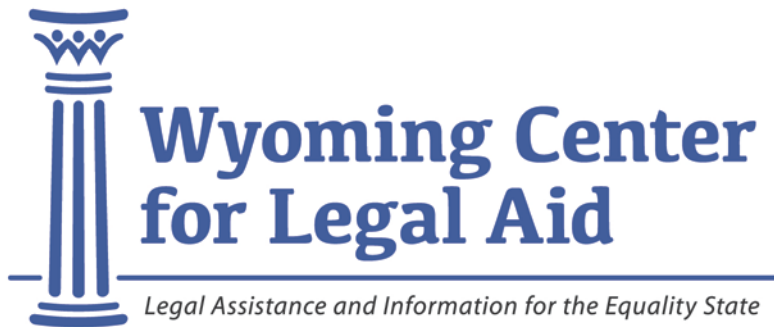


Wyoming Center for Legal Aid

Legal Assistance and Information for the Equality State

**Annual Report
to the
Wyoming Supreme Court
July 2013**



**WYOMING CENTER FOR LEGAL AID
REPORT TO THE WYOMING SUPREME COURT**

July 31, 2013

**HONORABLE MARILYN S. KITE, CHIEF JUSTICE,
WYOMING SUPREME COURT**

Members of the Board of Commissioners

Patrick R. Day, *President, Attorney at Law*
Stacey Obrecht, *Vice President, Attorney at Law*
Rae Lynn Job, *Secretary-Treasurer, Director, Special Project/Academic Facilitator,*
Sweetwater School District #1
Mark L. Aronowitz, *Attorney at Law*
Timothy O. Beppler, *Attorney at Law*
C. John Cotton, *President of Wyoming State Bar and Attorney at Law*
Stuart R. Day, *Attorney at Law*
Mary Johnson, *Attorney at Law*
Ray Fleming Dinneen, *Founder and Executive Director of Climb Wyoming*
Jacquelyn Bridgeman, *Associate Dean for Program Development & Professor of Law,*
University of Wyoming
Jennifer Hanft, *Attorney at Law*

Ex Officio Members

Walter F. Eggers, III, *Attorney at Law*
Devon O'Connell, *Attorney at Law*
Joann Odendahl, *Court Administrator, Wyoming Supreme Court*

Table of Contents

Narrative Overview	3
The Center’s History and Organization	3
Center Staff	4
Strategic Planning	5
Center Progress and Accomplishments	6
Center Launches New Website	6
Automation of <i>pro se</i> forms	7
Statewide Civil Legal Hotline and Central Intake	7
Remote Access Sites	9
Expansion of Services to Rock Springs	10
Future Expansion of Services to Gillette	10
Limited Scope Representation Initiative	11
Community Outreach and Education	12
Coordination with County Libraries	13
Legal Hub E-Newsletter	13
Center Awards Over \$750,000 in Grants	13
Collaborating with Stakeholders	14
Leveraging Resources: <i>Pro Bono</i> , Partnerships, and Local Community Support	14
Board Members and Meetings	14

Attachments

2013 Case Date

Fiscal Year 2012 – 2013 Expenditure Summary

2014 Strategic Plan

White Paper Goals

Annual Report to the Wyoming Supreme Court

The Board of Commissioners of the Wyoming Center for Legal Aid (the “Center”) is pleased to submit this annual 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 reporting and fiscal year from July 1, 2012 to June 30, 2013.

We are pleased to report that more than 2,860 eligible individuals in Wyoming were directly served during the reporting year through the Center’s new initiatives, programs and funding. This included services ranging from legal advice or brief assistance to direct representation in a court proceeding. This is a dramatic increase in the number of persons who are receiving legal services throughout the State, and we are on pace to substantially increase this number next year. These are all individuals who cannot afford the assistance of an attorney and would otherwise likely be without any legal help. As explained below in detail, the Center is leveraging its funds to build new community and partnering relationships that are significantly improving access to justice for the income-eligible.

The accomplishments of the Center are largely due to collaborative partnerships with our grantees, community organizations, the Wyoming State Bar (the “State Bar”), and the Access to Justice Commission. The Center has worked with the dedicated staff of Legal Aid of Wyoming, the Wyoming Coalition Against Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault, the Wyoming Children’s Law Center, and the Teton County Access to Justice Center in order to further the reach and capacity of each organization. The State Bar and the Access to Justice Commission have also provided tremendous support to the Center over the past year. This report highlights the success of many of these collaborative working relationships.

The Center’s History and Organization

The Wyoming Center for Legal Aid was created by the Wyoming Supreme Court and is governed by a Board of Commissioners. The Center came into existence on April 19, 2011, and is authorized and funded by the Wyoming Civil Legal Services Act, Wyo. Stat. §§ 5-2-121 et. seq. The Act charges the Center with developing a statewide program for improving access to justice and providing civil legal services to Wyoming’s low-income population. The Center is dedicated to helping income-eligible individuals in Wyoming connect with legal resources and find ways to address their legal needs.

The challenge faced by the Center is to increase direct legal services and resources to eligible individuals. This is the highest priority of the Center. But, Wyoming lacks even the most basic infrastructure necessary to serve income eligible persons. Only a handful of organizations have ever existed to serve the relevant population, and the State has never had a content rich website, coordinated programs

with the clerks who interface with the public, basic legal forms and instructions, etc. As a result, the Center recognized that meeting the significant needs of the income eligible requires much more than hiring a few more lawyers to represent clients. If the Center simply opened offices across the state and staffed them with a handful of lawyers, the increase in services provided would be small relative to the number of individuals that can be served through cooperation with existing legal aid providers. The Center therefore chose to focus on the coordination and expansion of existing services, developing new partnering relationships in underserved areas, and creating the infrastructure and capacity necessary to make legal resources both available and user-friendly to thousands of needy individuals in a centralized location or process.

The Center can have a greater impact by leveraging resources among existing providers, supporting and funding new, community-centered legal service organizations, expanding information and resources for *pro se* litigants, and addressing barriers to the justice system faced by the low-income population of Wyoming.

As contemplated by the Act, the Center is rapidly becoming the “hub” for the civil legal aid community. The Center has used the experience of its staff to assist other legal aid programs and providers in Wyoming in developing efficient intake processes, implementing a statewide hotline, and providing other assistance to Wyoming’s legal aid programs. Through these collaborative efforts, the Center is in a better position to facilitate and coordinate statewide legal services.

Center Staff

In the last year, there have been several staff changes at the Center. The Center hired Angie Dorsch as a staff attorney and Angie began work at the Center in August 2012. After beginning work at the Center, Angie expressed interest in and applied for the position of Executive Director.

The Center advertised for the position of Executive Director and after a nationwide search Angie Dorsch was selected as the Center’s first Executive Director and assumed this role in November 2012. Angie began her legal career as a staff attorney for Legal Aid of NorthWest Texas and later became the managing attorney for the service area covering the Texas Panhandle. Angie brings to the Center seven years of experience serving indigent clients in rural West Texas along with a working knowledge of grant and non-profit management.

The Center staff also consists of two staff attorneys and an administrative assistant. As the Center began managing more programs and initiatives, an administrative assistant was needed. Sheryl Knight was hired as the Center’s full-time administrative assistant in January 2013.

Kristin Karr, staff attorney, joined the Center in March of 2012 and has a strong technology background. Kristin works on the Center’s technology projects, such as the

automation of the Supreme Court's *pro se* forms and the development and ongoing maintenance of the Center's website and online legal resources.

