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Office of Program Performance

Final Report

From the

Program Quality Visit

to

Iowa Legal Aid
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LSC Review Team

John Eidleman, OPP Program Counsel (Team Leader)
Nancy Glickman, OPP Program Counsel
James Scruggs, OPP Program Counsel
Meredith Horton, OPP Program Counsel
César Britos, OPP Temporary Employee
Betty Torres, OPP Temporary Employee
Stephanie Edelstein, OPP Temporary Employee

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INTRODUCTION

The Legal Services Corporation's (LSC) Office of Program Performance (OPP) conducted a program quality visit to Iowa Legal Aid (ILA) from August 24-28 2015. OPP's team consisted of LSC program counsels John Eidleman, Nancy Glickman, James Scruggs, and Meredith Horton, and LSC temporary employees César Britos, Stephanie Edelstein, and Betty Torres.

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

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

On-site, the team visited the program's main office in Des Moines and its offices located in Dubuque, Waterloo, Sioux City, Iowa City, Cedar Rapids, Davenport, and Council Bluffs. The team interviewed program leadership, management and administrative staff, advocacy staff, and support staff. The team also interviewed members of the board of directors, judges, community partner organizations, other state justice stakeholders, and bar representatives. Due to scheduling and time constraints, some of these interviews, including staff in the Mason City and the Ottumwa offices, were conducted by telephone.

SERVICE AREA AND PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Iowa Legal Aid provides a full range of legal services to eligible clients in 99 counties across 55,857 square miles through ten regional offices. It has a small migrant program staffed by one attorney assisted during the summer months by interns.

The service area is mostly rural with several urban areas. Polk County, which contains Des Moines, the state capital, is the most populous county, containing 459,862 residents as of 2014. The county's population living below the federal poverty level is estimated to be 11.8%.

According to the U. S. Census Bureau the state population in 2014 was 3,107,126 (54.5 persons per square mile) an increase of 2% from the 2010 population of 3,046,869. The ethnic breakdown of the state includes White, 92.1 %, Black, 3.4%, Hispanic 5.6%, and Native American, .05%. 12.2% of the population has income under the poverty line compared to 15.4% of the U.S. population. The Limited English proficiency (LEP) population is growing, particularly those that speak Eritrean, Somali, Spanish, and Serbo-Croatian.

Iowa Legal Aid was created as a statewide organization through a series of mergers. The Legal Aid Society of Polk County was founded in 1951 through the efforts of a community foundation, the local bar association, and Drake University to provide legal services to low-income residents

of the county. In 1965, four new legal aid societies in addition to the existing Polk County program were organized in Dubuque, Iowa City, Council Bluffs-Omaha and Waterloo under funding from the Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO) to provide legal services to low-income people who resided in those geographic areas. Iowa Legal Aid was established in 1977, as the Legal Services Corporation of Iowa (LSCI), through the merger of four existing legal services organizations located in Dubuque, Waterloo, Iowa City and Council Bluffs. LSCI opened new offices in Sioux City, Des Moines (serving south central Iowa), Mason City, Cedar Rapids, Ottumwa, Spencer, Creston, Fort Dodge, Burlington and Decorah giving the program a statewide reach other than Polk County. Funding decreases in the 1980s forced the closure of a number of the LSCI's offices.

In 2003, the Legal Services Corporation of Iowa and the Legal Aid Society of Polk County merged to form Iowa Legal Aid. In 2015 HELP Legal Assistance, which had covered the Davenport area and was a subgrantee of ILA, merged into Iowa Legal Aid.

Beginning in 1996, Iowa's General Assembly appropriated funds for Iowa's federally funded legal services programs. The Iowa State Bar Association and individual lawyers have expanded their support as well. Many other groups have come forward to address the important task of providing access to justice for Iowa's most vulnerable residents.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Iowa Legal Aid is a very accomplished, productive, and organized program providing high quality effective and efficient legal services to its clients. Some of the strengths include a dedicated highly professional well-respected and knowledgeable staff, excellent leadership, a well organized and proficient intake system, superior strategic planning and a supportive and dedicated board.

The most recent needs assessment was completed in early 2015 using surveys, stakeholder meetings and data analysis. As a result of the needs assessment, Iowa Legal Aid's priorities continue to include preserving safety and stability of individuals and families; maintaining or improving economic stability through consumer representation; preserving the home; and providing representation in income maintenance cases.

ILA began a comprehensive strategic planning process in December 2008 that included staff and board members, and culminated in the board's adoption of a plan in May 2010. The plan was revised and updated in 2014 in light of what had been accomplished and remained to be accomplished, as well as addressing new needs and goals. Staff committees continue to implement the strategic plan that is effective through 2017.

While overall priorities have remained constant, case acceptance criteria have been adjusted to reflect emerging legal needs of the client community. The program identifies emerging needs using a number of methodologies including review of data on cases accepted, requests for service, and surveys provided to recipients of extended service.

Iowa Legal Aid is well known throughout the service area, with regional offices in areas that allow access by the low-income population. Most offices are welcoming and conducive to productive work of a poverty law firm. However a few others are not only old, but are in need of improvement and refurbishing.

ILA has a very efficient and effective intake system that consists of a number of portals for clients to access legal services including telephone, walk-in, outreach and on-line. ILA has an efficient central telephone intake system that it calls “unified intake” through which most of the intake is conducted. Support staff and attorneys throughout all of ILA’s offices staff the unified intake system.

Requests for services from persons 60 and older are transferred to the ILA’s Legal Hotline for Older Iowans, which is funded under the Older Americans Act and staffed by an experienced managing attorney, three staff attorneys, an intake screener, and volunteer attorneys.

ILA staff maintains a high level of involvement in the community, through community legal education and partnerships with community groups. Staff members conduct numerous community legal education events on a wide variety of subjects targeted towards specific groups. Outreach is expected of all staff and managing attorneys.

ILA has a long history of providing high quality legal services often resulting in extensive benefits to its client population. Over the years, ILA has expanded the legal rights of low income Iowans in numerous areas including protecting and preserving debt collection exemptions, domestic violence protective orders, evictions, and foreclosures. The program encourages appeals, impactful work, and affirmative litigation and has developed an Intensive Preparation of Appeals and Trials (IPAT) system to support this work. In 2014, ILA provided a total of over \$40 million in either direct financial benefits to clients or indirect financial benefits to local communities through various services such as preventing homelessness and domestic abuse.

Aside from its traditional representation, ILA has a number of special projects including Youth Link, Parent Representation, Disaster Coordination, Veterans support, and expansion of its medical legal partnerships. The recently formed program-wide Racial Equity Committee is working on identifying and addressing systemic issues facing low-income people of color.

ILA is a very productive program, providing high quality legal services to comparatively large numbers of eligible clients. ILA routinely exceeds the national median for LSC grantees in closed cases per 10,000 poor persons in all data captured categories, including total closed, extended closed, and contested closed categories. In 2014 ILA closed 425 cases per 10,000 poor persons as compared to the national median of 172.

