

Service Area and Program Overview

Page 3 - LASOC was founded by a group of Orange County attorneys in 1958 to respond to the needs of the County's poor and elderly.

LASOC Comment

LASOC was founded by the Orange County Bar Association.

Page 4 - LASOC receives funding from over 30 sources including local, state, federal, foundation, and IOLTA grants as well as various entrepreneurial undertakings.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Footnote 4 - The census adjustment combined with sequestration will result in a \$243,000 loss in LSC funding for 2013 and, assuming level funding for LSC, an over \$620,000 reduction from 2012 to 2014.

Page 5 - LASOC does not currently have a strategic plan in place as to how best to address client need but has commenced a planning process.

LASOC Comment

LASOC has over 30 funding sources and is required to comply with the various funding deliverables and reporting requirements. As noted in footnote 4, LASOC will also incur a \$620,000 LSC funding reduction from 2012 to 2014. These numerous funding sources are essential to the provision of services. LASOC's ability to develop a strategic plan is constrained by the operational guidelines and funding parameters required by its numerous funding sources. However, as noted in this report, LASOC has commenced the process of developing and incorporating a strategic plan.

Page 5 - LASOC's last comprehensive needs assessment was in 2008.

LASOC Comment

In 2011, LASOC conducted focus group studies to develop its priorities, which were completed and reviewed at the end of 2012. The focus group study was modeled after the California State Bar needs assessment methodology. LASOC retained a third party to conduct this needs assessment for \$10,000. Unless LSC directs LASOC to conduct another needs assessment to supplement the 2011 study, LASOC considers the 2011 focus group report to be its needs assessment. LASOC will conduct another needs assessment with the University of California, Irvine (UCI), Department of Social Ecology, in 2014.

Page 5 – While LASOC regularly captures quantitative statistics as to the services it provides, the program does not routinely evaluate the effectiveness of its service delivery.

LASOC Comment

Clients served through the Domestic Violence Prevention Program Clinic at the Norwalk and Compton Courthouses are provided with client satisfaction questionnaires at the end of each clinic. The data is evaluated annually. LASOC is planning to implement similar methods to capture qualitative statistics throughout the program. LASOC has outcome measures that capture closing results, major benefits, priorities, and dollar benefits in Matrix. The outcome measures are being reviewed to determine how best to use the information to improve services to our client community.

Page 5 – Mapping evidence suggest that there are some low-income communities within the program's service area that are underserved.

LASOC Comment

LASOC acknowledges that all low-income communities, within and outside the program's service area, are underserved. LASOC was informed that approximately \$6 is allocated to every low-income individual to obtain legal assistance.

Page 5 – In the absence of uniform policies, supervision of the legal work varies among offices.

LASOC Comment

LASOC disagrees with the use of the word "varies" as it is misleading. Although Directing and Supervising Attorneys may have different styles of supervision, cases are reviewed to ensure quality representation through case review meetings, informal discussions and periodic reviews. LASOC is in the process of developing a legal supervision manual which will formalize the process.

Page 5 – The program does not have a formal vehicle for advocates to strategize within the program on substantive areas of law.

LASOC Comment

LASOC is planning to conduct semi-annual meetings for advocates to strategize on substantive areas of law.

Page 5 – Communication between the various office/units, as well as from top administration to staff is in need of improvement.

LASOC Comment

All offices and specialty units within each office conduct weekly case review meetings. In addition, LASOC will develop a written comprehensive plan to improve program communication.

At the weekly meeting, all new cases are reviewed on a weekly basis.

Page 5 – LASOC has a creative and multi-prong approach to resource development, but it lacks a cohesive plan.

LASOC Comment

LASOC's Director of Fund Development will attend Management Information Exchange's (MIE) National Fundraising Conference in July and will develop a written plan shortly after.

FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Needs Assessment and Priorities

Finding 1. Although LASOC periodically measures client need through focus groups and Geographic Information Systems (GIS) mapping, it has not undertaken a comprehensive needs assessment since 2008.

