



# **LEGAL SERVICES CORPORATION**

**Office of Program Performance**

## ***PROGRAM QUALITY REPORT***

***FOR***

***Neighborhood Legal Services of Los Angeles County***

Recipient Number: 805180

September 9-13, 2013

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# Neighborhood Legal Services of Los Angeles County Program Quality Report

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The Legal Services Corporation's (LSC) Office of Program Performance (OPP) conducted a Program Quality Visit to Neighborhood Legal Services of Los Angeles County (NLSLA) from September 9-13, 2013. Team members included OPP Program Counsel Nancy Glickman (team leader), OPP Program Counsel Glenn Rawdon, and LSC temporary employees Cesar Britos, John Johnson, Alan Lieberman, and Andrew Scherer.

Program Quality Visits are designed to evaluate whether LSC grantees are providing the highest quality legal services to eligible clients. In conducting the evaluation, OPP relies on the LSC Act and regulations, the LSC Performance Criteria, LSC Program Letters, and the ABA Standards for the Provision of Civil Legal Aid. The evaluation was organized to follow the four Performance Areas of the LSC Performance Criteria, which cover needs assessment and priority setting; access to services and engagement with the low-income community; legal work management and the legal work produced; and program management including board governance, leadership, resource development, and coordination within the delivery system.

The team reviewed documents provided by the program to LSC, including recent applications for funding, technology and PAI plans, workforce analysis charts, and case service and other services reports. The team also reviewed materials requested in advance of the visit, including documents relating to board governance, intake, legal work and case management policies and systems, and the results of an online staff survey.

While on site, the team visited NLSLA's three offices located in the cities of Glendale, Pacoima, and El Monte; the four courthouse self-help centers staffed by the program in Pomona, Lancaster, San Fernando, and Van Nuys; the St. John's Well Child & Family Center, one of the program's medical community legal partnership intake sites, located in South Los Angeles; and the Shriver Pilot Eviction Legal Assistance Center, housed in the Downtown Los Angeles Stanley Mosk Courthouse.

The team interviewed program leaders and administrators, along with attorneys, paralegals, and administrative and support staff. The team also interviewed several members of the board of directors, judges, funders, community partner organizations, and state stakeholders.

## **SERVICE AREA AND PROGRAM OVERVIEW**

NLSLA is one of the 11 LSC-funded legal services programs in California and one of the three programs that serve Los Angeles County; the most populous county in the nation. NLSLA's LSC service area comprises the northern and eastern portions of Los Angeles County, including the Antelope, Pomona, San Fernando, and San Gabriel Valleys. It is a mixed area, primarily urban and suburban, however portions of the Antelope and Pomona Valleys are very rural. The area includes one-third of the City of Los Angeles (San Fernando Valley), several

larger cities (Pasadena, Glendale, Burbank, El Monte, Lancaster, Santa Clarita and Pomona), and numerous smaller cities.<sup>1</sup>

The 2009-2011 American Community Survey estimates that some 580,000 poor persons live within the program's service area. The area, considered a "majority/minority" geographic area, is extremely diverse; more than 50% of the poverty population is Latino. It contains both the largest Asian Pacific Islander and Armenian-American populations in the United States.

Although LSC funding of NLSLA has declined over the last three years, overall funding for the program has increased due to the receipt of substantial health initiative grants from the state of California and private foundations. In 2012, LSC provided approximately one-third of NLSLA's total funding. That percentage will decrease significantly due to a 23% census adjustment, which will result in a loss of over \$1 million in LSC funds. The program is currently planning a new structure to address the decreased LSC funding and increased health revenue.

At the time of the visit, NLSLA had 88 staff members, including 37 attorneys working out of its three offices, four self-help centers, three medical community legal partnerships and the Shriver Eviction Legal Assistance Center.

LSC's Office of Compliance and Enforcement conducted a CSR/CMS review of NLSLA in 2009. Although OPP has visited the program on several occasions, most recently performing a Program Engagement Visit in 2009, this was NLSLA's first Program Quality Visit.

## **SUMMARY OF FINDINGS**

NLSLA is a high quality legal services program, providing a wide range of services for its diverse client population. The program is deeply committed to its mission of changing lives and transforming communities, and is continually evaluating the best means to effectuate that vision.

The findings, and commensurate recommendations, found in this report are based on the status of the program at the time of the Program Quality Visit. As noted in NLSLA's comments to the draft report, many of the team's recommendations have been and/or are currently being addressed. The team applauds these efforts and, rather than annotating each change, directs the reader to the program's comments which are attached hereto.

NLSLA completed its most recent comprehensive legal needs assessment in 2008 and plans to embark on a new assessment in 2014. The program has procedures to recognize emerging needs between assessments and regularly responds to them as they arise. NLSLA does not have a formal strategic plan. However, the program routinely evaluates the effectiveness of its delivery system and makes adjustments as needed. The program is currently restructuring its intake system and unit structure to provide enhanced client services.

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<sup>1</sup> Through various partnerships and funding streams, NLSLA also serves residents of Los Angeles County outside of its LSC designated service area.

In order to most effectively serve its diverse clientele, the program offers a variety of services in numerous community based locations. NLSLA's impressive language capability mirrors the needs of its clientele.

NLSLA has a skilled advocacy staff comprised of all levels of experience. Several are widely recognized experts in their fields. While the program has historically delivered its services through substantive advocacy groups, changes in funding streams have led to a reassessment of this structure and the program is endeavoring to embark on a more holistic approach. The program routinely collaborates with local, regional, and state partners in an integrated delivery of services.

NLSLA provides high quality legal assistance utilizing a myriad of approaches. The program engages in both routine and complex litigation in a variety of forums; each providing substantial benefits for its clients. However, individual closed case statistics are below the national norms for LSC grantees. This may be due in part to the numerous other services and activities performed by program advocates, including staffing self-help centers, conducting various substantive workshops, delivering community education presentations, and collaborating with community partners on joint issues of concern. The program has a comprehensive advocacy manual as well as detailed standards for supervision. However, supervisory responsibilities do not appear to be uniformly followed. NLSLA's private attorney involvement component also posts statistics below the national median. However, the program has taken steps to enhance its pro bono delivery.

NLSLA has a dedicated board of directors that appropriately reflects the program's diverse service area. The board is well informed and is actively engaged in its governance responsibilities through various board committees. Program leadership is equally effective. The executive and deputy directors are highly experienced and present a well balanced partnership. Despite the use of various measures, communication with staff appears to be a challenge.

