

Legal Hotline Quarterly

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Wayne Moore Receives New Honor

Wayne Moore, Legal Counsel for the Elderly's (LCE) Director for the past twenty-six years, was honored at the last Board meeting of the current LCE Board of Directors on Wednesday, November 6th. Wayne was given testimonials by founding LCE Board member Jack Lahr, Esq. of the law firm of Foley and Lardner; former AARP Programs Director Anne Harvey; and preeminent leader nationally in law and aging, John Pickering, Esq. of Wilmer, Cutlerand Pickering.

In addition, LCE Board Chair Jerome Swindell, Esq., speaking on behalf of the Board, presented Wayne with a plaque and a gift as a token of the Board's appreciation for Wayne's dedicated leadership. Under Wayne's leadership, LCE has created and developed more than twenty-five different innovative models of legal services delivery, such as pro bono models, legal hotlines, and the AARP Legal Services Network, to name just a few. Many of these models have been replicated and are now used throughout the country in advocacy initiatives on behalf of older persons. In the last two months, Wayne has assumed his new role as Director of Advocacy Planning and Issue Development for State and National Initiatives (SNI).

Congratulations, Wayne!



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Shoshanna Ehrlich, Editor

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U.S. Administration on Aging Press Release **AoA Awards Almost \$1.5 Million for** **Senior Legal Hotlines**

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Administration on Aging (AoA) announced [October 9th, 2002] the award of almost \$1.5 million in grants to support the delivery of critical legal services to at-risk older Americans. The funding is for new awards and continuing Legal Hotlines that provide legal counseling and advice to older Americans on a myriad of legal questions.

"These hotlines provide advice and peace of mind to many of our most vulnerable seniors, who often struggle to deal with legal issues involving wills, health care and other issues," HHS Secretary Tommy G. Thompson said.

AoA's Senior Legal Hotlines offer free or low-cost legal assistance to older people who are socially or economically disadvantaged, frail, or at-risk. Legal staff and specially trained volunteers provide advice on legal questions or problems, provide self-help materials, and refer older people to legal aid offices, pro-bono, or reduced-fee private attorneys who specialize in elder rights protection.

According to data reported in 2001 by the AARP Foundation, which administers the Technical Assistance Project for Statewide Legal Hotlines, 25% of the calls to Legal Hotlines involve wills, estates, probate, powers of attorney and guardianship; 18% involve consumer issues; 16% involve health issues including Medicare and Medicaid; 15% involve housing issues; and 7% involve family issues.

"Senior Legal Hotlines provide valuable resources for hard-to-reach, socially and economically disadvantaged older Americans and their families, who often lack access to information and basic advice when legal matters are concerned," said Assistant Secretary for Aging Josefina G. Carbonell, who heads the Administration on Aging.

AoA's eight [awardees for the 2002 competition] Statewide Senior Legal Hotline projects include:

Established Hotlines

- **Legal Counsel for the Elderly, Washington, DC.**

Established in 1987, this project will test and evaluate three innovations in legal hotline delivery: (1) increasing the productivity and decreasing the cost per case of hotlines by instituting the "short-delay" callback method; (2) a new way of handling brief services by using staff-supervised non-attorney volunteers for those clients who need more than legal advice but do not need full legal representation; and (3) developing a low-cost method of targeting hotline services for disadvantaged populations by using non-legal volunteers to assist seniors to access basic legal information through a website available for seniors at community service agencies.

- **Legal Services for the Elderly, Inc., Augusta, ME.**

This project, which began in 1992, will create new legal resources and expand access to legal services in Maine's rural communities through a partnership with community health centers. The project will also build a coalition of community and law enforcement organizations and conduct outreach and education to address issues of elder abuse. Finally, the project will implement a pilot program to reduce barriers inherent in telephone services. Client service delivery will be improved by using an outcomes-based model to evaluate efficiency and effectiveness.

- **Access to Justice Foundation, Lexington, KY.** Begun in 1998, this project proposes to expand and strengthen its existing hotline to low-income rural seniors. The project plans to: (1) strengthen and expand the hotline's services by emphasizing the use of technology; (2) design a Pilot Rural Outreach Project to demonstrate effective strategies for expanding client awareness and use of the Hotline; and (3) establish a program to assist seniors with consumer law issues and provide training to volunteer attorneys to increase their knowledge of consumer issues negatively impacting on seniors.

- **Elder Law of Michigan, Lansing, MI.**

This project will build on the success of its existing Hotline and increase the numbers served with a traditional hotline. It will broaden its outreach to expand awareness among seniors on how to protect them-

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selves from debt and steps to resolve indebtedness. The project will also provide opportunities for seniors to find new resources for health care and other benefits to improve their economic well-being using a comprehensive Coordinated Economic Assistance Screening Tool focusing on Veteran's Benefits, unclaimed pensions, Medicare/Medicaid, state tax credits, and other benefits.