LASOC Response

In 2011, LASOC conducted a needs assessment modeled after the State Bar of California's needs assessment methodology using focus groups. This report was created by Professor Luz Herrera, former professor at Thomas Jefferson School of Law and current visiting professor at the UCI School of Law. This report is considered to be a legitimate needs assessment evaluation. LASOC has, in past reports, utilized a variety of needs assessment methodologies including, but not limited to, mapping, client surveys, public hearings and community based organization surveys. Additionally, we would note that the UCI GIS mapping project report was presented to LASOC at the end of 2012. LASOC will be undertaking its next needs assessment study in 2014 in accordance with the requirements of 45 CFR 1620.3 (b).

Evaluation and Adjustment

Finding 2. The program does not routinely evaluate the effectiveness of its service delivery.

Page 7 - Moreover, due to the extensive amount of pro se assistance provided, any evaluation of a more qualitative nature would be incomplete as there appears to be little in the way of case follow-up.

LASOC Response

LASOC does routinely evaluate the effectiveness of its service delivery model through weekly case review meetings and through the use of LASOC's Matrix which documents case outcomes. Moreover, although *pro se* outcomes are not fully captured, that does not imply that *pro se* assistance is ineffective or that *pro se* assistance does not result in positive outcomes. LASOC will provide *pro se* services in instances where such services are beneficial to clients, even in instances where it is impracticable to measure the outcome of the service. There is, at minimum, an educational value in providing *pro se* assistance. Clients become aware of their legal rights and responsibilities, understand the options available to them, and therefore have the opportunity to act in their own best interest based on the advice provided. The client satisfaction questionnaires collected from the Domestic Violence Prevention Program clinics reflect that clients receive effective service. Moreover, a large majority of the family law *pro se* clinics provided throughout the organization are not closed at the end of the clinic but upon the entry of a judgment which is reflective of the effectiveness of the services provided to the client. LASOC will regularly evaluate its outcome measures to determine the effectiveness of its service delivery model.

Strategic Planning

Finding 4. LASOC does not currently have a strategic plan in place.

Recommendation I.1.1.1 - LASOC should engage in a comprehensive needs assessment involving a variety of tools that may include GIS mapping, focus groups, surveying, or any other methods available to assess the needs of its client population. The assessment should assist in forming the basis of the program's strategic planning process.

LASOC Response

LASOC used its 2011 needs assessment findings to establish service priorities. The comprehensive 2011 report used focus groups, as recommended by the State Bar of California needs assessment methodology. LASOC will conduct its next needs assessment study in 2014 in accordance with the requirements of 45 CFR 1620.3 (b).

Recommendation I.4.2.1 - LASOC should endeavor to establish meaningful outcome measurement for all its casework and, in the area of pro se services, formally assess the effectiveness of their work.

LASOC Response

LASOC has established meaningful outcome measurements for all its casework and reviews them every year. LASOC will modify its case acceptance policy and office appointment policy, *infra* p. 2, to maximize the effectiveness of its service delivery protocols as necessary.

Recommendation I.2.4.1 – LASOC should commence engagement in the non-profit sustainability planning module or other appropriate strategic planning process as soon as practicable. The process should question and challenge the fundamental direction and operations of the program so as to provide a roadmap for future program development. Board and staff at all levels should be involved in the strategic planning process. Throughout this report, recommendations will highlight specific areas to be included in the plan.

LASOC Response

LASOC is in the process of creating a non-profit sustainability plan, as described in the PQV report, and will continue to move forward with providing services to the client community while maintaining its funding sources. As mentioned in the PQV report, LASOC is a recipient of over 30 funding sources which require specific deliverables and reporting requirements. While LASOC is willing to examine the direction and operations of the program, it must maintain its existing funding sources to provide services to its client community. The PQV report notes that LASOC will receive a \$620,000 LSC funding reduction between 2012 and 2014. The need for funding and the need to provide high quality legal services are both significant. LASOC will work to diversify its funding sources and create detailed protocols, within its funding guidelines that more clearly describe the framework and procedures for making referrals, scheduling clinic participation, office appointments, and other needed services.