NLSLA utilizes a team approach to its overall management and involves all managerial and supervisory staff in program operations. The program's fiscal staff is highly experienced and routinely works with the board and management team to support the program's mission. NLSLA has a strategic resource development approach that has proven highly successful in spite of the absence of a director of resource development. The position of human resource director is also currently unfilled and the program's new performance evaluation device has yet to be fully implemented. The program has a solid technological infrastructure that is maintained and supported by an outside consultant. Utilization of existing technological systems and assistance procedures could be enhanced.

## **FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

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

***Finding 1. NLSLA completed a comprehensive legal needs assessment process in 2008 and plans to commence its next assessment in 2014.***

In 2007, NLSLA commenced a comprehensive needs assessment spearheaded by a Priority Setting Committee (PSC) comprised of board, management, and staff. The PSC split into five sub-committees to gather information from a variety of sources: data research, NLS staff, client focus groups, community-based organizations and elected officials, and bench and bar. It hired a consultant to provide a multi-variable analysis of the demographics of the service area, which was compared to program case statistics. Surveys were disseminated to NLSLA staff, community based organizations, elected officials, judges, and bar associations. Nine client focus groups were conducted in four different languages; two in English, five in Spanish, one in Armenian, and one in Mandarin. The results from all the sub-committees were tabulated and legal specialty recommendations were ranked into one of three tiers, with resource allocations based on each tier level. For example, housing and health benefits were tier one priorities with a recommended 15-25% program resource allocation; government benefits, a tier two priority had an 8-15% resource allocation; and consumer was tier three with a 3-5% recommendation. In December of 2008, NLSLA's board of directors approved the recommendations submitted by the PSC. It is of note that the program's 2012 closed case percentages are generally in line with the PSC's 2008 recommended resource allocation formula. While the program had initially planned to commence a new assessment in the latter part of 2012, due to the uncertainty of various funding streams, that assessment has been put off until 2014.

***Finding 2. NLSLA has procedures in place that allow it to identify new and emerging legal needs between assessments and the program responds to those needs as they become apparent.***

NLSLA's legal staff currently operates within substantive advocacy groups. The groups routinely meet to discuss incoming cases, information gained from agency collaborations, and changes in procedural or substantive law. The supervising attorneys of the advocacy groups meet twice a month with the program's management team to discuss, among other things, issues raised in their advocacy group meetings. These continuing dialogues not only allow for identification of changes in the legal environment that affect the client community, but provide opportunities to develop programmatic responses. For example, the program sought and received funding to provide extensive community education on the Affordable Care Act and is currently gearing up to address any issues that will emerge as implementation of the Act commences in the coming months. In March of 2013, when the county court system announced its decision to consolidate unlawful detainer hearings in fewer courthouses, resulting in significant court access issues for the program's clients, NLSLA, along with various community partners, sought to enjoin the decision.

***Finding 3. While NLSLA does not engage in traditional strategic planning processes, the program has a history of evaluating and adjusting its delivery system to adapt to changing environments.***

NLSLA does not have a formal strategic plan. However, the program routinely evaluates its operations in response to changes in the legal or resource landscape. If it finds that adjustments are necessary, it develops a plan to make the appropriate modifications. For

example, in 2001, after an extensive deliberative process, NLSLA determined that rather than have one centrally located office, the program should expand to its current three office configuration to provide increased access to its diverse client communities. (See Finding 5 below.) In 2010, NLSLA commenced a thorough review of the program's intake process resulting in the program's current transition to a coordinated system. (See Finding 4 below.) Currently NLSLA is evaluating the best means to restructure its delivery system to address, among other things, the increase in specialized health advocacy resources and the decrease in more flexible LSC funds. (See Finding 7 below.) Each of these endeavors has involved internal and external evaluations, as well as various staff committees. While the program does not currently utilize outcome measurements beyond specific funder requirements, it is considering various options for future implementation.

**Recommendation I.1.1.1**<sup>2</sup> NLSLA should follow through on its commitment to complete a comprehensive needs assessment in 2014.

**Recommendation I.2.3.1** NLSLA should continue to work on its current planning process, taking into account not only its immediate restructuring needs but also engaging in a longer term strategic planning process addressing goals as to service delivery and the resource development activities necessary to achieve them.

**Recommendation I.2.3.2** NLSLA should continue its efforts to explore and implement better methods to measure outcomes.

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

### **Intake**

***Finding 4. After an extensive evaluation of its intake system, NLSLA has chosen to reorganize its advocacy group based intake process and implement a centralized/coordinated intake system; the team concurs with this decision.***

In 2010 NLSLA commenced a review of the effectiveness of its intake system. The project included hiring a consultant and having a team of legal services providers assess the current process. While the project took longer than anticipated due to funding challenges and a change in staff, it has since been reinvigorated and the recommendation for a

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<sup>2</sup> 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, and 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 seen as having a greater impact on program quality and/or program performance. In its next Application or Renewal, the program will be asked to report on its implementation of Tier One recommendations.

centralized/coordinated system is being implemented. A program-wide intake committee composed of a representative sampling of staff is guiding the process. The committee has established four subcommittees: operations, technology, evaluation, and training. The program plans for the new system to begin a soft launch by the end of 2013.

While NLSLA's current intake system provides for a variety of outreach portals, the most common point of entry is telephonic. The receptionists screen initial callers and, based on the request for assistance, refer the applicants to one of the self-help centers, program workshops/clinics, or an appropriate advocacy group hotline. Each advocacy group has developed their own hotline, staffed by advocacy group paralegals<sup>3</sup>, with different, and often very limited, hours of operation. Due in part to specialized funding, the program's Health Consumer Center's (HCC) hotline has a separate phone number and is open five days a week from 9:00 to 5:00. The administrative law advocacy group's hotline is on the first and third Wednesday of each month from 9:15 to 11:45. Family law is 1:30-4:30 every Monday and Wednesday, and immigration law is three hours each Tuesday afternoon. Rather than using a hotline approach, the housing advocacy group schedules applicants for appointments four days a week. General housing appointments are seen in the morning, and clients requiring assistance to answer unlawful detainer complaints are seen in the afternoon. Each advocacy group also has designated walk-in and emergency procedures. The lack of uniformity among the units is clearly a challenge, especially for clients with more than one legal problem. Cases that are not completed by the paralegals are generally brought to each advocacy group meeting where cases are discussed and assigned. Each advocacy group has well established, and often highly specific, case acceptance protocols.

Technology is generally not a part of the current intake system. Software is not used to assess hotline queues or wait times. Additionally, while the intake paralegals contemporaneously enter data into the program's case management system, there is no system for fact gathering or advice/referral options utilizing branching logic. Similarly, the system does not automatically generate or assist in preparing advice letters. The program does not have an online application option.