[ELM was also a recipient of one of three pension project \$150,000 grants awarded in the AoA 2002 Pension Projects competition. AoA announced that "ELM proposes to expand and enhance its current pension counseling project that serves the states of Michigan and Ohio by adding limited service to the state of Illinois. The project provides intake, advice, and information to pensioners on benefits, and offers suggestions and strategies for pension problem resolution. The grantee is using the model of a statewide legal hotline as the first point of entry for pension counseling"] (See *LHQ Summer 2002*)

- **Legal Aid Bureau, Inc., Baltimore, MD.**

This established hotline program will continue to collaborate with the Legal Aid Bureau and the Maryland Legal Assistance Network in an effort to provide accessible, high-quality legal information and assistance to socially and economically disadvantaged Maryland seniors. The grantee proposes undertaking three major initiatives:

1. improving services available to non-English and low-English proficiency seniors by partnering with Asian American and Spanish advocacy and community groups;
2. providing callers at all intake/access points with the most accurate, up-to-date legal information available; and
3. educating seniors about enforcing their rights in debt collection and garnishment cases

New Hotlines

- **The South Carolina Centers for Equal Justice, Greenville, SC.**

A new grantee, this project proposes to enhance South Carolina's current legal services intake system by establishing the "Serve Our Seniors Hotline (SOS)," which will improve access to legal services for seniors over 60 and serve as a reference bank for the state's senior service offerings. The Hotline will provide counsel, advice, and brief and extended service for senior callers with legal needs. Referrals to senior ser-

vice organizations throughout the state will also be available for those callers with non-legal needs.

- **Connecticut Legal Services, Inc., Middletown, CT.**

This new project proposes to develop a hotline that will provide telephone access and high quality legal services to seniors who have consumer problems. The hotline will be a collaborative effort among several State agencies. Services to be provided will include easy client access to hotline staff through direct calls or referrals; training of AAA's to identify issues; cross referral of clients; full service response to hotline clients throughout the state; and extensive outreach to Hispanic, African American, and rural elderly clients, as well as faith based organizations.

- **Idaho Legal Aid Services, Inc., Boise, ID.**

This project will establish a dedicated Senior Legal Hotline that will target rural elderly with an emphasis on disadvantaged seniors, seniors with disabilities, and Hispanic and Native American seniors. A Hotline Community Advisory Team comprised of representatives from both legal and non-legal service providers will assist in outreach. An interactive website will be developed to provide legal information through electronic brochures, pro se forms with instructions, and electronic intake systems. Local libraries will advertise the availability of their computers for seniors to access this website.

The following five hotline programs also received awards to continue their statewide [senior] legal hotlines:

- Northwest Justice Program, Seattle, WA
- Legal Services Corporation of Iowa, Des Moines,
- Legal Services Organization of Indiana, Indianapolis
- Legal Aid Society of Hawaii, Honolulu - \$35,000
- Atlanta Legal Aid Society, Inc. - \$110,000

AoA also provided the AARP Legal Hotline Technical Assistance Project, Washington, DC with a \$100,000 grant to provide technical assistance, support, information, and consultation to managers of legal hotlines.



HOTLINE OUTCOMES ASSESSMENT STUDY YIELDS FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

By Robert Echols and Julia Gordon*

More than three years in the works, the Hotline Outcomes Assessment Study commissioned by the Project for the Future of Equal Justice and funded by the Open Society Institute has concluded with a set of findings about what happens to clients after they are served and recommendations aimed at improving the level of favorable outcomes.

The final phase of the Study, conducted by an independent researcher, the Center for Policy research in Denver, involved a full scale survey of Hotline clients to answer a variety of questions about legal outcomes and the characteristics of callers who experience successful and unsuccessful results. Over 2000 clients, approximately 400 each from five geographically and demographically diverse Hotlines, were interviewed three to six months after they received services. The five sites were the Center for Arkansas Legal Services; the Legal Aid Society of Orange County; Coordinated Advice and Referral Program for Legal Services (CARPLS), Chicago; the Legal Aid and Defender Association of Detroit; and Coordinated Legal Education, Assistance and Referral (CLEAR), Washington State.

Clients were asked to describe what had happened in their case and to respond to a variety of questions about their experience with the Hotline and their circumstances. Demographic data about the clients was obtained from the Hotline case record and supplemented by information obtained during the interview.

We reviewed each interview form along with the client's original case record from the Hotline. In addition to the subjective responses of the clients, a more objective perspective on each case was provided by the authors of this article, both of whom are attorneys with legal services experience

**Robert Echols is a consultant on legal services issues. Julia Gordon is Senior Counsel at the Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP) They have staffed the Hotline Outcomes Assessment Study for the Project for the Future of Equal Justice since it began.*

On the basis of this review, we made an assessment of the outcome of the case and the role that the Hotline had played in helping the client respond to his or her problem.

