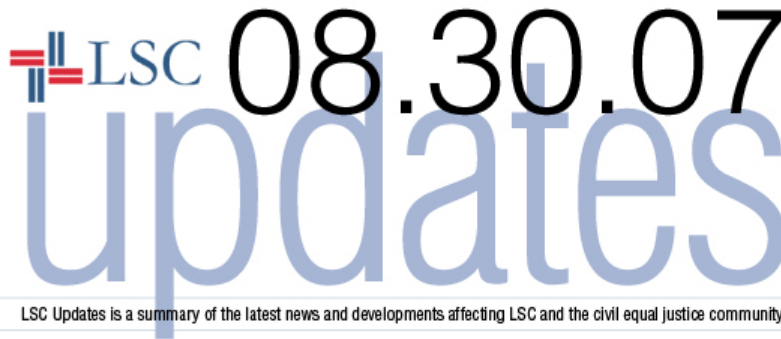


Shakarian, Melanie A.

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Subject: LSC Updates: August 30, 2007
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August 30, 2007

LSC Updates is a summary of the latest news and developments affecting LSC and the civil equal justice community.

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Created by Congress in 1974, LSC's mission is to promote equal access to justice in our Nation and to provide high quality civil legal assistance to low-income persons. LSC currently funds 138 independent local legal aid programs around the nation. Its 11-member Board of Directors is appointed by the President of the United States with the advice and consent of the U.S. Senate. For more information, please visit www.lsc.gov.

LSC News

LSC To Hold Technology Conference

LSC will host a technology strategic planning conference at its Washington headquarters on September 6 and 7. Attendees will include technology experts from the legal services community, private law firms, foundations, and corporations.

The goal of the conference is to help guide LSC in creating a strategic plan for effective use of technology by LSC-funded programs. The plan will also support future funding requests for LSC's Technology Initiative Grants program and guide the Corporation's future technology investment decisions.

Current and emerging technologies will be the conference focus and in-particular their application in the law offices and legal aid programs of the present and future in order to provide more high-quality civil legal assistance to low-income people.

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Two More LSC-Funded Programs Adopt *Pro Bono* Resolutions

The Boards of Directors of Legal Aid of North Carolina and Legal Assistance of Western New York have adopted resolutions aimed at increasing the involvement of private attorneys in the delivery of legal services to their clients, bringing to 19 the number of LSC-funded programs who have adopted such resolutions.

LSC is encouraging all program Boards of Directors to adopt *pro bono* resolutions modeled after one adopted by LSC's Board in April 2007. Urging programs to adopt local resolutions is a key element of LSC's private attorney involvement action plan, entitled "Help Close the Justice Gap, Unleash the Power of *Pro Bono*."

For a complete list of programs who have adopted *pro bono* resolutions, [click here](#).

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Participate in NALP's Recruitment Survey

The National Association for Law Placement (NALP) is conducting a survey on public interest employers' summer hiring procedures. According to NALP, while private sector law firms often follow carefully planned timelines when recruiting summer associates, the hiring cycles for public interest employers can vary greatly. NALP is gathering data to learn if there are ways it can help facilitate the summer hiring process. Responses will remain confidential and no information about specific organizations will be published without permission. A small working group of NALP staff and law school advisors will review the information you provide and may contact you for follow-up.

The survey will close on September 27.

NALP is a non-profit organization dedicated to facilitating legal career counseling and planning, recruitment and retention, and the professional development of law students and lawyers.

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To participate in the survey, [click here](#).

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LSC in the News

TRLA Regains Access to Disaster Victims at FEMA Sites

Lawyers with Texas RioGrande Legal Aid (TRLA) and all other LSC-funded programs will soon be allowed to assist victims of natural disasters at the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) Disaster Recovery Centers (DRC), according to a renegotiated agreement between FEMA, TRLA, and other parties. The terms of the agreement were outlined in an August 27 hearing on the matter before U.S. District Judge Sam Sparks.

FEMA agreed to renegotiate its agreement with the American Bar Association's Young Lawyers Division (ABA-YLD), which has worked with FEMA since 1993 to provide legal services to victims of natural disasters. The new agreement will eliminate language that has limited representation in the past, and will specify the terms under which LSC-funded programs will be able to serve disaster victims at FEMA sites, and on hotlines.

At issue was a clause in the agreement preventing volunteer attorneys from assisting victims who were appealing denials of requests for FEMA aid, and from representing, or even counseling, clients with lawsuits against the Federal, state, or local governments. FEMA has agreed to discontinue the policy associated with that clause and to renegotiate a new agreement specifying the terms under which LSC-funded attorneys may provide legal services to disaster victims. Judge Sparks put the case on hold for thirty days while this process moves forward.

TRLA sued FEMA earlier this month when, after nine years of working with victims at DRCs, they were abruptly denied access in June. TRLA claims that FEMA's change of policy violated First Amendment rights, and violated survivor's rights to legal representation.

TRLA Executive Director David Hall noted that all of the Texas stakeholders thought that the system in place for the last few years had worked well, and stated that "we are looking forward to restoring our important role in the disaster recovery process for indigent Texans."

The case is filed in the U.S. District Court for the Western District of Texas, Civil Action No. 07-CA-691.

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New Family Justice Center Opens in New Orleans

A new "one-stop" service center for victims of domestic violence opened in New Orleans, La., on August 28.