Rendy Lemke, staff attorney, joined the Center in April 2013. Rendy's primary responsibilities include the development and promotion of new *pro bono* programs and coordination of special projects, including the implementation of the Center's remote access sites.

The Center is now fully staffed and does not anticipate adding any additional staff positions at this time. All employees of the Center are employed under one-year at-will employment contracts (AWEC).

Strategic Planning

In the early months of the Center's development, the Board spent many hours creating an initial strategic plan. The Board at that time stressed that the plan was necessarily subject to change as the Center acquires experience and considers the results, effectiveness and efficiency of various pilot projects and initiatives.

Since that first strategic plan, the Board has reevaluated the objectives and priorities of the Center. In reviewing the original plan and in creating the new 2014 strategic plan, the Board took into account many of the same considerations and asked the fundamental question of what is the most effective role for the Center and Center funds.

In evaluating the impact of the activities of the Center, the Board recognizes the value of the Center's cooperative role in the State, working to coordinate statewide availability of legal resources and services throughout Wyoming. In the past year, the Center has worked closely with the Access to Justice Commission and existing legal service programs to expand the availability of direct legal services to new areas of the state that have never before had the availability of a legal aid attorney. The Center will continue this collaborative role in order to best leverage the state's limited resources.

The original considerations of the Board focused on the rural aspects of Wyoming and ways to serve many small communities. The Board recognized the necessity of technology as a critical part of a statewide program for Wyoming. Technology must be used in order to provide information and services to all corners of the state. During the last year, the Center has dedicated a considerable amount of staff time toward creating resources that can be accessed by the public over the internet. This focus on providing information and self-help resources will continue to be a priority of the Center in the upcoming year.

In developing the 2014 Strategic Plan, the Board also reviewed the original Access to Justice White Paper prepared by the Wyoming Access to Justice Commission in December 2009. The Board reviewed the progress by the Center in working toward

the goals originally contemplated in the White Paper. The Center has made progress toward those goals and continues to work toward those objectives.

Center Progress and Accomplishments

The Center has made significant progress in the past year. The Center continues several ongoing projects while also starting new projects and initiatives. The Center recognizes the need to build the infrastructure necessary to sustain legal services in the state. That infrastructure must include a variety and full range of programs to address the differing levels of legal assistance needed. The Center is working on a range of initiatives, from creating self-help resources for the public to developing new programs to provide full-representation of clients and providing resources for legal aid and *pro bono* attorneys.

Center launches new website

In November 2012, the Center launched the state's first legal information and resource website, www.legalhelpwy.org. Prior to the launch of the site, there was no central point for online legal information or resources in Wyoming for persons seeking information about basic legal topics.

The Center's website is easy to navigate and provides legal information in plain language. The website contains information and self-help resources on a variety of legal topics including family law, protection from abuse, money and consumer issues, senior issues, housing, and public benefits. The site also contains information about general courtroom decorum and procedures to assist *pro se* litigants.

The Center's website is the central portal for legal aid information, connecting users to other useful websites and resources. The site also provides legal aid resources available in the state and referral to the statewide hotline for those persons seeking the additional assistance of an attorney.

- The Center's website www.legalhelpwy.org was launched in November 2012. It is the state's first legal information and resource website.
- There have been more than **3,500** visits to the website since January 2013.

The amount of traffic and visits to the website continues to increase. The website is viewed by people from all across the state. The site has greatly increased the ability of individuals from any area of the state to access information and resources.

Automation of *pro se* forms

The Access to Justice Commission initiated conversations with the Supreme Court and the Center in 2012 regarding the automation of the existing family law *pro se* forms that are currently available on the Supreme Court's website. The forms can be complex with some of the packets containing as many as 180 pages. Many *pro se* litigants find it difficult to understand and complete the forms. Judges and clerks report that they frequently encounter *pro se* litigants who file inaccurate or incomplete pleadings.

Automation of the forms provides an online interview which leads *pro se* litigants through a series of questions. Based on the answers provided, the program then takes that information and completes the appropriate forms for the user. This simplifies the process of completing the forms and reduces confusion about which forms the user needs to complete. Low-income individuals make up the majority of individuals who use *pro se* and self-help forms and information, so this project continues to be a priority of the Center.

The automation of the forms has been an enormous undertaking for the Center. The Center continues to contract with Capstone, Inc. for the coding and technological aspects of the automation. Center staff must still help develop and review the interview questions and test the programming. This is a time intensive process.

There have been several delays to completing the automation. After the Center began automating the forms in 2012, there was a comprehensive review and series of updates to the Supreme Court's *pro se* forms packets. As the new forms were being developed, the Center had to stop work on the automation. Center staff worked with the Court to provide input into the updates and revisions to the *pro se* forms.

The final revisions to the Court's forms have recently been completed and the Center staff has been working to complete the automation of the divorce packets. The automation of the divorce without children packet has recently been completed and is now in the testing phase. Center staff must test each possible scenario and correct any problems in the program before making the program available to the public. The automation of the divorce with children packet is also nearing completion.

This is a time intensive project, but once the project is complete and available to the public, this will be a huge benefit to the state and will remain a benefit for many years to come.

Statewide Civil Legal Hotline and Central Intake

The Center has been tasked with creating a central point of intake for the state. A year ago, applying for legal aid services was difficult and time consuming for many applicants, especially those who did not live near a legal aid office.

The Center worked closely with Legal Aid of Wyoming to help develop a legal aid hotline to serve as both a legal advice hotline and also as the central point of intake for the state. The Center then provided the funding necessary to dedicate one full-time and one part-time attorney to answering calls and providing intake and brief services as well as screening cases for further legal services. Hotline attorneys also make referrals to other appropriate agencies and organizations.

The hotline began operating as the central intake and advice line in November 2012. It was decided that the hotline number should remain the same toll-free number that Legal Aid of Wyoming was already using. Before the hotline project was started, Legal Aid of Wyoming was only available to answer their phones on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday from 9:00 a.m. until 2:00 p.m. Even with these hours, they were frequently unable to offer telephone consultations and advice over the phone much of the time. After the implementation of the hotline, there is an attorney available to answer questions, provide legal advice, and accept applications for further legal services Monday through Friday 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

- **2,565** eligible callers have been assisted over the hotline.
- The Center funded advice and central intake hotline is available 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Monday through Friday for callers to be screened for eligibility, receive advice and brief services from the attorney over the phone, and make an application for further legal services if necessary.

This has dramatically increased the number of people who are able to get legal advice and services. Prior to the hotline, Legal Aid of Wyoming turned away about 80% of persons applying for services because they were “over capacity.” Prior to the establishment of the hotline, many of those persons were turned away without talking to an attorney or receiving any advice or services at all.

During the reporting period, the hotline provided advice and brief legal services to 2,565 individuals. The hotline has created greater efficiency and the ability to serve more individuals throughout the state.

The secondary purpose of the hotline is to centralize the intake, advice and brief services function to the hotline attorneys in order to free the other staff attorneys’ time to handle more extensive representation of clients. The hotline has met this objective. The number of cases that Legal Aid of Wyoming staff attorneys are now accepting for litigation and extended services has increased by 79.3%. At the same time, the number of individuals receiving advice and brief services increased by 314%. These figures are based on the monthly average of each of these services provided by Legal Aid of Wyoming staff attorneys before and after the implementation of the hotline.

The hotline achieved the following increase in services provided:

- 79.3% increase in litigation and extended services
- 314% increase in advice and brief services

This increase in both advice and litigation attests to the hotline as an efficient and effective tool for increasing the availability and statewide reach of legal services in Wyoming.