ILA has a number of legal work management policies and procedures in its Program Operations Manual (POMS), that address program procedures for topics including the program’s tickle and calendaring system, case file maintenance, post intake case considerations, document retention, appeal and complex litigation procedures, and training requests.

Supervisors appeared to have a good command of their supervisees’ work through case staffing and the open door supervision policies. However, legal work supervision policies appear to be somewhat informal and the execution of the formal policies varies among offices.

ILA has a very good PAI program that is integrated with intake, encourages participation by the advocacy staff and takes advantage of the local office connections with the local legal community. The ILA Volunteer Lawyer Project (IVLP) places cases in 98 of the state’s 99 counties. The Polk County Bar Association Volunteer Lawyers Project places cases in Polk County. ILA works closely with Polk County VLP, screening applicants seeking help from ILA, referring appropriate cases to Polk County VLP for placement, meeting regularly to determine what types of cases attorneys are accepting cases while fine-tuning the system.

Private attorneys have a number of opportunities to fulfill their PAI goal. They provide direct legal services to clients in a variety of cases, participate in the intake, and provide assistance to pro se clients at clinics.

ILA has a small Migrant Farmworker Project (MFP) that is staffed by one Spanish-speaking attorney who has been with ILA since 2007 and assigned to the MFP for approximately one year. The most prevalent legal problems for the migrant population are housing and employment issues. The MFP emphasizes extensive outreach and community education efforts to conduct intake in addition to the distributed intake system. Migrant closed cases were highly impressive as they were more than double the national median in all categories, including 31 closed per 10,000 migrant population, as compared to the national median of 14.

ILA has a committed board of directors who provide effective oversight and involvement in major policy decisions. The board is very knowledgeable about the program's mission and operations. Each office has a regional council which serves as a voice of the local communities and offices, raises the visibility of the program, raises funds, and provides a leadership opportunity that at times results in membership on the ILA Board.

The board members receive extensive training to serve as members. All new board members receive a formal training session as well as have a mentor who provides guidance and answers questions about their obligations as board members and about board operations. Client members participate on board committees (e.g. the program committee) and generally are vocal and engaged at full board meetings.

The program's leadership has significant experience and leadership ability. ILA's executive director has been in his position for 23 years and is highly respected and supported by the staff and the board. Outside constituencies hold him in high regard and see him as a strong point of the program.

ILA makes impressive efforts to maintain and expand its base of funding, in an effort to increase the quality and quantity of services to eligible clients. ILA's resource development efforts are highly professional, well coordinated, and consistent with the program's mission.

The program has multiple sources of funding that include state, federal and local grants, IOLTA funds, Area Agencies on Aging, general and earmarked grants from other non- profits, corporate and individual contributions, private foundations, bar associations and attorneys fees awards. A creative effort to enhance resources is the formation of the Iowa Legal Aid Foundation, which ILA was instrumental in creating in 2005. The Foundation is an independent entity created for the benefit of Iowa Legal Aid and to raise funds for the program and to establish an endowment to support the organization's work over the long-term.

ILA's delivery structure is effective and the program is an active participant in an overall delivery system statewide. It is the primary provider of legal services in the state and a leader in the state justice community. Iowa Legal Aid is highly respected among service providers, including those that serve seniors and those that serve a wider population. Staff members have been described as collaborative, knowledgeable, and strong advocates for clients.

FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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

Finding 1. ILA last completed a legal needs assessment in 2015.

The most recent needs assessment was completed in early 2015. The assessment primarily utilized surveys, although it also included meetings with stakeholders and staff, and data analysis. Surveys were included in the Equal Justice Journal¹ (mailed to approximately 7,000 households), posted on the ILA website, sent to a random selection of current and former clients, distributed at outreach and community legal education events, and sent to volunteer attorneys and other stakeholders. A sampling of clients with limited English proficiency were surveyed in their primary language. In addition, the program obtained input from staff, analyzed intake data on cases accepted and not accepted, and considered census and other data. Regional office advisory councils were actively involved in the needs assessment and priority setting process. The program used fewer meetings than in past assessments but engaged in a greater use of electronic surveys.

As a result of the needs assessment, Iowa Legal Aid's priorities continue to include preserving safety and stability of individuals and families; maintaining or improving economic stability through consumer representation; preserving the home; and providing representation in income maintenance cases. ILA's board reviews priorities annually.

Recommendation:² I.1.1.1. ILA should continue to use the results of its needs assessment as its guide in establishing priorities, and when annually reviewing priorities it should also consider new trending issues recognized by staff.

Strategic planning

Finding 2. Iowa Legal Aid adopted a strategic plan in May 2010, and revised that plan in November 2014. The current plan is effective through 2017.

Strategic planning is one of the strengths of Iowa Legal Aid. The 2007 LSC joint visit report recommended that ILA engage in a strategic planning process. The program began a comprehensive strategic planning process in December 2008 with the assistance of an outside

¹ The Equal Justice Journal is the ILA quarterly newsletter, which is mailed to approximately 7,000 households and also available at libraries, senior centers and shelters and other sites in hard copy, and online at <http://www.iowalegalaid.org/>

² Recommendations in this report will be identified by a Roman Numeral cross-referenced to the relevant Performance Area, followed by three numbers identifying, respectively, the Criterion addressed by the recommendation, the number of the finding, and a number designating whether it is the first, second, third, etc., recommendation under that finding. For example, III.2.14.3 designates Performance Area III, Criterion 2, Finding 14, and Recommendation 3 under Finding 14. There are two tiers (levels) of recommendations in this report. Recommendations marked with an asterisk* are Tier One Recommendations and are intended to have a direct and major impact on program quality and/or program performance. In your next grant renewal application or competitive grant application, instead of submitting a full narrative, your program will be required to report on what it has done in response to Tier One Recommendations.

consultant. The multi-step process included staff and board members, and culminated in the board's adoption of a plan in May 2010. The plan included quarterly status reports to the board.

In 2014, staff committees reviewed the 2010 strategic plan and made recommendations to the board for updates. At its November 2014 meeting, the board revised and updated the plan, taking into consideration goals that had been met (e.g., merger with HELP Legal Assistance), and those that had not yet been fully achieved or that should be ongoing. The current plan, effective through 2017, includes ten goals and accompanying strategies for achieving them. Goals include high quality casework, targeting services to achieve lasting results, intake, internal communications, succession planning, increasing the use of non-attorney volunteers, strengthening the roles of regional advisory councils, technology, partnerships, and staff retention. Each goal is accompanied by strategies.

Implementation of the plan involves staff at all levels and in all offices, under the leadership of the litigation director and a deputy director. The staff is actively engaged in achieving the goals of the strategic plan. There are ten staff committees totaling approximately sixty staff, working on strategies to fulfill the goals of the strategic plan. The board continues to receive quarterly reports on the implementation process and achievements.

Recommendation I.1.2.1.* ILA should continue to implement its strategic planning process.

Evaluation and adjustment

Finding 3. Iowa Legal Aid uses results of the needs assessment and other surveys and information to identify emerging issues and adjust priorities and services accordingly.

