committee provides regular reports to the full board. Board members interviewed for the visit reported the use of teleconferencing for some members when needed. A review of the minutes from 2012 and 2013 reflect a range in attendance from eight to 17 members and often three or fewer client-eligible members attend.. According to the LSHV bylaws, a quorum is met by "at least five directors plus one additional director for every ten directors (or fraction thereof) in excess of fifteen."

The bylaws provide for a declaration of a conflict of interest or appearance thereof. On several occasions the board has discussed potential conflicts of interest by members. Some meeting minutes do not reflect the disposition of motions or results of voting on matters decided by the board. The minutes for 2012 and 2013 do not reflect a performance review of the executive director by the board.

Recommendations:

IV.1.13.1. The board should continue its focus on increasing its racial, ethnic and geographic diversity, and on ensuring that the rural areas are represented.

IV.1.13.2. To the extent it has not already done so, the board should consider methods to activate its members, such as recording decisions required of the board in the agenda, reactivating committees that would further the goals of the board, requiring committee reporting to the board, recognizing board member contributions, and moving meeting locations throughout the program service area.

IV.1.13.3.* The board should assess whether it is necessary to revise its policy on the waiver of term limits and voting, and if kept, ensure the policy is adhered to and documented in the board minutes.

Criterion 2. Leadership.

Finding 14: LSHV has highly effective leadership and administration.

LSHV has an experienced executive director who is widely respected by board, staff and outside organizations. She is involved in a number of state and national legal services organizations; however, this has not diminished her equally active involvement in the

activities of the program. She is accepted as the leader of the program, is recognized by staff as having achieved outstanding accomplishments for the program, and is often given credit for maintaining adequate funding and expanding resources. The executive director is assisted by an equally competent, experienced and committed leadership and management team. Staff feels they are a part of an outstanding organization that provides excellent client service and representation. The program does not have a formal succession plan.

The program has a formal mission statement. Staff is aware of the program vision of expanding quality legal services to all geographic regions of the program's service area. Interviews of some staff and a review of the responses from the staff survey for purposes of this performance review indicate a diminished level of morale among some staff that would benefit from management attention. The level of morale appeared to the team to stem from a number of causes, including: perceived lack of recognition and appreciation of staff's work and accomplishments, a need for greater communications with staff regarding management's intentions and decisions, perceived failure to include staff in the decision-making processes, caseloads and a perception of an inability to do impact casework, labor-management negotiations, , and the perceived inability to take initiatives without first gaining permission.⁹

Finding 15: As noted above, LSHV benefits from a competent, experienced and committed management team.

LSHV has the processes and systems in place to address compliance with funder requirements. Deliverables for each source of funding have been targeted and overseen closely. The program is mindful of assessing future grants for progress on deliverables as promised.

Recommendation:

IV.2.14.1.* Management should initiate an effort to address the perceptions and diminished morale among staff and advocates. Such an initiative should emphasize recognition and appreciation of the work of staff, two-way communication from management to front-line staff and from front-line staff to management, and a greater presence of the executive director with the front-line staff and in the branch offices.

Criterion 3. Overall management and administration, including technology.

Finding 16: Overall, LSHV's technology implementation is solid and provides a sound foundation for staff. The program plans to provide security policy and

⁹ Subsequent to the visit, LSHV initiated several projects including an agency newsletter, a birthday and anniversary acknowledgment, and avenues to enable staff to meet in person and interact together informally. They are working more with the AICs to help them communicate to staff all relevant and important information they receive so staff is kept abreast of details regarding the entire organization, including staffing, funding, board activities, management activities and grants. See LSHV comments attached to this final report.

training to all staff. Some staff would benefit from upgraded hardware.

LSHV's information technology infrastructure is solid across the organization and helps LSHV meet its mission. While a few users identified challenges, most were happy with the quality of technology in the program. LSHV outsources many of its IT functions to Progressive Computing, an established managed service provider (MSP) in the region. Progressive Computing handles a broad range of IT issues, including supporting the programwide thin client environment.¹⁰ The program appears to have a good relationship with Progressive Computing, and has worked with the company for several years. LSHV recently sought proposals from other vendors to ensure that they were receiving best value for their IT services; they choose to stay with their current company.