The researchers analyzed the resulting data set to produce profiles of callers across the five sites and outcome patterns with special attention to the client, case and advice characteristics of cases with favorable and unfavorable outcome patterns.

Findings

The Study has answered a number of fundamental questions about Hotlines and their efficacy with various types of callers. The key findings for the study included the following:

- **Where a definite outcome could be determined, Hotline cases were almost evenly split between successful and unsuccessful outcomes.**

After indeterminate cases were eliminated, such as pending matters or cases where no outcome could be determined, the percent of cases where clients got the information they needed or the results they wanted (48%) almost matched the percent with unsuccessful outcomes (52%).

- **When callers understand what they are told to do and follow the advice they are given, they tend to prevail.**

Only 6 percent of the full sample of clients received unfavorable results because they did not prevail after following the advice of Hotline workers.

- **Most clients who fail to get what they want do not understand the advice they are given or are too intimidated or overwhelmed to attempt the recommended action.**

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A much larger group, 13 percent of the full sample, had unfavorable results because they did not understand the advice they received and 9 percent failed because they were afraid, discouraged, or lacked the time or initiative to try to do what the worker suggested.

- **Certain types of Hotline services are more apt to result in favorable outcomes.**

When the most and least successful outcomes were compared, brief services yielded the highest proportion of cases that were classified as favorable (69%). Advising clients on how to deal with a landlord, creditor, or other private party was next (59% favorable). Advising clients how to represent themselves in court was less likely to result in success (46% favorable). Favorable assessments were the lowest in cases where clients were instructed on how to deal with a government agency (36%) or were referred to another legal services program (42%) or social service agency (30%)

- **Sending written material increases the likelihood of success.**

Clients who received written legal information (such as a pamphlet or a letter summarizing the advice) had a significantly higher success rate (52%) than those who did not receive written information (42%).

- **Clients who were advised to hire a private attorney had the worst outcomes and were the most dissatisfied.**

Only 11 percent of clients who were advised to hire an attorney achieved favorable case outcomes and 52 percent rated the Hotline as unhelpful. When clients did hire a private attorney, the decision was rarely the result of Hotline advice. Only 18 percent of clients who were advised by Hotline workers to hire a private attorney did so; many reported being unable to afford or find one. Most who did retain an attorney (65%) had not been advised by the Hotline to do

so.

- **Consumer cases are more likely to have favorable outcomes; family cases less likely.**

Housing and consumer cases had the highest rate of favorable outcomes, while family cases were lowest, with many still pending when clients were interviewed. The higher favorable rates for housing cases probably reflects the fact that housing clients with unsuccessful cases may not have been reachable for an interview because they had moved. The results for consumer and family cases are consistent with the finding that cases in which the client is advised on how to negotiate with a private party were more likely to be successful than cases in which the client is advised on self-representation in court.

- **Hotline clients with the worst case results had distinct demographic characteristics.**

Categories of clients who obtained the least favorable outcomes were Spanish-speaking, Hispanic, those with the lowest education levels, those who reported no income from any source, and those who were separated and lived apart from their spouse. Substantial proportions of Spanish speakers, individuals with the lowest education levels, and those with no income source appeared to experience unfavorable outcomes because of a failure to understand the advice they were given. The lower results for callers who were separated is probably attributable to the fact that many were seeking a divorce and were disproportionately advised to retain a private attorney.

- **Many clients face barriers that may affect their ability to follow Hotline advice.**

When specifically asked questions about potential barriers to following the Hotline's advice, 42 percent of callers disclosed that they or a member of their households had a disability or a serious health problem; 33 percent reported serious transportation problems; 16 percent reported hav-

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ing work, school or daycare schedules that made it hard for them to handle their legal problems; 12 percent reported difficulties reading or speaking English well enough to complete forms and other legal paperwork; and 44 percent responded “yes” when asked if there were other factors that made it hard to handle their legal problem, such as stress, nervousness, fear of getting into trouble, or fear of an ex-partner or household member. While clients who reported disabilities fared no worse than their counterparts who did not, the other barriers listed above all correlated with outcomes that were significantly worse. Those with problems using English appeared to have failed primarily because they did not understand the advice they were given, while those with transportation, scheduling and miscellaneous difficulties frequently failed to follow through on the advice they received.

- **Some types of follow-up actions by the Hotline may boost the chances of callers experiencing favorable results.**

Most clients (78%) spoke only once with a Hotline worker and did not receive help from another source. The small group of clients who met with Hotline workers in person after their initial call did not appear to have a higher rate of favorable outcomes than those who just used the telephone, nor did clients who called the Hotline more than once. However, those who reported *receiving* a follow-up phone call from the Hotline or help from someone other than the Hotline worker, such as a legal clinic or a court facilitator, were more likely to have successful outcomes.