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

Intake

Finding 5. The vast majority of LASOC's intakes are processed through a centralized system that provides a seamless means for eligible clients to receive advice at their first point of contact with the program.

Page 9 – The Hotline operates from 9:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. Monday through Thursday and 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. on Fridays.

LASOC Comment

LASOC has reduced Hotline operating hours from 9:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. Monday through Thursday and 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. on Fridays. Time not spent on the Hotline will be dedicated to additional staff training.

Page 9 – Office appointment are scheduled up to 28 days in advance and, barring an emergency deadline, a client can wait as long as four weeks for an appointment.

LASOC Comment

Appointments are scheduled through the Matrix, LASOC's Case Management System. Each office operates around a set appointment schedule which can be made up to two weeks in advance. LASOC's Seniors Citizens Advocacy Program schedules appointments up to eight days in advance and Santa Ana Family Law Clinic appointments are made up to twenty days in advance. Emergency office appointments are available for clients with urgent matters.

Page 9 – Duty attorney advice does not appear to be regularly reviewed. Other than a brief Monday morning meeting of Hotline staff in attendance, there is no mechanism for Hotlines staff, both workers and duty attorneys, to meet and share any noticeable trends or emerging needs and discuss best practices. In addition, there does not appear to be any substantive training beyond the initial orientation.

LASOC Comment

Advice provided on the Hotline is reviewed regularly by designated staff. Advice provided by a PAI Hotline duty attorney is also regularly reviewed by designated staff. If issues arise, the Hotline Directing Attorney is notified and then communicates corrections with the Hotline duty attorney in person or by Matrix mail. Matrix mail is a customized email service contained within LASOC's CMS, Matrix. Email communication is often used to consistently disperse information among part-time intake workers, students and volunteers, and staff. Policies, best practices, emerging trends and needs are regularly emailed to all Hotline intake workers with the invitation to discuss subject matters, raise questions, and bring new items for review. Intakes that have been referred to the office for clinics, appointments and further assistance are also reviewed by LASOC staff. Should staff identify issues with the advice or content of the intake, the associated intake worker and duty attorney are notified either verbally or directly through Matrix mail. Intakes requiring correction are collected in a file which is reviewed and resolved at the weekly staff meeting.

Hotline support relies on student and volunteer participation. Therefore, Hotline staff is subject to the ebb and flow of volunteer availability. Trainings are provided to new volunteers by trained staff that regularly reviews policies and discusses best practices. An increase of volunteer participation occurs during the summer months, which allows staff to dedicate additional time to develop training materials and attend trainings such as lectures, observing Court hearings, watching video tutorials, and reviewing supplemental materials.

Page 10 – Although portions of the program's Case Handling Manual that outlines intake procedures and referrals was updated as recently as July 2012, the case acceptance guidelines, which form the basis for scheduling office appointments through the Hotline, has not be revised since January of 2001.

LASOC Comment

LASOC has office appointments available weekly in every office and clients needing immediate services are scheduled for emergency appointments. LASOC has an office appointment policy that is used throughout the program and is regularly reviewed by the directing and supervising attorneys. This policy will be evaluated by LASOC and updated as needed. LASOC will update its written case acceptance guidelines for counsel and advice, office appointments, referrals, and clinics.

Recommendation II.1.5.1 – Hotline staff, both intake workers and duty attorneys, should hold regular meetings to review emerging needs, receive substantive legal training to help identify issues, provide skills training on interviewing/customer service/cultural competency, and share insights and/or best practices.

LASOC Response

LASOC's Hotline hours have changed to 9:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m. Monday through Thursday, and 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. on Friday. Since LASOC has reduced the Friday Hotline hours, staff training is conducted every Friday from 1:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m. Reducing the Hotline hours will enable LASOC to hold more regular meetings with Hotline staff, both intake workers and duty attorneys, to review emerging needs, provide substantive legal training to help identify issues, provide skills training on interviewing/customer service/cultural competency, and share insights and/or best practices.

