



# Wyoming Center for Legal Aid

*Legal Assistance and Information for the Equality State*

## ANNUAL REPORT TO THE WYOMING SUPREME COURT

JULY 2012

**WYOMING CENTER FOR LEGAL AID**

**ANNUAL REPORT TO THE WYOMING SUPREME COURT**

**Report Required by Rule 117 of the Rules and Regulations of the  
Wyoming Center for Legal Aid**

**Submitted by:**

**The Board of Commissioners for the  
Wyoming Center for Legal Aid**

**JULY 31, 2012**

## **Table of Contents**

Narrative Overview

    Organization

    Grants

    Staff

    Strategic Plan

Additional Accomplishments

    2012-2014 Biennium Budget

    Website Design and Development

    Automation of *pro se* forms

    Stakeholder Relationships

    New Office

    Executive Director Search

    Board Meetings

Timeline

Rule 117 Requirements

Conclusion

**Attachments**

Strategic Plan

2011-2012 Expenditure Summary

Executive Director Job Post

Center Case Data

Testimonials

## **Narrative Report**

The Board of Commissioners of the Wyoming Center for Legal Aid (the “Center”) is pleased to submit this inaugural Report to the Wyoming Supreme Court pursuant to Rule 117 of the Rules and Regulations of the Wyoming Center for Legal Aid. This report covers the Center’s first full year of existence.

### **The Center’s Initial Organization**

The Center came into existence on April 19, 2011, when the Supreme Court adopted Rules forming the Center as a judicial branch entity. This followed the Supreme Court’s appointment of seven volunteers to organize the new entity in January 2011. The initial volunteers first investigated options for the Center’s organization, including contracting with a private corporation or operating as a new entity of the Supreme Court, both of which are authorized by the statute creating the state-sponsored legal aid program. Wyo. Stat. § 5-2-122.

Because the legislature biannually appropriates funds for the Center through the Supreme Court’s budgeting process, an entity under the direct control and supervision of the Supreme Court was selected as the most appropriate organizational form for the Center. Access to Justice initiatives are traditionally judicial branch activities. Using the rules and regulations of the Wyoming State Bar as a template, the initial Board of Commissioners drafted and then submitted to the Court a proposed set of Rules for the Center’s organization and operation. The Supreme Court subsequently adopted the Rules by formal Order and the Center officially came into existence.

The seven initial Commissioners immediately nominated new members to the Board to obtain geographic representation across the State. The Board also reached out to the Wyoming State Bar to enlist its involvement in the development of the Center. At the State Bar’s request, the Center Board recommended, and the Court agreed, to create one seat on the Center’s Board for a representative of the State Bar and to open another State Bar position *ex officio*. This brought Board membership to ten official members with three *ex officio* representatives, including Walter Eggers from the Access to Justice Commission and Joann Odendahl, Court Administrator. Laramie attorney Devon O’Connell joined the Board *ex officio* representing the State Bar.

### **The Early Months**

The Center is starting from scratch, without a preexisting strategic plan or anticipated structure. This presents huge organizational challenges, but it also presents

a unique opportunity to address creatively the challenges of providing legal services and access to justice support across a large and rural state. Because part of the Center's initial statutory charge was to develop a plan for the creation and eventual establishment of a statewide program, a significant part of the Center's first year has been spent studying various different ways to address the need. In addition, because the Center's governing statute calls for the development of a single point of entry for legal services to the income eligible as well as the eventual development of standards for the delivery of legal aid services, the initial Board of Commissioners has viewed its charge as broader than development and immediate implementation of the standard law clinic model. These models work well in urban areas but funding is not sufficient to open offices throughout the state. As a result, the Board has been investigating a variety of ideas and options for Wyoming and has been meeting with various stakeholders who have many different, and often competing, ideas and suggestions for the Center to consider pursuing, ranging from operating solely as a grant funding entity to the opening of discrete offices with full time attorneys in cities like Rock Springs and Gillette.

It takes time for a group of volunteers to develop a vision and strategic plan from scratch, locate and obtain office space, develop a budget, hire staff, and otherwise complete the necessary chores of developing an infrastructure for a new entity. But the Board did not want to delay making some funding available to other programs, so the Board decided first to conduct an immediate round of grant funding to existing legal service programs to make some of the accumulated funds in the Indigent Legal Services Account available to programs that can assist the income eligible. Requests for proposals for the expenditure of up to \$250,000 were solicited state-wide in July 2011, and in August 2011 the Board approved funding for several programs including Legal Aid of Wyoming, Inc., the Wyoming Coalition Against Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault, the Wyoming Children's Law Center, and the Teton County Access to Justice Program.

*Legal Aid of Wyoming, Inc.* spent \$74,589.00 of Center funds to expand its private attorney involvement (PAI). Legal Aid's Executive Director actively recruited private attorneys to accept reduced-fee cases throughout the state. Center funds were specifically used for clients whose income was above 125% of federal poverty guidelines (FPG) and below 200% FPG. Legal Aid was able to increase its pool of private attorneys from 53 to 84, as well as serve more individuals needing legal assistance who exceed LSC's income cap.

The *Wyoming Coalition Against Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault* spent \$32,557.71 to pilot its first private attorney involvement program, called "Judicare" by

some legal service providers. The Coalition has recruited 23 private attorneys willing to accept reduced-fee cases.

*Wyoming Children's Law Center* spent \$75,000.00 to provide Guardian *ad litem* and Mediation services for children in contested domestic relations cases. Legal services were either provided by in-house staff or via private attorney contracts. The Director of the Children's Law Center also devoted additional time to bringing about awareness of the organization and the services it provides.

The *Teton County Access to Justice Center* spent \$20,021.04 of Center funds to establish a legal resource center and library serving the citizens of Teton County.<sup>1</sup> Developed with the active support of the local Teton County Bar Association, the Teton County Access to Justice Center has grown into an effective local organization serving a community previously without organized support for legal services to the income eligible, and is good example of the type of locally-based, community sustained program the Center hopes to develop in other Wyoming communities. The Teton Access to Justice Center is actively supported by the local private bar and judiciary and receives financial support from other donors interested in supporting the local effort. The Teton County Commissioners donated available space and the library collections are maintained by the Teton County Bar Association. A part-time Director assists walk-in patrons, handles intake and screening for potential clients, and finds local private attorneys to take qualified cases. The Teton County Access to Justice Center also coordinates with several organizations to host periodic Law Seminars on topics such as Pro se Divorce, Simple Wills as well as general law nights that are open to the community.

In May of 2012 another RFP was published for the 2012-2013 grant cycle. Over \$1,300,000 was requested by various organizations and individuals. While this amount exceeds our total yearly budget, it does reflect the desire of others to work with the Center to achieve its goals. From this round of requests, the Center has decided to distribute approximately \$290,000 in additional grant funding and has awarded another \$90,000 in professional service contracts for the income eligible.

### **Initial Staff**

The Board immediately began the process of recruiting new staff to organize the Center, carry out the grant management program and help with development of the Center's organizational activities. The Center advertised with the State Bar and the law school for interested applicants and interviewed a number of prospective attorneys.

---

<sup>1</sup> Teton County's grant contract went into effect February, 2012.

Effective August 10 the Center hired Rennie Polidora as its initial staff attorney and acting interim executive director. Rennie had been active in supporting the work of the Access to Justice Committee in getting the initial legislation passed and was already well known and well-liked by many of the stakeholders supporting the Center's creation. Rennie was employed under a one-year at-will employment contract (AWEC) from the Center. After Rennie was set up and oriented, the Board also began searching for additional staff to support its ongoing development, interviewing candidates in the fall and winter of 2011. The process took considerable time after two promising applicants withdrew their names for consideration at the last minute for personal reasons, though one of them, Angie Dorsch, later decided to join the Center this August if she could have the time she needed to wind down her existing practice. In the meantime, Kristin Karr was hired in February, began in March, and was tasked with developing the Center's new website and overseeing the automation project discussed below.

Throughout this process the Board has received substantial and invaluable assistance from Court Administrator Joann Odendahl and Deputy Court Administrator Ronda Munger, both of whom have patiently educated the Board on state rules, procedures and budgets and assisted the Board in securing appropriate input into salaries, benefits, AWEC arrangements and other administrative guidance for complying with state procedures and requirements.

### **The Initial Strategic Plan**

While working through the grant process and the hiring of initial staff the Board also continued to work on a plan for the Center's strategic focus. Rennie Polidora was recruited to help, attending national events for legal service programs, interviewing program managers from other states, reviewing websites from around the country, and collecting data on legal service clinics. She canvassed what other states around the country have been doing, both successfully and unsuccessfully. Rennie and individual Board members also talked with various stakeholders in Wyoming, including the leadership of the State Bar, other legal service providers, members of the judiciary, and managers of community based service programs that serve the income eligible.

After many hours of discussion and debate, the broad outlines of an initial strategic plan for the Center emerged, eventually becoming the document attached to this report as an exhibit. Several salient features of this Plan warrant discussion here, although the Court and the public should keep in mind that this Plan is necessarily subject to change as the Center acquires experience and learns the results, both good and bad, of its various pilot initiatives.

First, for a large rural state with many small communities, the Board concluded that technology will be a critical part of a statewide program. Internet access to

information, resources, legal forms, answers to basic questions, etc. has the potential to reach all corners of the state immediately. As a consequence, the Center has devoted a large fraction of limited staff resources over the first year to technology, including contracting for and conducting the design of a content-rich website and overseeing a form automation project requested by the Supreme Court for *pro se* divorce materials. The website is still under development but we expect it to be ready for public launch in September, coinciding with the opening of the Center's office independent of the Supreme Court building. The website will have legal information for several key topics including domestic relations and landlord/tenant issues, county-by county resource information, contact information for all existing legal service programs in the state, answers to frequently asked questions, and links to other websites with useful legal information or resources.

The divorce packet automation project has also been a major undertaking, as the *pro se* divorce forms located on the Supreme Court's website have proven very challenging to automate. However, statistics show that the number of *pro se* divorce actions is growing rapidly and creating substantial burdens for the district courts. Many if not most of these cases involve persons eligible for benefits under the Center's programs. As a result, automating simple *pro se* divorce forms should provide huge benefits to the income eligible while simultaneously relieving some of the burdens carried by the courts at present.