The program identifies emerging needs using a number of methodologies. The litigation director and assistant litigation director, along with other staff members, review data on cases accepted, requests for service, and surveys provided to recipients of extended service, and factor the information gathered into the program's analysis of emerging needs. The results are used to inform ILA leader's and board efforts to address emerging needs.

While overall priorities have remained constant, case acceptance criteria have been adjusted to reflect emerging needs. The recent needs assessment resulted in a higher priority for unfair debt collection cases, and clarification that certain tax cases could be accepted for staff representation and that veterans' cases can be handled if private bar representation is not available. In the past, Iowa Legal Aid has responded quickly to needs necessitated by natural disasters such as the flooding in the Cedar Rapids area in 2008. The program has also responded to the needs of a growing immigrant population in the state by seeking out and partnering with service providers to meet those needs, beginning with outreach and community education. Most recently, the program is responding to the growing problem of unfair collection of court fees and other court-related debt, particularly claims for reimbursement of indigent defense costs. As the demographics of the state have changed, Iowa Legal Aid has also begun to examine the impact of practices such as collection of court debt on communities of color. Case acceptance criteria may vary among offices, based on regional needs.

Finding 4: Iowa Legal Aid collects outcomes information, engages in ongoing evaluation of its delivery mechanisms, and makes adjustments accordingly.

Outcomes for case services are recorded in the case management system. Outcomes data was collected and incorporated into a 2013 report, *The Economic Impact of Iowa Legal Aid*, which

staff, board, and advisory councils used in presentations and other forums to demonstrate the economic value of the program to various constituencies and as a fundraising tool.

ILA also continually evaluates its delivery mechanisms, and makes adjustments accordingly. Examples of recent adjustments include: adjustment of the intake process to make it more efficient and effective for the client community and for staff; hiring a Volunteer Services Project Manager to help establish improved procedures for recruitment, training, supervision and retention of volunteers; and personnel changes to develop new leaders in response to the need for succession planning.

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

Engagement with and access and utilization by the low-income population

Office locations, access, and conditions

Finding 5. Iowa Legal Aid is well known throughout the service area, with regional offices in areas that allow access by the low-income population.

Offices, which serve from two to fourteen counties, are located in communities throughout the state, in Iowa's larger population centers, in reasonable proximity to the client community, courts, and other services.

The quality of office space varies within the program. Most offices are welcoming and conducive to productive work of a poverty law firm. The offices have multiple brochures for visitors and some have toys for their children. However, exterior signage is lacking in many of the offices, and a few offices did not appear to have sufficient security to protect clients and or staff from intruders. In addition, some offices are in need of improvement and refurbishing, such as the Waterloo office.

Recommendation II.1.5.2: ILA should evaluate the conditions of each office to ensure that they are safe for clients and staff.

Recommendation II.1.5.3: As resources permit ILS should make renovations in the Waterloo office.

Recommendation II.1.5.4: ILA should review the signage for each office to ensure that applicants and clients can easily find the office location or suite.*

Dignity and sensitivity, including intake

Finding 6: ILA has a very efficient and effective intake system that was developed following the LSC Office of Program Performance/Office of Compliance and Enforcement joint visit in 2007.

ILA has a number of portals for clients to access legal services including telephone, walk-in, outreach and on-line. ILA has an efficient central telephone intake system that it calls "unified intake" through which most of the intake is conducted. Support staff and attorneys throughout all of ILA's offices staff the unified intake system. While at the time of the visit ILA had two

dedicated intake attorneys, that number varies and most staff attorneys are assigned at least one intake session per week.³ Senior staff attorneys are not required to handle any intake sessions, they are responsible for handling emergency matters on Thursday afternoons. Attorneys are considered “on-call” during their intake session time.

Telephone applicants are routed to the next available support staff member, who screens the applicants for conflicts and eligibility. Eligible applicants are temporarily placed on hold and the support staff then enters an intake chat room and posts information about the pending application, including a link to the case file in PIKA, the program’s case management system (CMS). An on-call attorney will respond to the message in the chat room and agree to take the case, and the call is transferred to that attorney. If an applicant is on hold for more than one minute waiting for an attorney, the screener will ask if the applicant would prefer a call from the attorney or if they wish to be on hold longer. The client makes the determination on whether they wish to hold longer on the phone. The attorney conducts a full interview and either closes the case as advice and counsel, or refers the case to the appropriate regional office. Applicants whose cases have been referred to a regional office are advised that their cases will be reviewed by that office to determine if the applicant can be further assisted.

In addition to telephone intake, ILA also accepts walk-in and on-line applications. Walk-in applicants are screened for conflicts and eligibility and then will meet in-person with one of the staff attorneys or offered a private space where they can call the telephone unified intake system if no staff attorney is available.

ILA receives an average of seven online intake applications per day using A2J software. The Ottumwa office’s receptionist reviews the applications, contacts the applicants, verifies conflict and eligibility information and sends it to an intake attorney. The information from the online intake is entered automatically into the Pika case management system when the application is made.

The regional offices hold weekly staff meetings during which time they review the cases from unified intake to determine the cases they will accept for further services, the cases that need more information, and the cases that will be closed without any additional assistance. The offices determine which cases they will accept for additional service based on available staffing resources and usually notify the applicant within 48 hours of their staff meetings.

The unified intake system has a number of benefits including: spreading the intake throughout the service area; allowing the lawyers to hear first-hand the various legal issues presented to the program; requiring the lawyers to become somewhat familiar with rudimentary knowledge on these issues or identify who in the program can answer the questions; requiring the lawyer to work and discuss cases with advocates and staff throughout the program; and building unity of the staff and the program. The system has also helped to bring the regional offices together. Most of the regional office staff participates in some part of the unified intake system, and the chat room feature provides an opportunity for employees to communicate across the offices in real time.

³ Telephone intake is performed in two shifts a day, Monday through Wednesday, and on Fridays (9:00 to 11:00 AM and 1:30 to 3:30 PM). ILA does telephone intake on Thursday mornings from 9 to 11 but not Thursday afternoons, except for emergencies. Each intake shift is called an intake session. The full time intake attorneys have eight sessions a week.

ILA has a very impressive and comprehensive intake manual to guide the staff through the intake process. In addition, ILA has bi-weekly support staff meetings to address intake issues such as policy changes, or changes in case acceptance priorities in the regional offices, etc. Due to variations in staffing and the availability of local funding and grants, some offices may have additional case priorities that are not available in other offices.

There are also multiple opportunities for cases to be reviewed by supervising attorneys. The managing attorneys review cases that are closed at the intake stage, and the managing attorney and staff attorneys review cases that are sent to the regional offices. Different staff members run various reports regarding the intake system data for different purposes, but it does not appear that there is a comprehensive evaluation of the intake system as contemplated by the strategic plan.

Some staff interviewed had concerns about the intake system. While the support staff appreciated the regular meetings and communications about changes and updates to the intake system, some reported feeling a little overwhelmed by all of the information that they had to continually process. Some staff attorneys were concerned that applicants and clients were being screened out too quickly and pertinent legal issues were missed. The lack of familiarity with regional variations may also frustrate efforts to craft systemic approaches to local issues such as poor rental housing.