Recommendation II.1.5.2 – Advice being given by Hotline duty attorneys should be reviewed regularly by the Hotline directing attorney, and feedback should be given, as appropriate, to ensure the delivery of high quality advice.

LASOC Response

LASOC will create a procedure where the Hotline Directing Attorney will test the advice given by Hotline duty attorneys and provide feedback as necessary to ensure the delivery of high quality advice.

Recommendation II.1.5.3 – The program should develop more specific protocols for Hotline referrals to the branch offices as a means to limit duplicate advice, ease office appointment wait times, and free up more time for branch office advocates to engage in extended representation. This may necessarily include expanding the advice given at the Hotline level. These protocols should be reviewed regularly at the Hotline staff meetings when branch staff is in attendance to adjust advice/referrals as appropriate to address emerging needs.

LASOC Response

LASOC will develop protocols that streamline Hotline referrals to limit duplicate advice at branch offices, decrease office appointment wait times, and allow advocates to engage in more extended representation. LASOC will review advice given at the Hotline level and will regularly review its protocols at the Hotline staff meetings to revise advice/referrals as needed in response to emerging needs.

Recommendation II.1.5.4 – The Hotline should consider incorporating a survey to follow up regularly with Hotline advice clients to help evaluate the effectiveness and impact of the advice provided. This could be done through a follow-up email survey, or the program could also explore implementing a low-cost text messaging survey to accommodate clients with limited Internet access.

LASOC Response

LASOC will send a survey by email to clients whose intakes were closed with advice and counsel. This will facilitate the evaluation of the effectiveness of the services provided by LASOC. In consultation with the UCI School of Social Ecology, LASOC will also consider designing a client satisfaction survey that will be completed immediately following the intake process.

Recommendation II.1.5.5 – The program should continue to work toward implementing an online intake option.

LASOC Response

LASOC is currently testing its online intake option for clients. LASOC plans to implement its online intake system by mid-July 2013.

Engagement with and access by the low-income population

Recommendation II.2.6.1 – LASOC should consider targeted outreach and other additional methods to inform potential clients of the availability of its services especially in the localities known to be underserved.

LASOC Response

LASOC will examine the GIS Maps and re-align its outreach efforts, as feasible considering its reduction in funding. LASOC will consider targeted outreach to the localities in areas underserved due to language or cultural barriers.

Recommendation II.2.6.2 - The program should insure that all of its website content is, at a minimum, in both English and Spanish.

LASOC Response

LASOC will review the options to provide information in Spanish and to make web services universally available.

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

Legal Representation

A. Staffing and Expertise

Finding 7. LASOC has highly experienced advocacy staff housed throughout the program

Page 13 – However, opportunities for them to share their expertise throughout the program were not evident.

LASOC Response

LASOC attorneys and staff frequently share their expertise throughout the program, which includes leading trainings in their respective substantive areas. LASOC will further leverage this expertise by incorporating SharePoint to formally share information and announce trainings program wide.

B. Quantity and Quality of Legal Work

Finding 8. LASOC has a three-tier delivery system that results in a high volume of limited services and pro se assistance for its clients and a reduced amount of extended direct representation.

Page 13 – In 2012, LASOC closed 13,938 cases. This was well in excess of the median number of total cases closed per 10,000 poor persons for LSC grantees. (315 compared to 245).

Page 14 – The program closed 21 extended cases per 10,000 poor persons, compared to the LSC grantee's national median of 57.

Page 14 – In 2012, the program closed a total of 242 cases that were concluded by means of negotiation, agency decision, or court decision. Of these, the program closed four contested cases per 10,000 poor persons. The LSC national median is 28 contested cases per 10,000 poor people.

