

STATEWIDE LEGAL SERVICES OF CONNECTICUT, INC.

STATEMENT OF PROGRAM PRIORITIES FOR 2020

PRIORITY 1: SERVE AS AN INTAKE PORTAL FOR THE CONNECTICUT NETWORK FOR LEGAL AID – AN INTEGRATED STATEWIDE LEGAL SERVICE DELIVERY SYSTEM

Statewide Legal Services of Connecticut, Inc. (SLS) has been, by design, the hub of this legal aid network since 1996. We serve as a “funnel” for a myriad number of calls and online intakes from people across the state who are seeking to have their civil legal service needs met. Our relationship with our formally networked partners affords SLS the opportunity to provide a full range of services to our clients and to participate in systemic impact work as part of this service delivery system.

Achieved or projected results, measurements, and metrics are a function of our case management system and outcome tracking projects in the Housing and Family Law units unless otherwise noted.

Goal 1: Provide clients with an array of civil legal services as part of the Connecticut Network for Legal Aid.

Strategy 1: Provide high quality civil legal advice and information to thousands of low-income people in Connecticut who would not otherwise receive help with life-changing problems such as loss of housing, family dissolution, loss of income or employment.

Desired Outcome: Serve over 16,000 people to understand their rights and the legal system.

Strategy 2: Work closely with our network partners; Connecticut Legal Services, Greater Hartford Legal Aid, and New Haven Legal Assistance Association to intake, triage, and refer identifiable priority cases using an integrated case management system.

Desired Outcome: 800 cases referred to core legal aid partners.

Strategy 3: Provide and maintain legal self-help materials, pertaining to an array of civil legal issues on the CTLawHelp.org website.

Desired Outcome: Will perform two reviews throughout the year of resources on CTLawHelp.org related to domestic protection order matters and will work directly with partner programs to update resources as-needed. We will work to collect useful baseline data regarding how often these resources are browsed from web visitors from Connecticut and provide information to the stakeholders’ Tech Advisory Committee annually.

Goal 2: Provide meaningful intake data to our legal aid partners to better inform the network of current and emerging legal needs within the state.

Strategy 1:

- Utilize telephonic and online intake methods to identify and track applicants with “non-core” legal problems.
- Set up case acceptance priorities and protocols to meet emergent needs, when identified.
- Participate in statewide substantive task force units and affinity groups to monitor emergent legal areas of client need and learn of any substantive law developments that could lead to a new emerging legal need for our clients.

Desired Outcome: Recognize at least one area of heretofore-unrecognized legal need that may be prioritized for referral to partner legal aid programs.

PRIORITY 2: PROMOTE HOUSING STABILITY

This priority is framed to help low-income individuals and families avoid homelessness due to a lack of understanding of the housing court eviction rules, laws, and processes. Assisting families who are in imminent danger of being evicted from their homes will reduce the likelihood of defaults or adverse judgments, which lead to the dislocation of the evicted families. SLS assists individuals and families to navigate the court eviction system to their advantage.

Goal 1: Help individuals and families facing eviction in public and private housing to maintain their tenancy or transition to new housing.

Strategy 1: Provide advice and limited service to clients who are being threatened with eviction or are going through the eviction process.

Desired Outcome 1: 2,000 individuals and families facing eviction issues will be empowered to navigate the legal system to resolve their problems.

Desired Outcome 2: 500 individuals or families will be able to resolve their eviction matter in a way that allows them to stay in their home, or will be given a reasonable time frame to relocate to new housing.

Strategy 2: Provide and maintain legal self-help materials pertaining to eviction rights on the CTLawHelp.org website.

Desired Outcome: Will perform two reviews throughout the year of resources on CTLawHelp.org related to eviction matters. Will work directly with partner programs to update resources and report annually as to any relevant additions or revisions in materials offered.

Goal 2: Educate and empower recipients of public and subsidized housing.

Strategy: Provide advice and limited service to individuals and families who have questions about obtaining or maintaining public or subsidized housing.

Desired Outcome: 1,300 clients who reside in public or subsidized housing will better understand their legal rights and obligations regarding subsidized housing matters after receiving advice or limited service from SLS.