- **Clients generally rated their experiences with Hotlines favorably.**

Nearly half (41%) characterized the Hotline as “very helpful” and 28 percent as “somewhat helpful.” Only 29 percent rated it as unhelpful. About half were certain that they would use the Hotline again for another legal problem. Two-thirds of clients at every site credited the Hotline with helping them make better decisions, feel

more confident about their abilities, and keep the problem from escalating. About a quarter of interviewed clients across the sites reported difficult reaching a Hotline worker.

- **Disappointed Hotline callers typically say there was nothing anyone could do or that they wanted a lawyer to do more for them, although a small fraction of callers complain about being treated rudely.**

Callers who were critical of the Hotline and rated it as unhelpful typically said there was nothing anyone could do for them. The next most common reason for their dissatisfaction was wanting a lawyer to do more on their behalf. Approximately 2 percent of callers complained about disrespectful and uncaring treatment by Hotline workers.

- **User satisfaction ratings are associated with Hotline outcomes, but the correlation is not perfect.**

Clients with favorable outcomes were significantly more likely than their counterparts with unfavorable outcomes to rate Hotlines as “very” helpful, but they were more generous than their objective situation would seem to warrant. While 63 percent of clients with favorable outcomes gave the Hotline a “very favorable” rating versus only 19% of clients with unfavorable outcomes, a third (32%) of clients with unfavorable outcomes rated the Hotline as “somewhat helpful.” Moreover, a quarter of the clients who did not follow the Hotline’s advice or did not prevail rated the Hotline as “very helpful.”

- **Hotlines serve a broad population with a variety of demographic characteristics.**

While most interviewed clients were English-speaking females, the sample was almost evenly split between White and African-American respondents, with a lesser representation of Hispanics (13%). About 41 percent reported income from wages, the rest reported income from wel-

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fare benefits, Social Security and other sources, while about 10 percent reported no income source at all. Roughly equal proportions were married, separated, divorced, and single. And while a third had completed high school and another third had some college, about 20 percent had less than a high school education and 14 percent had completed college.

- **Most Hotline callers have family, housing, or consumer problems.**

About 40 percent of respondents had phoned the Hotline with a family problem; 20 percent had housing and consumer issues, respectively. The remaining callers had a variety of other problems, the most common of which dealt with benefits and employment matters. Income maintenance cases, which have historically been considered a major legal services case type, represented only 5 percent of the sample.

Recommendations

These findings suggest that Hotlines succeed in delivering legal services to many individuals with a broad range of problems. However, a substantial proportion of clients fail to understand the advice they are given or fail to implement it because of fear, discouragement, lack of time or lack of initiative. These problems are far greater than failure to prevail among those who understand the advice and try to follow it. To increase the ratio of favorable to unfavorable outcomes, the Study recommends that Hotlines adopt measures to enhance understanding and promote action, including the following.

- **Hotlines should develop or increase their capacity to provide brief services or institute a brief services unit.**

Brief services are more likely to result in successful outcomes than advice or referral services. In cases where it may be possible to resolve the client's problem with a letter, telephone call, or completion of a form or referral, it is likely to be a more effective use of resources for the Hotline

or a related unit to perform the action than for the Hotline to advise the client how to do so. The Hotline will already have invested time in developing the facts and legal issues in response to the client's call; investment of the additional time required for the brief service will substantially increase the likelihood of a successful outcome for the client's problem. Cases in which clients are less likely to obtain favorable outcomes on their own, as discussed above, should be given priority for brief services.

- **Hotlines that do not routinely provide written information to clients should do so.**

The provision of written information, whether a generic pamphlet or a letter detailing the advice provided, increases the likelihood of a successful outcome.

- **Hotlines should recognize that certain demographic groups are particularly less likely to obtain favorable outcomes.**

Non-English speakers, individuals at the lowest education levels and those who report no income perform significantly worse than other demographic sub-groups, chiefly because they appear not to understand the advice they are given. Hotlines should develop special protocols for dealing with these clients, possibly including increased support or more extended services.

- **Hotlines should screen callers for certain barriers that are associated with unfavorable outcomes.**

Clients who, when asked a specific question, report having a less than 8th grade education or problems with transportation, reading or comprehending English, scheduling (work, daycare, or other), stress or fear, or other personal factors affecting their ability to resolve their problems, are less likely to obtain a successful outcome. Hotlines should routinely screen for these barriers. This is likely to require special attention during intake, since we noted that most of these barriers

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could not be discerned from existing case files. Hotlines should develop protocols for dealing with these clients, possibly including increased support or more extended services.

- **Hotlines should institute or improve follow-up procedures.**

Hotlines would do well to institute tickler systems flagging cases for a call-back to check on the client's progress. Cases that should be flagged are those in which the problem is particularly likely to have serious consequences for the client. Especially important are those in which one of the following factors is present:

- 1 The recommended action is one where clients are less likely to obtain a favorable outcome: representing oneself in court; dealing with a government agency; or obtaining legal assistance from another legal provider or help from a social services agency.
- 2 The client falls into one of the demographic categories that are less likely to obtain a favorable outcome, especially non-English-speakers and people with no income.
- 3 The client reports having less than an 8th grade education or problems with transportation, work or daycare schedules, reading or comprehending English, or stress, fear, nervousness, or other factors that would make it difficult to follow through with the Hotline's advice.

