

## **WYOMING CENTER FOR LEGAL AID 2013 STRATEGIC PLAN**

The Wyoming Center for Legal Aid was created by the Wyoming Supreme Court as an entity of the 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 citizens. The Wyoming Center for Legal Aid is dedicated to helping income-eligible Wyoming citizens connect with legal resources and find ways to address their legal needs.

The Center is still a relatively new organization that continues to seek innovative ways to address the issues that face the low-income in accessing the justice system. The Center's reach and impact is much greater by leveraging available resources. This plan updates the 2012 Strategic Plan adopted by the Center and sets program targets and priorities for 2013.

**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 for the low-income in the state. Available resources are limited and likely will never be enough to provide an attorney for each person who has a civil legal problem and who cannot afford an attorney. Therefore, programs that address broad issues of access to justice must be coordinated along with the provision of tradition legal services in order to find ways to provide meaningful access to the justice system.

**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 and 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 develop a plan for addressing these problems and issues.

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

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

1. Automation of the Supreme Court pro se divorce packets;
2. Continually adding content to the Center's website;
3. Providing information to the public about limited scope representation;

4. Hosting clinics and education for the public; and
  5. Developing programs and tools to help pro se persons navigate the court system.
- B. Single point of entry and coordination of services**
1. Continuing to fund the operation of a statewide hotline;
  2. Building a referral system;
  3. Providing a list of community partners on our website and links to other resources;
  4. Maintaining our website calendar that lists legal aid events for all providers; and
  5. Maintaining a single point for information where clerks and judges can send individuals for information and assistance.
- C. Statewide reach**
1. Developing an integrated statewide plan to provide legal services to all areas of the state;
  2. Working through community organizations to leverage resources in order to expand legal services;
  3. Expanding direct services to underserved areas of the state, such as Rock Springs and Gillette; and
  4. Evaluating the effectiveness of programs and projects.
- D. Direct legal services**
1. Develop innovative direct service projects that avoid duplication of existing services;
  2. Invest in a case management system that will adequately track cases and grants and increase efficiency in providing services;
  3. Continue to work with the State Bar in coordinating and partnering in projects and initiatives that further the mission of the Center; and
  4. Evaluate areas where direct services by Center staff are most appropriate and if appropriate, provide direct services. The Center will always continue to work on broad scope initiatives and projects that further access to justice in Wyoming.
- E. Community involvement**
1. Work with community organizations;
  2. Locate, identify, and develop relationships with existing community organizations across the state that already serve the income eligible and work with those community organizations to leverage existing resources and reach our target population; and
  3. Work with community organizations and partner with the private bar to develop pro bono opportunities throughout the state.

**Action Plan:** In working to accomplish the 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 automation of the Supreme Court pro se divorce packet;
2. Create and integrated statewide plan to coordinate and expand legal services throughout the state;
3. Maintain adequate Center staffing to timely complete Center objectives and priorities;

4. Continue to develop policies and guidelines for the Center;
5. Provide training opportunities for legal aid attorneys throughout the state;
6. Continual development of the Center's website by adding content and self-help resources and regular updates;
7. Continue to distribute the Center's e-newsletter to keep stakeholders and other legal service providers informed of developments in the access to justice community;
8. Expand existing and new legal service opportunities through grant funding;
9. Maintain supervision and oversight of grants and grantee operations;
10. Coordinate with Supreme Court auditors to schedule regular reviews of grantees;
11. Evaluate potential locations and partnership opportunities for future legal service expansion throughout the state;
12. Coordinate with the State Bar, Supreme Court, and Legal Aid of Wyoming to develop and promote pro bono programs to increase pro bono assistance throughout the state;
13. Continue to develop a continuum of access to legal services, including development and promotion of limited scope representation;
14. Continue to develop relationship with University of Wyoming School of Law to leverage students as a valuable resource through externships and other meaningful opportunities for students to contribute to Center and Access to Justice initiatives;
15. Provide a network of support for legal service organizations in Wyoming; and
16. Continue to develop a list of community organizations and court personnel with which the Center can work to develop a statewide network of resources and contacts for the income eligible.