Remote Access Sites

The Wyoming Access to Justice Commission was awarded a 2013 Access to Justice Innovations Grant from the American Bar Association. Wyoming was one of seven states to receive a 2013 Innovations Grant. The Commission, through Chairman, Hon. Justice James Burke, worked closely with the Center to develop a grant proposal aimed at increasing access to services in rural areas of the state.

The Center's collaboration with the Access to Justice Commission results in an Access to Justice Innovations Grant from the American Bar Association to develop remote access sites in rural areas of Wyoming.

The Commission, in collaboration with the Center, developed a plan to place remote access sites in five underserved rural communities in Wyoming. The Center identified community partner organizations in each community who have volunteered to provide space for the sites and staff to man the sites. The Center has begun the process of equipping each site with computers that have Skype® capabilities. The computers will be used to host Skype® clinics in order to match the need for legal advice in rural areas with *pro bono* attorneys willing to meet with the client remotely using Skype®. The remote access sites will also be available for any of the Center's grantees or the legal clinics at the University Of Wyoming College Of Law to meet remotely with clients in those communities.

The Center is responsible for the implementation of this project. The communities selected to pilot the remote access sites are Cody, Douglas, Evanston, Newcastle, and Thermopolis.

Volunteer attorneys will be able to provide *pro bono* services to these rural areas without leaving the comfort of their office. The Center will screen and qualify applicants and coordinate the Skype® clinics.

The grants are provided in order to strengthen access to justice commissions and promote innovative approaches to removing barriers to access to justice. The grant

received for this project was \$8,000, for which the Center will be responsible for the implementation and oversight.

Expansion of Services to Rock Springs

Over the past year, the Center has collaborated with many stakeholders and community organizations. One of the most successful collaborations thus far has been with the Sweetwater County Family Justice Center.

Through the Center's funding and a partnership with the Family Justice Center and Legal Aid of Wyoming, the Rock Springs area has its first full-time legal aid attorney.

Through a partnership between the Sweetwater County Family Justice Center, the Wyoming Center for Legal Aid, and Legal Aid of Wyoming, the Rock Springs area now has a full-time legal aid attorney for the first time.

The placement of legal aid attorneys in many areas of the state in the past has been cost prohibitive due to the high overhead expense of opening a physical office. However, the Sweetwater County Family Justice Center donated space including utilities and other related expenses, in order to house an attorney in the Family Justice Center. Because this arrangement made it feasible to place an attorney in Rock Springs, the Wyoming Center for Legal Aid then provided the necessary funds, through a grant to Legal Aid of Wyoming, for the salary and related personnel costs of employing a full-time attorney in Rock Springs.

Brett Johnson, County Attorney for Sweetwater County, worked to create the Sweetwater County Family Justice Center. This is the first Family Justice Center in Wyoming. The partnership with the Center was also due in large part to Brett's commitment to making the arrangement possible and feasible for all stakeholders.

The Sweetwater County Family Justice Center brings together multiple agencies, all housed under one roof, to provide full-service support for victims of domestic violence and their families. Because the Family Justice Center provides a full range of services for victims of domestic violence, it was important for the Family Justice Center to be able to have services available to address the civil legal needs of the victims.

The new attorney at the Family Justice Center provides assistance for a wide range of civil legal matters and also serves the surrounding area, including Sweetwater, Uinta, and Lincoln counties.

Future Expansion of Services to Gillette

Center staff travelled to Gillette to meet with stakeholders. While meeting with the court employees and community organizations, they expressed the great need for

legal aid assistance and services in the Gillette area. The area has never had the presence of a legal aid office or attorney.

Based on the overwhelming need for services in the area, the Center is working to form a collaborative arrangement in order to place a full-time attorney in Gillette to serve the northeast corner of the state. The Center identified a community organization who serves the Center's target population and who is also willing to partner with the Center to donate space and overhead expenses to house the attorney.

The Center is moving forward with plans to place a full-time attorney in Gillette through a partnership with an existing community organization.

The Council of Community Services (CCS) in Gillette is an ideal partner for a project to expand legal services to the Gillette area. CCS works with the Center's target population and houses a number of programs for low-income individuals including a food pantry, soup kitchen, homeless shelter, transitional housing program, housing assistance and weatherization programs. CCS's clients have a number of unmet legal needs.

In creating a program to expand services to Gillette, the Center is working to duplicate the model used to expand services to Rock Springs. The Council of Community Services has agreed to donate the necessary space and associated expenses, such as utilities. The Center is in the process of entering into an agreement with Legal Aid of Wyoming to provide grant funds to enable Legal Aid of Wyoming to employ the attorney.

This cooperative arrangement and reduced cost due to donated space and overhead, makes it feasible to place an attorney in Gillette for the first time. The Center hopes to have the project up and running and a full-time attorney in Gillette in the next few months.

Limited Scope Representation Initiative

Limited scope representation has become a topic on a national scale as more low-to moderate-income individuals find themselves unable to afford the full services of an attorney. Limited scope representation is being encouraged as one way to address the issues associated with the ever-increasing number of *pro se* litigants.

The support for limited scope representation stems from the potential win-win situation for all stakeholders involved when it is used appropriately. *Pro se* litigants benefit because they receive assistance and advice of an attorney. Lawyers benefit because it has the potential to increase the lawyer's client base. Persons that would otherwise not be able to afford the attorney's services can afford some parts of the representation without the attorney reducing his or her hourly rates. And, Courts

benefit because those *pro se* litigants who utilize limited scope representation will be better prepared because of the legal assistance and they will use less court time and resources.

More than **100** Wyoming attorneys have attended the Limited Scope Representation CLE developed by the Center in cooperation with the Wyoming State Bar.

The Center, in cooperation with the State Bar and with the support of the Access to Justice Commission, developed materials for limited scope representation for Wyoming attorneys. The Center has offered trainings for attorneys on limited scope representation in several locations throughout the state. To date, the Center has offered the free CLE in Cheyenne, Rock Springs, and Jackson. More than 100 attorneys have attended the CLE. The CLE will also be offered at the Annual State Bar Meeting in Gillette in September. The limited scope representation materials are available for Wyoming attorneys when they log into their State Bar account.

The State Bar has developed a list of attorneys willing to accept cases on a limited scope basis and utilizes the list in conjunction with the Lawyer Referral Service to connect prospective clients seeking limited scope assistance with an attorney willing to provide that service.

The Center has developed information for the public about limited scope representation which explains in plain language the basics of limited scope assistance arrangements. The information is available on the Center's website. The Center also created a brochure explaining limited scope representation which was sent to all Circuit and District court clerks as a resource the clerks can provide to the public.

Limited scope representation is not a solution to every problem. But, by encouraging the use of limited scope representation and providing the tools for attorneys to offer limited scope services, this provides options to the public and is just one more tool for addressing the unmet legal needs of *pro se* litigants.

Community Outreach and Education

The Center works with existing community organizations to provide outreach and education to our target population. Examples of such arrangements include the Center's work with Wyoming Kinship Advocacy and Youth Alternatives to offer an education and information session for non-parents who are caring for children. Staff attorney, Rendy Lemke, led a seminar at Youth Alternatives focused on providing education and information for non-parents who are seeking guardianship of a child. The Center will continue to work with community organizations to provide outreach and education.