- **Policymakers should take further steps to evaluate whether Hotlines are an appropriate method of delivering service to non-English speakers.**

The non-English speaking clients in this Study were Spanish speakers who were provided services by the Hotline in Spanish. They had a particularly high rate of failure to act due to inability to understand the Hotline advice. Those who did follow the Hotline's advice were no less likely to

succeed than their English-speaking counterparts. Policymakers should conduct more in-depth evaluations of outcomes obtained by non-English speaking Hotline clients to determine whether this method of delivering services is suited to this demographic category.

- **Hotlines should recognize that telling a caller that they should obtain a private attorney is unlikely to result in a successful outcome.**

When Hotline workers advise callers to retain a private attorney, they should know that most of these clients will not be able to afford to hire an attorney or will not be able to find one willing to take their case. Hotlines should explore alternative services that are more likely to result in successful outcomes. Local policymakers should explore the implications of this problem, such as devoting more resources to developing panels of attorneys willing to take cases for reduced fees.

- **Hotlines should be aware of the limitations of client satisfaction data and analyze the data they get in ways that maximize their utility.**

While user satisfaction is a legitimate and an important indicator of Hotline effectiveness, it is not a perfect measure. Clients are frequently more generous in their evaluations of Hotlines than their personal situations would warrant. To some extent, this may reflect the fact that even clients who do not get what they want may feel empowered by the information they receive. In conducting client satisfaction surveys, "very helpful" and "somewhat helpful" response categories should not be merged in the analysis, because only the "very helpful" category is strongly associated with case outcomes.

- **Hotlines should conduct random follow-up telephone interviews with clients.**

In order to more accurately assess performance, Hotlines should institute random follow-up inter-

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views to gauge the effectiveness of their services and to identify ways to improve them. We believe the Study demonstrates the effectiveness of random client surveys as a technique that provides more accurate information about client attitudes than client satisfaction surveys and more complete data about outcomes than models that are currently used by some programs. We think that the survey technique should be used broadly in the legal services community for program and delivery model evaluation and assessment. The 400 case interviews that we will return to each of the five participating Hotlines will provide the managers of those programs with a wealth of insight about their clients and what happens to them. Any program that conducts a survey of this type would gain similarly valuable insights.

We strongly concur with the recommendations of the Study. We understand that Hotlines are working under great pressure and have limited resources and limited capacity to respond to clients. Nevertheless, we think that that Hotlines would do well to adopt these recommendations and thus provide more useful services to those clients that they serve, even if it means that they are able to serve fewer clients.

The complete Hotline Outcomes Assessment Study is posted on the NLADA web site,

<http://www.nlada.org>.

Click on “Civil Resources” and “Project for the Future of Equal Justice.”



CARPLS’ NEW SOFTWARE MOVES IT TO THE HEAD OF THE “CLASS”

By Leslie Corbett, Executive Director of CARPLS

Coordinated Advice and Referral Program for Legal Services, or CARPLS as we are better known, is a stand-alone hotline providing over 15,000 legal services to low-income people in the Chicago area annually as well coordinating the intake criteria for over 28 legal aid providers. Being a high volume operation, technology that is fast, efficient, reliable and scalable is of the utmost importance.

Since its inception in 1993, CARPLS has used two different Dos-based case management systems and the same phone system with two major upgrades. It became clear over the last couple of years that an overhaul of our technology systems was necessary if we were to continue operations at all, let alone expand and serve more clients. After exhaustive research of phone and software systems, I felt no smarter and the Board and I decided we needed help making this important decision. We hired a consultant to review the research and proposals submitted by local vendors. In January, our consultant recommended we build customized software and lease a new phone system.

Having been on the receiving end of customized software before, I was skeptical. However, we really did our homework. Current products serving legal services programs were more than what we needed in terms of scope and costs. We are not LSC-funded so many of the features of popular products did not work for us. We needed a definitive cost structure and a solution that would integrate our phone and software applications. Thus, the Network Ninjas saved the day!

We contracted with Network Ninja, which has now grown to include PS Technologies, to develop a web-based case management system that would integrate with our telephone system so we could provide remote access opportunities to our staff and volunteers. Additionally, we leased an Intertel phone system from BTI Communications. The phone system was installed in March. The software work began in March and we launched the new product July 31. Both companies are working together to put the finishing touches on the phone integration piece.