Goal 3: Prevent the loss of public and subsidized housing.

Strategy: Preserve public and subsidized housing for clients by providing extensive services or direct representation to clients through coordinated service with SLS and its partner legal aid programs.

Desired Outcome: 425 individuals or families whose public or subsidized housing is being threatened will preserve their housing or housing subsidy.

Goal 4: Educate local service providers in matters related to housing/eviction law.

Strategy: Provide community legal education to local service providers about housing/eviction-related matters so that they are able to issue spot housing law matters and refer clients to SLS for legal assistance.

Desired Outcome: 20 service provider groups will be trained on how to identify housing/eviction law issues of their clients and appropriately refer them to SLS for legal assistance

PRIORITY 3: IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF RENTAL HOUSING

Goal 1: Improve the likelihood of obtaining better and safer housing for low-income individuals and families.

Strategy 1: Provide advice and limited service to clients who are looking for housing quality improvements.

Desired Outcome: 350 clients will better understand their legal rights and obligations concerning state and federal laws regarding enforcing housing quality standards.

Strategy 2: Provide and maintain legal housing quality self-help materials on the CTLawHelp.org website.

Desired Outcome: Will perform two reviews throughout the year of resources on CTLawHelp.org related to housing quality matters. Will work directly with partner programs to update resources and report annually as to any relevant additions or revisions in materials offered.

Goal 2: Educate local service providers in matters related to housing quality law.

Strategy: Provide community legal education to local service providers about housing quality issues so that they are able to issue spot housing law matters and refer clients to SLS for legal assistance.

Desired Outcome: 20 service provider groups will be trained on basic housing code enforcement rights so they can identify and appropriately refer clients to SLS for legal assistance.

PRIORITY 4: SUPPORT FAMILY STABILITY AND SAFETY IN FAMILY COURT MATTERS

This priority acknowledges that self-represented people would achieve better outcomes in family court with legal advice and limited assistance. Although a significant number of our cases are divorces, family law can take on many topics and procedural challenges.

Goal 1: Empower self-represented Family Court litigants.

Strategy 1: Provide advice and limited service to clients who are involved in custody, divorce, visitation, and other family-related matters.

Desired Outcome 1: 1,500 self-represented individuals will be able to pursue judicial remedies in Family Court matters after receiving advice and/or limited service.

Desired Outcome 2: 125 self-represented litigants will gain the ability to follow through with the basic advice and limited action given by SLS regarding self-representation in Family Court proceedings.

Strategy 2: Provide and maintain legal self-help materials pertaining to family law on the CTLawHelp.org website.

Desired Outcome: Will perform two reviews throughout the year of resources on CTLawHelp.org related to family law matters. Will work directly with

partner programs to update resources and report annually as to any relevant additions or revisions in materials offered.

Goal 2: Educate local service providers in matters related to family law.

Strategy: Provide community legal education to local service providers about family law matters so that they are able to issue spot family law issues and refer clients to SLS for legal assistance.

Desired Outcome: 20 service provider groups will be trained on how to better understand family law issues so that they can identify and appropriately refer clients to SLS for legal assistance.

Goal 3: Identify victims of domestic abuse for extended services

Strategy 1: Provide extensive services or direct representation to victims of domestic abuse through coordinated service with SLS and its partner legal aid programs.

Desired Outcome: 40 cases with domestic abuse issues that need more extensive services and/or direct representation will be identified and referred to our partner legal aid program.

Strategy 2: Provide and maintain legal self-help materials pertaining to restraining orders on the CTLawHelp.org website.

Desired Outcome: Will perform two reviews throughout the year of resources on CTLawHelp.org related to protection orders. Will work directly with partner programs to update resources and report annually as to any relevant additions or revisions in materials offered.

Goal 4: Educate local service providers in matters related to how domestic abuse issues impact poverty law matters.

Strategy: Provide community legal education to local service providers about domestic abuse matters so that they are able to issue spot and refer clients to SLS for legal assistance.

Desired Outcome: 20 service provider groups will be trained on how to better understand domestic abuse related issues so that they can identify and refer clients to SLS for legal assistance.