Coordination with County Libraries

Kristin Karr, staff attorney and former law librarian, provided webinar training for all interested public librarians in the state. The training introduced the librarians to the resources available on the Center's website as well as other resources available to self-represented litigants. Kristin also provided each public library in the state with flyers and information for the public about the website and the availability of the advice and intake hotline for those patrons who need the assistance of an attorney.

Legal Hub E-Newsletter

In January 2013, the Center published the first edition of Legal Hub, the Center's e-Newsletter. Legal Hub has news for the access to justice and legal aid community. The Center developed the newsletter as a way to keep stakeholders informed of the work of the Access to Justice Commission, the Center, and legal aid providers around the state. The Center has published three issues of Legal Hub on a quarterly schedule. All issues of Legal Hub are archived and available to be viewed on the Center's website.

Center Awards Over \$750,000 in Grants

For the upcoming 2014 fiscal year, the Center awarded more than \$750,000 in grants to increase the capacity of existing legal aid providers. The Center awarded \$353,000 in grants to Legal Aid of Wyoming for three different projects: expanding the hotline, employing a full-time attorney in Rock Springs, and continuing the private attorney contracts for a limited number of cases. Teton County Access to Justice Center was awarded \$112,500. The Wyoming Children's Law Center was awarded a grant of \$70,000. The Wyoming Coalition Against Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault has been awarded \$215,000 for the 2014 fiscal year.

These grants are a vital component to increasing the capacity and reach of the existing legal aid providers in the state and the provision of direct legal services to those in Wyoming.

In the early stages of development, the Center developed a pool of attorneys willing to take cases at a reduced rate. The Center wanted to test this model of delivery of services because the cost of opening physical offices throughout the state was cost prohibitive. The Center directly contracted with private attorneys as well as providing grants to Legal Aid of Wyoming and the Wyoming Coalition Against Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault to pilot the same type of private attorney contracts. After piloting the project, the Center, Legal Aid of Wyoming, and the Coalition all had the same experience that it was difficult to monitor and manage cases using so many different attorneys, the administrative cost was high, it was difficult to find attorneys willing to take cases at a reduced rate in many areas of the state where the need was the greatest, and because these contracts must be capped to control costs the only cases that were a good fit for this model of representation were cases that would take a relatively short

amount of time. The Teton County Access to Justice Center has had some success with a similar model, but what has worked in Jackson has not worked elsewhere in the state.

Due to this evaluation of the private attorney contracts, the Center has focused more on capacity building of the existing legal aid providers in the state. The Center has decreased the funds allocated to private attorney contracts and increased grant funding. The Center will continue to set aside some funds for private attorney contracts for limited cases and the Center has provided a smaller grant to Legal Aid of Wyoming for this purpose as well.

Collaborating with Stakeholders

In the last year, the Center staff has spent time meeting with stakeholders and community organizations to identify the needs of particular communities. This has led to collaborative arrangements with multiple organizations.

These partnerships with community organizations have made it possible for the Center to create and develop initiatives such as the remote access sites and Skype clinic locations. This has also created collaborative arrangements which have made it feasible to expand legal assistance to areas of the state that are underserved. The Center will continue to collaborate with existing and new stakeholders and community organizations in order to best leverage the available resources throughout the state.

Leveraging Resources: Pro Bono, Partnerships, and Local Community Support

There will likely never be enough resources available to enable each qualifying applicant for legal assistance an attorney to handle the case through full-representation from beginning to end. Therefore, *pro bono* assistance by volunteer attorneys and collaborative partnerships with local community organizations will continue to be a priority of the Center.

The Center has begun to partner with the State Bar and Legal Aid of Wyoming to develop structured and regular *pro bono* advice clinics. The Center is also working in collaboration with the Access to Justice Commission in the development of the “I’ll Do One” (*Pro Bono* Case) initiative in order to increase *pro bono* services in the state. The remote access site project the Center is developing is just one more way to try to match the legal need that exists with *pro bono* attorneys. The Center will also be working to develop a *pro bono* assistance program for veterans over the next year.

Board Members and Meetings

When the Board of Commissioners for the Wyoming Center for Legal Aid was first formed, some of the inaugural members were appointed to a two-year term. Leigh Anne Manlove and Christopher Reimer’s terms expired in April 2013. To replace these

members, the Supreme Court appointed three new Board members. The new members to the Board are Jacquelyn Bridgeman, Stacey Obrecht, and Jennifer Hanft.

Jacquelyn Bridgeman is the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs and Professor of Law at the University of Wyoming College of Law. Stacey Obrecht is an attorney in Cheyenne and consultant with the consulting firm Public Knowledge, LLC. Jennifer Hanft is an attorney based in Laramie. Jennifer is a sole practitioner who has provided numerous *pro bono* hours. Jennifer received the State Bar's 2012 *Pro Bono* Award.

The Board continues to meet monthly to provide guidance and oversight of the Center. The Board and staff of the Center look forward to continuing to develop resources, programs, and initiatives to serve those in need of legal assistance in Wyoming. The Center would also like to thank all of the lawyers, judges, elected officials, community partners, legal aid providers, and volunteers who work to make access to justice for all a reality in Wyoming.

Case Data

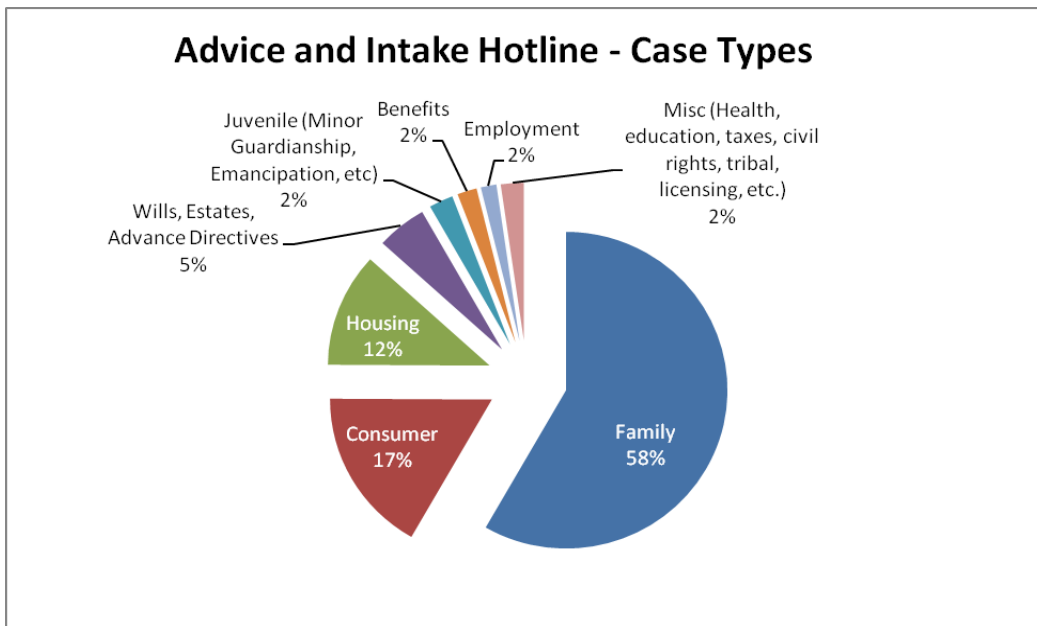
Case Data of Services Provided using Center Funds

Hotline Operations

The Center worked with Legal Aid of Wyoming to establish a statewide advice and intake hotline that would be available Monday through Friday from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. The Center provides the funding for the hotline through a grant, and Legal Aid of Wyoming operates the hotline. The following is a summary of the number and types of cases handled by the hotline.