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CLASS (CARPLS Legal Aid Software System) is a dream come true. Having attorneys at the front door of service means that the intake interview must take less than 5 minutes and that the focus must be on the legal work rather than the intake. The Ninjas developed a product that mirrored the flow and logic of our old system but added bells and whistles that enhance our reporting and data collection capabilities. The system is easy to use and even the attorney we nicknamed "Baseline" due to his fear of technology uses CLASS with ease and confidence. Features include client eligibility, demographics, conflicts check, tickler & scheduling tools, case notes, referral tracking and analysis, coding services, tracking self-help information, a further service survey, a case review module and enhanced reporting. We are still working on some of the reporting features, but the goal is that it combines both call and case data to provide a fuller picture of hotline services provided.

The database used is PostgreSQL and the operating system is Linux. We host CLASS at our office but it can run over the web as an ASP. Citrix is not required to run the system and the database and operating system is Open Source, thus there are no costs or licensing fees for this solution.

No costs? Well, the software development itself was \$60,000 and we paid an additional \$20,000 to integrate the system with our new telephone system. Since it is a customized application, the costs will vary from program to program. Additionally, CARPLS pays an annual maintenance fee of \$3,000 for the Ninjas to support the product. The Ninjas have been incredibly responsive to any and all issues we have had. And I am pleasantly surprised to report there have not been any major issues.

Currently, CARPLS is the only legal services provider using this product, though work has begun for the Heartland Alliance in Chicago. The Network Ninjas have worked with several non-profits to develop customized case management software including the City of Chicago Children's Advocacy Center.

Next steps for CARPLS include working with our 28 providers in order to make the most out of our new technological potential. We will be able to electronically transfer intake information as well as provide e-mail follow-up for conflict checks. The sky is the limit and we need to poll our providers in

regards to their technological capacity and desire for increased services. Additionally, we need to develop internal standards on remote access case work for staff and volunteers in order to ensure high quality services on and off-site.

One word of advice for programs looking to develop customized software: budget staff time to work with the programmers. I believe an integral part of the success of this project was the time, input, expertise and dogged determination of the two staff members who worked directly with the Ninjas. Director of Legal Services Jim Brown and Senior Attorney Al Schwartz spent an amazing amount of energy on this project and are to be commended for their hard work. Programs must be willing to devote their best people to this project if they want the end product to meet their needs.

If you would like to take a look at a copy of CLASS, log on to <http://www.psti.net>.

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Center: Jim Brown, CARPLS Director of Legal Services, Network Ninjas Peter McArthur (left) and Andy Plax (right) pose in front of Chicago skyline.

101 Good Reasons for Using a Web Based ASP

By John Paul Kemp, reprinted with permission from www.kempscaseworks.com*

**The article below describes ASP technology in the context of the Clients Case Management software. The Technical Support for Legal Hotlines Project does not endorse or recommend any product. The article below is reprinted to illuminate the general benefits of ASP technology.*

What is an ASP?



ASP is an abbreviation for Application Service Provider. It is a company that puts an application, like Clients Case Management (Clients), up on the Internet and allows people to use it for a fee. It allows a legal aid office to outsource their computer needs and get back to what they are best at, representing clients.

Clients is a computerized case management system that tracks cases for legal services, law school clinics, and pro bono offices that represent low-income people. The ASP version of Clients is located in an extremely secure data center that is accessed over the Internet.

Your computers become thin clients when using the case management software.

Safe
Economical
Easy
Powerful
Flexible

Safe



The information at the data center is actually much safer than it is in your own office. This is why:

1. Your database is backed up on tape on a daily basis.
2. The backup tapes are stored off-site in a vault. Backups are transported in metal boxes with seals by a courier service.
3. There is redundancy built into the hard drive systems.

4. Usage and access to the database are monitored 24 hours a day.
5. There is intrusion protection.
6. There is 24-hour physical security at the data center.
7. The facility uses biometrics to identify who wishes to enter. Only if they are approved can then get in. There is fire protection.
8. Virus protection is monitored and updated regularly.
9. Employees' backgrounds are checked for criminal records before being hired.
10. Cleaning service employees' backgrounds are checked for criminal records before being hired.
11. A firewall is in place to prevent unauthorized traffic.
12. Venture Technologies data center is a Tier 1 facility, which requires passing stringent tests.
13. No data leaves the data center. The workstation sends mouse moves and keystrokes. It receives pixel data to construct an image on your monitor.
14. The information going over the Internet is encrypted.
15. A backup of the data (in a Microsoft Access format) can be downloaded to your local hard disk once a week.
16. The data center provides enhanced security and redundancy that you couldn't afford in your own office.
17. Your database will not be "marooned" on broken hard drives or "lost at sea" on computers that have been stolen
18. The data center is more dependable than a typical wide area network, being available for use more than 99% of the time.
19. If your Internet Service Provider goes down, you can use an office or home dial up connection, such as MSN, ATT or AOL to access your data.
20. The data center is inspected and monitored by third-party evaluation companies.
21. There is a password to access the ASP.
22. There is a password to get into the database
23. The ASP password is changed periodically.
24. You own your data.