Additionally, although there appears to be multiple-layers of review for the cases coming through the unified intake system, it does not appear that there is any coordinated system of case review. It is not clear that managing attorneys are reviewing cases for similar issues, and it is also not clear that offices are using similar baselines to determine which cases to accept for extended services.

Legal hotline for older Iowans

Requests for services from persons 60 and older are transferred to the senior legal hotline, which is in operation 9-4:30 Monday-Friday and funded under the Older Americans Act and staffed by an experienced managing attorney, three staff attorneys, an intake screener, and volunteer attorneys. The hotline provides advice and brief services; more extended services are handled by regional office staff or referred to the volunteer lawyer project. Hotline staff also conducts numerous community legal education programs throughout the state.

Recommendation II.1.6.5.* ILA should designate one person at a managerial level to oversee the overall intake system on an ongoing basis to ensure that all attorneys and support staff are aware of any differences in the levels of services offered by the regional offices and differences in local court practice rules.

Recommendation II.1.6.6: ILA should ensure that regional offices inform the program about the kinds of cases they accept for extended service and about local court practices that may impact case acceptance decisions.

Outreach

Finding 7: ILA staff maintains a high level of involvement in the community, through community legal education and partnerships with community groups.

ILA conducts numerous community legal education events on a wide variety of subjects targeted towards specific groups. Outreach is expected of all advocate staff and managing attorneys.

Audiences include persons experiencing homelessness, domestic violence victims, veterans, seniors and their caregivers, at-risk youth, foster parents, and those experiencing mental illness. Topics include divorce, custody, protective orders, wills, probate, powers of attorney/advance directives/end of life care, guardianships/conservatorships, landlord/tenant issues, employment, fraud/elder fraud, consumer protection, debt collection/garnishment, and Medicaid issues. The program has a Low-income Taxpayer Clinic grant from the IRS under which it conducts extensive outreach often targeted to the English as a Second Language (ESL) community.

Since 2006, ILA has operated a statewide medical-legal project in collaboration with a primary care medical provider and a homeless outreach and transitional housing organization. More recently, the program has entered into contracts with three other medical institutions to provide services. These projects involve on-site hospital outreach and intake, holistic assessments, and efforts to eliminate healthcare barriers and address the social and environmental factors that negatively impact a client's well being.

The program also produces numerous consumer legal publications, including an extensive guide to landlord-tenant court and the quarterly Equal Justice Journal, which is mailed to 7,000 households, available at libraries and other sites, and posted on the ILA website. The quality of the program's consumer legal publications is exemplified by its Guide to Landlord Tenant Law in Iowa, which is used as a reference by judges presiding over residential landlord tenant cases.

Outreach is a priority for the managing attorneys in the branch offices, some of which cover largely rural regions of the state. For example branch office staff set up outreach events at local libraries focusing on seniors' issues (Medicaid, power of attorney, other aging issues).

Limited English Proficiency

Finding 8: ILA adopted a comprehensive Language Access Policy in 2005, and amended that policy in 2011.

ILA's language access practices and limited English proficiency (LEP) policy are comprehensive and effective. The staff, the executive director, and board review ILA's services for LEP clients annually.

There is limited language diversity in Iowa. LEP Iowans comprise 5.3% of the low-income population in the state according to the American Community Survey estimates for 2010-2012. The most prevalent non-English language spoken among the low-income population is Spanish, followed by Arabic and Chinese. In the Des Moines area, languages spoken by the client community also include Bhutanese, Bosnian, and Sudanese. In 2014, Iowa Legal Aid provided services to clients who spoke 51 different languages.

As of the date of the visit, ILA has four fully bilingual staff members: three Spanish-speaking staff (including one of the staff attorneys) and one staff member who speaks Bosnian. In addition, several staff members are sufficiently proficient that they can perform tasks independently in Spanish.

The LEP policy requires an annual review of ILA's services for LEP clients and a comprehensive review of the policy itself and the legal needs of the state's LEP population every five years. These reviews are led by the staff LEP work group and presented to the executive director and board of directors. The most recent comprehensive assessment was performed in 2011, and the review conducted in 2014 was presented to the board in April 2015.

In the annual review, the program evaluates changes in the LEP population in the state, ILA's outreach to LEP communities, staff language capacity, number of non-English language intakes, and the program's use of outside translation and interpretation services. Support staff and attorneys are aware of the LEP policy and appropriately make use of the in-house bilingual staff to interpret for Spanish-speaking clients, the language interpretation service (Pacific Interpreters), AmeriCorps volunteers, or community-based resources to quickly and effectively serve LEP clients.

The automated recording heard by all callers to ILA offers Spanish speakers the option to be directed to dedicated bilingual staff for assistance and intake. The ILA website is available in Spanish, Bosnian, and Arabic. Brochures, signs, and informational materials in office waiting rooms were available in multiple languages, as well.

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

Legal representation

Staffing and expertise

Finding 9: ILA has a good mix of new, mid-level, and highly experienced advocates practicing primarily as generalists.

Of the sixty-eight attorneys, eight have a year or less experience, twenty-two have two to ten years' experience, thirteen have ten to twenty-five years' experience, and twenty-five attorneys have more than twenty-five years of experience. The average experience level is seventeen and one-half years.

With the exception of a number of grant specific positions, i.e. tax, Violence Against Women Act (VAWA), juvenile and foreclosure, all the attorneys work as generalists, often with one to three areas of special interest or concentration. This generalist scheme assists in both the operation of the intake system as well as full coverage of all subject areas in the smaller offices. Numerous staff has developed significant expertise in their area of interest encouraged by the senior attorney designation process, which requires work on a special project. Such expertise exists in all program priority areas and a number of staff has written sections of state and national practice manuals. The program maintains a list of subject matter experts on its wiki and advocates routinely turn to these experts for assistance.

Quality of legal work

Finding 10. ILA has a long history of providing high quality legal services often resulting in extensive benefits to its client population.

Over the years, ILA has expanded the legal rights of low income Iowans in numerous areas including protecting and preserving exemptions, protective orders, evictions, and foreclosures. Most recently, the program has addressed the increasing use of administrative mechanisms by various levels of government to collect debts. By negotiating with several government entities, the program has improved the notice process, stopped certain collections not authorized by law, and vacated illegally obtained judgments. In 2014, ILA obtained a total of over \$40 million in either direct financial benefits to clients or indirect financial benefits to local communities

through various services such as preventing homelessness and domestic abuse. Team interviews with judges and community partners were uniform in their praise for the program's work.

ILA has a number of special projects that have been highly successful. Since its inception in 2008, ILA's Foreclosure Defense Project has assisted some 11,000 clients. In over 60% of the cases, ILA either prevented foreclosure of a client's home or significantly delayed a foreclosure sale to allow time for mortgage modifications or workout agreements. In 2014, the program's longstanding Legal Hotline for Older Americans added a focus on elder abuse issues which resulted in some of the first protective orders under the state's new Elder Abuse Act. The program's newest effort, the Parent Representation Project provides early intervention to parents whose children are involved in a juvenile court child in need of assistance action or may be at risk of being part of the system.