PRIORITY 5: STRENGTHEN FINANCIAL STABILITY FOR LOW-INCOME INDIVIDUALS AND FAMILIES

Being poor literally means not having enough resources to meet every day needs. Many other legal problems stem from this overarching need. This goal seeks to help stabilize households and help

individuals and families avoid evictions, debt collections, and/or payment of fines. This priority acknowledges the fact that low-income individuals and families continue to need help with daily necessities to keep their living environment healthy. Cash benefits are often available to these families, yet many do not know they exist. Others apply - but are wrongly denied.

Goal 1: Boost household incomes by helping clients secure state and federal benefits.

Strategy 1: Provide advice and limited service to clients who qualify for TANF, SSI, SAGA, SNAP, Unemployment Compensation, and other similar benefits, or who are in danger of losing such benefits.

Desired Outcome: 800 clients will be empowered to navigate the appropriate government system (*i.e.*, the Federal Social Security Administration, Connecticut Department of Social Services, Connecticut Department of Labor) to obtain or maintain cash assistance benefits.

Strategy 2: Provide extensive services or direct representation to eligible clients to help them obtain or maintain public benefits through coordinated service with SLS and its partner legal aid programs.

Desired Outcome: 220 clients who qualify for cash assistance benefits, but have been denied by a government agency, or who receive benefits which are now in jeopardy of being terminated, will be identified by SLS and referred to our partner legal aid programs for more extensive services and/or direct representation.

Goal 2: Improve public understanding of money management and consumer rights.

Strategy: Facilitate trainings using the Federal Consumer Protection Bureau's "Your Money, Your Goals" (YMYG) toolkit to educate service providers and their clients on basic money management principles.

Desired Outcome: Conduct 15 YMYG workshops to local service providers to educate them on how to help their clients learn basic money management principles.

Goal 3: Educate service providers about what benefits may be available to their clients.

Strategy: Provide community legal education to local service providers about public benefits to which their clients may be eligible to receive so that they are able to issue spot and refer clients needing these benefits to SLS for legal assistance.

Desired Outcome: 20 service provider groups will be trained on how to better understand public cash and non-cash benefits and the resources available to individuals so that they can identify and appropriately refer clients to SLS for legal assistance.

PRIORITY 6: ENHANCE ACCESS TO ADEQUATE HEALTH CARE

Goal 1: Improve or maintain health services for low-income individuals and families.

Strategy 1: Provide advice and limited service to clients who have questions about navigating Connecticut's healthcare and low-income health insurance systems.

Desired Outcome: 100 self-represented individuals will be empowered to navigate the health care system.

Strategy 2: Provide extensive services or direct representation to clients, who are being denied medical care or medical insurance, through coordinated service with SLS and its partner legal aid programs.

Desired Outcome: 60 clients who are being denied medical care or medical insurance will be identified by SLS and referred to our partner legal aid programs for extensive services and/or direct representation.

Strategy 3: Provide and maintain legal self-help materials pertaining to Medicaid eligibility on the CTLawHelp.org website.

Desired Outcome: Will perform two reviews throughout the year of resources on CTLawHelp.org related to Medicaid benefits. Will work directly with partner programs to update resources and report annually as to any relevant additions or revisions in materials offered.

Goal 2: Educate service providers about basic healthcare and what is available to eligible clients.

Strategy: Provide community legal education to local service providers about healthcare and medical insurance available to clients to which they may qualify.

Desired Outcome: 20 service provider groups will be trained on how to better understand basic health care benefits and the resources available to eligible individuals and families so that they identify and refer clients needing these benefits to SLS for legal assistance.

PRIORITY 7: PREVENT CHILDREN AT RISK FROM LOSING EDUCATIONAL RIGHTS

Statistics show that children who stay in school and perform well in their education will do better in family, employment, and societal settings later on in life. Education helps break the cycle of poverty.

Goal 1: Protect educational opportunities for children.

Strategy: Provide extensive services or direct representation to a child facing expulsion through coordinated service with SLS and its partner legal aid programs.

Desired Outcome: 35 children who are facing expulsion or are lacking needed special education services will be identified by SLS and referred to our partner legal aid programs for extensive services and/or direct representation.

Goal 2: Educate local service providers about basic education rights.