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Economical



Studies show that offices using ASPs save money. In evaluating your savings it is important to look at the total cost of ownership (TCO) of operating your computers.

With an ASP, you DON'T need:

25. To buy a SQL server.
26. To hire anyone with SQL server knowledge.
27. To buy SQL licenses.
28. To buy a Citrix Server or Servers.
29. To hire anyone with Citrix XP knowledge.
30. To buy Citrix XP software.
31. To upgrade your computers, since the speed of the system is independent of the workstation using it.
32. To buy Microsoft software licenses.
33. Upgrade your hardware to run Windows 2000 or XP (which is what the database runs on at the data center).
34. To buy and setup backup hardware, backup software, and tapes.
35. To spend time backing up, rotating and storing the tapes, and testing the backup.
36. To figure out load balancing within servers in your office.
37. To hire anyone who knows how to run a Web Server
38. To find a safe, locked, secured room with air conditioning to house your servers.
39. Bigger bandwidth coming into the main office, since each office communicates with the data center. No one office acts as the compilation point for all the others.
40. To provide dual data lines from multiple providers into your main office to deal with outages that might occur to one.
41. Routers and dedicated lines. All you need is adequate access to the Internet.
42. A team of engineers debugging the latest version of Windows, Citrix XP, SQL or how they interact with each other. Venture Technologies has that team working for you.
43. To staff a help desk.
44. A Diesel generator
45. Battery backups.
46. To install a fire suppression system.

You also save in other ways.

47. There is an extremely short setup time, measured in days not months. You and your staff are not tied up for six months getting things working.
48. There is a low cost to get up and running
49. An ASP causes reduced overall costs for both management and hardware.
50. Bandwidth requirements are kept to a minimum, 12 to 20K per user.
51. Your application costs become predictable. This makes budgeting much easier.
52. The ASP compensates for lack of internal IT resources. If you don't have highly skilled computer people, you don't need to hire them.
53. Extend the useful life of your old computers. Replace them three years after you normally would.
54. Buy new inexpensive desktop or laptop computers with no performance penalty. The speed of Clients depends on the equipment at the data center.
55. Pull old computers out of the closet and start using them again.
56. Expensive hardware and software experts don't sit idle for long periods of time waiting for calls when things are working correctly.
57. Attorneys and administrators can go back to doing their normal jobs, rather than trying to be an IT department.
58. Other high-end applications that you might not otherwise afford are now within reach.
59. Complex applications usually require support for both the application (Clients) and the data base (Microsoft SQL). Eliminate the need to support the database.
60. Eliminate the worry of or liability for illegally pirated software existing on workstations.

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Easy



The ASP version of Clients is actually easier to install and work with than the normal version. This is because the work is done for you.

61. When your data is ready, we can set you up in a day.
62. Venture Technologies can set you up with all your applications on an ASP, not just case management. You can add email, word processing, accounting and other applications that wouldn't be affordable to buy and support.
63. In a totally ASP-based system, the only software required on the user's desktop is a Web browser. This would totally eliminate the need to manage client software desk-by-desk.
64. Venture Technologies can arrange to provide you with connectivity to the Internet if you need it.
65. All you need to run Clients ASP is a computer that supports an Internet Browser. Clients ASP will run on Windows, Linux, Unix, Macintosh and even Windows CE.
66. Upgrades are easy. Changes can be made to your system from our offices in Atlanta or at the ASP in Jackson.
67. Data entry error checking is easy. Check data entry daily or weekly from your own office.
68. Avoid the search every two years for experienced hardware and software people to replace ones who left for higher paying jobs.
69. Escape the pain and challenge of installing and managing a Wide Area Network (WAN).
70. Almost totally eliminate application maintenance tasks. Take the time you would have used learning SQL and Citrix and use it to train your staff on how to use case management. Use the time freed up to use case management information to manage, rather than fiddling with hardware and operating systems.
71. Be worry free about server and workstation setup. (Did the backup really work, and should I test it?)

72. Dial-up connections will work for one or two people.
73. KCW can help you with data changes without having to visit your office.
74. Guaranteed performance and uptime.
75. There are no additional development, testing, or deployment procedures for other individual applications. These can be 'turned on' in a day.

Powerful



Clients ASP has all the features of the normal version and more. Having it on an ASP makes it even more powerful.