In addition, ILA has recently formed a program-wide Racial Equity Committee that is identifying and addressing systemic issues facing low-income people of color, and a work group has identified LEP issues affecting this growing client population. While many of the advocates are engaged in special projects or creative advocacy, others tended to operate solely within the realm of more traditional direct services.

The writing samples submitted to the team reflected work in all program priority areas in a variety of forums including local, state, federal, and appellate courts. The program encourages appeals, impactful work, and affirmative litigation and has developed an Intensive Preparation of Appeals and Trials (IPAT) system to support this work. The team was impressed with the high number of appeals from administrative tribunals, state courts, and federal courts. Of the 56 writing samples involving court or administrative tribunal, seven were in the Iowa Supreme Court, two the US. Circuit Court of Appeals and seven were court appeals of administrative hearings. Issues addressed included first amendment rights of those on offender registries, the propriety of city ordinances seeking removal of homeless encampments from public view, and protection of unemployment rights for those absent from work without intent or foreseeability. While numerous samples demonstrated aggressive and creative advocacy, others did not reflect the experience level of the author.

Quantity of legal work

Finding11: Despite a decline in case closure for the past five years, ILA still routinely exceeds the national median for LSC grantees in closed cases per 10,000 poor persons in all data captured categories, including total closed, extended closed, and contested closed categories.

In 2014 ILA closed 65 extended cases per 10,000 poor persons compared to the national median of 39, and 40 contested closed cases as compared to the national median of 18. Impressive as they are, these figures are even more impressive when one considers that ILA closed over 2,000 non-LSC reportable cases during the same time period.

Individual caseloads appeared to be of appropriate size ranging from single digits for those attorneys with other responsibilities to 74. The overall average was 25 cases per advocate. The review of closed cases per county as compared to the overall poverty population reflects appropriate figures on both the county and regional office levels.

Legal work management

Finding 12: ILA has a variety of legal work management policies and procedures, which are generally found in its Program Operations Manual. Supervision policies appear to be less documented.

The litigation director and assistant litigation director have responsibility for oversight of substantive legal areas. An advocacy team composed of senior staff attorneys and other experienced staff provides support the litigation director, assistant litigation director and staff throughout the program on substantive legal issues.

The Program Operations Manual (POMS), available electronically, contains program procedures for a myriad of topics including the program's tickle and calendaring system, case file maintenance, post intake case considerations, document retention, appeal and complex litigation procedures, and training requests. In addition to the POMS, new staff attorneys receive a 20-page memo on their job expectations and office procedures. The memo covers various aspects of the attorney's job responsibilities, program/office policies, and specific expectations for work to be performed during the first six months of employment. A similar, but specifically tailored expectation memo is also utilized for all new managing attorneys. It discusses the full panoply of managing attorney responsibilities including fiscal, grants management, casework, outreach, and PAI.

While supervisors appeared to have a good command of their supervisees' work through case staffing and the ubiquitous open door supervision policies, legal work supervision policies appear to be informal and vary among offices. The managing attorney expectation memo is generally silent on specific supervision protocols and the POMS section on legal work supervision only addresses case reviews. The POMS case review section calls for reviews for new attorneys on a monthly basis for their first nine to 12 months and more experienced attorneys every three to four months. Generally, discretion is given to the managing attorney as to whether the reviews consist of samples or entire open case reviews. Team interviews reflected that case reviews ranged from weekly for some new attorneys to not at all for more experienced attorneys. Review of managing attorney caseloads appeared very limited. There also does not appear to be any specific procedures as to review of written work and while some supervisors have set up internal systems, it appears to be generally self-directed.

Accompanying attorneys to court on their first cases and/or co-counseling varies among offices as well. Closed case reviews appear to be for compliance purposes as opposed to a quality review.

It is important to underscore that the team did not see a lack of supervision within the offices, but rather the dearth of policies resulted in differing levels and methods among the offices.

Training

Training is readily available to staff. The new attorneys are required to attend new lawyer training put on by the program. The new hires are also assigned a mentor from another office for a period of six months. Twice a year the entire program gets together for training covering the various workgroup subject areas at "work group day trainings".⁴ Attorneys attend state CLE trainings and participate in webinars on substantive issues. Advocates frequently attend MIE, and NITA trainings and a few have attended National Organization of Social Security Claimants' Representatives (NOSSCR), NLADA trainings, migrant and ABA tax section trainings. The

⁴ The work group days usually include training on substantive legal issues for which attorneys can receive CLE credit, and additional one half day training sessions for the support staff.

assistant litigation director attended the Shriver Center, Racial Justice Training Institute (RJTI), NLADA litigation directors training and the National Consumer Law Center Conference.

There is a training committee that must approve requests for training after they are approved by the supervisor and prior to the executive's approval. A number of staff believed that national or out of state training was not available due to fiscal concerns and were reluctant to request approval to attend those trainings. The multistep process to obtain permission to attend training may also have a chilling effect on staff requests to attend trainings.

Recommendation III.1.12.7*: ILA should ensure that supervision of legal work is consistent with the program's high standards and that periodic review of open files takes place.

Recommendation III.1.12.8*: ILA should consider revising its multi-step approval policy for trainings, clarify with staff what trainings are available, and the process by which staff need to request training and by which they receive approval.

Private attorney involvement

Finding 13: ILA has an efficient and effective PAI program that is integrated with intake, encourages participation by the advocacy staff and takes advantage of the local office connections with the local community.

Iowa Legal Aid has two effective PAI programs. The ILA Volunteer Lawyer Project (IVLP) places cases in 98 of the state's 99 counties. The Polk County Bar Association Volunteer Lawyers Project (Polk County VLP) places cases in Polk County. ILA works closely with the Polk County VLP, screening applicants seeking help from ILA, referring appropriate cases to them for placement, meeting regularly to determine what types of cases attorneys are accepting while fine-tuning the system. Approximately 35% of Polk County VLP's cases are referrals from ILA.

ILA has a well-written and comprehensive PAI plan that describes the reason for the program, recent changes, and the process for placing cases. In addition, procedures for the operation of the VLP program are written, detailed, comprehensive and part of the intake manual or in the POMS. All relevant information is captured in the PIKA CMS.

Private attorneys have a number of opportunities to fulfill their PAI aspirational goal of providing 50 hours of pro bono service.⁵ They supply direct legal services to clients in a variety of cases, participate in the intake process by making call backs to eligible applicants for legal services and provide assistance to pro se clients at clinics. The IVLP manual for volunteer attorneys that addresses the legal areas for referred cases is updated annually.

The selection and placement of cases, which is incorporated into the distributed intake system, is efficient and well managed. Callers are screened and the advocate on duty flags the case as a possible PAI referral, or the case is identified at case staffing. The managing attorney of the office determines that the case is appropriate for PAI and the applicant is sent a referral letter giving appropriate advice on the case, indicating that a referral is possible, and containing the VLP retainer agreement that must be signed, completed, and returned to commence the referral. When the documents are returned, the PAI coordinator uses the database to find an attorney. The

⁵ Iowa Rules of Professional Conduct, Rule 6.1 encourages Iowa lawyers to provide at least 50 hours of pro bono service a year the substantial majority of which should be provided to persons of limited means.

attorney is sent the appropriate information concerning the client's case and then the PAI attorney makes an appointment. A follow up letter is sent to the attorney after the placement to confirm that the appointment has occurred.