The second major focus of the strategic planning process was to evaluate whether the Center should be organized around the standard law clinic model, where lawyers are hired and paid by the Center to directly represent the income eligible, preferably in several different locations around the State. This is the most common form of legal aid clinic and is no doubt what most people expect to see when encountering a legal aid program. However, devoting all of the Center's resources to the standard legal clinic model would have several major drawbacks for a state like Wyoming. First, direct representation of clients is time intensive. Even with most client contact consisting of brief consultations, the Center's annual budget suggests that at most 2,000-2,500 persons per year could be assisted directly. More problematically, opening and staffing brick and mortar offices with associated rent, utilities, and support staff can be expensive, and in any event the Center could never afford offices throughout the state, leaving a large number of small communities essentially unsupported. Finally, Legal Aid of Wyoming, Inc., the federally-funded legal aid organization, already operates a legal clinic and has invested in the case management software, conflict database management systems, and toll free phone numbers that a standard clinic would support. Duplicating these resources seems wasteful and creates the risk of confusion with the public. Ideally, the Center should be able to support the growth of Legal Aid's clinic

without wastefully duplicating much of what it already does, preserving limited resources for other projects.

The Center therefore plans on devoting a significant portion of its resources, at least over the next few years, toward the creation of community-based volunteer programs and the development of a network of community based contacts that can work with the Center to leverage funds and resources. For example, if Center staff can work with local lawyers in each county to initiate and then maintain monthly “law nights” or divorce clinics the Center may be able to create continuous local resources largely provided and staffed by volunteers, an arrangement that is not currently possible throughout the state without regular logistical support. The Center can provide that support. This will require volunteer support from the local bar and others to maintain, but the Center believes those resources exist if they can be organized and sustained by the Center.

Other examples may help illustrate the community-based concept the Center envisions. Visits can be arranged regularly with low-income nursing homes and senior centers for social security and Medicare support, simple wills and trusts, etc. Community safe-houses can be linked into a network for Center staff to visit and educate on domestic relations issues and procedures. The idea is to focus on creating or tapping into largely volunteer organizations in small communities around the state that can come to count on the Center for support and resources, while the Center develops the skill sets and programs for supporting local efforts. In this fashion, the Center hopes to leverage limited funds into a volunteer community-based network that eventually reaches around the state.

This is not to say that the Center’s legal staff will not represent clients or provide direct legal advice to income-eligible persons. That is, and will remain, a central part of the Center’s programs. But the Center intends to avoid being pulled immediately into the law clinic model, to see if, instead, community based programs and networks supported by the Center can be brought to fruition in communities around the State. Our current test pilot program in Teton County is bearing fruit in significant part as a result of the exceptional commitment of the local bar to support the project with their largely volunteer time. The Center hopes to duplicate that elsewhere.

The Center has already begun making connections with organizations. For instance, CLIMB Wyoming expressed a need for attorneys to assist their participants in getting records expunged so that they would have access to better jobs with higher salaries. The Center located two volunteer attorneys who spent an evening at CLIMB providing one-on-one counsel to the attendees who brought their records.

Another example is the relationship that has developed between the Center and a counselor at Big Horn Basin Counseling Service in Lovell. The counselor was looking for an attorney to help a client with a divorce. The Center was able to secure a private attorney willing to handle the divorce action. Because the client has a mild learning disability and is not the most effective communicator, the counselor was able to facilitate correspondence between the attorney and the client. The Center has also contracted with a private attorney to handle a bankruptcy case for another one of the clients at Big Horn Counseling. Again, the counselor assists the client with gathering necessary paperwork and ensuring follow-through. As a mental health professional, the counselor helps the client with her emotional problems, but the Center is able to address the legal problem that is often a piece of the overarching issue. Effective representation of these clients requires the support and facilitation of the Counseling Service, so working in partnership with the Counseling Service to refer clients and then support their representation is an effective way to meet legal needs with minimal resources and maximum efficiency.

These examples provide a snapshot of how the Center envisions working around the state. Clients are connected to the Center through a local support agency which is better equipped to address an individual's other needs so that attorneys can focus on the legal issue. This holistic approach to working with the income-eligible is being used in multiple metropolitan areas across the country, but it has not been implemented on a statewide scale. The rapid increase of medical-legal partnerships is perhaps the best known example of "co-located" civil legal assistance, but they are one component of a larger community-based initiative.<sup>2</sup>

The overall intent of the Strategic Plan is to serve the maximum number of income eligible citizens possible by leveraging all available resources. This entails a

---

<sup>2</sup> "At least one example of co-location exists in three-quarters of states (75%)". Rebecca L. Sandefur and Aaron C. Smyth. *Access Across America: First Report of the Civil Justice Infrastructure Mapping Project*. American Bar Foundation, October 2011, page 15, available at [http://www.americanbarfoundation.org/uploads/cms/documents/access\\_across\\_america\\_first\\_report\\_of\\_the\\_civil\\_justice\\_infrastructure\\_mapping\\_project.pdf](http://www.americanbarfoundation.org/uploads/cms/documents/access_across_america_first_report_of_the_civil_justice_infrastructure_mapping_project.pdf).

NLADA, *Effective Community Engagement: A toolkit for civil legal services programs*, available at <http://www.nlada100years.org/page/newly-released-effective-community-engagement-toolkit-civil-legal-services-programs>.

Legal Services Corp., *Legal Assistance Foundation of Metropolitan Chicago, Community Engagement Unit*, (2011 Innovations in Civil Legal Services), available at [http://lri.lsc.gov/sites/default/files/LRI/pdf/12/120009\\_LAF\\_CEU.pdf](http://lri.lsc.gov/sites/default/files/LRI/pdf/12/120009_LAF_CEU.pdf).

combination of *pro se* assistance, pro bono support from attorneys, private attorney contracts and civil legal service providers. It also requires community engagement and education so that some legal issues can be addressed before they get too complex. The Center can facilitate, coordinate and support these efforts in a way that has never been done in Wyoming. It will take some time to create connections, establish relationships and build a strong foundation throughout the state, but the Center believes that long-term benefits to having a statewide network counsel against development of a standard law clinic model. Ideally, the Center will develop a healthy partnership with Legal Aid of Wyoming, supporting the expansion of that clinic's resources while devoting the Center's resources toward development of new networks across the state.

## **Additional Accomplishments**

### **Budget 2012-2014**

Part of the fall of 2011 was devoted to creating the biennium budget for the Center's 2012-2014 fiscal cycle. The initial 2010 legislative appropriation was \$2.5 million and this is the guideline that was followed. The Board, in conjunction with Supreme Court Administration, presented a budget to the Legislature that reflected its infancy and need for flexibility as a newly-formed entity.

It was decided that \$357,951/year would be set aside for salaries and benefits of three (3) Staff Attorneys and one (1) Executive Director. Another \$58,220/year was budgeted for office expenses, travel, requisite dues and registration fees, malpractice insurance and other administrative costs. \$277,500/year was allocated for grant awards. The majority of Center funds were assigned to Professional Services, thereby allowing flexibility for a range of potential needs that were identified. This particular budget category will allow the Center to contract with private attorneys to take cases, hire part-time administrative support when appropriate, and contract with IT-related personnel working outside the scope of in-house IT. \$556,329/year was allocated for professional services.

### **Website Design and Development**

One of the first projects tackled by Center staff was the creation of a logo and tagline that would reflect the Center's purpose and become a recognized symbol throughout the state. Simultaneously the Center began developing a statewide website that will also be an integral part of the services it provides. A nationwide broadcast of the RFP resulted in dozens of submittals from professional website designers and developers. Fortunately, the Center was able to select a local firm, Cheyenne Technology, to develop and design the website. A frequent partner of Cheyenne Technology, Western Sky Design, was chosen to design the logo and tagline.

Center staff worked closely with the contractors to finalize the scope of the website project, which is quite broad. The statewide website will be the first place that income-eligible citizens will go for legal information and subsequent assistance if needed. It will be a resource for service organizations that work with the Center's target population. It will be a place to share ideas, whether from the judiciary, clerks, attorneys or other legal service providers. The website will be a dynamic tool for communicating with stakeholders while responding to the legal needs of the income-eligible throughout the state. The launch date for the website is early September. However, the site will be continually updated and improved upon to better serve its users. Such updates include a statewide calendar of events and short video clips that address particular areas of interest.

### **Automation of *pro se* forms**

The Access to Justice Commission initiated conversations with the Supreme Court and the Center regarding the automation of the existing Domestic Relations *pro se* forms that are accessible through the Supreme Court's website. These forms can also be purchased at the District Courts throughout the state, and are primarily used by individuals who cannot afford an attorney. The forms can be quite complex and despite having detailed instructions, they are not considered to be very user-friendly. Judges and clerks report that they often struggle with *pro se* litigants who file inaccurate or incomplete pleadings. Automating the forms so that they are presented as an online interview will not only make it easier for *pro se* parties to access the justice system, but it will also alleviate some of the frustrations experienced by judges and clerks who are unable to offer assistance.

Because the income-eligible are often the individuals using these forms this project falls within the Center's domain of responsibilities. After talking to several states about their experiences with automation, gathering information from independent contractors with expertise in this area, and meeting with Supreme Court Administration and IT multiple times, Center staff formalized an agreement to purchase the necessary software and contract with Capstone, Inc. to automate the *pro se* forms.

Although Capstone does the coding and technological aspect of the interviews, Center staff provide continuous feedback to ensure accuracy and user-friendliness. The interviews require dozens of hours of testing using various scenarios to make sure that they are able to accommodate the realities of the *pro se* litigant. This also entails having the questions posed in plain language. This project is much bigger and more time intensive than expected, but once completed the benefits will be realized for years to come.

It is anticipated that the “Divorce without Children” packet will be ready for public use this fall. The packet for “Divorce with Children” should be available soon afterwards. They will continue to be available through the Supreme Court’s website.