A total of 2,565 eligible callers were assisted by a hotline attorney.

Family law, consumer, and housing are the most common legal needs of applicants.



The second goal of the hotline is to increase efficiency by centralizing intake, advice and brief service as functions of the hotline attorneys. This then allows the staff attorneys at Legal Aid of Wyoming to focus on litigation and extended representation.

The hotline achieved the following increase in services for Legal Aid of Wyoming:

- 79.3% increase in litigation and extended services
- 314% increase in advice and brief services

This increase in both advice and litigation attests to the hotline as an efficient and effective tool for increasing the availability and statewide reach of legal services in Wyoming.

Rock Springs Project

The Rock Springs project is in its infancy. The Center, through a grant, provides the necessary funds to Legal Aid of Wyoming to employ an attorney in Rock Springs. The Sweetwater County Family Justice Center donates the space and overhead, which has made the expansion of services feasible.

Bethia Hyatt was hired in June 2013 to fill this full-time staff attorney position. Services are provided to Sweetwater, Uinta, and Lincoln Counties. Even though the project had a full-time attorney for less than one month of the reporting period, eight cases were opened before the end of the grant cycle on June 30, 2013.

Case Type/Legal Issue	Number of Cases Opened
Custody/Visitation	3
Divorce	3
Landlord/Tenant	1
Social Security Disability (SSDI)	1
Total	8

Wyoming Coalition Against Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault

The Wyoming Coalition Against Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault (the “Coalition”) is a statewide organization that provides holistic services to victims of domestic violence and sexual assault.

The Coalition provided holistic and extended legal services to victims in **53** cases.

In 2012, the Coalition’s funding from the federal government was significantly cut and the Coalition was faced with reducing their legal staff from two attorneys to one. This reduction would have severely impacted available services to victims. The Coalition, even with two attorneys, is limited in the number of cases they are able to accept. A grant from the Wyoming Center for Legal Aid has allowed the Coalition to

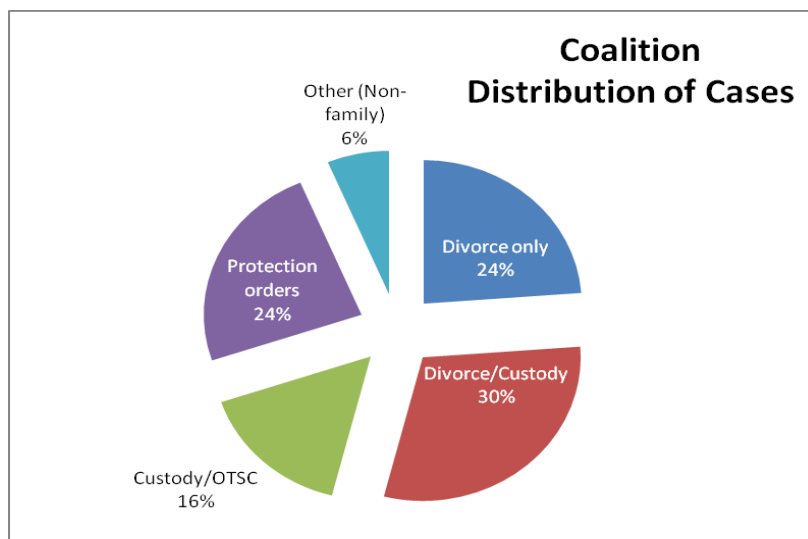
maintain two full-time attorneys who handle cases throughout Wyoming. Without the Coalition, victims of domestic violence would be unable to get the help they desperately need.

The Coalition's grant was modified in the middle of the reporting period to replace the private attorney contracts administered by the Coalition with a full-time attorney position. The new staff attorney, Rennie Polidora, was hired by the Coalition in January 2013. The Center's funding pays 100% of Rennie's position and 25% of the second staff attorney position at the Coalition. Although this modification to the grant was mid-year, the Coalition's staff attorneys provided representation in 34 cases with Center funding. An additional 19 cases were handled by private contract attorneys prior to the modification of the grant. The Coalition's cases were primarily family law cases. These cases ranged from protection against stalking and abuse to divorce and custody actions in order to extend protection to victims and their families.

Every day the Coalition helps clients like Louise.* Louise was a victim of severe mental and physical abuse, and abuse involving weapons, by her husband. She was concerned for her safety and that of her children. She made the decision to flee the state with her children after filing for divorce. Due to the high lethality risk of the relationship, the Coalition was able to open her case immediately and help her file for divorce. Attorneys at the Coalition ensured she and her children were in a safe location before her husband was served. With the help and advocacy of the Coalition, Louise was able to get a divorce from her abusive husband and was awarded primary physical custody of her children.

*Name has been changed.

With the Center's funding and support, the Coalition is able to continue their work to help victims like Louise escape abuse, protect their children, and start new lives.



Wyoming Children’s Law Center

The Wyoming Children’s Law Center (“WCLC”) received a grant from the Center to provide assistance to children and families with legal needs.

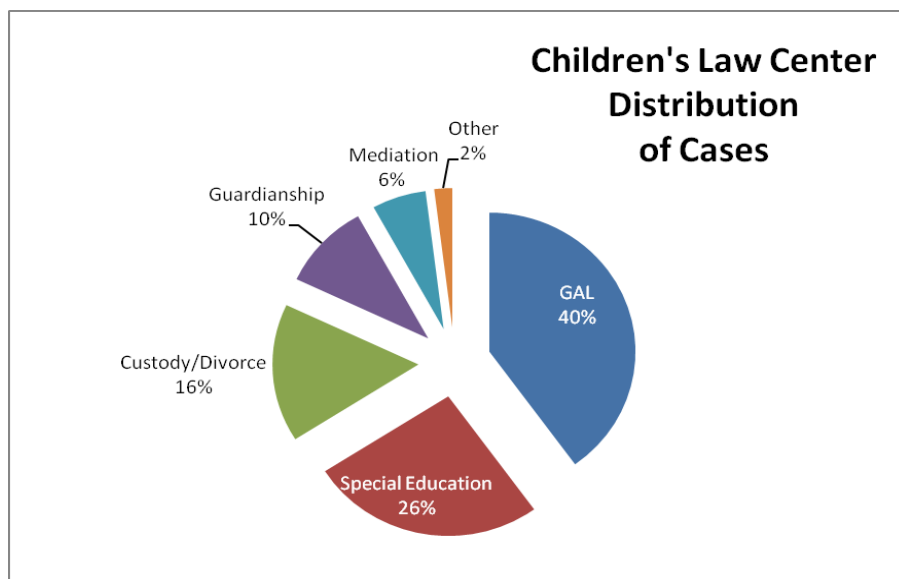
50 families received legal assistance from the Children’s Law Center.

The grant was modified during the reporting period in order to allow for expanded services for special education. Wyoming Protection and Advocacy had provided assistance to parents advocating for special education services for children suffering from disabilities, but Protection and Advocacy no longer offers those services.

WCLC’s special education services fill an important unmet need in the state. The WCLC advocated for the needs of 13 children to assure that these children receive the special education services they need.

The Children’s Law Center also helps children maintain stability. The WCLC helped a grandparent maintain custody of her grandchild, whom she had rescued two years earlier from a meth house. The mother tried to regain control of her son. The child was frightened of his mother and school records showed that before he lived with his grandparent, he had been enrolled in 40 schools. The WCLC was able to file for guardianship and keep the child with his grandparent.

