

ACCESS TO JUSTICE BOARD

CIVIL EQUAL JUSTICE PROGRAM PERFORMANCE STANDARDS (OCTOBER 1999)

The Civil Equal Justice Program Performance Standards have been developed by the Access to Justice Board's Accountability Standards Committee. These standards represent the first attempt to articulate a uniform set of performance expectations for those engaged in the delivery of civil legal services to low-income and vulnerable people in Washington State. These Performance Standards are based upon and integrate expectations from a variety of different funders. It is the committee's intent that the standards' design will ensure that information is accurately and objectively reported to grant makers.

The Performance Standards specify the major areas that grant recipients must address. Listed below each standard are specific indicators that service providers must adequately address to successfully meet the standards. Methods will be developed to enable grant makers to evaluate individual programs for compliance with each indicator, as well as monitor for effectiveness.

The intent of the Performance Standards is to create a uniform grant reporting system that provides funders and the Access to Justice Community with information necessary to ensure the most effective and economical delivery of high quality services. Uniform standards allow program staff to spend more time on client-related issues and less time fulfilling grant reporting requirements.

Two documents are integral to these standards and by reference here are made a formal part of the standards: the *State Plan for the Delivery of Civil Legal Services to Low Income People in the State of Washington* (Revised September 1999) and the *Hallmarks of an Effective Statewide Civil Legal Services Delivery System* (July 1995) on which the *State Plan* is based. These documents are attached. All three documents must be read together to fully understand and be able to implement the standards.

Finally, while it may be self-evident, it is important to acknowledge that limitations on funding, staff and technological resources directly affect the capacity of any individual program to meet the full range of expectations set out here. Nonetheless, these standards serve as the goal toward which all civil equal justice participants should strive.

Performance Standard One: Strategic and Collaborative Planning

The organization consults with Access to Justice partners, clients and other stakeholders to identify the most pressing needs of the client community. The organization delivers services that are responsive to client needs, consistent with the *Hallmarks*, the organization's duties under the state plan and the organization's mission.

Indicators:

The organization:

- embraces the *Hallmarks*, identifies its strategic role in the ATJ delivery system, and defines its target client population(s);
- periodically (*i.e.*, 24 – 36 months or as circumstances dictate) undertakes a comprehensive reassessment of the most pressing legal problems of its target client population in consultation with clients, other social and human services providers, ATJ Network partners, and other entities with a stake in meeting the civil equal justice needs of low income and vulnerable people;
- defines client service priorities, goals and objectives that respond to identified legal problems;
- delivers services designed to meet client priorities, goals and objectives and states desired outcomes that are consistent with the organization's role under the *State Plan*;
- evaluates the effectiveness over time of client services in relationship to stated goals and objectives ;
- adjusts service delivery plans in response to changing and/or emerging needs or unexpected results.

Performance Standard Two: Development and Utilization of Resources

The organization works collaboratively and strategically to marshal and leverage internal and external resources to achieve defineable outcomes that respond to the target client community's most pressing and critical legal needs.

Indicators:

The organization works collaboratively to:

- identify resource needs to accomplish desired outcomes;
- allocate responsibility to develop and secure resources;
- ensure highest and best use of all resources consistent with applicable statutory and contractual requirements;
- ensure that resources are used to achieve the broadest possible benefit for the target client community.

Performance Standard Three: Client Access

The organization facilitates access for its target client community by coordinating with existing and emerging client access systems, minimizing barriers to persons who need access to the justice system, and expanding the capacity of clients to effectively assert and defend their rights within the civil justice system.

Indicators:

The organization:

- identifies and coordinates with existing and emerging local, regional and statewide client intake, advice and referral systems, including but not limited to the CLEAR system;
- identifies and addresses barriers such as language, disability, lack of transportation, or other status, condition, or cause which results in lack of access
- works to understand the broad range of values, cultures and aspirations represented within the client community, and develops internal capability to provide legal representation that is sensitive to these values, cultures and aspirations;
- fosters trust, affirms and reinforces the dignity of clients, is sensitive to each client's individual circumstances and, within resource limitations, is responsive to each client's legal problems;
- engages in efforts to increase client and client community understanding of the legal rights of low income people and the resources available through the Access to Justice Network, and to increase the ability of clients to assert and defend their rights within the civil justice system.
- increases program visibility, with particular emphasis on reaching those clients and client communities who suffer from conditions or circumstances which limit their capacity to self-identify legal problems and locate appropriate legal assistance resources.

Performance Standard Four: Quality Assurance

The organization develops and maintains the capability to ensure high quality client services.

Indicators:

The organization:

- achieves client-defined objectives consistent with applicable rules and standards governing professional responsibility;
- ensures effective supervision of client service activities;
- provides appropriate staff and management training opportunities and access to essential tools and technical expertise;
- performs a periodic evaluation of staff and management to ensure quality client services;
- recruits and provides appropriate support for a high quality, diverse and client-sensitive staff;
- adopts internal systems and standards for the timely, efficient and effective practice of law.

Performance Standard Five: Effective Management and Administration

The organization has management and administrative systems that enable staff and the organization to carry out work consistent with these standards.

Indicators:

The organization:

- has personnel and organizational management systems;
- develops and maintains internal communication and technology coordination;
- employs effective fiscal administration and record keeping;
- develops good external relations and communications capabilities;
- allocates resources in support of strategically developed service delivery activities and its Access to Justice Network responsibilities;
- complies with applicable grant and contract provisions.

Performance Standard Six: Governance.

The organization's board actively supports the mission and activities of the organization, and effectively exercises its oversight responsibility. The board ensures that the organization works in partnership with the Washington Access to Justice Network and supports the *Hallmarks* and the *State Plan for the Delivery of Civil Legal Services to Low Income People in the State of Washington*.

Indicators:

The organization ensures:

- board members are knowledgeable and committed to access to justice, the mission of the organization and the role of the organization in the larger Access to Justice Network;
- the board actively and appropriately engages in program governance and oversight;
- governance structure serves the organization's mission and ensures the highest and best use of the organization's resources;
- the board is knowledgeable about the program's activities.