### **Stakeholder Relationships**

The creation of the Center came about through the efforts of many. The Access to Justice Commission (AJC) was instrumental not only in getting Legislative support, but also in bringing together an array of statewide stakeholders. The Center’s long-term success depends on maintaining those relationships. In addition to the Access to Justice Commission, other stakeholders include the Legislature, the Wyoming State Bar, UW College of Law Dean, staff and students, UW Legal Clinics, Legal Aid of Wyoming, Judges and Clerks, and members of the private bar.

The Center has made stakeholder communication a priority during the past year, and has some accomplishments to show despite having a staff of one (1) for much of that time. For instance, Judge Kautz from the Eighth Judicial District requested the Center host a Pro se Clinic to assist litigants with their forms. Center staff made arrangements to host three (3) clinics, one each in Torrington, Douglas and Wheatland, over a Friday and Saturday. The Executive Director from Legal Aid of Wyoming partnered with the Center on this endeavor. Unfortunately, client turnout was quite low. However, it was a positive learning experience that fostered other ideas for working with the Judicial Districts in this regard.

The Center has met with the Executive Director and staff of the State Bar to share ideas on various issues. There is continual interaction between the two organizations when potential clients are in need of a free or reduced-fee attorney. Additionally, the Center assisted the WY State Bar and Legal Aid of Wyoming in assembling a panel of speakers for a Consumer Issues seminar held in Cheyenne. This collaboration will continue for future Seminars that are scheduled.

In February the staff attorney introduced the Center to court clerks from around the state at their Annual Conference in Cheyenne. Everyone engaged in a discussion about the different ways that the Center can help the clerks. One clerk in particular has begun making frequent referrals to the Center when *pro se* litigants need assistance.

The Center has met with Dean Easton at the UW College of Law to discuss the legal clinics and how they fit into the statewide picture of legal services, including the new Simple Wills/Probate Clinic that will begin this Fall. The Center has also been approved by the College of Law to accept students for internships and externships.

One staff attorney has continued to participate in regular meetings with the AJC's Local Access Sub-committee, chaired by Judge Lavery, in order to stay abreast of initiatives that correlate with Center objectives.

In April, Center staff and Board members met with Supreme Court Justices and Administrators, along with Sen. Tony Ross and Rep. Mary Throne to provide an update on the Center. The primary focus of the meeting was the Strategic Plan, but it afforded an opportunity to share thoughts or concerns that legislators may have since their support is essential for the Center's existence.

The examples above demonstrate a few of the ways in which the Center has maintained communication with existing stakeholders. However, it is also important to identify and foster new relationships with other potential partners. In the upcoming year the Center hopes to connect with individual County Bar Associations, community colleges, and Senior Citizen facilities to name a few.

A recent relationship that has developed with the Wyoming Department of Education (WDE) provides an illustration of how the Center can collaborate with stakeholders in a mutually beneficial way. A representative from the WDE contacted the Center regarding a need for attorneys who could advocate for parents on occasion. Realizing that there are not many attorneys in the state who are knowledgeable in Education Law, they discussed ways to increase the pool of qualified advocates. The Education Conference that was scheduled in June seemed like a good opportunity to bring professionals together so the WDE agreed to waive the registration fees for five (5) attorneys if the Center would recruit them. The Center requested letters of interest from attorneys throughout the state, and offered to pay lodging and mileage in exchange for accepting at least one case referral. Thirteen (13) letters were received and five attorneys were selected. It was a win/win situation for all: the WDE will have a handful of attorneys who can represent parents when needed, the attorneys received two days of free training from national experts and the Center will be able to provide legal assistance to potential clients.

### **Locating a State Office**

Knowing that there would be several months of initial preparation and set up before the Center would have regular public interaction, the Supreme Court offered the use of one of its offices to Rennie Polidora when she began working in August. A computer was purchased and a phone number was assigned, but otherwise the court shared its printer and other office supplies. However, it became apparent that in order to be fully present and available to the public the Center would need a separate space. As a judicial branch entity the Center is able to use office space in state buildings, which provides several economic advantages. Rather than spending funds on rent,

infrastructure and necessary overhead expenses the Center can allocate a greater portion of its funds toward serving others.

Construction Management was contacted in early spring with a request for a location that could accommodate at least four (4) staff members and one (1) receptionist. The Center was able to secure adequate space in the Hathaway Building directly across the street from the Supreme Court. This convenient location allows easy access to conference rooms and video capabilities necessary for Board meetings at the Supreme Court, but is more accessible to the public.

Supreme Court IT staff were instrumental in transitioning the Center's computers and associated technological capabilities so that the re-location was seamless while staying on the court's server. The Center was assigned new phone numbers for additional staff and a new fax number, in addition to changing its email addresses to reflect its status as "legalhelpwy" rather than "courts.state.wy.us". Essential office supplies and basic furniture pieces were ordered. Once the office is completely set up and new employees are on board the Center will host a reception for the public and stakeholders.

### **Executive Director Search**

The Board of Commissioners agreed early on that some fundamental decisions needed to be made before the Center should recruit an Executive Director. Without a clear strategic plan it would be difficult to assemble the desired skill set that the Center's first Executive Director should possess. Once the necessary groundwork was laid a Search Committee was formed, a job description was created and posted both statewide and through national websites that cater to similar organizations.

The Board recognized that the ideal Executive Director will possess a suite of attributes that do not necessarily require a legal background; therefore, the job description is quite broad. To date nine (9) applications have been received, and they include a diverse range of experiences and interests. Interviews will be set up in late August or early September, depending on the availability of both candidates and the Hiring Committee. Past interview processes have required a minimum of two full days, but for such an important position this round of interviews will likely require more time. Accommodating out-of-state candidates presents an additional hurdle to scheduling challenges.

### **Monthly Board Meetings**

Throughout this past year the Center has held monthly Board meetings, each lasting between three (3) and five (5) hours. The volunteer Board consisting of ten (10) commissioners and three (3) *ex officio* members has also spent countless hours, beyond

monthly meetings, assisting the Center staff in numerous ways. Whether it is serving on a Hiring Committee and participating in day-long interviews or drafting contracts and RFP's, each Board member has played an active and integral role in developing the Center.

## **Timeline**

This timeline provides a general summary of the activities discussed above:

**January 2011:** Initial Board approved by the Wyoming Supreme Court

**March 2011:** After analysis, decision made to have Center be a Judicial entity, rather than a non-profit

**April 2011:** Rules creating the Center were adopted by the Wyoming Supreme Court

**June 2011:** Interviews conducted; Staff Attorney position offered

### **August 2011**

- Staff Attorney's first day on the job (August 10)
- Grant Proposals due on 18<sup>th</sup> (received 13 proposals; approximately \$1 million total request)

### **September 2011**

- Advertise to hire another Center employee (focus on technology)
- Draft and execute contracts with 3 grantees; 4<sup>th</sup> grant contract pending location

### **October 2011**

- Interview 4 candidates (offered position to one but didn't work out; decided to re-open)
- Publish RFP for Website Designer & Developer
- Work with Joann on Biennium Budget
- Host an hour-long breakout session at Conflict Resolution Day in Casper

### **November 2011**

- Select website designer and developer; have 1<sup>st</sup> meeting
- Publish 2<sup>nd</sup> job posting for another Center employee (submission deadline at end of December)
- Drafted contract and Policy Manual for private attorneys to accept reduced-fee cases
- Attended AJC Conference in Denver

### **December 2011**

- Negotiate agreement with IT and Hotdocs for *pro se* form automation (required multiple phone conferences with independent contractors, other legal service providers and Court Staff)
- First Quarterly Reports due by grantees
- Attend NLADA conference in Washington, D.C.

### **January 2012**

- Review job applications and schedule interviews
- Contract with Capstone, Inc. to automate *pro se* forms

## **February 2012**

- Interview 8 candidates for 2 positions; make immediate offer to one
- Expungement Night at CLIMB (2 local pro bono attorneys and Center attorney)
- Grant Contract executed with Teton County ATJ Center
- Attend Clerks Conference in Cheyenne to introduce the Center

## **March 2012**

- Organize, schedule and co-host 3 *pro se* clinics in Eighth Judicial District

## **April 2012**

- Attend Externship Fair at UW College of Law
- Publish RFP for second round of grants

## **May 2012**

- Interview 2 out-of-town candidates on May 7<sup>th</sup>; offer position to one who will begin working late summer
- Review Proposals and award Grants for 2012-2013 (a little over \$1.3 million in requests)

## **June 2012**

- Finalize 2012-2013 grant contracts
- Close out budget
- Begin moving across street (furniture, supplies, technology connection to court)
- Education Law Symposium in Lander
- Consumer Issues Panel in Cheyenne

## **July 2012**

- Move into new office
- Begin search for Executive Director
- Final Reports from grantees due
- Annual report is due to the Supreme Court on July 31<sup>st</sup>

## **September 2012**

- Third Staff Attorney will be in place
- Website will have enough content and support to go “live”

## **Rule 117**

Rule 117 states that “the report shall include, but not be limited to, a description of: (a) the number of cases handled by the Center; (b) the number and compensation to all Center attorneys and contractors; (c) the amount of all other monies expended by the Center during the year; and (d) any other information requested by the Supreme Court. The annual report will also summarize the types of cases handled by the Center and shall identify the number of each type of case handled by the Center.”

## **Number of Cases handled by the Center**

During the first year of its existence the Center was not prepared to handle cases in-house. Hiring staff, securing an office, and creating support documents are just a few of the requirements necessary to provide direct representation. For this reason, the

Board of Commissioners decided early on that the most effective way to use Center funds towards helping the income-eligible while Center staff focused on infrastructure development would be through grants and private attorney contracts. Therefore, the majority of people served with Center funds occurred via grantees and private attorneys.

Grantees submitted three (3) quarterly reports and a final report is due at the end of July. Each grantee operates differently so comparing case statistics between one organization and another does not accurately reflect each grantee's overall contribution to the provision of civil legal services. Without providing a lengthy analysis of data, the four grantees served the following numbers of individuals with Center funds:

*Legal Aid of Wyoming* had 91 cases that were assigned to private attorneys.<sup>3</sup> *Wyoming Coalition for Domestic Violence* had 36 cases that were handled by private attorneys. *Wyoming Children's Law Center* had 32 GAL or Mediation cases. *Teton County Access to Justice Center* served 211 non-attorney patrons in the library/resource center and had 85 attendees at their public law night and seminars. *Teton County* referred 10 clients to private attorneys who were paid directly by the Center.