Cases like this occur every day. Without legal assistance, many caretakers do not know how to obtain legal custody of the children who rely on them for support or advocate for their children’s education and other needs. The Center’s funds contribute to the ability of the WCLC to impact these children’s lives.

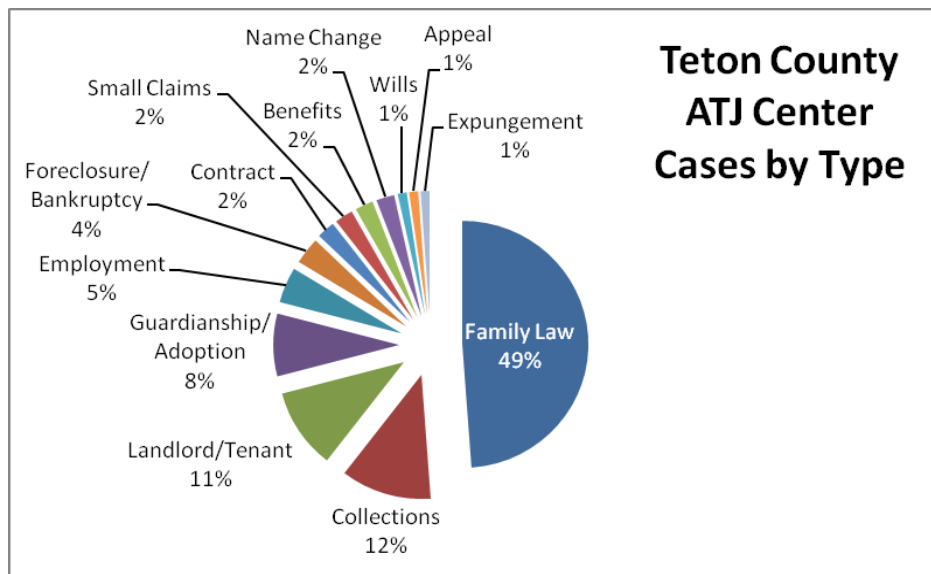


Teton County Access to Justice Center

The Teton County Access to Justice Center (the “TCAJC”) provides self-help resources for the Teton County area and also provides referrals to private attorneys who contract with the TCAJC to provide legal representation and assistance to qualifying individuals at a reduced rate paid with Center funds.

86 individuals received legal representation and services through the TCAJC.

The TCAJC accepts applications and screens for applicant eligibility. Persons who qualify may be referred to a private attorney who provides representation without charge to the client. The TCAJC pays the contract attorneys at reduced rate from Center grant funds for this representation. Additionally, the TCAJC provides self-help and reference assistance to persons trying to access legal information. The TCAJC assisted 75 additional persons with brief legal advice and self-help services.

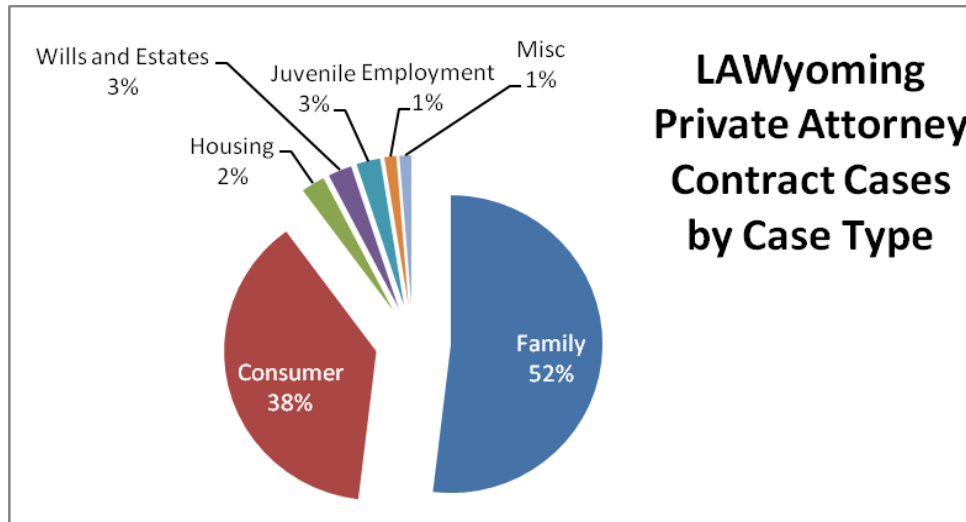


The TCAJC has been successful in setting up community education events, legal clinics and other outreach services for the Teton County area, which provide additional benefits and services to Jackson and the surrounding communities.

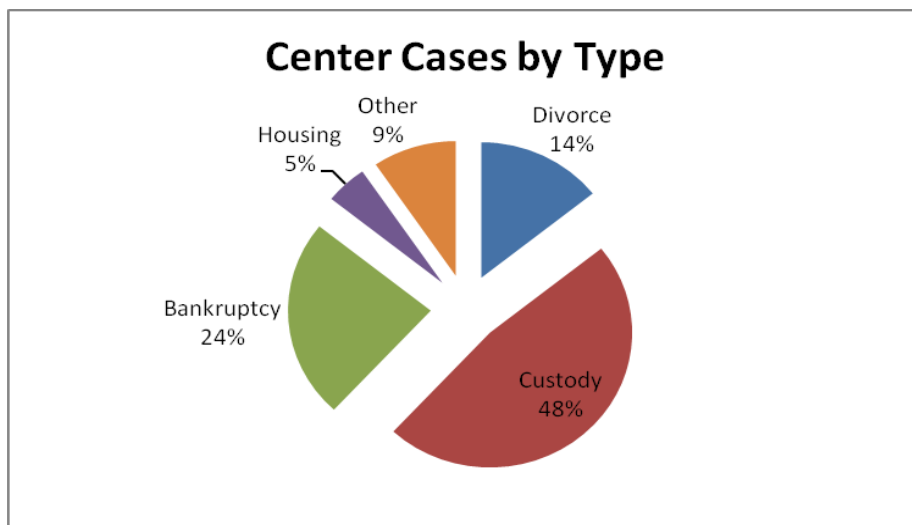
Private Attorney Contracts

Attorneys provided for 101 cases through Center funded private attorney contracts.

The Center awarded a grant to Legal Aid of Wyoming to fund contracts with private attorneys to handle cases when a legal aid attorney is not able to accept a case. Through Center funded private attorney contracts, managed by Legal Aid of Wyoming, 79 individuals received legal services.



The Center also directly contracts with private attorneys to bridge service gaps. After implementation of the advice and intake hotline in November 2012, the Center requested most applicants to call the hotline first as the central intake point before applying with the Center. The Center continues to receive referrals and cases which Legal Aid of Wyoming cannot accept. Forty persons contacted the Center requesting information or assistance. Of those, the Center contracted with private attorneys to assist in 22 cases. Custody and family law were the greatest areas of need.



Total Number of Persons Served

In total, through the Center and Center funded programs, **2,863** individuals received direct legal assistance. As required by statute, all individuals receiving direct legal services through Center programs and funds were screened for income eligibility prior to receiving assistance.

Many more individuals received information from the Center's website and community outreach events and benefited from the resources and information which has been made available in the past year. The greatest need continues to be in family law cases, particularly when children are involved. The Center will continue to increase information and resources available to address the growing number of family law litigants that are self-represented, as well as finding ways to increase direct services.

The last year marks a significant improvement in the delivery of legal services in Wyoming. Far more individuals were assisted through the Center and Center funded programs than in the Center's initial year of operation. The Center will continue to build upon these programs in the upcoming year and continue to increase the number and availability of services to the low-income in Wyoming.