As mentioned above, the program was an early legal services adopter of a hosted VOIP phone system. The hosted system provides many benefits, and LSHV has worked hard to avoid any serious call quality issues. Staff seems pleased with the enhanced phone features and reports no concerns with call quality. Additionally, while enhanced remote access -- powered by the hosted VOIP system, the thin client infrastructure, and LSHV's move to Legal Server -- has been very well-received among staff, it does create new security risks as users access key systems through more vulnerable networks. LSHV's technology team recognizes these risks and plans to adopt policies and conduct trainings to address them.

Finally, some staff identified printing and scanning as a challenge. Multiple staff indicated that the printer they were assigned to use did not function adequately and that they needed to use a printer in a different section of the office. Scanning will be critical as more and more case information is stored electronically in Legal Server. LSHV should ensure that these functions are adequate across the organization.

Recommendations:

IV.3.16.1. LSHV should continue to evaluate how technology can make the organization more effective and ultimately enhance service delivery.

IV.3.16.2.* LSHV should move forward with its security policy and trainings to ensure that staff working remotely keep key program systems and data secure.¹¹

IV.3.16.3.* LSHV should ensure that staff has access to high-quality printers and scanners. Older unreliable printers should be phased out.¹²

Criterion 4, 5 and 6. Financial Administration. Human Resources Administration. Internal Communications.

¹⁰ A thin client environment refers to a lower cost centrally managed computer network that does not use CDROMs, disk drives or and expansion slots.

¹¹ Subsequent to the visit, LSHV reported it had implemented this recommendation by instituting an internet access security policy to ensure confidentiality.

¹² Subsequent to the visit, LSHV reported it had implemented this recommendation.

Finding 17: The program has sufficient, capable, trained and effective staff dedicated to financial administration¹³.

The program engages in multi-year financial planning and projections beyond the current year. LSHV management is mindful of the need for contingency plans for potential changes in the New York State Judiciary Civil Legal Services funding.

The Chief Financial Officer is given accolades by staff for his availability to address questions. The CFO meets with the ED frequently, probably on a daily basis, in order to address financial issues and resolve departmental issues as they arise. The CFO reported that he ensures updates to the Accounting Policy Manual and updates it as necessary.

The board Finance Committee reviews the financial statements on a monthly basis and the CFO and executive director meet with the Finance Committee to review the report and attend every board meeting. LSHV is commended for maintaining six-months of cash reserves, including a \$2 million line of credit. There is a back-up of financial records off-site. Annual audits have been clean and reflected no problems.

Finding 18: LSHV's has a widely respected, experienced human resources director. Some staff reported concern that their evaluations did not incorporate feedback from their direct casework supervisors.

The human resources director is commended by staff and the visit team for being available and responsive to staff on their human resources needs. LSHV recently underwent a revision of its evaluation instrument in response to concerns raised by staff. Interviews with staff reflected varying levels of satisfaction with the results of the last evaluation process. Some staff reported that their evaluations were conducted by supervisors who did not have background or related subject matter expertise to their area of practice.

Recommendation:

IV.5.18.1.* To the extent it is not already occurring, substantive law experts who are not an advocate's supervisor should participate in providing input and written feedback in that supervisee's evaluation along with the appropriate AIC to ensure that feedback on their legal work is documented by experienced managers within the relevant area of practice.

Finding 19: LSHV's executive director and management are cognizant of the benefits of regular communication with all staff. Despite the use of regular staff meetings, some staff shared a desire for more direct contact and input with upper management and programmatic decisions.

¹³ 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.

Despite a variety of programmatic meetings and management communiqués, internal communication remains a challenge. LSHV staff meets programwide twice a year. Program management meets monthly, and individual offices meet at least monthly. In addition, senior management routinely sends program wide informational e-mails and has commenced individual office visits. While staff is informed of program policies and changes, it does not appear that the basis of the policies or their changes are discussed or that staff input is sought before they are implemented. In addition, staff interviews indicated that management may not be sharing the results of case work as reported in grant activity and outcomes reports to funders.

Recommendation:

IV.6.19.1.* The program should share grant outcome reports with the staff to reinforce their understanding of the value of their work.