Despite not being officially open, the Center still logged quite a few phone calls and emails from those seeking legal assistance. Some of these individuals were referred by various community organizations and legal service providers. Some found the Center's contact information on the Supreme Court's website. To the best of their ability, Center staff provided assistance in the manner most appropriate. Several inquiries entailed basic questions that could be answered by Center staff. Many people were seeking legal help and they were directed to the appropriate resource. If the Center could locate a private attorney willing to accept a case on a reduced-fee basis, then the potential client was given an application for services to verify income-eligibility. At least 53 individuals were directly helped by the Center in this manner and those cases are listed in the Appendix. The number is probably greater because not every phone call was entered into a database if the questions were fairly straightforward and required little time.

Combining the numbers served by grantees with the number of people who contacted the Center directly, approximately 500 people were provided legal assistance because of the Center's resources.

### **Number and Compensation to all Center attorneys and contractors**

There were two Center attorneys on staff between July 1, 2011, and June 30, 2012. One staff attorney began working on August 10, 2011, and a second staff attorney

---

<sup>3</sup> This figure is based on data from May 25, as the grantee's final numbers were unavailable.

joined the Center on March 19, 2012. Compensation, including benefits, totaled \$92,116.66.

The Center has contracted with 15 private attorneys willing to accept case referrals at a reduced rate. Not all of these attorneys have been assigned a Center case, but the paperwork has been finalized so that they are ready to accept an appropriate case referral when needed. The Center will launch a more aggressive campaign in the upcoming year to increase its roster of willing qualified attorneys throughout the state, focusing on more of the under-served communities.

In the last year the Center paid \$2,573.57 to eight (8) private attorneys who handled twelve (12) cases. Attorneys were paid \$70/hour with a cap of 10 hours. If the case exceeded ten (10) hours the attorney provided hours 11-20 as pro bono. Only one attorney exceeded 20 hours, at which point compensation resumed at \$70/hour. Currently seven (7) new cases are pending with five (5) private attorneys.

### **Amount of all other monies expended by the Center during the year**

The remaining funds expended by the Center went towards grant awards, non-attorney professional services and setting up a new office. A total of \$202,167.75 was awarded to four (4) grantees. A detailed account of this expenditure is discussed above.

The Center contracted with other professionals for designing its logo, developing the website and automating *pro se* forms. This amount totaled \$33,640.10.

The biggest expenditure for the Center last year relates to its relocation to the Hathaway Building. Furniture, office supplies and telecommunication services are necessary to provide services, but for the most part these are one-time expenses. To date, \$1,315.91 has been spent on phones and data service. An additional \$34,686.02 was spent on furniture, including desks, credenzas and chairs, office supplies, computers and a printer.

Finally, \$1,428.08 was spent on expenses related to conferences attended by one staff attorney. This includes the WY State Bar Annual Conference, a national conference in Washington D.C., an Access to Justice conference in Denver and a Conflict Resolution Symposium in Casper where she was a guest presenter.

Center expenditures for fiscal year 2011-2012 totaled \$372,539.79. Based on the original \$2,500,000 appropriation, the balance remaining on June 30, 2012, was \$2,127,460.21.

### **Additional Information requested by the Supreme Court**

No additional information was requested by the Supreme Court.

## **Conclusion**

In its first full year of existence the Center's all volunteer Board researched and developed a structure for the Center, developed a strategic plan, hired staff, approved more than one half million dollars in grant funding, and contracted for the development of a content rich website. New Center staff, at present just Rennie Polidora and Kristin Karr, have designed and drafted private attorney contracts, guidelines and policies, retained private attorneys to represent clients, drafted and supervised grant contracts to a number of different organizations, overseen automation of pro se divorce packets, hosted legal aid clinics, worked with other legal service providers, located office space, and assisted hundreds of individuals in getting answers to their legal questions and needs. Much of their work has been devoted to creating the infrastructure necessary for a new judicial branch entity, and we expect to "open the doors" to the public full-time this fall with an executive director in place within a few months. The Center's Board has proceeded carefully, avoided expenditures that it lacked infrastructure to manage, and focused on hiring high quality staff to professionally and effectively create a new entity for meeting the legal needs of the income eligible. The work to meet that need has just begun, but a structure is coming into place that we expect will have huge impacts across Wyoming over the next several years.

## **ATTACHMENTS**

# 2012 Strategic Plan

## WYOMING CENTER FOR LEGAL AID 2012 STRATEGIC PLAN

The Wyoming Center for Legal Aid (Center) was formed on April 19, 2011, by the Wyoming Supreme Court. Since then, the Center has: 1) hired one full time employee; 2) canvassed existing civil legal aid programs in Wyoming and other states; 3) met extensively with the Wyoming State Bar to coordinate support for the Center; 4) developed policies and a form of private attorney contract for representation of Center-referred clients; 5) obtained private attorney input for Center priorities; 6) funded four civil legal aid programs operating in Wyoming; 7) begun test-piloting new programs with local community organizations; and 8) begun development of an integrated website that will serve as a single coordinated point of entry for all Wyoming citizens seeking referrals to existing programs and other community resources for legal assistance. A considerable effort has also been taken to evaluate long-term program priorities for the Center, including an assessment of the various options that may be pursued to stretch as far as possible the limited available funds across Wyoming.

This plan updates and expands the initial Strategic Plan of the Center adopted in 2011 and sets specific program targets and priorities for 2012.

### I. The Issues and Challenges Facing a New Legal Aid Program in Wyoming

This plan is the product of months of in-depth discussions, brainstorming sessions and informal surveys of various stakeholders and interested parties. For every idea put forth, an analysis of its benefits, ramifications and costs followed. Primary topics of discussion focused on the Center becoming essentially a law firm with multiple offices and walk-in clients, having a website and hotline, contracting with private attorneys or going into communities to offer education and outreach on a broader scale. Regardless of the idea explored, the conclusion was the same: there are several ways the Center can help individuals with their legal problems, but there are not enough resources to do everything. Fundamentally, the question to be answered is this: how can the Center help the most people possible?

After exploring possibilities of what the Center **could** do, conversations shifted to what the Center **should** do. Many expect the Center to provide direct legal representation as the primary method for helping individuals with their legal problems. This is the standard clinic model, where a clinic operates essentially as a publicly-funded law firm for the income eligible. But others have urged the Center to undertake efforts with perhaps a broader reach, including the development of pro se forms, hosting a content-rich website, funding pilot projects with local community organizations and other court-centered initiatives that a state-wide judicial branch entity is well-positioned undertake. The Wyoming Civil Legal Services Act requires the Center to provide a single point of entry and coordinate with existing providers throughout the state. "Center" connotes a hub of sorts, a place where information and ideas are exchanged. It should be a reliable location where

resources come in, but also go out. An active, vibrant Center must be dynamic, flexible and current on issues relevant to its purpose.

As judicial branch entity, coordination with other organizations is important. The legal community is an important partner in the Center's Mission—the State Bar Association, members of the private bar, court clerks, judges and existing legal service providers. To connect with the target demographic the Center must also work through organizations that serve those individuals in their respective communities. The specific organizations vary from one community to the next, but low-cost health clinics, senior centers, soup kitchens and safe houses stand out as potential partners. In addition to being the link between Center resources and income-eligible clients, community organizations can relay the legal issues that their participants face, ensuring the Center stays abreast of those needs.

These considerations gave birth to the plan detailed below. In general it is conservative, moving forward cautiously so that the Center has a solid infrastructure and is prepared for the challenges that lie ahead. Although some may wish the Center move more quickly, the Center's position is that creating a sustainable and respectable organization will take time.

Based upon input from: 1) the Access to Justice Commission; 2) meetings with the Supreme Court and Court personnel about the Court's various access to justice initiatives; 3) existing civil legal aid providers in Wyoming; and 4) civil legal aid providers outside Wyoming willing to share their experiences, we have distilled the competing needs and priorities identified over the last six months to the following.

## **II. Identified Needs and Priorities to Consider**

### **A. Improving self help**

Many have identified the need for more simplified self-help legal processes. Pro se representation is expanding rapidly in Wyoming and current pro se forms can be complex to navigate, often leaving court personnel (clerks and judges alike) struggling with pro se litigants who appear with erroneous or incomplete paperwork. The Supreme Court is interested in automating some of the pro se forms that already exist to make it simpler for persons to fill out necessary paperwork properly, as well as gain a better understanding of the process itself. The self-help process can also be aided by court facilitators, who might assist the public in navigating simple pro se cases. While improving the efficacy of self-help forms is not tied directly to income, increasing the ability of individuals to get directly into the legal system will undoubtedly be of greatest benefit to those who cannot afford a lawyer themselves. While the State Bar has an understandable interest in ensuring that people who can afford and need a lawyer continue to hire one, pro se access to the most basic of necessary legal procedures remains a priority of the Supreme Court. The Center believes that supporting this effort, particularly through its website, is a major priority. The Center also believes that making access to the legal system simpler will benefit both the public and the private bar by helping people become more knowledgeable about the legal process and the resources which exist to help them.

## **B. Single point of entry and coordination of services**

Wyoming lacks a location to find all available legal aid clinics and services. Existing legal aid programs and clinics operate independently and community organizations helping the income eligible have no ready source of legal support. One of the Center's statutory charges is to provide a "single point of entry" to legal aid resources. For a large rural state, there is no question that a website hosting all this information is critical to meeting the statutory objective. An immediate priority of the Center is developing a resource-rich website, capable of directing any Wyoming citizen to the organizations in their communities that can provide help. The Center envisions a website with links to all the civil legal aid services existing in the State, including the pro bono programs sponsored by the State Bar, Legal Aid of Wyoming, Inc., the UW law clinics, the Coalition against Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault and other formal and informal programs that are hosted around the state. In addition to the relevant links, the website can provide enough information so that a website user will know if a particular provider may or may not be a viable resource to pursue. Additionally, the website will be a portal whereby lawyers and judges can request support from the Center or provide on-going comments, suggestion and ideas for improving access to justice in Wyoming. The website will, as quickly as possible, be filled with substantive legal content, including pro se packets, automated forms, perhaps a chat line for persons with questions, and other resources for people who cannot afford a lawyer but need a basic introduction to the legal system. Ideally, the Center's website can also serve as a gateway into the services of the private bar and the programs of the Wyoming State Bar.