FISCAL YEAR 2013 EXPENDITURE SUMMARY

Salaries and Benefits	\$262,070.58
Utilities, Travel, Office Equipment and Furnishings	\$28,118.95
Telecommunications	\$4,218.70

Grants

Wyoming Coalition against Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault	\$136,720.51
Wyoming Children's Law Center	\$68,472.75
Teton County Access to Justice Center	\$112,750.00
Legal Aid of Wyoming, Inc.	\$141,060.42

Professional Services

Private Attorney Contracts and Contracts for Professional Services	\$22,112.55
Contracts for Website Development and Automation of <i>pro se</i> forms	\$19,616.25

TOTAL * **\$795,140.71**

*Total includes the June 2013 grant expenditures of \$55,980.53
which were paid in July 2013.

WYOMING CENTER FOR LEGAL AID 2014 STRATEGIC PLAN

The Wyoming Center for Legal Aid was created by the Wyoming Supreme Court and is governed by a Board of Commissioners. The Center came into existence on April 19, 2011, and is authorized and funded by the Wyoming Civil Legal Services Act, Wyo. Stat. §§ 5-2-121 et. seq. The Act charges the Center with developing a statewide program for improving access to justice and providing civil legal services to Wyoming's low-income population. The Wyoming Center for Legal Aid is dedicated to helping income-eligible individuals in Wyoming connect with legal resources and find ways to address their legal needs.

The Center continually seeks innovative ways to address the issues that face the low-income in accessing the justice system. By leveraging available resources, the Center's reach and impact is much greater. The Center continues to strive to coordinate legal services throughout the state in order to have a statewide system of legal resources and service providers that work together to meet legal needs in Wyoming, to avoid duplication of services, and to efficiently and effectively manage the state's resources allocated to civil legal aid to the indigent.

Vision: Access to justice for every person in Wyoming.

The Center's vision is to work toward a legal system that is accessible and provides justice to everyone in Wyoming, including those who cannot afford an attorney. This vision is a lofty goal that cannot be accomplished without innovations in the delivery of legal services to the low-income. Available resources are limited and will never be enough to provide an attorney for each person who has a civil legal issue and cannot afford an attorney. Therefore, programs that address broad issues of access to justice must be coordinated along with the provision of traditional legal services in order to find ways to provide meaningful ways for the public to access the justice system.

The Center is a "hub", a central place where ideas and information are exchanged and shared. As such, the Center will continue to collaborate with many different organizations and agencies that share Center goals in order to improve the provision of legal assistance to the low-income community.

Mission: Serving the legal needs of low-income persons of Wyoming through community engagement, education, information, and expansion of legal services throughout the state.

Objectives: The Center was created to address inadequate access to legal assistance and the court system by low to moderate-income individuals in civil matters. Wyoming courts face the burden of an ever increasing number of unrepresented litigants and individuals who cannot access the court system because of financial barriers. This leaves many individuals without the ability to address their legal issues. This strategic plan is designed to develop a plan for addressing these problems and issues across the state.

At this time, the Center recognizes that information and self-help resources, increased pro bono, and partnerships with the State Bar are foundations that still must be built upon in Wyoming. Over the next year, the Center will continue to focus on building the infrastructure to create a sustainable and workable system of civil legal assistance in the state. The Center is sensitive to the fact that there will not be an attorney available to accept every case for full representation. However, the Center will strive to put in place resources that will allow every person to obtain a basic level of information and resources which will allow every person meaningful access to the justice system.

The Center has identified needs and priorities that must be addressed in order to further our mission. These objectives include:

A. Self-Help Assistance and Resources

1. Begin testing the automation program for the Supreme Court pro se divorce forms.
2. Continue automation of other approved Supreme Court pro se forms and packets to aid self-represented litigants in completing necessary legal documents.
3. Maintaining a website to provide accurate and easy-to-understand information and self-help resources to persons throughout the state along with information about available legal services in Wyoming.
4. Provide a variety of self-help forms for common legal issues with plain language instructions for their use.
5. Host clinics and education events for the public.

B. Statewide Reach

1. Work through community organizations and existing providers that currently serve our target population to leverage resources and expand direct legal services to underserved areas of the state.
2. Continue to develop an integrated statewide plan to provide legal services to all areas of the state.

C. Increase Access to Services in Rural Areas

1. Develop innovative ways to reach the rural communities that are currently underserved.
2. Increase access to legal assistance in rural areas through the use of technology and self-help resources, outreach, and pro bono legal services.

D. Create Structured Pro Bono and Private Attorney Involvement Programs

1. Work with the Wyoming State Bar, the Access to Justice Commission, and legal service providers to coordinate pro bono programs throughout the state.
2. Develop pro bono programs designed to encourage private attorneys to increase pro bono services.

E. Single Point of Entry and Coordination of Services

1. Continue to fund and monitor the operation of a statewide hotline for legal advice and intake for legal services.

2. Continue to refine a referral system and network for persons applying for services on the hotline.

F. Coordinate and design a statewide pro bono program to assist qualifying veterans

1. Work with existing agencies and advocacy groups that currently serve veterans in order to identify the current legal needs of veterans.
2. Develop a program that will target assistance to qualifying veterans.

G. Develop and provide a support network of training and information for legal aid providers and pro bono attorneys

1. Provide training and education opportunities for legal aid attorneys.
2. Develop a forum for legal service providers to share information.

H. Coordinate with the Access to Justice Commission to address barriers that low-income individuals face in accessing the court system.

At this time, the Center's focus will be on these objectives. Meeting these objectives is essential for creating a statewide program for legal assistance.

Action Plan: In working to accomplish these objectives, the Center has created the following action plan, which is intended to be flexible in order to accommodate creativity and changes in order to best address the needs of our target population.

1. Complete the automation of the Supreme Court pro se divorce packet, including testing.
2. Begin automation of the Supreme Court pro se child custody modification packets.
3. Provide training opportunities for legal aid attorneys in the state.
4. Provide training opportunities and resources for pro bono attorneys throughout the state.
5. Expand direct provision of legal services to the Gillette area.
6. Evaluate potential locations and partnership opportunities for futures legal service expansion in underserved areas of the state.
7. Develop and adopt metrics to evaluate the provision of the legal services provided through Center funding.
8. Maintain supervision and oversight of grants and grantee operations.
9. Coordinate with the Supreme Court auditors to schedule regular reviews of grantees.
10. Develop a coordinated plan with the State Bar, the Access to Justice Commission, and Legal Aid of Wyoming to develop and promote a structured pro bono program and increase pro bono assistance.
11. Develop and set-up remote access sites in the designated rural areas of the state in order to develop pro bono Skype clinics as well as provide a place for persons to come to connect with a legal aid attorney via Skype.
12. Develop a relationship with the University Of Wyoming School Of Law to provide opportunities for students to gain experience and provide pro bono services.
13. Develop resources to support the work of legal aid providers throughout the state. This can be done through development of training manuals, password protected

- website access, and other resources for use by legal service providers to aid in the provision of quality legal services.
14. Provide updated information for clerks and courts to provide to the public in order to direct the public to available resources.
 15. Provide public education, awareness, and dissemination of the resources available to the public.
 16. Organize pro bono clinics and develop participation of local attorneys for pro bono involvement.