The Family Justice Center, funded by a \$3 million grant from the U.S. Department of Justice, will serve as a centralized location where victims of domestic violence can access the full range of services—legal, medical, and social—needed to escape their abusers and rebuild their lives.

Bernadette D'Souza, a domestic violence attorney with the LSC-funded New Orleans Legal Assistance Corporation (NOLAC), has been chosen to chair the center's Service Delivery System Work Group, which coordinates the different agencies working at the center. While NOLAC attorneys will not be located on-site, they will now travel to the center to meet with their domestic violence clients.

"The whole point is to make the process of getting help easier for victims," said D'Souza. "In the past, cobbling together the array of services—protective orders, medical attention, divorce, child custody—needed to free victims from a cycle of violence could prove to be an insurmountable hurdle. Combining services under one roof is a crucial step forward for helping victims."

The center is the 16th of its kind to open since President Bush announced his Family Justice Center Initiative in 2003. LSC-funded programs are already working with victims in other Family Justice Centers throughout the country.

For more information about President Bush's Family Justice Center Initiative, [click here](#).

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Legal Aid of Arkansas' Pro Bono Efforts Highlighted

Evie Comfort had a daughter in jail and a grandson suffering from Recurrent Respiratory Papillomatosis, a disease which causes tumors to grow in the larynx, vocal cords, and trachea. Without medical attention, her grandson would surely die, but without legal custody, Evie Comfort could not get it for him.

She tried private attorneys. "There was not an attorney in Arkansas who would touch me for less

than \$3,000," she said. She eventually called Legal Aid of Arkansas, which found a private attorney willing to take her case *pro bono*, securing the legal custody she, and her grandson, so desperately needed.

This case, highlighted in an August 19 article in Arkansas' Morning News, is just one of the approximately 350 cases a year handled by volunteer attorneys working with Legal Aid of Arkansas. *Pro bono* lawyers are extremely important for the program, which has only 19 staff attorneys to serve 31 counties in a state ranked 49th in dollars spent per person for civil legal aid, according to legal aid's web site.

To read "*Pro Bono* Services Help Those Unable To Pay For Legal Aid" in Arkansas' Morning News, [click here](#).

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"No Cost for Kindness" A Profile of Three LASCLEV Attorneys

Sandra M. Klepach, The News-Herald (OH) – August 12, 2007

Abigail C. Staudt laughed.

Marley F. Eiger thought, "Oh, how boring."

Claire Cloud first worked as a hair stylist, then joined the military.

But the women who run the Legal Aid Society of Cleveland's Painesville office all eventually heeded the advice at which they initially scoffed: "You should be an attorney."

Today, as the only attorneys on staff in Painesville, the three head a mission of justice for more than 20,000 of Lake and Geauga counties' low-income residents.

Staudt was among eight new attorneys hired in 2006 and spread among the private nonprofit organization's offices in Painesville, Ashtabula, Cleveland and Elyria.

They are Legal Aid's largest group of new hires in more than 10 years, made possible in part by new philanthropic contributions. Of the new eight, Staudt is among four who speak Spanish. Two are black.

Starting salaries were \$33,000 last year, although the board recently voted to "significantly increase" them as a result of better funding, Director of Development Melanie Shakarian said.

But "I didn't go to law school to make money," said Staudt, who joined the Peace Corps after college. "I went to law school so I'd be able to use that information to help people."

To read the article in its entirety, [click here](#).

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New York IOLA Regulations Take Effect

New regulations that could dramatically increase funding for New York's civil legal aid programs took effect earlier this month.

The new rules require banks to pay interest rates on Interest on Lawyers Accounts (IOLA) similar to rates paid on accounts of comparable size. Banks that were paying interest rates on IOLA accounts of less than 1 percent will now pay closer to three percent. According to a press release from New York Governor Eliot Spitzer's office, The IOLA program could distribute up to \$60 million per year under the new rules, up from approximately \$14 million in 2007. The regulations were proposed on May 31 and adopted on August 16 following a period of public comment.

Since 1983, New York's IOLA program has collected the accumulated interest from accounts used by lawyers to temporarily hold their client's funds, and distributes it to civil legal aid programs.

For more information on New York's new regulations, [click here](#).

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Success Story from Maryland's Legal Aid Bureau

(Legal aid is about helping ordinary people with real-life problems. Client stories from the field illustrate the day-to-day struggles - and victories - of poor Americans seeking justice under law.)

Within a few months of being admitted to the Maryland bar, Legal Aid Bureau staff attorney Jake Ouslander helped an elderly man in an assisted living facility regain access to the retirement benefits that were his sole source of income.

The client had designated his sister as an authorized payee for all of his bills, and arranged to have his retirement benefits direct-deposited into her bank account. The arrangement worked fine until his sister had a stroke and became incapable of managing her own affairs, not to mention her brother's. As bills from his assisted living facility kept piling up, so did the client's retirement benefits, only they were in his sister's bank account which he had no access to.

The client contacted the Legal Aid Bureau for help. Ouslander was able to convince all the parties in the case, including the bank holding the account and the daughters of his client's sister, to release the funds to his client. Eventually the client collected his approximately \$10,000 in built-up funds, and was able to pay all of his delinquent bills and remain in the assisted living facility.

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