## **C. Statewide reach**

There are many places in Wyoming not directly served by any legal aid resources. Legal Aid of Wyoming, Inc., the federally funded program, has offices in Cheyenne, Casper and Lander, and serves the Wind River Indian Reservation. It is facing significant funding cutbacks, the implications of which have not yet been realized. Other communities in Wyoming have no resident program. Many have suggested that the Center establish offices in Gillette and Rock Springs to provide broader coverage of legal aid offices in Wyoming. Ensuring state-wide coverage for civil legal aid services is a priority of the Center, although the establishment of separate offices is expensive and therefore should be undertaken only upon demonstration of need. Initially, the Center expects its website to reach across the State, and the Center should be able to connect citizens in far-flung rural areas with lawyers or resources in their areas under the programs described below.

Wyoming's rural character poses special challenges for the Center. Typically, legal aid clinics are located in large urban areas, which make the provision of one-on-one legal services easier and cheaper to accomplish than, for example, connecting a client in Greybull or Farson to a legal aid office. The Center will never have sufficient resources to open law firm-type offices in every community, and the temptation to place offices in larger communities like Rock Springs and Gillette can lead to continued neglect of the many small communities in Wyoming where there are few lawyers but many who may need services. Existing legal aid programs in Cheyenne and Laramie have had success representing

individuals across the State, particularly when local lawyers can be retained through clinic supervision to assist. In part for this reason the Center has developed policies and contracts for the hiring of private attorneys on a reduced-fee basis for service to clients in smaller communities. Based upon the experience of these programs, the Center expects to expand legal help across the state, but will need to build the community-based network described below to support that effort. The uniquely rural character of Wyoming suggests the Center should work through local community-based organizations to reach the income eligible public rather than pursue the typical “walk-in” model of traditional urban clinics.

#### **D. Direct legal services**

An option for the Center is to spend the bulk of its available funds providing direct legal services to income eligible clients with full-time paid staff, as is commonly done by many civil legal service providers around the country. Under this “law-firm” model, a clinic hires full-time lawyers to represent clients who come to the clinic and are screened for income eligibility and then paired with Center attorneys. This is the model employed by Legal Aid of Wyoming, Inc., but there are significant issues to consider before adopting this model as the Center’s primary template.

First, under this model the Center would be required to spend considerable resources in developing client intake and case management systems. Having personnel answer the phones, screen calls to determine the nature of the need, qualify clients under the income limits, and route clients to appropriate legal resources is a significant undertaking on a daily basis. The Center would also have to spend considerable resources developing the necessary software to track input for case management and fiscal accountability. Legal Aid of Wyoming has already developed all these systems, and has considerable experience managing them, so the Center must seriously consider the wisdom of duplicating all those efforts and creating what would essentially be a competing legal aid clinic performing many of the same functions as Legal Aid of Wyoming. In part for these reasons, several interested stakeholders have urged the Center not to undertake direct “off the street” representation of clients.

Second, the provision of direct legal services requires the Center to develop policies that inform when and how direct representation is undertaken. There are subtle but important ethical considerations to navigate. For example, should the Center represent one side of a contested divorce? If that is done, should Center funds be used to hire a lawyer for the other side of a contested divorce, as some legal aid clinics do? Is it appropriate for the state to be effectively funding both sides of a private divorce? Ethical issues like these are frequent problems for legal aid clinics and are best avoided, or navigated, with the use of well-thought-out guidelines and policies that take time to develop.

Third, experience teaches that direct representation of clients for extended legal problems is expensive and time consuming. Legal Aid of Wyoming reports that its staff attorneys represent about 40-45 clients a year in extensive representation through the court system. Similarly, the Coalition against Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault reports that its staff attorneys each handle about 20-30 cases per year, as these cases typically involve extended

litigation through the Court system. This means that extensive direct representation of clients in court by the Center would consume available funds without allowing the Center to reach a very large number of the income eligible. Not surprisingly, therefore, most legal aid clinics focus on providing brief consultations with people who need advice or explanations of their legal rights, rather than extensive one-on-one representation in court. In 2011, Legal Aid of Wyoming helped about 2,040 people, but most of these contacts were in the form of brief consultations, advice and limited action. Approximately 110 of those cases involved more extensive representation, with or without going to court. These numbers were achieved with a budget of about \$900,000 in 2011. As a result, if the Center were organized around a similar model, with its annual estimated revenues of about \$1.3 million, the Center might expect to serve about 2,400 people, the vast majority of whom would receive brief consults. An important long-term challenge facing the Center is evaluating whether it can make the biggest difference in Wyoming using the standard in-house clinic model, or whether it can stretch its dollars more effectively by devoting at least some of its resources to other projects, as discussed below.

Finally, the provision of direct legal services by the Center may inhibit broader pro bono participation by the State Bar. If private attorneys believe that the needs of low income persons are being “covered” by the Center it becomes more difficult to recruit and sustain pro bono volunteer services by the private bar. Many well-established legal aid clinics were initially built from a volunteer pro bono effort by the private bar, a history that does not exist in Wyoming given its extremely rural character. However, the Center is committed to working closely with the State Bar to grow, rather than replace, its on-going efforts to expand pro bono undertakings by the private bar and therefore believes priority should be given, at least in the early years, to developing programs which have the potential to expand sustained pro bono services by the private bar.

The Center is committed to providing direct legal representation to the income eligible, and will expect that all of its staff attorneys, wherever located, to regularly represent individual clients. For at least its early development, however, the Center intends to explore activities that are different than the standard “clinic” model, with the goal of leveraging its limited resources further than might be possible as a walk-in clinic. The Center’s funding and statutory authority counsel for the development of a statewide coordination program that promotes and improves pro se forms, facilitates the development of information resources for the public and works with existing organizations to leverage the services they already provide, rather than duplicate them. At least initially in 2012, the Center will therefore focus primarily upon the development of a state-wide community-based network (described below) to expand the reach of civil legal aid resources and to bring into the legal system groups and organizations that currently do not have access to civil legal aid in their areas. If this experiment in community based organization is successful, the Center hopes to reach on an annual basis thousands more than it can help as a walk-in clinic.

#### **E. Community involvement**

The Center’s initial 2011 strategic plan was committed to the core objective of growing “community based systems rather than develop a state-wide agency within the judicial

branch of government for direct delivery of legal services.” Subsequent investigation by the Center confirms that approach. Wyoming is a large rural state with many small communities, and lacks the large urban centers best served by the classic legal aid clinic model. Further, the funding available to the Center is not expected to support a significant number of offices around the state. Nor does the Center gain by duplicating many of the functions already undertaken by Legal Aid of Wyoming, which already has client intake and case management systems. The Center and Legal Aid of Wyoming should find ways to work together to avoid duplicating efforts while maximizing their respective limited resources.

For these reasons, the Center wants to experiment with an innovative idea that may be well suited for a large rural state. Specifically, the Center wants to locate, identify and develop relationships with existing community organizations across the state that already serve the income eligible and therefore know what those individuals need in the way of legal services. By working directly with community organizations, the Center hopes to leverage its existing resources and harness more private attorney and pro bono efforts to reach a larger number of citizens across a larger swath of Wyoming than would be possible with a standard legal aid clinic model.

For example, the Center can reach out to senior citizen centers around the state, where clinics could be held on simple wills, living wills, and Medicare or Medicaid benefits. Similarly, Center staff could work with community-based safe houses and social service providers who are already working with income qualified clientele to organize and encourage their participants to attend targeted sessions on specific legal topics. The Center’s goal would be to develop a list of community organizations throughout the state (at least several in each county) to partner with to provide legal services to the income eligible on a regular basis, with the staffing help of the private bar, thereby leveraging limited Center resources into a grassroots program stretching throughout the state.

Another example is afforded by Judge Kautz’s recent suggestion that regular clinics be held to educate the public on basic forms and procedures in divorce cases, where there is an increasing amount of pro se litigation occurring. Hosting regular pro se clinics is not something that the private bar is readily able to do by itself on a sustained basis. If, however, the Center and the State Bar jointly focused on supporting efforts like these to create and then establish a dependable system for private attorneys to attend, clinics like these may be built around the state and hosted regularly in each county. Center staff could organize the event, screen potential participants for income eligibility, take care of the administrative chores associated with finding facilities to host, and then publicize the event. Center attorneys could attend monthly evening clinics and assist the qualified public with the participation of local attorneys providing pro bono services. Once up and running in Converse County, such a program could largely be supported on a sustained basis by pro bono private volunteers, who can help allow the program to keep running while Center staff go on to another community, perhaps Gillette, to replicate the program there. Ideally, over time, programs like this could become established across the state, leveraging limited Center resources with pro bono or partially paid support from the private bar to reach a larger number of Wyoming citizens that could be served by a walk-in clinic.

The advantages of working with and through existing community-based organizations are many. First, organizations exist in most Wyoming communities that have already identified, and work with, the income eligible. Working with these organizations directly would reduce the burdens on the Center associated with client intake. It also helps identify clients with “skin in the game,” in the sense that they will be organized and accountable to the community organizations that already serve their needs. For example, the Center is currently test-piloting a program with CLIMB Wyoming, where CLIMB is having its members prepare to meet with Center-sponsored pro bono private lawyers to address specific topics of need, under circumstances where the clients are required to come prepared and then be responsible for taking action afterward. CLIMB will have its participants prepared for the session and be responsible for following up on the advice they get. In this fashion, CLIMB can work with the Center to define the services needed and organize a specific event, and then the Center can locate and recruit appropriate experts from the private bar to establish a regularly scheduled and focused program than can recur on a repeated basis in the future. Replicating this approach around the state, Center lawyers will travel to similar community organizations, learn their needs, and then work with them to provide targeted brief consults on a regular basis. This method will extend the Center’s reach, while providing a targeted and supported platform for pro bono efforts from the private bar, which can be leveraged around the state to create a lasting web of legal services for income eligible persons who would otherwise never enter the legal system. Over time, persons around the state will learn to contact the Center to have the Center support similar programs in their communities, and the Center’s website would carry a calendar of upcoming events across the state on a regular basis.