Criterion 7. General resource development and maintenance.

Finding 20: LSHV has a well-developed private fundraising plan and experienced resource development unit. Fundraising at LSHV is staffed appropriately and involves input from management, the AICs and financial administration staff.

LSHV is highly commended for its accomplishments and substantial growth of resources from local and state funders. The program has prioritized private funding to balance government funding and grants with its multi-dimensional 2014-15 Private Fundraising Plan. LSHV seeks new grants that will equalize client access and service delivery across the service area. Resource development efforts have been successful. The program has increased from a staff of approximately 50 in 2003 to its current level of over 100 staff. This growth is especially noticeable during 2011-2013.

Fundraising is driven by the executive director, with the assistance of the deputy executive director, the director of development, the assistant director of development the director of grants and reporting, the AICs and other staff, where appropriate. The director of development is primarily focused on private fundraising and the goals outlined in the Fundraising Plan. She is supported by the assistant director of development. The director of grants and reporting is responsible for reporting on case services data, assisting with the annual competitive and renewal grant applications and generating grant activity and case services reports. Development staff participates in relevant training, including meetings and conferences presented by the local Association of Development Officers and the Association of Fundraising Professionals.

AICs and their staff support resource development efforts by sharing information about new funding opportunities and discussing them among the AICs and administration during the regular managers' meetings to make sure the new opportunity fits within LSHV priorities and its mission. An example of this is the competitive grant application for the NYS Cancer Health Advocacy program. LSHV does not have an annual report,

but reported its plan to begin producing an annual report to further its success with its community presence and strong relationships.

Criterion 8 and 9. Coherent and comprehensive delivery structure. Participation in integrated legal services delivery system.

LSHV's delivery structure is effective and the program is an active participant in an overall delivery system statewide. LSHV has a coherent, comprehensive delivery system that effectively coordinates its efforts with those of other providers. LSHV is highly engaged in the statewide legal services delivery system. LSHV is involved at every level of the statewide delivery system including its involvement in Chief Judge's Task Force on Access to Justice, the state bar's President's Committee on Access to Justice and Committee on Legal Aid, the Association of New York State Legal Services Organizations and LawHelpNY. LSHV works closely with the Empire Justice Center including planning and serving as trainer at the biennial statewide Partnership Conference providing substantive law training. LSHV advocates are members of the various state task forces.

LSHV is an initial member of the Legal Services Funding Alliance (LSFA), a coalition of legal services providers (LSC and non-LSC funded) outside of New York City that joined together to educate the New York executive and legislative branches as well as the public about the need for funding for civil legal services outside of New York City. The LSFA works together to create educational materials about their work and who they are, and make progress towards the goal of ensuring that funding is provided for services outside of New York City. LSHV's executive director is an incorporator and the current vice president of the Association of New York State Legal Services Organizations, Inc. (Association), a statewide association formed to provide support to New York state civil legal services programs. Over 50 organizations have indicated interest in participating as members looking for funding advocacy support, collaboration, creation of best practices, models and training. The Association had its first board meeting in September 2014 and will have its first membership meeting in January 2015 at the New York State Bar Association annual conference.

Dapworks for New York State is a statewide campaign seeking to increase funding for the Disability Advocacy Program (DAP). DAP returns at least \$3 for every \$1 invested in the program through the state budget by assisting low-income, severely disabled New Yorkers in appealing application denials for federally funded SSI benefits. LSHV has been heavily involved in this campaign, having devoted the time of its Disability Program Manager and staff to educating the legislature about this program. This successful statewide effort has increased funding in the last year. In addition, LSHV has been an active participant in the New York for Responsible Lending coalition.

The Technology Working Group of the Chief Judge's Task Force to Expand Civil Legal Services in New York is a project which has brought technologically advanced systems thinkers in the statewide delivery system into an alliance to examine the delivery system's technology needs. In November 2013, the committee made recommendations regarding requisite technology investments for legal services programs and related

technology support needs to ensure that the legal services community maintains a current and effective use of technology to deliver services. The group has begun its planning process for a statewide technology conference, which will likely occur over two days in spring of 2015.