LASOC Response

LASOC's statistics were well in excess of the median number of total cases closed per 10,000 poor persons for LSC grantees. This reflects its effort to provide some level of service to all eligible clients in need of assistance. LASOC will move towards providing more extended services, while recognizing that the cost of re-aligning services and resources with the reduction of funding costs will ultimately reduce the number of poor persons it serves throughout the year. A rebalancing of services would, of course, come at the expense of denying some eligible clients any services. LASOC has a responsibility to provide a service delivery system adopted by its Board which assures that eligible clients receive some level of service in effort to meet their need.

Page 14 – Consumer work rarely reaches beyond limited service and foreclosure assistance does not include litigation. The individual caseloads discussed with staff did not appear strategic or impactful.

LASOC Comment

LASOC's foreclosure assistance program is intended to provide housing counseling and loan modification assistance. LASOC has undertaken foreclosure litigation; however, because of diminished resources, LASOC's litigation staff will only undertake foreclosure litigation after an analysis of available resources.

Page 15 – It was of concern to the PQV team that of the 30 writing samples submitted as the program's advocates' best legal work over the past 24 months, nine were pro se pleadings and five were not advocacy products involving representation of a client. As evidenced by the General Relief case described previously, the program is capable of complex and/or impactful advocacy if it is considered a priority.

Page 15 – Finally, it is important to note that concern about the program's lack of extended direct representation was raised across all categories of team interviews; staff, board, community partners, and the judiciary.

LASOC Comment

LASOC will, to the extent practicable, take action to provide more extended direct representation, while assuring that some level of service is provided to all eligible clients. It is the policy of LASOC, as adopted by its Board of Directors, to provide counsel and advice, at a minimum, to all eligible clients. To free up additional attorney time, LASOC will seek to eliminate services provided at an office appointment which are duplicative of services previously provided by the Hotline and to effectively utilize other legal resources that are available to our client community.

C. Legal Work Management and Supervision

Finding 9. Due to the lack of uniform legal work management and supervision protocols, the level of management and supervision varies throughout the program.

LASOC Response

LASOC disagrees with the use of the word “varies” as it is misleading. LASOC has supervision protocols for the provision of legal services which are used by directing and supervising attorneys on a regular basis. As appropriate, cases are discussed at weekly case review meetings. LASOC will memorialize the manner in which management and the supervision of legal work is carried out throughout the organization and will conduct a quarterly case load review on open cases.

D. Training and Support.

Finding 10: While encouraged by the program, staff development and support is generally self-effectuated.

Recommendation III.1.8.1- As part of its planning process, LASOC should develop a means for its advocates to engage in more extended direct representation in all its priority areas that address both individual and systemic needs.

LASOC Response

LASOC often hosts MCLE trainings which will be announced through SharePoint and will be open for participation by all staff and volunteers. As part of a staff evaluation, training needs are discussed, including a review of their training needs and past trainings attended. LASOC will review the level of service provided in each subject area that addresses both individual and systemic needs to determine service delivery adjustments as necessary. LASOC will evaluate the feasibility and the means for its advocates to engage in more extended direct representation.

Recommendation III.1.9.1 – The program should implement uniform legal work supervision protocols.

LASOC Response

LASOC will create written legal work supervision protocols. These procedures will be reviewed on a regular basis.

Recommendation III.1.10.1 – As part of its evaluation system, professional development plans should be completed for all staff members that include desired skills and attendant training needs.

LASOC Response

LASOC will include an evaluation on professional development plans for all staff members to ensure they receive adequate training.

Recommendation III.1.10.2 – The program should provide a forum for advocacy staff from the various offices/units to share substantive knowledge and strategize on emerging needs.

LASOC Response

LASOC will use SharePoint as the forum for advocacy staff to share substantive knowledge and strategize on emerging needs. LASOC will also hold semiannual meetings for advocates.

Recommendation III.1.10.3 – As resources allow, the Santa Ana directing attorney position should be separated from that of the director of litigation.

LASOC Response

As recommended by LSC, LASOC has hired a Santa Ana Directing Attorney and the positions of Director of Litigation and Santa Ana Directing Attorney have been separated. LASOC hopes to hire a Director of Litigation in 2014 when resources are made available.