At times the local office will make a lateral placement to an attorney or firm in its geographic area. Those cases are referred to the PAI coordinator and then back to the local office to insure that all pertinent information is captured for reporting purposes. The managing attorney of the local office must review the lateral referral prior to its completion. A benefit of the lateral referral is that the local office keeps its contacts with the local community and lawyers.

Placement of cases with volunteer attorneys in Scott and Clinton Counties continues to be handled in the same manner as was done previously by HELP, prior to the merger. The Davenport office places and monitors the cases as part of ILA's IVLP. Cases referred to the Polk County VLP are picked up by a representative of the Polk County VLP.

There is a Volunteer Services Program manager and two other staff assigned to all of the program's VLP endeavors. However, the executive director reviews all VLP referrals other than routine family law or simple wills and has responsibility for overall supervision of the PAI program. Numerous other staff members also have some responsibility for PAI in addition to the executive director. The screeners, advocates and managing attorneys all play a fundamental role. It is unclear to the team if the executive director has the time to devote to the VLP operation. The assignment of a designated staff person to manage the entire PAI effort could result in more efficient supervision of the day-to-day activities of the VLP.

In 2014, ILA closed 1,441 PAI cases and the total closed PAI cases per 10,000 poor persons was 40 compared to the national median of 16. ILA closed 16 extended service PAI cases per 10,000 poor persons compared to the national median of six. For contested cases, ILA closed seven cases per 10,000 poor persons in 2014 compared to the national median of two. Forty percent of the closed PAI cases were extended service and 60% limited service.

The senior hotline uses volunteer attorneys in-house to provide advice and brief services to callers. The hotline also refers out certain cases (e.g., wills, powers of attorney) to volunteer attorneys.

Recommendation III.1.13.10: As resources allow, ILA should consider designating one person other than the executive director as a coordinator of all program's PAI activities to include management of recruitment, retention and recognition of PAI attorneys, as well as assuring proper oversight and follow up of cases.

Other services and program activities to and on behalf of the eligible client population

Finding 14: ILA engages in a variety of other service to and on behalf of the client eligible population.

The program reports that staff engaged in more than one thousand community education presentations to clients and stakeholder organizations in 2014, which were attended by approximately 4,785 persons. The topics for the community education included the full range of poverty law topics impacting clients and vulnerable populations e. g., the Earned Income Tax Credit, public benefit programs, Medicare Part D, consumer protection, advance health care directives, powers of attorney, wills, domestic violence, housing, emergency assistance, Medicaid for long-term care, and the Affordable Care Act among others. Interviews with staff and

stakeholders confirmed that the provision of community education is a core programmatic function. LITC funds for outreach to the English as a second language (ESL) communities supported presentations by ILA attorneys to ESL parents at Head Start meetings. ILA participates in three Medical Legal Partnerships. One is a partnership with Legal Aid of Nebraska and an Omaha based hospital. ILA and Legal Aid of Nebraska staff presented on this project at the National Medical Legal Partnership Conference and the programs won the 2015 Outstanding Medical Legal Partnership of the Year award.

In addition, ILA publishes the Equal Justice Journal quarterly and provides extensive information on its website. ILA conducts only a few pro se clinics, limited to persons seeking divorces where there are no children.

Recommendation III.3.14.11: ILS may want to consider expanding its use of pro se clinics.

Migrant program

ILA has a small Migrant Farmworker Project (MFP) that is staffed by one Spanish-speaking attorney who has been with ILA since 2007 and assigned to the MFP for approximately one year. ILA's 2015 grant application states that between 4,000 and 6,000 migrant farmworkers, mostly Hispanic, come to Iowa each growing season. They also work in meat and poultry processing plants. The most prevalent legal problems for the migrant population identified in the program's last needs assessment were housing and employment issues.

The program's telephone intake system is available to applicants to access legal services. However, because most farmworkers are isolated in rural areas and many are non-English speakers, the Project emphasizes extensive outreach and community education efforts to conduct intake. The outreach is well organized, often coordinated with the migrant health staff of collaborating organizations, generating a high yield of contacts. The ILS effort is conducted by Spanish-speaking summer interns who are sometimes accompanied by the staff attorney. In addition, as part of the outreach efforts, an outreach flyer created by the program that describes services available under Iowa Legal Aid's MFP is left at migrant labor camps. The program's website has a page containing a summary of some of the important rights and responsibilities of farmworkers; however, there is no reference to migrants, their rights or the migrant program on the home page. Viewers must type in the word "migrant" in the search box on the home page to get to the migrant page.

ILA has made the decision that because the migrant population is small and transitory and the grant is only \$37,740, the major emphasis of the project is on outreach, education, and brief advice. ILA outreach is focused on growers who employ large numbers of migrant workers..

The migrant attorney has taken advantage of the training available and attended a migrant training conference in 2014, training provided by the Midwest Migrant Program Training Consortium, and the Farmworker Advocate Training provided by the National Legal Aid and Defender Association (NLADA). She participates on a farmworkers law listserv. The MFP also coordinates with experts in other programs such as TRLA, which recently sent a paralegal to do joint outreach with ILA's staff attorney. The deputy litigation director supervises the migrant staff attorney.

Migrant closed cases were also highly impressive as they were more than double the national median in all categories including 31 closed cases per 10,000 migrant population, as compared to 14, 20 extended as compared to five and 10 contested as compared to the national median of a statistical zero per 10,000 poor persons.

Migrant Farmworker Project participates as part of an integrated delivery system for migrants. There are, several other organizations in Iowa that provide services to migrant farmworkers including Proteus, Inc., a statewide agency that provides health care and other services to migrant farmworkers. The project's staff attorney serves on the Board of Directors for Proteus. Migrant Farmworker Project also receives referrals from the New Iowan Centers that provide services to migrant farmworkers. In addition the Project coordinates with faith-based organizations, churches and community centers.

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

Board governance

Finding 15: ILA has a committed board of directors who provide effective oversight and involvement in major policy decisions.

The quality and commitment of the board strengthen the overall program. The board members are very knowledgeable about the program's mission and operations. The team's review of the detailed and comprehensive board and committee meeting minutes, as well as the on-site interviews with board members, demonstrate a highly engaged and dedicated board. The board's engagement extended to advocating for a surcharge in the annual attorney registration fees of Iowa's approximately 9,000 attorneys to promote access to justice, achieving an increase in state funding, other resource development activities, and participating as trainers in staff workgroup days.

The quarterly board meetings are generally well attended with most members attending in person and with few absences. The board members receive comprehensive materials prior to the meetings that they review and discuss at the meetings. At each meeting they also receive a progress report on the strategic plan. The meetings appear to be run efficiently, which is impressive considering the diversity of the tasks and agenda items before the board.

