

FORWARD

The Legal Services Corporation (LSC) identified Ohio's 1999 State Plan as "one of the better plans that (they had) seen to date." In coming to this conclusion, LSC staff applied six criteria of a good plan to Ohio's 1999 State Plan. As we apply this same set of criteria to Ohio's 2004-2007 State Plan, we believe that we have developed an even better plan – one that moves us closer towards achieving a more comprehensive and integrated civil legal services delivery system.

The first criteria used by LSC states that a good plan provides for the statewide coordination of activities and services in the present while ensuring consideration of the needs of the future. LSC notes that a good plan describes how a delivery system will coordinate current and future activities to best meet needs. Like our 1999 Plan, we attempt in the 2004-2007 Plan to clearly address how the delivery system will work together in a coordinated and integrated manner to develop optimal methods to deliver services to clients and a better product for clients. We also attempt to provide information as to how the legal needs of special populations of clients, including clients who may not currently be adequately served by legal services providers and disenfranchised or unpopular client groups, will be addressed.

Second, LSC states that a viable plan presents the common goals, purposes, values, principles and norms that underlie and support it in order to ensure consistency of vision and purpose. It should spell out what the planners hope to achieve through their plan. The 2004-2007 Ohio State Plan offers a strategic approach to service delivery. Through an extensive planning process, state planners have identified vision statements, goals, and activities for the delivery system. Over the course of the next several years, these strategic principles will guide decision-making and continuous improvement efforts.

Third, LSC states that a defensible plan is one that has been discussed with and/or reviewed by individuals, organizations and institutions within the state that have a stake in the design and operation of the state's system for ensuring equal justice. In developing our new State Plan, we have attempted to engage more individuals within and outside the delivery system. By extending the length of the planning process and the breadth of participation, we believe that we have developed a plan that represents well the needs of clients and staff and the capacity of the delivery system. We hope that our grassroots planning approach has secured the necessary buy-in from staff and other stakeholders to successfully implement this plan.

Fourth, LSC states that a good plan presents its goals both in terms of their measurability and in terms of who is responsible for ensuring their completion. In developing our new Plan and its specific activities, we required state planners to identify desired outputs and outcomes, as well as who would be responsible for implementing each activity, funding each activity, and how each activity will be monitored. We sought this level of detail in the Plan, not to be overly prescriptive, but to ensure that activities are realistic, feasible, and measurable. We also seek to have continued accountability to the Ohio State Planning Steering Committee and each program within the delivery system.

Fifth, LSC states that in order for a plan to be considered effective, the plan must demonstrate that all of the legal services providers were willing to look beyond single issues or a single program to examine the big picture in terms of client needs and organizational capacities in order to develop the best possible methods and mechanisms to address the present and future needs of clients within the state. The 2004-2007 Ohio State Plan represents the culmination of much discussion, compromise, and risk-taking by individuals within the delivery system and each program. This Plan, which has the unanimous support from program directors, presents concrete information as to what the legal services providers believe to be the major issues confronting clients and the client communities served by the programs. The Plan also clearly demonstrates that the state planners and program staff are committed to developing the best possible methods and mechanisms to address the present and future needs of clients within the state.

Sixth, LSC states that a defensible plan will fully respond to all of the issues identified in LSC Program Letters 98-1 and 98-6. The 2004-2007 Ohio State Plan incorporates, within the identified goals and activities, the many issues and priorities found in these and subsequent LSC Program Letters. While also relying on an understanding of unique challenges and opportunities in Ohio and the rich base of staff experience and knowledge, staff planners utilized LSC state planning resources to ensure that the new State Plan will move us closer towards achieving a more comprehensive and integrated civil legal services delivery system.