Private Attorney Involvement

Finding 11. LASOC's PAI program is fully integrated into the program's delivery system and provides a wide range of opportunities.

Page 17 – Despite LASOC's investment of extensive landlord and tenant law training to some 25 YLD members, the program never took flight.

LASOC Comment

LASOC plans to renew its efforts with the Orange County Bar Association's (OCBA) Young Lawyers Section (YLD) to provide *pro bono* opportunities for YLD members.

Page 18 - Although LASOC has a wide variety of PAI activities, there does not appear to be an overall plan how to best use such a valuable resource in program delivery.

LASOC Comment

LASOC has a PAI plan that was designed to respond to client needs. The PAI plan is distributed to the local bar associations and to LSC. LASOC has a very active PAI program

and as part of LASOC's restructuring process, the PAI effort for Southeast Los Angeles have been incorporated into the duties of one of its Directing Attorney to further engage the members of the private bar.

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

Board governance

Finding 13. While there is a core group of actively engaged board members, overall board engagement could be improved.

Page 19 - While this concern was expressed by both attorney and client board members, this would appear to be especially problematic for the client board members as some client members reported they found the financial materials somewhat confusing.

LASOC Comment

LASOC has implemented a new and more comprehensive financial presentation for the Board which summarizes the financial report. LASOC also distributes meeting materials in advance for the Board to review prior to the meeting.

Page 20 - Although a draft leadership succession plan was submitted to the PQV team, it does not appear as if it has been fully adopted by the board.

LASOC Comment

LASOC will create a written leadership succession plan that will be presented to the Board for adoption.

Recommendation IV.1.13.1 The board should strive to increase membership engagement in board activities by, among other things, seeking increased attendance at monthly board meetings and/or removing inactive members as allowed by the program's bylaws, distributing board meeting materials with sufficient anticipation to permit effective preparation by members, and providing training for board members in its roles and responsibilities including interpretation of financial information.*

LASOC Response

Board meeting materials are made available and distributed to the Board on the Friday prior to the monthly meetings. LASOC will review the attendance of Board members and will consider removing inactive members if it is in the program's interest to do so. Training is available to all interested Board members. At least two Board members attend the National

Legal Aid and Defender Association's Annual Conference. Board training is also provided at LASOC's Staff Retreat and Board Orientation.

Recommendation IV.1.13.2 The board should be actively involved in the development and implementation of a strategic planning process recommended under Finding 4 of this report.

LASOC Response

During LASOC's strategic planning process, staff will engage the Board to be actively involved in the development and implementation of the plan for the program.

Recommendation IV.1.13.3 The board should engage in succession planning for both the program and board leadership.

LASOC Response

LASOC will create a written leadership succession plan that will be presented to the Board for adoption.

Recommendation IV.1.13.4 Continued efforts should be made for Southeast Los Angeles County representation on the board.

LASOC Response

LASOC has created a PAI Directing Attorney position in Southeast Los Angeles County (SELA) to engage the involvement of the private bar. The SELA PAI Directing Attorney will recruit for Southeast Los Angeles County representation on the Board.

Overall management including financial and human resources administration

Finding 15. While the program has experienced, capable, and diverse management, they appear to work independently as opposed to part of a cohesive team.

Page 21 - Each office/unit/operational section appears to operate in its own silo. It is unclear how programmatic decisions are made on either the advocacy side or the operational side, as well as for the program as a whole.

LASOC Response

LASOC has offices in Santa Ana, Anaheim, Compton and Norwalk. These offices are geographically distant and serve diverse and different communities. The administrative aspect of the program, however, is integrated and disseminates programmatic decisions for both advocacy and operations.

Recommendation IV.3.15.1 LASOC should consider adopting a more team orientated model of program management that: includes all key leadership positions; meets on a regular basis; considers agenda items offered by staff; and, regularly reports a summary of results back to the staff (as is appropriate).

LASOC Response

LASOC's key staff will meet on a regular basis to review work productivity, consistency, effectiveness, and overall quality of services. LASOC staff will be encouraged to provide agenda items that will be discussed at team meetings.