All of this is not to say that the Center should eschew providing direct legal services with its own clients on a case-by-case basis. Doing so will always be a part of what the Center does, and over time may become the principal activity of the Center. In the short term, however, the Center believes that enduring success is more likely to be achieved if it truly creates a “presence” throughout the state by partnering with community organizations. If the Center begins its existence as a sole provider of civil legal services it would be difficult to shift its focus elsewhere. Understanding that the need for legal services is great and the demand is high, the Center is not prepared to open the floodgates and operate in an environment where one is struggling to stay afloat. The creation of a new legal services entity affords the Center an opportunity to be something different and unique in the legal aid arena.

### **III. Specific Program Plans and Priorities for 2012**

With these principles in mind, the Center has created the following strategic plan for 2012, which is dynamic so that it can be flexible, forward-thinking and creative, but also reliable, sustainable and of high quality. While the discussion below explains the detailed reasons for our new action plan, the bottom-line is to:

1. Hire at least two additional staff attorneys as soon as reasonably possible;
2. Begin a search for an Executive Director to have in place by July 1;

3. Develop policies and guidelines for direct representation by Center attorneys;
4. Begin direct representation from Legal Aid of Wyoming referrals;
5. Design, populate and load with content a comprehensive website by July 1;
6. Contract with professional firm to automate pro se forms; begin automation;
7. Work with Legal Aid of Wyoming to explore ways to promote both organizations and avoid duplication;
8. Canvass the state to develop a list of community organizations and court contacts with which the Center can work to develop a statewide network of contacts with the income eligible;
9. Locate, contract for and support the opening of an office by July 1, 2012;
10. Complete the “branding” process so the Center can have a recognizable logo established prior to networking;
11. Begin test-piloting community based programs (e.g., CLIMB, divorce clinics);
12. Begin test-piloting private attorney contracts and client referrals;
13. Conduct another round of grant funding;
14. Supervise current grants;
15. Evaluate potential locations for future Center offices;
16. Hire support staff for Center office;
17. Work with State Bar’s pro bono programs to expand private pro bono efforts;
18. Continue to meet with representatives at the UW Law School to determine the best way to work together;
19. Develop and regularly circulate an electronic newsletter to AJC stakeholders and legislators; and
20. Work with Supreme Court to support/facilitate pilot court facilitator projects.

#### **IV. Working with Legal Aid of Wyoming**

Legal Aid of Wyoming is the federally funded low-income legal aid clinic, and has offices in Cheyenne, Casper and Lander, serving the Wind River Reservation as well. This program has been through many changes over the years, and is currently facing federal budget cuts. It does, however, have many years of experience operating a legal aid clinic in Wyoming, and serves some of the same clientele targeted by the Center.

Ideally, the Center should find a way to coordinate, rather than duplicate, the services provided by Legal Aid of Wyoming. For example, Legal Aid of Wyoming has already purchased, and has experience with, case management software, conflicts database management, a call-in hotline, and other components of a legal aid program that the Center might consider operating on its own. As a new entity, the Center needs to explore ways to leverage the Legal Aid program and its experience, to support Center programs, assist Legal Aid, and to avoid unnecessary duplication of efforts. The Center therefore intends to explore the current systems and operations of Legal Aid, evaluate ways to leverage its programs and support its efforts, and identify ways to avoid unnecessary duplication of effort. The Center will make it a priority over the first six months of 2012 to develop a strong working relationship with Legal Aid, and will investigate ways to avoid duplicating costs and services already provided by legal Aid. The goal will be to develop a comprehensive plan for supporting and expanding the work of both organizations with a minimum of duplication. The Center Board's and the Center's staff will begin a sustained interaction with Legal Aid, with the goal of developing and integrating a plan for the two organizations to coordinate services and resources by July 1, 2012.

#### **V. The Center Website**

One statewide website that contains a wealth of relevant legal information, including links to other available resources, is an immediate priority. For many, the statewide website may be the only point of contact they have with the Center. Ideally the website is the first place individuals will go. In addition to resource links the website will host a statewide calendar that lists ongoing programs and pertinent events occurring throughout the state. This may include regularly-held pro se workshops, but also other events such as seasonal tax-filing clinics.

The Center has contracted with Cheyenne Technology, Inc. to design and develop a website for the Center. Initially, the website will need to load existing pro se forms, provide links to existing programs and services statewide, provide contact information for the Center, contain a calendar of upcoming clinics and seminars, provide a "hotline" number, explain income eligibility requirements, and otherwise direct persons to all applicable legal resources.

The Center's website should contain as much legal content as possible for the use of the income eligible. The website should serve as a legal guide for persons to consult, both to gain a basic understanding of the legal process and to identify more readily their own legal needs, so that they can pursue appropriate resources. Content on the website should be

sufficiently robust to educate people on the appropriate gateways into the legal process, both through the hiring of private lawyers and direction, as appropriate, to legal aid resources, including basic pro se forms and instructions. At the Supreme Court's request, the Center has begun the process of automating existing legal forms, and it is expected that web-based access to automated forms will greatly help individuals who need to pursue pro se relief. To fill the website with accurate and useful content, at an appropriate level of explanation, the Center has decided to contract with appropriate legal specialists for the drafting of website content in targeted legal areas.

The Center does not want to go "live" with its website until Center staffing is sufficient to support it and until the Center has its own office space and location. The Center is therefore targeting July 1, 2012 as its initiation of the website in conjunction with its other plans.

## **VI. Staffing and Office Space**

Evaluation of the programs and priorities described above suggest the following minimum staffing needs for 2012. First, a staff attorney will be needed to develop the website, supervise efforts to load it with accurate content, support it, and oversee the development of automation programs to make the forms and content accessible to the public. While long term the website should not be a full time job for a staff attorney, the Center expects website development to be a time-intensive commitment for at least the first half of 2012.

Another staff attorney will be needed to develop the contracts, policies and systems necessary to work with Legal Aid of Wyoming, and to begin the development of an integrated hotline, client intake and referral system. The Center will need to develop policies governing client intake, quality legal representation, coordination of grants, supervision of private attorneys contracting with the Center, and other infrastructure projects necessary to establish appropriate operating policies and programs.

The Center also needs to begin reaching out to communities around the state to locate those local programs that can partner with the Center to address the unmet needs of the income eligible. Ideally, Center staff should be canvassing the state, meeting community leaders, promoting Center policies and objectives, getting to know local court personnel and judges, and otherwise formally developing a statewide network of contacts.

The Center also needs to locate and move into its own office space. A client-friendly and approachable facility should be located, if possible, on state-owned properties, to house an office with at least five full-time staff. Efforts are already underway to identify possibilities, and the goal will be to locate, arrange for, and move into separate facilities by July 1, 2012. This will require attention to the infrastructure needed to support a stand-alone facility, including computers and IT support, phones, copiers and other components necessary to support an office. The person responsible for this effort can also begin investigating the costs and possibilities of opening additional offices, perhaps in Rock Springs or Gillette, in 2013.

As soon as possible, the Center should also host community-based programs (like the experiment with CLIMB Wyoming), referring clients to private attorneys under contract with the Center, and otherwise starting at least limited direct representation based upon referrals routed through Legal Aid of Wyoming.

Canvassing all these objectives suggests the Center will need to hire two more lawyers as soon as possible and a paralegal/secretary by July 1, 2012. The Center should also begin the search for an Executive Director, hopefully to have someone in place by about July 1, 2012 when the Center is targeting to be ready to open for business.

## **VII. Continue the Work with Key Stakeholders**

The Center should also continue developing relationships and projects with other legal service providers in the state. They are an invaluable resource not only for their expertise and knowledge, but also as an integral component of a statewide network. The communication between the Center and key stakeholders must remain continuous and open.

### **A. Access to Justice Commission**

The Commission has the respect of all branches of government and has the ability to bring a broad range of players to the table. It was successful in obtaining funding to create the Center and its ongoing relationship is essential for the Center's success. The Commission will be continuing to address other issues that create barriers to justice. Any future AJC initiatives should be supported by the Center, so long as there is no statutory conflict. Additionally, the Center can make recommendations to the Commission as it gains awareness of barriers that are faced in various communities and certain topics come to the fore.

### **B. UW Law School**

The Law School houses the Legal Services Clinic and the Domestic Violence Clinic, each of which is managed by a faculty director. Third-year law students receive class credit while representing low-income clients. The Domestic Violence Clinic works closely with the Wyoming Coalition for Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault. It would be great if the Center could be another option for third-year law students seeking practical experience. However, if the Center draws from the pool of students available at the Law School, it must be sure that the clinics are staffed first.

The Center can also create internship opportunities through the Law School for students who are not eligible to work in a clinic, such as first- and second-year students. Additionally, the Center should establish a fellowship position for post-graduates which would ensure a consistent stream of staff attorneys.

### **C. The Wyoming Bar Association**

The Bar Association is in the best position to communicate with the statewide legal community and must be a core partner with the Center on all Center programs and initiatives. The Center has already met repeatedly with the State Bar Commissioners, all of whom have expressed a commitment to the Center and its statutory charge. The question now will be finding ways to leverage the Bar's resources so as to maximize the Center's reach, while finding ways to benefit the private bar by introducing more persons to the legal system. In 2012, the Center intends to begin development of a community-based model under which targeted populations can be approached and serviced based both on need and income eligibility. Ideally, much of the legal assistance can be provided by pro bono efforts of the private bar. The Center hopes to partner with the State Bar and its pro bono resources to create more opportunities for pro bono involvement of the private bar, and anticipates a number of projects will be designed and implemented over the coming year. Whether or not the Center ultimately evolves into a facilitator/coordinator or a standard "clinic" will depend in significant part upon whether the private bar can support sustained community based services organized by the Center, and so the model will begin development in 2012, working with the State Bar.