The initial plan for the new system is to have just two hotlines. The health line will remain separate, and all other substantive areas will be combined into a single system on the main program line. There will be one set of increased call-in times for any kind of legal problem. At the time of the team visit there was uncertainty as to how the system will be implemented and the various subcommittees were working on their individual portions of the project. The program's non-health advocacy paralegals are currently undergoing cross training in all priority areas to handle the incoming calls. The technology committee is viewing various software options to use in improving the efficiency of the system. Understandably, there appeared to be a fair amount of apprehension on the part of staff likely to be most directly affected by the change. While the change provides the program the ability to create a new system, the team has some concern that implementation may not address all issues or take full advantage of the opportunity; this is especially true in the area of technology.

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<sup>3</sup> The Health Consumer Center also uses new attorneys on the hotline as a training device.

**Recommendation II.1.4.1** As decisions are being considered and made concerning implementation, operation, and staffing of the new intake system, management should ensure that updates are communicated to all staff.

**Recommendation II.1.4.2** In developing the new intake system, the program should consider various technological enhancements such as the use of software that utilizes branching logic for interviews, case assignment, and case referrals; automated document software for form letters; integration of a future online application process; automated call back options; and tracking software.

### **Engagement with and access by the low-income population**

***Finding 5. NLSLA is highly engaged with, and has a demonstrated commitment to providing access for, its diverse client community.***

From its client centered logo to its placement of offices, NLSLA has embraced its diverse client communities. Pacoima, home base for NLSLA since 1965, is the center of the Latino and African American poverty communities in the Northeast San Fernando Valley. When the program expanded to open an office in the neighboring San Gabriel Valley, rather than the more populous and cultural hub of Pasadena, the program placed its office in El Monte, a high poverty area with large Asian and Pacific Islander and Latino communities. Glendale, the third office, has the largest poverty population in the central portion of NLSLA's service area and contains the largest low-income Armenian community in the United States. Each of the offices has well appointed waiting rooms with a variety of available legal educational materials. The Pacoima office has a massive meeting room that is not only used for program workshops but also local community events.

NLSLA also provides access to its services through its four court-based self-help centers, three medical community legal partnership clinics based in neighborhood health clinics, and intake at local family source and family justice centers. While the majority of the program's workshop offerings are at its office locations, it should be noted that the workers rights clinic is held in the evenings and Saturdays for enhanced access. Additionally, NLSLA attorneys assist in the Southern California Chinese Lawyers Association's monthly general clinic for Chinese speaking litigants. In addition to regularly scheduled workshops, the program routinely engages in community education events at local schools, faith based organizations, and community centers. A review of such events, however, reflected limited outreach in the Antelope Valley beyond the court based self-help center. Community partners interviewed by the team routinely praised the access provided by NLSLA and the dignity and sensitivity with which it treats its clients.

In its continuing efforts to engage with its local communities, the program recently sought and received funding to be a participant in two major community based assistance projects. The first, the Pacoima Promised Neighborhood Initiative Grant, provides help and support to children and families living in a targeted low-income neighborhood by having a one-stop shop for services within the local schools. The second is a California Endowment funded

project for utilizing Los Angeles' abandoned historic General Hospital and creating a space where nonprofits can coordinate wellness programming and promote disease prevention.

To address the diversity of languages spoken within NLSLA's service area, the program has a well thought out Limited English Proficiency (LEP) plan that builds upon the program's impressive staffing commitment to language access. Over 80% of the total staff and 72% of the attorneys speak a language other than English. In total, NLSLA staff speak over 15 languages including all of the major languages of the program's client LEP populations. Of particular note, through the Dickran Tevrizian Fellowship Program, an Armenian-speaking law school graduate is housed in NLSLA's Glendale office under a revolving two year fellowship.

**Recommendation II.2.5.1** The program should expand its workshops and/or other outreach efforts to the Antelope Valley.

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

#### **Legal Representation**

***Finding 6. NLSLA has a dedicated and skilled advocacy staff with mixed levels of experience and expertise.***

NLSLA's advocacy staff is a combination of new, mid-level, and experienced advocates. Of the program's 37 attorneys, ten have less than five years of experience, seven have five to ten years, twelve have ten to twenty years, and eight have over twenty years of experience. Senior management and supervising attorneys average 24 years of experience. The paralegal staff has an average of 10 years of experience with the program.

The program has successfully recruited highly skilled attorneys, including recent law school graduates and lateral hires from other legal services organizations. Included in these recent hires are several young attorneys with outstanding research and writing skills that have been involved in the program's major litigation. Several program advocates have developed extensive substantive expertise and are considered state and national experts in their practice areas, most notably in the health and benefits arena. NLSLA staff are routinely requested to train both legal and social service providers as well as lend their expertise to various administrative and governmental entities. The team was consistently impressed with the dedication and skill level of the advocates they interviewed.

***Finding 7. Recent shifts in funding have led the program to reassess its long standing substantive advocacy structure.***

NLSLA's advocacy is divided into four critical client needs: health, housing, family and economic security, and access to justice. Currently, within each category are specialized advocacy groups and projects. Under health are both the program's Health Consumer Center and its administrative law advocacy group. Housing encompasses the housing and consumer

advocacy group as well as the Shriver Eviction Legal Assistance Center. The separate family law, immigration law, and employment/workers rights advocacy groups handle family and economic security issues, and the program's courthouse based self-help centers are the primary providers for general access to justice. Each advocacy group has an assortment of attorneys and paralegals that operate throughout the program's three offices and various off site locations. The current mix between paralegals and attorneys in each group appears to be the result of attrition, changes in funding, or other factors that do not necessarily reflect strategic decision-making around substantive delivery. In some groups, the attorneys and paralegals often do very similar work. The individual groups meet weekly or bi-weekly to review intakes and discuss emerging trends and ongoing matters. However, despite the high volume of incoming cases seen by both the Shriver and courthouse self-help staffs, they do not meet regularly with other staff to discuss legal issues, trends, or strategies.