76. Your case management runs on extremely fast computers at the data center. As time goes by, these data center computers will be upgraded without you even knowing it.
77. Clients ASP has all the powerful features of the normal Clients program, and more.
78. Use case management from any device, at any location through the Internet.
79. Add additional applications that are just as easy to access over the Internet.
80. Access case management from visitation sites, senior centers, at home or even on the road.
81. Use your time to improve your focus on what case management does, rather than maintenance and installation
82. Training and support can be handled centrally using "shadowing." This means we can take over a computer and show the user what they need to do, even if the user is on the other side of the country.
83. Eliminate the need for visiting each office and desktop to troubleshoot or install updates.
84. There are no WAN servers in the central or branch offices, so having a technical person on staff travel around to maintain them is not necessary. Your technical staff can concentrate on how the software works and helping advocates, rather than traveling.
85. The available power expands to match the size

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- of your data (there is scalability).
- 86. The speed of the application is almost completely independent of the equipment being used by the staff member.
- 87. Use your freed up time to use case management for strategic objectives. Eliminate disk or email transfers of data from branch offices.
- 88. The system uses the industrial strength Microsoft SQL Database.
- 89. The more complex technology tasks a legal services office takes on, the more they jeopardize their ability to represent clients. Legal Aid offices should focus on what they do best, representing clients.

Flexible



One important reason offices purchase Clients is that it is very flexible. Putting it on an ASP makes it easier to utilize this flexibility

- 90. Clients ASP can be modified and adjusted just like the standard version.
- 91. You can have custom queries
- 92. You can have custom reports
- 93. You can have custom 'special program' tables and intake sheets.
- 94. Expansion of storage, users or speed is fast and easy and invisible.
- 95. Customizations to the program need to be done to only one 'front-end'.
- 96. Once customizations are completed, they are automatically sent out to users in the evening.
- 97. Load balancing works invisibly. Underused servers can pick up the work of servers that are being heavily used.
- 98. Improvements and lessons learned by one legal services program using the ASP are shared among all of them.
- 99. Experienced computer people can be given extensive rights to customize and administer their version.
- 100. Major upgrades to new versions of the program

- can be handled without an on-site visit or mailing the database on a CD.
- 101. Downtime for upgrades is minimized.
- 102. Cases can be transferred to other legal aid programs.

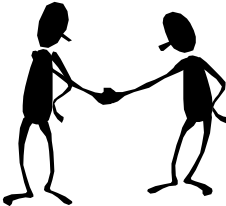
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The Power of Partnerships



From the Frontline

*by Carol Matthews**

BRIDGING THE GAP

At the recent National Aging and Law Conference I went to a workshop on “Navigating A Cashless Society”. It was an excellent presentation on the many ways money can change hands in these modern times and how the old fashioned methods are on their way out. This may be true for people who are younger and better educated, but a lot of poor and elderly folk are not part of the technological revolution and modern banking practices are beyond their experience.

Social Security has been insisting on direct deposit for several years now. Those who don’t want their checks direct deposited can request a waiver. Failure to provide the SSA with a bank account number is considered a request for a waiver. That is where a lot of my clients are. They are still cashing checks at the local store and paying a hefty price to do so. Sometimes it is a neighbor or relative who cashes their check without the little legal formalities—such as any kind of legal authorization. This practice has it up sides and down sides but seems fairly entrenched in some parts of the community. It is not at all what the Social Security Administration has in mind.

Sometimes a financial traditionalist agrees to adopt a modern banking practice. Recently, I spoke with a client who reluctantly had allowed her monthly check to be direct deposited. Now, on the first of every month, she goes to the bank and withdraws enough cash to buy a money order to pay her rent. She was totally impervious to everything I had to say about the uses of a checkbook. In the ongoing national debate about the privatization of social security I wonder whether any of the proponents have met my clients. The mind boggles at the thought of persons who can’t negotiate conventional banking transactions attempting to profit in the world of investment strategy. Unfortunately, it is all too easy to imagine what sort of financial counselors will be eager to help them, down at the corner store.

Banking transactions are only one example of the ways in which my low income and elderly clients have missed the technological revolution. Computers are not part of their lives. They cannot access information or government forms through the internet, or pay bills on line. The gap between the computer literate and illiterate does not just reflect a difference in education and income, but also in age. We need to find ways to bridge this gap.

LCE has launched a pilot project to provide some quasi-legal services to the older population by establishing self help offices (SHO) in the community. These offices are staffed by paralegals and specially recruited volunteers. Each office has computers linked to the internet, and loaded with software that allows a person to create some legal documents, write complaint letters, deal with most government agencies, and access information on the internet, all in the privacy of a local SHO assisted by technology savvy volunteers.

When these offices were opened it was anticipated that the hotline would provide the immediate legal back-up as necessary. We do that. No problem. But I have also found that the SHO can help out the hotline as well. When clients want help with government forms, need to locate information, or solve many other problems, the hotline can refer them to the SHO nearest their home. There, clients are able to write custom tailored consumer complaint letters, complete a public benefits check-up, obtain government services, prepare a complaint for small claims court, or do any of the many, many things that now can be done through the amazing capabilities of the internet. Thus the elderly can benefit from computer technology they could never use or afford at home.

**Carol Matthews is a hotline attorney and LCE in Washington D.C.*

Please submit your comments about LHQ articles, letters to the editor, news and information about legal hotline topics to:

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