Recommendation IV.5.15.2 The program should consider technology solutions to support IIR functions, as resources allow.

LASOC Response

LASOC is reviewing potential technology solutions to support its IIR functions as resources allow.

Recommendation IV.5.15.3 All staff should be evaluated regularly, regardless of their status in or beyond the program's salary scale.*

LASOC Response

LASOC will ensure that evaluations are conducted annually for all staff. .

Technology

Finding 16: Despite LASOC's leadership role in external technological access issues, programmatic internal technology is not used to its full potential.

LASOC Response

In 2013, LASOC scheduled a two week long on-site technological training in Microsoft Office 2010. Trainings were offered in Outlook, Word, and Excel for beginner, intermediate and advanced level users. LASOC staff received training in these applications and was encouraged to sign up for multiple training sessions to enhance skills in all levels of expertise. LASOC will survey staff for feedback and ask if they are interested in additional technical training. LASOC will provide additional training and support for interested staff so they are able to effectively utilize their software applications and other technological programs at their full potential.

Recommendation IV.3.16.1 LASOC should ensure that the Matrix system is well documented so as to be capable of support by more than one staff person.*

LASOC Response

LASOC's Matrix system has been well documented and is capable of support by more than one staff person.

Recommendation IV.3.16.2 As resources allow, LASOC should ensure that internal staff have appropriate hardware to work as efficiently and effectively as possible.

LASOC Response

LASOC has submitted a request to the LSC Office of Compliance and Enforcement to purchase appropriate hardware for internal staff. The request is still being reviewed at this time.

Recommendation IV.3.16.3 The program should consider ways it could better utilize technology internally to improve staff efficiency and effectiveness by decreasing the reliance on paper case files and managing more case information in the CMS.

LASOC Response

LASOC has integrated the use of technology to decrease its reliance on paper files by eliminating paper intakes for the Hotline. LASOC uses technology to document files and would like to convert all its paper files into an electronic CMS, however, a comprehensive transition would require a significant investment. LASOC will continue to look for options and consider CMS proposals to better utilize technology to improve staff efficiency and effectiveness.

Internal Communications

Finding 17. Although there is extensive collaborative communication within each branch office or unit, the program lacks systems or procedures to ensure regular communication among all staff, particularly across offices and internal units, and from administration to staff.

Page 23 - The smaller offices engage in various forms of informal and formal meetings, but the Santa Ana units do not appear to meet as a whole. Although the program held a staff wide retreat in 2009, there are currently no regular program-wide staff meetings. In addition, senior leadership does not appear to have regular in-person interaction with the outlying offices. Communication from management is either via e-mail or passed down by mid-level managers after their quarterly meetings. There are no clear procedures for soliciting staff input on significant decisions and some staff expressed concern that they did not know of the existence of certain issues until after the fact.

LASOC Response

LASOC's Santa Ana units do meet together weekly. Additionally, all the individual units meet regularly. During the month of May, LASOC's senior leadership held meetings in each of the offices to discuss the funding situation, the need to restructure the program and the voluntary severance pay program. Senior management also recommended that staff meet in their respective offices with co-workers and supervisors to discuss staffing and other budgetary recommendations. Supervisors were asked to make recommendations by the end of May 2013. Historically, this is the process that has been used to solicit input on significant decisions. In addition, each year representatives of all job classifications and offices meet to discuss the content of the fringe benefit package and to make recommendations to the Board of Directors. Also Directing and Supervising Attorneys meetings are held at least four times a year to discuss significant issues, program policies and procedures and other issues that affect the delivery of services to our client community. Input was recently solicited from the staff and the Board of Directors on strategic thinking and the organization, communications, and social media usage.