Strategy: Provide community legal education to local service providers about basic education rights so that they are able to issue spot and appropriately refer clients to SLS for legal assistance.

Desired Outcome: 20 service provider groups will be trained on how to better understand basic education rights so that they can identify and refer clients to SLS for legal assistance.

PRIORITY 8: SAFEGUARD THE LEGAL RIGHTS AND REMEDIES OF CONNECTICUT'S ELDER COMMUNITY

SLS plans to improve the statewide service-delivery system for hotline, advice and referral services for elders (over 60 years) seeking help with general civil legal needs. We will strive to work more with this population, our legal aid partners and human service providers in the year ahead.

Goal 1: Increase service to the elder population in need of general civil legal services.

Strategy 1: Provide advice, referral, and limited services to clients age 60+ who apply for civil legal services either on the phone or online.

Desired Outcome: 2,000 seniors will be empowered to better understand their legal rights and remedies when addressing their civil legal needs.

Strategy 2: Provide and maintain legal self-help materials pertaining to elder rights on the CTLawHelp.org website.

Desired Outcome: Will perform two reviews throughout the year of resources on CTLawHelp.org related to elder rights/law. Will work directly with partner programs to update resources and report annually as to any relevant additions or revisions in materials offered.

Strategy 3: Seek funding for at least one grant that forwards outreach and service provision goals to strengthen SLS's capacity to serve Connecticut's elder population.

Desired Outcome: Apply for and receive at least one grant to underwrite SLS's enhanced capacity to outreach and service the elder community with or without a collaborating legal aid provider.

PRIORITY 9: STRENGTHEN THE ROLE OF CIVIL LEGAL AID IN RESPONSE TO THE OPIOID CRISIS

Working in partnership with healthcare providers, local social service agencies, the justice system, our legal aid partners, and others who serve those affected by opioid addiction, SLS can help individuals with opioid-related substance abuse disorders secure the basic necessities of food, shelter, healthcare, and safety to enhance their road to recovery.

Goal 1: Develop a Medical-Legal Partnership (MLP) with a Federally Qualified Healthcare Center (FQHC).

Strategy 1: Research and identify at least one FQHCs within our service area that work directly with victims of opioid abuse. Target those providers who do not have easy access to a legal aid program in their area.

Strategy 2: Forge at least one MLP with an FQHC to address the civil legal needs of their patients.

Desired Outcome: Help at least 50 individuals or families experiencing civil legal needs because of Opioid addiction understand their legal problems and rights, receive advice, and appropriate legal services.

Strategy 3: Research federal, state, and other sources of revenue that provide funding to support MLPs.

Desired Outcome: Submit an application for funding to at least one funding source, alone or with a collaborating legal aid partner, to cover the costs of running the MLP for at least 12 months.

PRIORITY 10: INCREASE LEGAL SERVICES TO THE LOW-INCOME POPULATION IN BRIDGEPORT AND WATERBURY REGIONS

Based on data from our case management system and phone logs, it appears that there is a lack of civil legal aid services in Bridgeport and Waterbury relative to the percentage of the poverty population to

the overall population in these areas. Even though there is a civil legal aid office in each of these areas, the number of applicants seeking services from SLS appears low.

Goal 1: Conduct a Legal Needs Assessment in Bridgeport and Waterbury

Strategy 1: Working with Connecticut Legal Services, who has a branch office in Bridgeport and Waterbury, we will develop a legal needs assessment tool to be distributed to the low-income population in these areas and to the local social service providers who serve these individuals and families.

Strategy 2: Gather and analysis data received from the legal needs assessment surveys and determine the area of civil legal need that is lacking within these areas.

Desired Outcome: A better understanding of the low-income population in these target cities, their legal needs, and how best to serve them.

Strategy 3: Develop a marketing campaign to address the needs identified by the surveys, and then deliver the needed outreach services to the low-income populations within Bridgeport and Waterbury so that they know where to turn for assistance.

Desired Outcome: If needed, a higher number of eligible applicants seeking civil legal support will contact us through our telephonic and online services.

Employee Acknowledgement

I hereby acknowledge receipt of the Statewide Legal Services 2019 Priority Statement. I have read, understand and agree to all of the above.

Print Name: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____