

In the Works: Guidelines for States Wishing to Implement Uniform Statewide Reporting on Title IIIB Legal Services

NASUAD is an active participant in an exciting new initiative to create guidelines for States wishing to develop, or revise current, statewide reporting systems for Title IIIB legal services. The project's goal is to facilitate the gathering and utilization of statewide reporting data to "tell the story" of Title IIIB legal services and its impact on the well being of the nation's most vulnerable elders. The one-year project is funded by the Borchard Center on Law and Aging and administered by The Center for Social Gerontology (TCSG). TCSG is hoping that directors of State Units on Aging (SUAs) and their legal services developers will help champion this important undertaking.

The Guidelines will make recommendations about: (1) the process for developing statewide reporting, calling for active participation of State Units on Aging, Area Agencies on Aging and Title IIIB legal services providers; (2) data collection methods and types of data to be gathered; and (3) suggestions for using the information/data to help build support and understanding of the critical importance of legal services.

The goal for statewide reporting systems created under the Guidelines is to gather complete and consistent information that: (1) Captures impact/ performance outcomes to demonstrate what legal assistance is actually achieving for vulnerable elders; (2) Highlights the extent to which legal assistance programs are effectively targeting and reaching elders with the greatest social and economic need and are handling priority legal issues; (3) Improves the ability to monitor services; and (4) Enhances collaboration between state and area agencies and providers.

To design Guidelines that reflect the wide variety of legal services systems operating within individual states, the project will begin by collecting information on current state legal services reporting practices, working with SUA Directors to survey their State Legal Services Developers. The survey will identify best practices in statewide reporting systems and barriers to the development or implementation of statewide reporting. The project aims to create flexible guidelines to fit the unique legal services systems in each state. It is hoped that the State Guidelines will serve as the foundation for a national system of reporting in the future.

Lindsey Copeland, Director of Policy and Legislative Affairs, is the NASUAD representative to the project's National Advisory Committee. Principal investigators are Laurie Lisi, Consulting Attorney to TCSG and Penny Hommel, Co-Director of TCSG. Project staff is working closely with Lindsey to solicit SUA input on the Guidelines, and we welcome any and all suggestions by SUAs.