### **VIII. Self-help/Pro Se**

There are individuals who represent themselves in legal matters, either by choice or necessity. For several years the Wyoming Supreme Court has provided pro se packets that can be downloaded and printed by parties who are not represented by an attorney. These packets have only been available for domestic relations cases. Although the packets can be quite useful, they are still fairly dense and cumbersome. They are also not strictly available to low-income litigants.

There are supporters around the state who would like to see the pro se process become more user-friendly. The Supreme Court has made it a priority to automate pro se forms. Interactive forms are easier to use than the current packets because they ask the party specific questions and enter the answers so that at the end of the interview a party can print a complete, court-ready form.

In 2012, the Center will prioritize the forms to be automated and contract with a professional firm to begin the automation process. The Center should begin meeting with groups around the state who are currently working towards improving the pro se process (such as the Domestic Relations Litigation Committee, Family Court Facilitator pilot project, Unauthorized Practice of Law Committee). Concurrently, the Center should arrange several "pro se workshops" around the state based on local needs and availability of volunteer instructors.

### **IX. Direct Representation: Staff Attorneys; PAI; and Pro Bono**

The Center has been tasked with providing civil legal services to income-eligible individuals. There are various ways in which this can be achieved, but generally there are two approaches: 1) the Center can provide support for (financial, technological, etc.) and

help coordinate existing providers, thereby becoming more of a manager/facilitator; or 2) the Center can hire attorneys and/or contract with private attorneys who provide direct representation.

The primary concern with the first approach is that there are not many existing providers and for some who are providing civil legal services, their caseload is limited by available supervision (law clinics) therefore giving more money in the form of grants would not dramatically increase the number of clients served. To address this issue, the Center plans on developing a network of community based programs to facilitate addressing unmet needs in local communities, hopefully supported by the private bar.

In this “facilitator” mode, the Center hopes to reach far more individuals than it could using the classic “law clinic” model, but success in this effort will require support from the private bar. The most cost-effective way to provide direct legal representation is through the use of pro bono attorneys. Although pro bono recruitment has been less than successful in Wyoming, it is hoped that the Center’s existence and support may increase participation. The Center plans to work with the State Bar and individual bar associations to design and implement programs which have the potential to expand pro bono participation by the private bar. In the short term, the Center can create and administer a survey through the State Bar to gauge interest in different ways that attorneys can volunteer, begin meeting directly with local bar associations, test pilot projects in select areas, and create a database of potential volunteers and what they are willing to do.

The Center will not, however, rely solely on the “facilitator” model, but also begin experimenting with direct representation of clients, both with staff attorneys and by contract with the private bar. After talking with several states and civil legal service providers, the general consensus is that contracting with private attorneys is costly and requires a significant amount of oversight. There are certainly situations in which a private attorney would be the best use of the Center’s resources. However, it should be done sparingly so as not to undermine the pro bono efforts. The Center should have very specific guidelines for when a private attorney will be contracted with (isolated geographical area or a case requiring a lot of face-to-face interaction, etc.).

The Center will develop a database of attorneys who are willing to take on cases at a reduced fee. Attorneys who also agree to work on a pro bono basis will be given priority for a reduced-fee case selection.

## **X. Grants**

The Center has already awarded four grants to existing providers, allowing them to expand their current services. Ideally the Center will continue to be a grantor, especially in situations where a particular grantee is in a better position to provide specific legal services. Currently the grants are awarded annually. Short-term, the Center will continue oversight of existing grants, including site visits and managing quarterly reports, target another in April, make award decisions in May so that current grantees will know whether

or not Center funds will be available after June, and sign contracts with a second round of grantees.

# Expenditure Summary

## **EXPENDITURE SUMMARY**

Salaries and Benefits \$92,116.66

Utilities, Travel, Office Equipment and  
Furnishings \$36,114.10

Telecommunications \$1,315.91

### **Grants**

Wyoming Coalition against Domestic  
Violence and Sexual Assault \$32,557.71

Wyoming Children's Law Center \$75,000.00

Teton County Access to Justice Center \$20,021.04

Legal Aid of Wyoming, Inc. \$74,589.00

### **Professional Services**

Private Attorney Contracts \$2,573.57

Contracts for Website Development and  
Automation of *pro se* forms \$33,640.10

# Posting for Executive Director

**Executive Director**



## **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR POSITION**

The Wyoming Center for Legal Aid (WCLA) is now accepting applications for its first Executive Director.

The WCLA is a newly formed entity created by the Wyoming Supreme Court to implement a civil legal services program for the income eligible, as authorized by the Wyoming Legislature. *See* Wyo. Stat. § 5-2-122. The WCLA is overseen by a Board of Commissioners appointed by the Wyoming Supreme Court. The initial Board has developed a strategic plan, obtained office space and associated support, hired initial attorney staff, begun the process of grant funding other legal aid programs, and is now seeking an Executive Director to begin full-time implementation of the Center's programs and priorities. A copy of the WCLA's 2012 strategic plan is available at <http://www.courts.state.wy.us/AJC/WCLA-2012StrategicPlan.pdf>.

The WCLA's first Executive Director will have a unique opportunity to play a pivotal role in bringing into existence a new civil legal services program in Wyoming. Candidates for the position do not have to be an attorney, but the position will require overseeing the operation of a legal aid program and frequent interaction with the State Bar, court personnel, legislators, community leaders, and other stakeholders. The ideal candidate will be passionate about providing access and support for civil legal services to the income eligible, able to work in an unstructured environment for a start-up organization, be extroverted and willing to travel around the state to promote, create and grow the program, and have relevant experience with not-for-profit or volunteer organizations that work effectively with other community organizations. .

### **Primary responsibilities will include:**

1. Directing and organizing community events around Wyoming to introduce the WCLA, its resources and programs;
2. Collaborating with the judiciary to identify and support programs that will increase access to justice for Wyoming citizens who would otherwise go without;
3. Collaborating with communities around the State to identify opportunities to present legal aid information and clinics to the income eligible;
4. Collaborating with private law firms and the Wyoming State Bar to support and expand representation of the income eligible;
5. Delivering effective direct legal services by and through WCLA personnel;

6. Coordinating with other civil legal aid providers to avoid duplication and to expand the scope of services to those who qualify;
7. Establishing and promoting new civil legal service programs throughout the State;
8. Administering and supervising grants awarded by the WCLA;
9. Continuing development and support of an easy to use and helpful website with on-line information and resources; and
10. Overseeing the administration of the WCLA, its staff, operations and programs.

**Knowledge and Skills:**

- Knowledge of strategic planning;
- Knowledge of grant administration;
- Knowledge of finance and budget, human resource concepts, principles and practices;
- Skilled in interpersonal, written and verbal communications;
- Skilled in personnel management and employee relations;
- Ability to develop collaborative relationships to facilitate the accomplishment of work goals and to build strategic relationships among people, communities, the Wyoming State Bar, the judiciary, and other stakeholders;
- Ability to multi-task and prioritize in a new, unstructured environment;
- Ability to inspire and motivate others;
- Ability to present and convey information clearly and concisely to groups or individuals verbally, electronically and in writing to ensure they understand the information; and
- Ability to spend significant time traveling around Wyoming

**Preferences:**

- Bachelor's degree
- Five years of progressive work experience in non-profit or legal-related field including at least five years managing staff

Salary Range is \$65,000 - \$85,000 depending on experience and qualifications, plus State of Wyoming benefits. The position will be filled under an "at will" contract with the Center.

**To Apply:**

Send a Cover Letter, Resume and three (3) Letters of Recommendation, along with the Judicial Employment Application (<http://www.courts.state.wy.us/forms/wsc-app.pdf>) to:

Rennie Polidora  
Wyoming Center for Legal Aid  
2300 Capitol Ave., First Floor  
Cheyenne, WY 82002

Or electronically to: [rpolidora@legalhelpwy.org](mailto:rpolidora@legalhelpwy.org)

Contact Rennie Polidora at (307)777-6967 for any additional information.

# Case Data

**Case Data**

<b>Client Location (if known)</b>	<b>Legal Issue</b>	<b>Outcome</b>
out-of-state	needs birth certificate for son born in 2002 in Jackson, WY	sent to DV Clinic
Thayne, WY	emailed re: kids watching porn while with Father	emailed her back that she has contacted the right people & we can't help her
Cheyenne	concern abt son having visitation w Father long history w Judge Arnold & clinics	ongoing
Cheyenne	Collections/Garnishment	spoke with attorney
Cheyenne	worker's comp; bankruptcy; enforcement of court orders	answered general questions
Casper	landlord/tenant problem; emailing for her daughter	forwarded to DV Clinic because daughter had left relationship due to DV
Big Horn County	land issue; complaints about local judge	LAW is supposed to be helping her; confuses the 2 organizations
Laramie	pregnant teenager; mother wanting custody modification	contracted with Charles Pelkey
Laramie	divorce	contracted with Charles Pelkey
call from North Carolina	son's girlfriend's mother passed away & they had questions regarding probate	requested more information and/or contact Bar Referral
South Carolina	father in SC; custody modification	answered general questions
Worland	auto claim	called Ray and he said he would call her
Douglas	grandmother wants guardianship; mother rep by LAW	ongoing
Cheyenne	Emancipation	answered general questions

Sheridan	granddaughter in prison feels coerced to relinquish parental rights for 10 m.o.	LAW can't represent prisoners; looking for contract atty in Sheridan
Lovell	needs atty for 61 y.o. needing divorce living in Lovell nursing home	LAW sent denial letter due to capacity; found a contract attorney
Lovell	needes atty for W coerced into signing divorce, custody papers by abusive H	sent her to DV Clinic and emailed Dona
Washington State	left msg; has questions on behalf of bro getting a divorce in WY	Kristin answered questions
Casper	ex-W wants him to relinquish PR but he wants to be relieved of \$70k in arrears	gave him LAW numbers
Wisconsin	step-mother needing custody & support modification for WY Order	directed her to pro se forms; wouldn't be income-eligible
Evanston	on probation in Evanston; wants to modify ID Order to get work-only DL	Called ID Legal Aid; referred to ID Bar so emailed link to Michael with criminal attys
Laramie	ongoing custody dispute; wants to move to different District Court	ongoing
Alpine, WY	divorce and custody	emailed with additional questions and info; haven't heard back
Lovell	divorce and custody	emailed with additional questions and info; haven't heard back
unknown	paternity and visitation	referred to Child Support Services
Louisiana; grandchildren in Cheyenne	grandparent custody	discussed grandparent rights when bio parents are available
out-of-state	out-of-state custody issue	Kristin called to get more info; referred her to LAW
Utah	wage garnishment law update	Kristin called her and said the law hadn't changed since 1993
Rock Springs	looking for legal form re status memo	emailed her back that such a form isn't available