Priorities:

Although all of the above objectives are important and deserve the attention of the Center, the following have been identified as priorities of the Center in the upcoming year:

1. Develop a system to recruit, train, and support pro bono attorneys throughout the state;
2. Create a web resource for pro bono attorneys that will provide instructions and support for common issues and cases handled;
3. Pilot remote access sites in five rural communities to increase access to underserved areas of the state;
4. Expand legal services to the Gillette area through community partnership and placement of a full-time attorney in Gillette;
5. Complete the automation of the pro se divorce packets;
6. Develop a relationship with the VA and other service providers for veterans to create a system in which low-income veterans with legal needs can be identified, referred, and screened for eligibility and pro bono assistance.

The Center's resources and staff time will be allocated appropriately to meet these objectives. The Center will continue to employ its current staff to work toward developing and implementing programs and projects that will enhance the delivery of legal services in Wyoming.

The Center also provides substantial funding to increase the capacity of our grantees' organizations so they may better address the legal needs of the low-income population. The Center will continue to work with existing and new organizations to help develop effective approaches to serving the large number of eligible persons who qualify for services.

Progress toward meeting the goals of the Access to Justice White Paper: Goals of a Statewide Program

During the Center's strategic planning process, the Board reviewed the Access to Justice White Paper which was prepared by the Wyoming Access to Justice Commission in December 2009. This white paper provided the basis for the development of state funding and a statewide program for civil legal services in Wyoming.

The Board reviewed the progress of the Center in meeting these goals. A summary of the objectives that are contained in the white paper as well as the Center's work towards those goals are as follows:

1. Coordinating all programs providing legal services to the indigent.

The Center has worked extensively with existing legal aid providers to assist in the development of a statewide system of legal services. The Center provides resources and support for legal service programs throughout the state.

2. Establish eligibility criteria.

The Center has established screening and eligibility criteria for the use of Center funds which the Center and all Center grantees use in determining eligibility for services. Any person receiving direct legal services through Center programs or funds is screened and qualified for eligibility before receiving services.

3. Be a vehicle to provide funds to existing programs to extend their reach.

The Center awarded more than \$750,000 in grants to existing programs for the upcoming 2014 fiscal year in order to expand the capacity of those programs. In addition to grant funds, the Center has worked to develop efficient mechanisms for the delivery of services by existing providers, such as the statewide advice and intake hotline.

4. Operate a statewide single point of entry or equivalent mechanism for centralized ease of access.

The Center has provided funding and worked extensively with the Legal Aid of Wyoming to develop a statewide advice and intake hotline. The hotline screens callers for eligibility, provides legal advice and brief services, and is the central intake mechanism for further legal services or referral to other appropriate agencies and organizations. The hotline is an efficient mechanism to offer screening, intake, advice and brief services for those throughout the state seeking legal assistance.

The Center has also developed a central portal for legal information at the Center's website, www.legalhelpwy.org. This website offers legal information on a wide variety of topics, is a central point to access legal resources, and provides referral to the central intake hotline for persons needing the further assistance of an attorney.

5. Coordinate with the Wyoming State Bar and other entities on private attorney involvement, pro bono legal services, and education programs.

The Center has worked in coordination with the State Bar to offer materials and training to attorneys on limited scope representation in an effort to increase the options and services available by private attorneys to self-represented litigants.

The Center has also begun collaboration with the State Bar, Legal Aid of Wyoming, and the Access to Justice Commission on several new pro bono initiatives, including currently working with the State Bar to develop a pro bono assistance program for veterans.

6. Receive grants and donations and make grants for legal services to the poor.

The Center worked in collaboration with the Access to Justice Commission to secure a 2013 ABA Access to Justice Innovations Grant to develop remote access sites. The Center also awarded more than \$750,000 of Center funds for grants to legal aid organizations to increase their capacity to deliver services throughout the state. All grants made by the Center are targeted to provide services for low-income individuals at or below 200% of the federal poverty level and all persons receiving direct services provided with Center grants are screened for income eligibility.

7. Establish uniform standards for the delivery of civil legal services to the indigent.

The Center has adopted the American Bar Association standards for the delivery of civil legal services to the indigent as a model for the provision of civil legal aid in Wyoming.

8. Increase access in rural areas.

The Center has focused a great deal of time in developing strategies and programs to reach rural and underserved areas of the state. The Center is working to pilot remote access sites and Skype® pro bono clinics in five rural communities in Wyoming. The Center has also worked to develop partnerships with community organizations willing to donate space and overhead in order to place full-time legal aid attorneys in areas of the state, such as Rock Springs and Gillette, who have never before had the presence or services of a full-time legal aid attorney. These partnerships with community organizations will greatly improve the availability of legal services to these communities and the surrounding rural areas. The hotline and website also effectively reach all areas of the state, including rural areas.

9. Provide adequate funding for legal services.

The Center has increased grant funding each of the past two grant cycles. The Center awarded more than \$750,000 in grants for the 2014 fiscal year.

10. Assistance to veterans.

The Center is working in collaboration with the State Bar to develop a program to provide pro bono legal assistance to veterans. The Center has begun discussions with the Bar regarding this development and the development of a veterans' assistance program is one of the Center's priorities in the next year.

11. Statewide legal information and resources website.

The Center has developed a website, www.legalhelpwy.org, which contains legal information and resources for legal problems commonly facing the low-income population. The site provides answers to frequently asked questions, resources and forms, and information about available programs and organizations where the public can seek additional services.

12. Use of technology to connect the public with information and assistance and remove geographic barriers.

The development of the remote access sites and Skype® clinics, online resources, and the automation of the Supreme Court pro se forms are a few of the examples of the Center's use of technology to remove barriers to access to information and resources, regardless of geographic location.

13. Assisting self-represented parties.

The Center has devoted considerable time to the development of resources and information to assist self-represented parties. The Center continues to develop forms and detailed instructions for self-represented parties. The Center's website also provides general information for pro se parties on what to expect in court, general courtroom decorum and information about common legal procedures which many self-represented litigants face.

14. Pilot self-help sites in courthouses.

The Center has provided grants to Teton County Access to Justice Center to pilot a self-help resource center in Teton County. Although this is not housed in the courthouse, this pilot will continue to be reviewed for effectiveness and the possibility of duplication of self-help resources to other areas of the state. The Center will continue to evaluate the best way to provide self-help assistance and resources.

**15. Private attorney involvement; and
16. Pro bono involvement.**

The Center continues to work with the State Bar and the Access to Justice Commission to encourage private attorney involvement and to develop structured pro bono programs to help facilitate greater participation by the private bar through programs such as the Skype pro bono clinics and the "I'll Do One" initiative of the Access to Justice Commission.

17. Ongoing evaluation of programs.

The Center continually monitors and evaluates the programs we develop and fund. Grant oversight and administration is an ongoing function of the Center in evaluating the best use of resources throughout the state.

18. Coordination with county libraries.

The Center has also provided a webinar to the state's county librarians to provide a demonstration of the resources available to library patrons on the Center's website and other useful resources that are available.

The Center also sent out information flyers to all county libraries in Wyoming which contain the Center's website as well as the advice and intake hotline number for library patrons needing additional assistance from an attorney. The Center continues to look for ways to coordinate with libraries to help direct patrons to the appropriate resources.

The Center has also partnered with one county library and is looking forward to a future partnership with a second library (after an expansion of the library) to house remote access sites to connect persons with pro bono and legal aid assistance over the internet using Skype.

The Center has made substantial progress towards these original goals which the Access to Justice Commission contemplated in working towards the development and funding for a statewide program for legal aid in Wyoming. Although much progress has been made, there is still much work to be done to continue to remove barriers to access to justice and increase the provision of legal services throughout the state.