NLSLA has long had a commitment to health care advocacy. With the advent of the Affordable Care Act, the program has secured over a million dollars in both state and foundation grants to address education, enrollment, and access issues concerning California's changing health care options. This substantial increase in targeted health related funds, coupled with the reduction of the relatively flexible LSC funding, has caused NLSLA to undertake a comprehensive evaluation of its current advocacy structure. A review of the program's advocacy roster confirms the need for such an examination. Currently, twenty of the program's advocates are engaged in health advocacy. Each of the remaining advocacy groups have three or fewer full-time attorneys with some being assigned to more than one group. It is thus difficult for some of the smaller advocacy groups to maintain all of its case and other services responsibilities. This has been especially true when the advocacy group takes on a major piece of litigation. The program has thus enlisted a consultant to assist with a restructuring project. He has surveyed staff and met with a large number of them individually. The initial plan is to combine all of the non-health related advocates into one general advocacy group, similar to the system being implemented for intake hotlines. While still retaining areas of expertise, the advocates would also operate as generalists and thus be able to provide a more holistic approach to assisting clients. Further development of the new structure is scheduled to be discussed at both the yearly board retreat and an upcoming all staff meeting. The plan is to have implementation coincide with the launch of the new intake procedures.

***Finding 8. NLSLA provides high quality legal services to its client community utilizing a variety of approaches and forums.***

NLSLA engages in a wide array of quality representation techniques for its clientele, ranging from individual assistance on routine matters to complex litigation. In 2012, the majority of closed cases generally mirrored the programs priorities and were in the areas of housing (29.1%), health (23.8%), income maintenance (17%), and family law (16%). The breadth and proficiency of the program's work was evident in a number of the writing samples submitted for team review. They reflected each of the program's priority areas and included well-drafted products before state, federal, appellate, and administrative tribunals. Included in the submissions were an appellate brief arising out of a mortgage foreclosure, a federal court brief challenging the use of the abstention doctrine in a state court access issue, a writ of mandamus in state court seeking review of a subsidized housing termination, a motion in a bankruptcy

adversarial proceeding, and a supplemental security hearing brief before an administrative tribunal. Judges and community partners interviewed by the team were uniform in their praise of the program's legal work.

Advocates are proud of their accomplishments for clients and are sensitive to the broader issues that have a greater impact on the client community. The program regularly engages in litigation and/or special projects<sup>4</sup> that produce such results. For example, the program was recently successful in a civil rights action against Los Angeles County and two cities in the Antelope Valley, contesting the treatment of African American and Latino Section 8 housing residents. In another action, originally lost by private counsel, through filing an amicus appellate brief, the program assisted in gaining due process protections for tenants of locally subsidized housing. Additionally, not only has the program won various foreclosure rights for homeowners in both trial and appellate courts but, in partnership with Los Angeles County, it has set up a principal reduction program to save homes prior to the initiation of the foreclosure process. In a pending case, NLSLA is challenging the City of Los Angeles' attempt to place three waste-related facilities in a low-income Latino neighborhood that already has one of the highest concentrations of polluting industries in the county.

One NLSLA's signature projects is the Shriver Eviction Legal Assistance Center. NLSLA leads a collaborative of four Los Angeles programs that provide legal representation to low-income tenants facing eviction in Los Angeles' main downtown and busiest courthouse. NLSLA staff housed in the courthouse provide the intake, advice, and answer preparation for eligible clients. If further representation is required, the case is referred to one of the partner programs. In 2012, NLSLA prepared over 3,000 answers for low-income tenants. The Judicial Council of California will be doing an extensive evaluation of this and other projects to measure its impact on the low-income community.

***Finding 9. NLSLA annually closes a lower number of individual cases as compared to other LSC grantees.***

NLSLA's 2012 total closed, extended closed, and contested closed cases per 10,000 poor persons were each well below the national median for LSC grantees. The program closed 90 cases per 10,000 poor persons as compared to the national median of 245, 16 extended cases as compared to 57, and seven contested cases as compared to 28. There appear to be a number of reasons for such a disparity.<sup>5</sup> Program advocates are involved in a host of activities on behalf of the client eligible population that are not captured in closed case statistics. These include the program's self-help centers, workshops, and various collaborative projects. Additionally, NLSLA engages in complex litigation, such as the Antelope Valley Section 8 housing case, which utilizes significant program resources and, while impacting a larger segment of the client eligible population, is generally counted as one case. Conversely, the program's current intake

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<sup>4</sup> Non-case related examples are discussed in Finding 12.

<sup>5</sup> As a result of a database compatibility issue, none of the Shriver Eviction Legal Assistance Center cases were reported to LSC. Due to the unique nature of these cases, including their location outside of NLSLA's serve area and the unbundled representation, it is unclear to what extent they would be appropriate for inclusion in this calculation and thus are not listed as a factor in this finding.

system does not lend itself to providing any meaningful volume of individual counsel and advice. Additionally, there is a large disparity among the advocates' caseloads, with many numbering in the single digits and others well above 50. Although several of the lower numbered caseloads could be partially explained by special projects, complex litigation, or supervisory/managerial responsibilities, others could not. The imbalance may be the result of the supervisory challenge discussed below in Finding 10.

***Finding 10. NLSLA has a comprehensive advocacy manual that includes 'Standards for Legal Supervision'; however, many of the supervision policies are not universally followed.***

The program's *Advocacy and Intake Manual* provides an extensive collection of procedures, including program advocacy policies, compliance standards, and case handling best practices. Appended to the manual are *Standards for Legal Supervision* which are designed to assure adherence to the manual's precepts. Towards that end, the *Standards* detail appropriate supervisory responsibilities. These include a variety of oversight and supportive mechanisms, including individual case reviews, case status report reviews, caseload reviews, and closed case reviews. While advocacy group supervisors have open door policies and routinely engage in review of closed cases, team interviews reflected that adherence to the more formal ongoing case review responsibilities vary among supervisors and is often sporadic.<sup>6</sup> Mentors' engagement in the program's mentoring program appears to be inconsistent as well.

The *Standards* also call for supervisors to assure that all case handlers receive appropriate training to facilitate development of their skills and knowledge. While most attorney staff felt they had ample training opportunities, training appears to be primarily self-directed and individual development plans were not apparent. With the exception of substantive law training for paralegals involved in the new intake system, training opportunities for non-attorney staff were less evident. It should be noted that all staff receive LSC compliance training. With the advent of the new advocacy structure wherein advocates are undertaking new areas of law, increased supervision and individual development plans will be vitally important.

The director of litigation is a valuable resource to the program. He is well respected for his knowledge and experience and is very accessible to staff. His approval is needed for all appellate and affirmative litigation and he routinely co-counsels with the program's advocates. He does not, however, oversee the program's legal work management systems.

**Recommendation III.1.8.1** The program should find ways to better integrate the work of the Shriver project, the self-help centers, and the medical-legal partnerships into the substantive work of the program so that the work of the units and the work in those projects can inform each other's practice and thus better advance client interests.