All of ILA's 18 member board seats are currently filled. ILA strives to achieve broad diversity in its board, including diversity of practice areas of the attorney members. Client members are selected according to the type of service they received while they were represented by the program. The board has 11 attorneys, six client board members and one other position. There are 10 women and eight men. All board members are White except for one Native American.

Each office has a regional advisory council which serves as a voice of the local communities and offices, promotes the visibility of the program, raises funds, and provides a leadership opportunity that at times leads to membership on the ILA board. The regional councils play a significant role in the selection and appointment of directors; with the end result that geographic diversity is achieved. The regional managing attorneys recruit potential client board members for appointment on the regional council, and after service there, recommend some candidates to the board of directors for appointment. By nurturing regional advisory council members ILA grooms future members of the board and address the challenge of finding qualified client eligible board members.

The board members receive extensive training to serve as members. ILA received an LSC Technology Initiative Grant (TIG) to establish a board and advisory council website that includes a self-guided training module for board members with instruction about the basic elements and

duties of board membership. In addition, all new board members receive a formal training session. New client members receive a training of approximately three hours with the executive director. The executive director meets with client board members the night before each board meeting to answer questions, discuss program updates and prepare for the board meeting. The board also includes a mentoring program for new members, through which each new member is contacted by an experienced member of the same category (client representative or attorney) prior to the first meeting, to answer questions and provide guidance. Client members participate on board committees (e.g. the program committee) and generally are vocal and engaged at full board meetings.

Leadership

Finding 16: The program's leadership team has significant experience and leadership ability.

ILA's executive director has been in his position for 23 years and is highly respected and supported by the staff and the board. Outside constituencies hold him in high regard and staff reported that he is easily accessible. He visited four of the ten offices this year. During his visits, he meets with all staff to answer questions. A deputy director position was created recently to alleviate the heavy concentration of duties held by the executive director. The creation of the deputy director position, together with the recent creation of an assistant litigation director position, are part of the program's plan for orderly succession in leadership positions. These deputies join the existing deputy director of administration and the deputy director of litigation.

The litigation director and assistant litigation director are highly regarded by staff and are easily accessible. Senior leaders provide new managing attorneys with a lengthy memorandum explaining duties, expectation, possible pitfalls, and available resources. After one year on the job, the new managing attorneys attend MIE training.

Overall management, including financial management⁶ and human resources administration

Finding 17: ILA's overall management is structured with clear lines of responsibility.

ILA is a well-run organization. The management team includes the executive director, the deputy directors, the assistant litigation director and the managing attorneys. The team confers regularly on major decisions concerning the program. The deputy directors work closely with the executive director in managing ILA. Each has defined obligations. They confer with the executive director on a regular schedule. Managing attorneys are responsible for oversight of their regional office or unit and are engaged in decision making about case acceptance and PAI referral.

The majority of the responsibility for operating the program resides with the executive director and the deputy director for program administration. In addition to his responsibility for the overall operation of the organization the executive director also has supervisory obligation over private attorney involvement, Health and Law Project, and development activities.

ILA's administrative functions largely rest on a long-serving deputy director for program administration, assisted by a fiscal manager who was hired almost 15 years ago and has a degree

⁶ The Office of Program Performance (OPP) conducted this visit for the purposes set forth in the Introduction. OPP findings and recommendations under this criterion are limited to staffing, organization, and general functions. Other offices at LSC conduct assessment of fiscal operations.

in accounting. This deputy director is responsible for oversight of Iowa Legal Aid's technology initiatives and fiscal operations. He is the main liaison with the board's Development, Finance and Audit Committee, providing it a detailed packet that includes draft budgets and explaining issues that need to be addressed. The board's treasurer, who has served on multiple other boards, including several not for-profit organizations, reported that ILA's administrative team does an excellent job in this regard.

Disaster planning

Finding 18: ILA has adequate disaster response and recovery plans for its offices.

A well conceived continuity of operation plan usually has the following components: Order of Succession/Delegation of Authority; Alternate Facilities; Continuity Communications; Vital Records Management; Human Capital; Devolution of Control; Test, Training and Exercise (TT&E); Reconstitution. The Iowa Legal Disaster Plan sent to the team was last revised in 2006 and sets out appropriate objectives including safeguarding the lives of staff members and clients; continuing services to clients and minimizing disruption of service and protecting its assets. It also sets out the disaster duties of the programs leaders and staff, provides guidance to managers of the offices for implementation of the plan and discusses safeguarding the program's technology. However, the plan fails to consider alternate locations for staff if the office is not functional. The plans for protecting technology appear to be outdated as ILA has moved to a web based case management system. It is unclear if the program reviews and tests its disaster plan on an ongoing basis.

Iowa Legal Aid's disaster engagement under the Midwest Legal/Disaster Project Grant has gone on for nine months. Thus far the work has met the benchmarks of the grant. The staff assigned to the grant is very knowledgeable of this area of the law and enthusiastic in carrying out the grant. The grantee will develop a coordinated network with virtually all disaster experts in the state to enable timely provision of legal services to disaster survivors by pro bono and staff attorneys.

Recommendation IV.3.18.12: ILA should review and update its disaster plan. As part of this review, ILA should review the ABA publication *Surviving a Disaster: A Lawyers Guide to Disaster Planning*, and determine if there are changes needed in its plan.
http://www.americanbar.org/content/dam/aba/events/disaster/surviving_a_disaster_a_lawyers_guide_to_disaster_planning_final.authcheckdam.pdf

Technology

Finding 19. ILA's core information technology (IT) is standardized and functions effectively across the organization.

ILA's technology plan for 2015 is well thought out and plans for a reasonable amount of work during the year. The budget appears to support the plan, although it allocates only \$200 for IT staff training and \$600 for the rest of the staff. There is no strategy surrounding adding or updating content on the statewide website.

Over all the technology appears to be working well. The program has taken advantage of a number of LSC Technology Initiative Grants to make improvements in its technology. For example, a TIG enhanced board engagement through providing web resources, another created HotDocs/A2J interviews for family law forms, and another TIG created an on-line diagnostic

tool. Another TIG was used to upgrade the IVLP's case management system providing staff program-wide access to the system, as well as providing volunteer attorneys a means to enter case notes, time records.

The staff members are generally satisfied with the level of technology available to them and the responsiveness of the IT advocate. Nonetheless, we heard some complaints that the Internet and email go down with some frequency, and it went down for 45 minutes the week prior to the program quality visit.

The program's web site has not fully kept up with trends in modern web development. It is too busy, presenting a lot of information and options on the homepage and, to a lesser extent, on the secondary content pages. There is a shortage of forms on the site. Some PDF fillable divorce forms give little guidance to users.

Recommendation IV.3.19.14:* ILA should review its systems against LSC's Technologies That Should Be in Place in a Legal Aid Office Today (Revised 2015), (Technology Baselines) to see what updates they might need to reach the Baselines.

Financial administration

Finding 20. The Program has sufficient, capable, trained and effective staff dedicated to financial administration.