Recommendation IV.6.17.1 The program should develop a means to ensure ongoing communication to and among staff as to administrative decisions, funding initiatives, office/unit accomplishments, and other areas of interest. This could be accomplished through several means, including regular emails, sending leadership minutes to staff, an online newsletter, and use of SharePoint.*

LASOC Response

LASOC will use SharePoint to share information and make announcements. LASOC staff will have access to administrative decisions, funding initiatives, accomplishments, and other areas of interest through SharePoint. Each month, a staff attorney will submit an article to the OC Lawyer magazine to share about LASOC's accomplishments and other hot topics for the community.

Recommendation IV.6.17.2 LASOC should make an effort to hold periodic all-staff meetings. These meetings could be used for educating staff about the work, special projects, and priorities of the various offices and units; providing training regarding policies, procedures, and data collection; providing substantive background in areas of emerging client needs; reviewing results achieved for clients and strategizing as to potential changes in the delivery of services to clients that may improve the quality and effectiveness of the representation; and other similar activities designed to inform staff and build institutional cohesiveness.

LASOC Response

LASOC will schedule periodic all-staff meetings throughout the year. LASOC will use survey monkey to survey staff for agenda items. These meetings will be structured to inform staff about special projects, and priorities of the various offices and units; providing training regarding policies, procedures, and data collection; providing substantive background in areas of emerging client needs; reviewing results achieved for clients and strategizing as to potential changes in the delivery of services to clients that may improve the quality and effectiveness of the representation; and other activities to build institutional cohesiveness. Staff will receive written announcements and have access to SharePoint for all other information.

Resource Development

Finding 18. LASOC has a creative and multi-faceted approach to fundraising and development but lacks a cohesive plan.

LASOC Response

LASOC's Director of Fund Development will attend Management Information Exchange's (MIE) National Fundraising Conference in July. The Director of Fund Development will create a written comprehensive and cohesive fundraising and development plan with input from the Board that will clearly address the goals of the program and provide institutional transparency.

Page 24 - Not all of LASOC's entrepreneurial efforts have proven successful. In an attempt to capitalize on the program's technological innovations, in 2011, LASOC created a separate for profit corporation to market Legal Genie, its I CAN! attorney-assisted product. A consultant was retained to seek investors and much time and expense was spent on the project. Sufficient investors had yet to be confirmed when LASOC was approached by the court administrative office to collaborate on an E-filing assistance project. As the collaboration was predicated upon Legal Genie being retained by LASOC, the newly formed corporation was dissolved and the program incurred additional expense to wind down the project. The E-filing collaboration is still in negotiations and LASOC offers Legal Genie assistance as an option for ineligible applicants.

LASOC Comment

While there is no guarantee that entrepreneurial efforts will be successful, LASOC is in the final stages of negotiating the I-CAN! E-filing contract with the Superior Court of Orange County. LASOC's Board decided that the program must preserve e-filing services for the client community and its relationship with the Court. Under that direction, LASOC will continue to collaborate with the Court and will continue to provide e-filing services for the community.

Recommendation IV.7.18.1 As part of the strategic planning process, LASOC should*

develop a clear vision for future program restructuring, growth and expansion. That vision should be incorporated into the resource development plan so as to focus on development activities that move the program toward its strategic goals.

Recommendation IV.7.18.2 LASOC should create a process for assessing, over time, the cost benefit analysis of the various development activities. This process should consider all costs, including staff time, necessary to realize a particular return. This process should be used to decide which activities should continue to be prioritized. However, it need not be mechanistic. The process could take into consideration reasonable start-up time and costs but there should be clearly defined benchmarks which trigger a careful reassessment if anticipated goals are not being achieved.

LASOC Response

LASOC will undertake a cost benefit analysis of its development activities and create a resource development plan that incorporates its strategic goals and its vision for the future program restructuring, growth and expansion.

Recommendation IV.7.18.3 As resources allow, LASOC should consider expanding its resource development experience, knowledge and capacity.

LASOC Response

LASOC has shifted some resources to expand its development team. The development team will also attend appropriate trainings that will increase their knowledge and capacity.

Finally, LASOC must note that all service related commitments are subject to the availability of available resources. LASOC will, in good faith, seek these resources to undertake the commitments set forth in this response.