**Recommendation III.1.9.1\*** In its restructuring discussions, the program is encouraged to consider how best to use the skills and expertise of staff, including whether attorneys should be doing work that could be done by skilled paralegals, whether advocacy staff are handling a

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<sup>6</sup> The team is mindful of the fact that there are currently two supervising attorney openings, but it is their understanding that supervisory responsibilities have been temporarily reassigned.

reasonable amount of casework, and to determine an appropriate balance between core services and broad based litigation and advocacy.

**Recommendation III.1.10.1\*** The program should take steps to ensure that all supervisors adhere to its Standards for Legal Supervision.

**Recommendation III.1.10.2\*** The program should designate a manager to oversee its legal work management systems, including the Standards for Legal Supervision and caseload assignment mechanisms.

**Recommendation III.1.10.3** The program should assure that training is included in the development plan portion of its new performance management evaluation system. (See Finding 19 and the recommendation thereunder.)

### **Private Attorney Involvement**

***Finding 11. NLSLA is committed to improving the effectiveness of its private attorney involvement component.***

Although NLSLA has long had a private attorney involvement (PAI) component with written policies and procedures, a formal PAI Plan was not drafted until 2009 in response to an LSC Office of Compliance and Enforcement (OCE) visit. The extensive plan, developed by a committee of the board, focused on various substantive projects including foreclosure, immigration, unemployment, and SSI, as well as assistance with NLSLA's workshops, self-help centers, and clinics. While PAI closed case numbers have increased every year since the drafting of the plan, they have not reflected the substantive areas or anticipated output envisioned by the plan.

In 2012, NLSLA reported closing only 47 individual PAI cases. While a significant 44.7% of the cases involved extended representation, total closed, extended closed, and contested closed cases per 10,000 poor persons were each well below the national median for LSC grantees.<sup>7</sup> As with the program's basic field cases, these figures do not paint a complete picture of NLSLA's PAI component as they do not capture other PAI efforts such as non-case matters or co-counseling. For example, volunteer attorneys assist at the program's workers rights and bankruptcy workshops described in more detail under Finding 12 below. Additionally, pro bono attorneys have co-counseled a number of major pieces of litigation including the Antelope Valley Section 8 housing case and the appellate due process case; each described in Finding 8 above. Finally, it appears that there may be a disconnect between actual PAI case work and LSC reporting as the 2012 LSC J form reflected no PAI case referrals for the year despite clear anecdotal evidence, gathered from team interviews, to the contrary<sup>8</sup>.

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<sup>7</sup> The program closed one PAI case per 10,000 poor persons as compared to the national median of 22, and a statistical zero per 10,000 poor persons for both extended and contested closed cases as compared to the national medians of eight and three, respectively.

<sup>8</sup> The director of pro bono operations, hired in September of 2012, was not aware of the form.

Recognizing the need to enhance its PAI component, in 2012, NLSLA leadership listed improving the program's pro bono efforts as one of the NLSLA's five major goals. Towards that end, in September of 2012, NLSLA recruited an experienced PAI coordinator to lead the program's pro bono projects. The newly created director of pro bono programs is considered part of the program's leadership team thereby reinforcing pro bono activities as an integral part of program operations. Additionally, the PAI plan has been redrafted to be less project-specific and thus allow for individual case assistance in a wider range of substantive areas. Individual referrals are placed through the pro bono assisted workshops, i.e. unemployment cases, or advocacy group case acceptance meetings. Assignment and oversight are provided by the director of pro bono operations with part-time assistance from a member of Glendale's support staff.

The director of pro bono programs often sits in on the advocacy group case acceptance meetings to learn of specific needs where pro bono assistance could best be utilized. She has created a number of new projects with local firms through training and recruitment in such areas as U-Visas and domestic violence restraining orders. A number of firms have also agreed to take cases through the Shriver Eviction Legal Assistance Center. Training of firms in additional substantive areas is planned for the upcoming year. The director is also looking into building up relationships with local law schools as well as working on collaborative regional projects. For example, NLSLA is poised to participate in the L.A. IMPACT project, the Los Angeles legal community's response to Vice President Biden's meeting with the Association of Pro Bono Counsel. The pilot project is focused on providing wrap-around legal services for the survivors of domestic violence.

**Recommendation III.2.11.1\*** NLSLA should continue its efforts to expand and enhance its PAI program.

**Recommendation III.2.11.2\*** NLSLA should strive to better capture PAI case data as well as capture non-case PAI statistics.

**Recommendation III.2.11.3** The program may want to consider including specified PAI referrals as part of the initial hotline decision making process.

**Recommendation III.2.11.4** As PAI case referrals increase, NLSLA may need to consider additional administrative assistance for case placement and oversight.

### **Other program services and activities on behalf of the low-income population**

***Finding12. NLSLA engages in a myriad of other services and activities that provide access, education, and advocacy for the low-income population throughout its service area and beyond.***

By far the program's largest "other service" is NLSLA's long standing work in state court based self-help centers. NLSLA started its first self-help center in a local high school in 2000. A more formal center was later developed in the Van Nuys courthouse and, by 2005, the project mushroomed into five centers. Ultimately, the County Supervisors wanted a center in

each district and today NLSLA operates nine courthouse based self-help centers throughout the county. The program manages four on its own and subgrants the operation of the other five to its sister Los Angeles County LSC grantees.<sup>9</sup> In three of NLSLA run centers there is a separately funded domestic violence assistance component as well. In 2012, the centers run by NLSLA served over 75,000 individuals, the vast majority of whom were low-income.

Each NLSLA run center has staff attorney(s), support staff, and a cadre of recruited volunteers. A supervising attorney oversees all of the NLSLA centers through periodic visits and monthly staff meetings. Trainings are conducted quarterly. The centers are open each day for both morning and afternoon sessions. The self-represented litigants (SRLs) sign up to see volunteers on a first come, first served basis. Once signed in, the SRLs wait to be initially screened and, if they have a problem that is handled by the center, they are given the appropriate packet of forms and instructions for their legal problem. If their problem is not handled by the center, they are given referral information for other resources. Although the centers have some computers available for the SRLs, and a limited number of guided interviews for document assembly, they are extremely small in number and vary by center. Volunteers assist the SRLs with filling in pre-printed forms and/or writing out the entire document and, when complete, the volunteer reviews them with an NLSLA attorney for accuracy. While center staff routinely suggest that appropriate participants apply for NLSLA's direct services, as opposed to the purely informational assistance given at the centers, there is no seamless way for such referrals to be effectuated.

One of the challenges for the centers is the difficulty low-income litigants experience in obtaining the requisite number of copies necessary for filing and service. While one center has a copier supplied by the court, the other three rely on rented copiers that have a limit on the number of copies. One court charges 55 cents per page for copies and another does not have a copier available for public use. While SRLs who have fee waivers are generally entitled to free copies, there is a lack of uniformity by court clerks in following the appropriate procedures to enable litigants to actually obtain copies.