ILA has 85 funding sources. There is one full-time employee in charge of grant reporting. Overall administrative expenses represent 11-12% of the budget. There is a fiscal manual that is updated periodically and is available to all staff on the program wiki. One of the most significant financial administration challenges for ILA is the increasing cost of health insurance and increasing regulatory requirements imposed by the Affordable Care Act. To address this challenge, ILA is considering retaining an outside vendor to help it navigate the complexities of the ACA, including insurance plan administration.

The board has created a financial reserve sufficient to cover five months of operating expenses, or approximately \$4 million. Contribution to this fund is ongoing and built into each annual budget.

Human resources

Finding 21: The program does not have one dedicated, experienced Human Resources person.

A Human Resources (HR) manager was hired pursuant to LSC's recommendation following the 2007 visit. However, the position was not financially sustainable and was eliminated. Currently the executive director, the program administrator, the deputy director, the fiscal manager, and the managing attorney of each office discharge the HR function. For example, the executive director is very engaged in recruiting and hiring; the fiscal manager is in charge of benefits plan administration and enrollment; the deputy director is currently working on the possible redesign of the personnel evaluation methodology.

Staff evaluations are performed under the collective bargaining agreement and are to be administered annually. Interviewees reported they were evaluated recently but otherwise evaluations have been sporadic. Evaluations are a challenge. The current evaluation process for advocates specifies numeric goals. The review includes whether the numeric goals were achieved. Also, advocates are to select six cases they would like their manager to review; in turn, the

manager is to select six additional cases. The review of the 12 cases selected in this manner includes court documents, case notes, and outcomes. ILA reported that on average it takes 12 hours for the annual review of each employee, causing ILA to consider redesigning this method. The complexity and investment of time inherent in the evaluation process has resulted in many evaluations not performed annually, as stipulated by the policy. It appears that evaluations are more often done when dealing with probationary periods. Although management has made it clear that evaluations are supposed to be done annually, this has not translated into compliance with the policy of annual evaluations being conducted.

Training for advocate staff is sufficient, and is addressed earlier in this report. The opportunities for support staff training do not appear to be as abundant as for attorneys. They attend one day of the work group meeting and support staff have monthly telephone conference calls to address intake issues.

Recommendation IV.5.21.15: The program is encouraged to continue its assessment of the employee evaluation process and make adjustments as appropriate.

Recommendation IV.5.21.16: ILA should review the training available for non-advocate staff and ensure that appropriate trainings are available for all staff.

Internal communication

Finding 22. The program has effective, intra-staff and staff-management communications.

The program's internal communications appear to meet the staffs' needs for regular meaningful information. Staff was generally pleased with internal communications, reporting that ILA has various avenues to facilitate the flow of information, including emails, the program's unified intake chat rooms, weekly office staff meetings, administrative memos from the executive director, the program wiki, management meetings in person (supplemented with conference calls as needed), and two staff workgroup meetings each year. The work group meetings include trainings for the staff attorneys, which are eligible for CLE credit, and additional trainings aimed at support staff. The staff also reported that supervisors generally have an open door policy and are accessible and supportive.

Resource development

Finding 23. ILA makes impressive efforts to maintain and expand its base of funding, in an effort to increase the quality and quantity of services to eligible clients.

As OPP found in its 2007 report, ILA's resource development efforts are highly professional, well coordinated, and consistent with the program's mission.

The program has multiple sources of funding that include state, federal and local grants, IOLTA funds, Area Agencies on Aging, general and earmarked grants from other non-profits, corporate and individual contributions, private foundations, bar associations and attorneys fees awards. The program continually seeks out funding opportunities to address identified needs and provide services to clients on emerging issues. While some are small, others are substantial. All the grants are focused on critical legal needs and ILA avoids the temptation to seek funds for issues outside of the program priorities.

The Iowa Legal Aid Foundation, which ILA was instrumental in creating in 2005, is a creative approach to resource development. The Foundation is an independent entity created for the benefit of Iowa Legal Aid and to raise funds for the program and to establish an endowment to support the organization's work over the long-term. The Foundation has 21 directors whose mission is to promote the program and raise money. The board members receive training and assistance from the ILA development associate and an outside consultant who attends all the board meetings. Last year the Foundation raised more than \$400,000. Its goal is to eventually raise \$1 million annually. It also holds an annual Equal Justice After Hours reception and supports ILA's Annual Campaign for Equal Justice. The 2015 budget included in the materials sent to the team projected that the Annual Campaign for Equal Justice would raise \$101,500. In 2014 the program's total funding was \$8,507,103, \$2,517,136 from LSC and \$5,989,967 non-LSC funding.

ILA has an effective resource development team of three employees, which includes a full-time grant writer who seeks out grant opportunities and writes grants other than the grant application to LSC, and a full-time development associate who provides staffing support to the Foundation. Several members of the leadership team contribute significant time to resource development efforts including the executive director, program administrator, the executive director's administrative assistant, a staff attorney who is a former corporate attorney and the manager of the Legal Hotline for Older Iowans. Local office staff members work with their advisory councils on fundraising.

In 2014, ILA received a LSC Midwest Legal/Disaster Project Grant of \$367,700 to, among other things, enhance disaster planning across the state. The grant award was made following an extensive competitive grant process and based on a very well written grant proposal.

Participation in integrated legal services delivery system

Finding 24. ILA's delivery structure is effective and the program is an active participant in an overall delivery system statewide.

ILA is the primary provider of legal services in the state and a leader in the state justice community. It collaborates with bar associations, the courts, and law schools in the state. The program maintains excellent relations with the private bar and the courts. Iowa Legal Aid staff members have participated in the Iowa State Bar Association's Access to Justice Committee, which is concerned with the methods by which members provide legal aid to low-income persons. The Committee advocated for the Supreme Court to impose a mandatory fee on all Iowa attorneys to be deposited with IOLTA to help support ILA. Program attorneys are involved in the state and county bar association activities, and several have served in leadership positions.

Staff members are on the boards of other service providers such as the Domestic Violence Advisory Committee and Homeless Committee. They also have monthly meetings with the housing authority to deal with any issues that arise. They are also involved in MacArthur non-profits, and community mapping meetings, as well as attending events for the Dubuque Community Foundation.

Staff serves as members of ISBA Rural Practice Committee and is actively involved in the law student rural practice pro bono program, through which law students who provide 50 hours of pro bono services in rural areas can receive stipends to help defray living expenses.

Iowa Legal Aid is highly respected among service providers, including those that serve seniors and those that serve a wider population. Staff members have been described as collaborative, knowledgeable, and strong advocates for clients.

CONCLUSION

Iowa Legal Aid is an effective and efficient program with many forward thinking attributes such as its Advisory Councils, creation of the Iowa Legal Aid Foundation and its distributed intake system. There are few areas that need improvement. The program is very well managed with strong leadership and board support. It is highly productive, providing high quality legal services to a significant number of clients. It is also a program that is constantly engaging in self-analysis as well as trying to improve from learning from others and adopting new ideas. Its continued strategic planning efforts are exemplary and could serve as a model for other programs.