Pinedale	complex separation & custody issue with property	emailed additional questions; haven't heard back
unknown	child custody	emailed application but never received it
Cheyenne	Minor's Trust Account	looking for a private atty who can answer some questions
Maryland	her brother is having custody & visitation dispute with ex-wife	ongoing
Powell	questions regarding visitation for unmarried father	answered general questions
Sheridan	needs divorce; has a Protection Order	looking for private attorney; working with Coalition
Sheridan	Bankruptcy	assigned to private attorney for flat rate
Meteetse	disabled son not getting required accommodations in the school district	working with private attorney
Lovell	Bankruptcy	contracted with private attorney
Lovell	Bankruptcy	contracted with private attorney
Powell	dispute with child's principal re mom's presence at school on non-custody days	referred to private attorney for consult; haven't heard back but left messages
Laramie, but action is in Teton County	Collections/ Creditor	referred to Teton County Access to Justice Center
Saratoga	custody/support for 2 kids; never married to father	waiting on return of application; have a willing attorney if applicant qualifies
Rawlins	Name Change	explained the process including publication & expenses
Colorado	Small Claims; question about Jurisdiction	answered questions

Casper	questions about pro se divorce; no minor children	answered questions; directed her to the forms & will help if needed
unknown	has an upcoming Appeal before the SC re government and real property	returned call; he hasn't called back but it sounds like his case would be restricted based on
Alabama	question about bail bonds and Civil Legal Services fees	directed her to Court Administration
Rawlins	questions about custody modification	answered questions; she will look at pro se forms and call if she needs more info
unknown	left a message stating that she needed an attorney but didn't say issue	returned call; she had found a pro bono attorney
Louisiana; grandchildren in Cheyenne	grandmother concerned about safety of grandchildren in custody with their father	explained parental vs grandparent rights; DFS has been notified and there isn't much to
unknown	questions about custody modification; bio dad is terminally ill	referred her to LAW
Rawlins	q's about kids in foster care	spoke with DFS and they are working with her
Cheyenne	Order to Show Cause Hearing	contracted with private attorney

# Testimonials

## **Polidora, Rennie**

---

**From:** Diana Currah [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Thursday, July 26, 2012 3:47 PM  
**To:** Polidora, Rennie  
**Subject:** Law Seminar thanks and look back

Hello, Rennie--

This email is a belated thank you for organizing interested attorneys to attend to the WDE Special Programs Law Seminar and for coming yourself. I hope it was time well spent and worth your group's time as you consider the task of offering representation to families of special needs children. On that note, WDE would welcome any feed back that you could supply regarding the session topics, format of the conference and application of the information to your group. I am also curious about next steps and ways to collaborate so that parent's of children may have more accessibility to legal counsel. Thank you in advance for sharing any thoughts that you are able to share.

Again, thank you for organizing a group of interested folks and I look forward to hearing from you.  
Sincerely,

--  
*Diana*

**Diana Currah, Ph.D.**  
Dispute Resolution Coordinator  
Special Programs Division  
Wyoming Department of Education  
307-857-9285 Office  
307-857-9261 FAX

**Confidentiality Notice**

This transmission and any accompanying documents contain information belonging to the sender which may be confidential and legally privileged. This information is intended only for the use of the individual or entity to whom this transmission was sent as indicated above. If you are not the intended recipient, any disclosure, copying, distribution, or action taken in reliance on the contents of the information contained herewith is strictly prohibited. All e-mail correspondence to and from this address is subject to WY Public Record Law which may result in monitoring and disclosure to third parties.

E-Mail to and from me, in connection with the transaction of public business, is subject to the Wyoming Public Records Act and may be disclosed to third parties.

To Whom It May Concern,

I am a therapist in the mental health center in Big Horn County, Wyoming. We serve primarily low income clients who have few or no resources. Many of my clients in the past have incurred larger debts, been at the receiving end of a bad visitation plan, and other problems because they don't have the finances to hire an attorney. All I can do is try to help them deal with their sadness and frustration.

I have only been aware of Wyoming Center for Legal Aid Services for a few months. (I'm not even sure I have the name accurate. I'm not in my office as I type this.)

However, Rennie has been prompt in responding to my questions, concerns, and referrals every time I have contacted her. That's wonderful!

She e-mailed me the forms promptly; followed up (when my clients were slow in filling them out); and updated me in what she needed to continue her efforts. (Then I helped my clients get their parts completed.) My clients, especially, due to mental issues, often have difficulty with paperwork. So far, Rennie and I are good at team-tagging the clients to get their paperwork moving.

May these services continue!

Dorothy Baker, LCSW  
Big Horn Basin Counseling Services

**Polidora, Rennie**

---

**From:** Jessica Schneider [redacted]  
**Sent:** Monday, July 30, 2012 4:47 PM  
**To:** Polidora, Rennie  
**Subject:** Estate Planning Clinic

Rennie,

Good afternoon. As I'm sure you are aware, earlier this month Aaron Tomisich left Laramie to go back to school to obtain an LLM in tax law. As a result of his departure, I have taken over as the first adjunct professor for the Estate Planning Clinic at the law school. Before he left, Aaron and I talked about some potential resources regarding how to set up the screening process for the clinic and Aaron mentioned your name.

If you have any time over the next week or so, would you be willing to meet with me to discuss the screening process and forms you use for potential clients and to give me some advice on how best to achieve serving the low-income population of Wyoming? I know that this is something you do all the time and I would so much appreciate hearing your thoughts. I am really excited about the clinic and its potential to provide another type of free legal service to the people of Wyoming.

Thank you and I look forward to hearing back from you.

Jessica

**Jessica Schneider**

Jessica Schneider  
Attorney at Law  
Prehoda, Leonard & Edwards, LLC  
P.O. Box 789  
Laramie, WY 82073-0789  
307-742-7896  
307-742-9799 (fax)  
[redacted]

IRS Circular 230 Disclosure: To insure compliance with requirements imposed by the IRS, we inform you that any US tax advice contained in this communication (including attachments) is not intended or written to be used, and cannot be used, for the purpose of (1) avoiding penalties under the IRS Code or (2) promoting, marketing or recommending to another party any tax related matter.

**CONFIDENTIALITY NOTICE:**

The information in this email is intended to be reviewed only by the addressee. If you are not the intended recipient or an authorized representative, you are hereby notified that any review, dissemination or copying of this email, its attachments or the information contained herein is prohibited. If you have received this email in error, please notify the sender by return email and delete this email. Thank you.

## **Polidora, Rennie**

---

**From:** Valerie Schoneberger [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Monday, June 25, 2012 4:46 PM  
**To:** Polidora, Rennie  
**Subject:** Wyoming Children's Law Center

Hi Rennie,

I wanted to share with you my experience working with Donna Sheen of the Wyoming Children's Law Center. I had a contentious custody case set for trial last week. I asked for mediation through the WCLC because my client qualified. After almost 1.5 years of litigation and no progress on custody and visitation, there was little hope to accomplish much at mediation. With the help of a pro bono GAL and Donna's magic, we settled the case favorably for both parents. I think if mediation had occurred sooner, we could all have saved ourselves headaches and the court's time. Mediation seems ideal for low-income or pro se litigants in family law cases. I think it's more satisfying to them also. Hopefully, you can continue to support this program.

Valerie Schoneberger  
Attorney  
Legal Aid of Wyoming, Inc.  
420 Lincoln  
Lander, WY 82520  
(307) 332-3517; 332-3544 (fax)  
[REDACTED]

The information contained in this e-mail is confidential information intended only for the use of the individual or entity named above. If the reader of this message is not the intended recipient you are hereby notified that any dissemination, distribution or copying of this communication is strictly prohibited. If you have received this message in error please notify us by e-mail or telephone immediately and return any hard copies of the original message to Legal Aid of Wyoming Inc., Inc., 431 Main Street, Lander, WY 82520, via ordinary U.S. mail.

**Polidora, Rennie**

---

**From:** [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Tuesday, June 26, 2012 2:21 PM  
**To:** Polidora, Rennie  
**Cc:** Audrey Cohen-Davis; Steve Dwyer; CReimer@lrw-law.com; Erika Nash  
**Subject:** Fw: Access to Justice - living up to its name

Thought you would enjoy this note! Cheers, Betsy

-----Forwarded Message-----

**From:** Leonard Carlman  
**Sent:** Jun 25, 2012 10:03 AM  
**To:** Betsy Bernfeld  
**Subject:** Access to Justice - living up to its name

Hi Betsy,

Here's a nice note from my first Access to Justice client. If it would be helpful as a testimonial in support of continuing the Access to Justice program, you are welcome to use it for that purpose.

Warm regards,

Len

Begin forwarded message:

**From:** [REDACTED]  
**Date:** June 20, 2012 7:14:46 PM MDT  
**To:** Leonard Carlman <[REDACTED]>  
**Reply-To:** [REDACTED]

I want to thank you for all your help regarding my eviction notice, which was given for no reason. I did not have funds to move into a new place, and facing possible homelessness was a scary prospect. Sometimes getting any kind of justice feels impossible when you are unable to pay for it, and I had almost given up hope of any help at all. Then someone told me about the new program called Access to Justice Center. Without their help and yours, I would likely be living in my car. I am deeply grateful. I hope that this program continues on because it fills a serious need. This was a situation where I could not help myself and you helped me. Thank you again. I hope to be able to pass this kindness on one day.

Roni Grasseler

Isaiah 25:4 For you have been a defense for the helpless, a defense for the needy in his distress, a refuge from the storm, a shade from the heat."

Leonard R. Carlman  
Hess Carlman & D'Amours, LLC  
30 East Simpson Street (Office & Deliveries - not USMail)  
PO Box 449 (US Mail)  
Jackson, WY 83001