In addition to the state court self-help centers, NLSLA also operates a self-help clinic at the local bankruptcy court. It is staffed one day a week by a staff attorney and volunteer attorneys proficient in bankruptcy law. Judges from both the state and bankruptcy courts uniformly praised the work of the self-help centers. They stated that it was easy to spot a NLSLA assisted filing as they were always properly completed.

NLSLA provides substantive workshops in different locations throughout its service area on a variety of topics including workers rights, foreclosure, and consumer debt. Emblematic of the program's commitment to access, worker's rights workshops are held weekly in each of the program's offices in the evenings and on weekends. The NLSLA website contains a monthly calendar of the location and time of its workshops. In 2012, some 2,165 individuals participated in NLSLA workshops.

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<sup>9</sup>The Legal Aid Foundation of Los Angeles (LAFLA) operates centers in the cities of Inglewood, Torrance, Long Beach, and Santa Monica, and the Legal Aid Society of Orange County staffs the center in Compton.

Aside from formal workshops, the program also engages in extensive community legal education to client groups and community partners alike in each of their priority areas. Most notably, as a result of an array of health related grants, NLSLA is engaged in a concerted campaign to educate both the client and social service community on the implementation of the Affordable Care Act and the various options available for medical services in Los Angeles County. In 2012, over 5,000 people attended a NLSLA community education presentation.

The most innovative of NLSLA's educational endeavors is its interdisciplinary curriculum and clinical program at USC's Gould School of Law and Keck School of Medicine. Taught by NLSLA lawyers, the class offers medical and law students an enhanced understanding of the socio-economic factors that impact wellness in disadvantaged and impoverished neighborhoods. The clinical component includes work through NLSLA's medical community legal partnerships.

While all of the other services listed above assist thousands of individual community members, NLSLA's expertise in substantive areas of poverty law also enables the program to engage in activities that impact the low-income community as a whole. NLSLA is routinely requested to sit on various public and administrative agency committees to represent the interests of their low-income constituents. For example, program staff have been asked to sit on the Los Angeles County Department of Public Social Services' Domestic Violence Steering Committee, Advisory Board on Civil Rights, and various other committees that review proposed agency policies and forms. In addition, NLSLA has an appointed seat on a Stakeholder Advisory Committee to the California Department of Health Care Services. Program staff are also often requested to testify, comment, or otherwise engage in state, regional, and local proceedings that affect their client community. NLSLA's twice yearly advocacy reports to LSC are replete with such requests including, for example, a request from the California Attorney General's office on foreclosures, from a local state senator on garnishments, and from Los Angeles County on its general relief program.

**Recommendation III.3.12.1** NLSLA should consider ways to promptly integrate appropriate referrals from the self-help centers to the program's intake system.

**Recommendation III.3.12.2** NLSLA should consider methods to streamline the self-help process for SRLs including assessing matters capable of assistance when the litigant first signs in, making more use of automated documents and guided interviews, and working with the courts and/or possible donor agencies to solve the copier problem.

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

### **Board governance**

**Finding 13. NLSLA has an extremely diverse board of directors wherein both attorneys and client members reflect the program's unique service area.**

NLSLA's commitment to diversity is nowhere more evident than in its board composition. Of the current 27 directors, 33% are Latino, 18% African-American, 18% Asian Pacific Islander, and 7% Armenian. In addition, two of the last four board presidents have been people of color. Pursuant to the program's bylaws, attorney members are not only appointed by local geographically based bar associations, but also specialty bars including the national Asian Pacific American Bar Association, the Black Women Lawyers Association, the Mexican American Bar Association, and the Taiwanese American Lawyers Association. Client appointing agencies are similarly representative of the community and include such agencies as the Asian Youth Center, the NAACP, and Cee Fa Buddhist Association, Inc. While the board routinely has an influx of new members, the bylaws do not include term limits and a number of its members have served over 20 years. There are currently three vacancies on the board and, while maintaining diversity is central to the board's philosophy, members are also looking to fill the positions with an eye towards fundraising capabilities.

***Finding 14. Board members appear to have a high level of ongoing engagement and are committed to the program and its mission.***

The Board minutes reflect thoughtful discussions of programmatic issues by all board members in attendance. Most members attend meetings regularly and there is a low incidence of absenteeism. Directors who are unable to attend in person may participate telephonically. Of note, board minutes list each member's yearly attendance to date. The team found that all the board members with whom they spoke were well informed on the issues facing the program. Upon appointment, members receive an orientation presentation as well as a board manual. The board not only routinely receives executive director and financial reports at each board meeting, but staff give presentations as to various projects as well. Outside speakers are often brought in to address specific issues as they arise. For example, in response to the resignation of one of its members who wrote a letter expressing concerns about the role of the board, a consultant provided a session on board governance. Additionally, when fundraising was determined to be a board priority, a representative from California's One Justice, presented to the board on the issue.

While the board as a whole meets four to six times a year, including at an annual board retreat, most issues are reviewed initially by the relevant board committees with reports and recommendations later presented for consideration by the full board. The NLSLA bylaws list four standing committees; executive, personnel, nominating, and membership. Additional committees have been formed as needed including, PAI, finance, audit, and development. Both the formation and subsequent output of these committees are emblematic of the board's ongoing engagement. For example, the PAI committee was formed to develop and enhance the program's PAI Plan after OCE's 2009 visit. The newly formed development committee is addressing board fundraising activities and met four times in the first five months of 2013. The audit committee includes a non-board member CPA who was invited to join the committee to share his expertise. Both the executive and finance committees regularly meet in between board meetings. The executive committee agendas include the range of all issues to be presented to the full board and the finance committee reviews interim financial statements and budgetary projections. The value placed on understanding programmatic financial issues is underscored by the board's tradition of having a member serve as treasurer prior to being eligible for the presidency. Board committees

have also worked on program needs assessments and annual evaluations of the executive director. They have not engaged in formal strategic planning nor have they adopted a leadership succession plan.

**Recommendation IV.1.14.1** The board is encouraged to continue to develop its fundraising capabilities.

**Recommendation IV.1.14.2** The board should be actively involved in the development and implementation of a strategic planning process as recommended under Finding 3 of this report.

**Recommendation IV.1.14.3\*** The board should engage in succession planning for both the program leadership and the board.

### **Leadership**

***Finding 15. The program has effective leadership that establishes and maintains a shared sense of vision and mission, and emphasizes excellence, innovation, and achievement of goals and objectives.***

While the program embraces a team leadership concept, the executive director and deputy director are the unquestioned leaders of the program. The executive director has worked in legal services for over 40 years. He was a staff attorney for an LSC grantee and later a staff attorney and deputy director for a national back-up center. He has been the director of NLSLA for the past 20 years. The deputy director started her career at NLSLA as a paralegal in 1978. She went on to law school and returned to the program as a Reginald Heber Smith fellow. She has been the deputy director for 15 years. It is worthy of note that the resumes of both the executive director and deputy director contain lists of their involvement in major poverty litigation.

The partnership between the director and deputy director has proven effective, with the executive director focusing on external issues and broad programmatic vision, while the deputy emphasizes internal matters and the day-to-day running of the program. The board, staff, and external partners appear to appreciate this arrangement. The director and deputy director have framed a vision and mission that is understood and embraced by the entire staff. They have a record of achievement and commitment, and have leveraged their relationships within the local and legal community to expand the program influence and activities.

### **Overall management and administration including financial management<sup>10</sup> and human resources administration.**

***Finding 16. NLSLA has a solid and experienced management team that is highly committed to the success of the organization.***

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<sup>10</sup> This visit was conducted by the Office of Program Performance (OPP) for the purposes set forth in the Introduction. OPP findings and recommendations under this criterion are limited to staffing, organization, and general functions. Assessment of fiscal operations is conducted by other offices at LSC.

NLSLA utilizes a “team” concept for managing the program. The primary leadership team currently consists of the executive and deputy directors, managing and supervising attorneys<sup>11</sup>, the director of litigation, the director of pro bono programs, and the chief financial officer.<sup>12</sup> Together they possess an average experience level of 24 years. Each member of the team, while responsible for his or her assigned area, feels an equal commitment to the program as a whole. The team meets twice a month to discuss and address basic management of the program and its delivery system. A smaller, senior management team, consisting of the executive and deputy directors, the two managing attorneys, and the director of litigation, meet monthly and focuses on broader policy development and oversight. The management supervisory structure is somewhat unorthodox as the senior managers’ job descriptions require them to report to both the executive and deputy directors. While at first blush, this may appear likely to generate conflict and confusion, in practice it does not because of the effective partnership between the executive and deputy directors.

***Finding 17. NLSLA has sufficient, highly experienced staff dedicated to the program’s financial administration.***

NLSLA’s financial team consists of four well qualified staff. The chief financial officer (CFO), who also serves as the chief operating officer, is a certified public accountant (CPA) with a master’s degree in accounting, and more than 17 years of experience as an auditor and non-profit fiscal manager. She views her role in terms of what is financially necessary for effective delivery of legal services and regularly meets with legal managers to better assess advocacy needs. The controller, also a CPA, has a degree in commerce and accounting and more than 10 years of experience. The senior accountant has a Bachelor’s degree in accounting and has been with the program 11 years. The fiscal assistant has 10 years of experience with the program. All fiscal staff have received various types of training, from Management Information Exchange administrator sessions to training on the use of financial software. Each has received training on the LSC regulations and the program utilizes a Financial Policies and Procedure Manual based on LSC regulations. While there is an open door policy among all members of the finance team, they also meet formally on a monthly basis. As a unit, they administer some 24 grants and 9 subgrants.

The program leadership and board of directors are integrally involved in both budget planning and oversight to ensure appropriate resource allocation. Budgets are prepared in a timely fashion, and include a one-year projection beyond the current fiscal year. Financial statements are prepared and discussed with program leadership on a monthly basis and budget adjustments are implemented, as needed. Revenue and expense statements are prepared and disseminated for both the finance committee and full board meetings.

***Finding 18. NLSLA is currently without a human resources director.***

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<sup>11</sup> The managing attorneys address program wide issues and the supervising attorneys direct the individual advocacy groups.

<sup>12</sup> Normally the development and human resources directors would be part of the team but those positions are currently vacant.

NLSLA's human resources director left the program in May of 2013. Responsibility for the majority of his duties was temporarily shifted to the deputy director, in conjunction with the human resources assistant. In July of 2013, the human resources assistant also assumed the duties of the retired Glendale office manager. Although human resource functions currently appear to be appropriately carried out, a full time staff position is clearly advised.

***Finding 19. While the program has developed a new computerized performance evaluation tool, it has yet to be fully implemented.***

NLSLA management recently developed a comprehensive performance management system. The system seeks to evaluate the work of employees based on agreed upon performance goals. The system has a number of steps including the creation of development plans to assist in reaching the performance goals as well as self-assessment. The process appears extremely valuable; however, team interviews reflect that the system has yet to be fully implemented among both staff and managers. While some staff have been evaluated, others reported filling out self evaluations and hearing nothing further. The remainder appear not to have begun any process. The team is mindful that the lack of implementation may, in part, be a result of vacant supervisory positions.

**Recommendation IV.4.17.1** .The program should consider including two-year projections beyond the current fiscal year when adopting its budget. While the third year projection may be purely speculative, it gives the board and management a "heads-up" about which grants are expiring, and what the fiscal staff and management's best estimate is for changes in funding. It also provides a helpful road map for necessary fund development and consequential program planning.

**Recommendation IV.4.17.2\*** Financial reports should be routinely disseminated to the finance committee on a monthly basis regardless of committee or full board meeting dates.

**Recommendation IV.5.18.1** When resources allow, the human resource position vacancy should be filled.

**Recommendation IV.5.19.1** The program should make every effort to have all staff and managers evaluated in a timely manner.

## **Technology**

***Finding 20. NLSLA has a solid technology infrastructure to support its work and an outside consultant to provide upkeep and support; however, the program's technological capabilities are not used to their full potential.***

NLSLA has endeavored to maintain a solid technological base for program activities. All three offices are connected though a network using virtualized servers with additional Internet connections to ensure adequate bandwidth. Staff are provided desktop computers with Windows 7 and Office 2007 as well as email and calendaring functions handled by Groupwise. In 2009,

NLSLA upgraded its phone system to an all VoIP process. The program has utilized a Polycom point-to-point video conferencing system for the three main offices for over a decade. Unfortunately, the system has not been extended to the self-help centers and other off site locations as Internet connectivity has been a challenge. The program's case management system (CMS) is "home grown", written and supported wholly by an outside consultant. While the CMS is modified and updated as needed, its functionality is not seamlessly consistent with emerging features currently being offered to the legal aid community. The program has no intranet or other system of knowledge management. The program uses HotDocs for some documents at the self-help centers, but does not appear to use it for general legal work.

Staff appeared generally satisfied with the program's technology, although they had some concerns with the support they receive for its use. The first point of contact for any user support need is with the office manager. If the issue cannot be resolved in house, it is referred to the consultant. There is no system for trouble ticket tracking or any FAQs for users to reference. While the consultant can take over users' machines remotely to provide support, staff interviews reflected that getting support in a timely manner is often an issue. NLSLA is currently advertising for an in-house information technology manager.

NLSLA has an informative, easily accessible, website at <http://www.nlsla.org/>. As it should, this website is about the program and defers to CaliforniaLawHelp (CLH) for materials to assist clients. However, despite listing numerous community agencies under its client resource tab, NLSLA's website does not have a link to CLH. It is also unclear who from NLSLA is participating in CLH and what NLSLA is contributing to that effort.

**Recommendation IV.4.20.1** NLSLA should consider utilizing their current technological capabilities to their fullest potential including, expanding the use of its video conferencing system for outreach and education, increasing usage of automated document assembly, creating an intranet with resources for staff, and developing a system of knowledge management that integrates with the CMS.

**Recommendation IV.4.20.2** As resources allow, NLSLA should consider replacing its homegrown CMS with a commercial product that will better serve its needs.

**Recommendation IV.4.20.3\*** NLSLA should continue its efforts to hire an internal IT person.<sup>13</sup>

**Recommendation IV.4.20.4\*** NLSLA's web site should have a prominent link to CLH and the program should assure that someone is assigned as a liaison to CLH and make contributions as appropriate.

### **Internal communication.**

***Finding 21. Despite the program's engagement in various best practices, effective communication is still perceived as an issue among program staff.***

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<sup>13</sup> NLSLA's comments to the draft report reflect that an in-house IT staff manager was hired in December, 2013 and will formally commence employment on January 6, 2014.

NLSLA utilizes a variety of methods to foster program communication. Management meetings are held twice a month with an expectation that supervisors will pass information gained to their staff. Program-wide meetings are held quarterly, and are used for information dissemination, staff training, and social networking. Additionally, the executive director and deputy director routinely visit each office for *cafecitos* (a casual group discussion) and both maintain secondary field offices outside of the Glendale administrative office. Finally, programmatic projects, such as priority setting and development of the new intake system, are carried out by committees with staff representation. Notwithstanding these efforts, concern about lack of effective communication from program leadership was a common theme expressed in team interviews. It should be noted, however, that not all staff chose to participate in the available avenues of communication. The staff concerns generally centered on lack of information concerning previous and possible upcoming layoffs, as well as the current restructuring efforts including coordinated intake and advocacy group reorganization; each of which potentially involves significant change with attendant anxiety among those most affected.

**Recommendation IV.4.21.1** Program leadership should consider various ways to address the communication concerns, including reviving the program's newsletter, engaging in one-on-one conversations between program leadership and staff members, and/or establishing an intranet with regular informative postings. At the same time, program staff should be encouraged to avail themselves of the communication opportunities currently available.

**Recommendation IV.4.21.1** Program leadership should keep staff regularly informed of the restructuring decision making process as well as the program's financial status as updated information becomes available.

### **Resource Development**

***Finding 22: At a time when traditional revenue sources, including LSC, have been significantly reduced, NLSLA has been able to maintain its funding through thoughtful and strategic resource development.***

Over the last three years, while LSC funds have decreased, NLSLA has significantly increased its overall funding from approximately \$11.4 Million in 2010, to just over \$13.6 Million in 2012.<sup>14</sup> Of NLSLA's \$13 million budget, less than 30% is funded by LSC. The remainder is a combination of county, state, federal, and private grants as well as internal fundraising efforts. What is most significant about NLSLA's development efforts is that the program has sought to increase its funding while still remaining on mission; the vast majority of the program's new funding comes in the area of health advocacy, a long time program priority. Additional funding is in the area of housing, another program staple. NLSLA is not only strategic in the types of funding it seeks, but in the amount as well. The program's development efforts focus on major grants as opposed to amassing numerous smaller grants. Of its current 24 grants, only three are less than \$50,000 and the average non-LSC grant is in excess of \$350,000.

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<sup>14</sup> Additionally, despite a total sequester and census readjustment loss of over \$1 million in LSC funds for 2013, NLSLA is not projecting a deficit for the year.

In order to garner major grants, the program routinely collaborates with other agencies and, as demonstrated with the self-help centers and now the Shriver project, has a proven track record as a lead agency in such grants. NLSLA has also been able to build upon its accomplishments with major foundations, such as the California Endowment, in seeking supplemental grants.

While various members of the leadership team have been responsible for the development of these grants, additional fundraising efforts have been somewhat hampered due to the two year vacancy in the program's director of development position. The position has been advertised and is seen as a priority by the board. The development associate, who is relatively new to the position, has been performing some of the development functions, including preparations for the annual Just Neighbors event, which is expected to raise approximately \$100,000. However, an experienced development director could take the program's fundraising to the next level. This is especially true in light of the board's commitment to engage in fundraising, as a development director can spearhead or help coordinate such efforts.

**Recommendation IV.7.22.1** The program is encouraged to promptly fill the vacant director of development position.

### **Participation in an Integrated Delivery System**

***Finding 23. NLSLA is integrally involved with its local and state partners in the delivery of legal assistance to California's low-income population.***

As noted throughout this report, NLSLA actively collaborates with legal, medical, and social service providers in Los Angeles County on a wide range of issues. NLSLA works in partnership with the Legal Aid Foundation of Los Angeles (LAFLA), Public Counsel, and the Inner City Law Center on the Shriver Eviction Legal Assistance Project. Similarly, LAFLA and the Legal Aid Society of Orange County are sub-grantees of NLSLA's county Self-Help Center grant. Additionally, NLSLA has co-counseled with the Western Center on Law and Poverty, Public Counsel, and LAFLA, in cases that affect their joint clientele. The cooperation among legal services providers in integrating delivery is no more evident than NLSLA's medical legal partnerships in LAFLA's LSC service area and LAFLA's veterans' project in NLSLA's LSC service area.

In addition to programmatic integration, NLSLA staff individually participate in county and statewide coalitions and task forces in a number of substantive areas, including housing, administrative benefits, health, and family law. Many of those efforts have been undertaken in conjunction with the Legal Aid Association of California, One Justice, and the statewide Health Care Alliance.

## **CONCLUSION**

NLSLA is a contemplative program that has a history of evaluating and, in turn, adjusting its delivery system to better assist its client community. Its current re-structuring process poses a further opportunity for the program to continue its tradition of thoughtful evolution and service enhancements.