



CAMPAIGN FOR EQUAL ACCESS

BRINGING JUSTICE HOME

GETTING THE MOST FROM YOUR COMMUNICATIONS TOOLKIT: AN INTRODUCTION

An initiative of the Project for the Future of Equal Justice
A Joint Project of the National Legal Aid & Defender Association
and the Center for Law and Social Policy

This Communications Toolkit is one component of the *Campaign for Equal Access: Bringing Justice Home*, an initiative of the Project for the Future of Equal Justice¹. The campaign provides legal aid professionals and supporters with messages, message strategies and communications tools to use in building support at the community level. From its inception in 1999, the goal of this national campaign has been to create and convey messages that educate the public and key target audiences about the need for, and value of, civil legal aid and to build long-term support for institutions that provide this service.

The Toolkit was produced to help legal aid professionals and supporters communicate more effectively with the public and specific target audiences. It contains the following items:

- Components of a Communications Strategy to Build Community Support for Legal Aid
- Summary of the Message Research
- Talking Points on Legal Aid Restrictions
- Fact Sheet on Civil Legal Aid
- Case Studies About How Local Communities Built Support for Civil Legal Aid
- Six Print Public Service Ads (PSAs)
- Press Releases
- Tips on How to Frame and Pitch Stories
- Tips on Placing Op-Eds
- Evaluation of Communications Initiatives
- PowerPoint Presentation for Use in Talks Before Community Groups
- Media Tips (How to Speak and Make Presentations)

Each of these items is designed to provide guidance as you carry out your communications strategy. The Project for the Future of Equal Justice and NLADA stand ready to provide additional technical support as well. *Campaign For Equal Access* Coordinator Bonnie Allen and NLADA Director of Communications Elizabeth Arledge are available to organizations for telephone consultation and on-site training and other support. Additional resources are listed at the end of this Introduction.

¹*The Project for the Future of Equal Justice, a joint initiative of the National Legal Aid & Defender Association (NLADA) and the Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP), is launching this campaign with generous support from The Open Society Institute.*

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Of particular value as you begin your local campaign effort will be the tool titled “Components of An Effective Communications Strategy.” This tool is designed to guide you in developing an overall plan. Based on the public opinion research (explained below), it includes campaign-specific information on these topics:

Why Develop a Communications Strategy?

Goals of a Communications Strategy

Target Audiences

Key Messages

Message Elements

Tactics

Suggested Implementation Schedule for a One-year Campaign

Campaign Background and the Public Opinion Research

This *Toolkit* is based on message development research conducted by the firm of Belden Russonello & Stewart (BR&S) at the request of the Open Society Institute and the Project for the Future of Equal Justice. The research process involved several steps.

- Interviews of 20 legal aid professionals throughout the country to identify communications needs in the legal aid community.
- A series of 10 focus groups in five cities between November 1999 and January 2000, to uncover attitudes and assumptions Americans have about civil legal aid.
- A national survey of 1,200 adults in April 2000 to measure the extent of the attitudes heard in the focus groups and to place statistical assurances on the most popular messages and define the opinions that are most decisive for and against civil legal aid.
- The development of print advertising concepts (both graphic design and text copy) that were tested in four additional focus groups.

A November 2000 report distilled the results of the research process. The report includes:

- A short review of the public opinion research findings;
- Elements of a general message and advice for communications on civil legal aid;
- The visual presentation of ad prototypes for national, state and local communications efforts; and
- A discussion of the reactions to the specific ad concepts tested in the focus groups.

More detailed information about the research can be found in the “Summary of the Research” section of this Toolkit. Copies of the report are available from the Project for the Future of Equal Justice.

Campaign Components

In the summer and fall of 2001, the Project for the Future of Equal Justice will distribute the communication tool kits broadly within the civil legal aid community through mailings and at national and regional conferences. The Project, working in conjunction with Douglas Gould & Co., a New York-based strategic communications firm, also will conduct several intensive, hands-on media trainings of local, state and national leaders during this period. Contingent upon future funding



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from The Open Society Institute and other funders, the Project plans to implement additional stages of the *Campaign for Equal Access: Bringing Justice Home* in 2002.

For more information, or a copy of the campaign's research report, **contact Bonnie Allen, Campaign Coordinator, at 202-452-0620 ext. 221, b.allen@nlada.org or Elizabeth Arledge, NLADA Director of Communications, 202-452-0620 ext. 223, e.arledge@nlada.org**

Additional Resources for Creating and/or Implementing Your Campaign's Communications Plan

Two good resources for communicating your program's news to the national legal aid community and to national and regional reporters are NLADA and the Access to Justice Project of the Brennan Center for Justice.

National Legal Aid & Defender Association (NLADA)
1625 K Street NW, 8th Floor
Washington, DC 20006
<http://www.nlada.org>

Contact:
Communications Director Elizabeth Arledge
Tel. 202-452-0620 ext. 223
E-mail: e.arledge@nlada.org

The National Legal Aid & Defender Association (NLADA) is the oldest and largest national, non-profit membership organization devoting all of its resources to advocating equal access to justice for all Americans. Founded in 1911, it champions effective legal assistance for the poor and serves as a collective voice for both civil legal aid and indigent defense services throughout the nation. NLADA provides a wide range of services and benefits to its individual and organizational members. It works to improve the American system of justice by seeking adequate funding and promoting high standards for the delivery of legal assistance to the poor.

Through several printed publications and its new Web site to be launched in the summer of 2001, NLADA seeks to collect and disseminate stories on the triumphs and struggles of legal aid programs.

NLADA can also provide its member programs with targeted lists of reporters, organized by location, type of publication and area of interest.

The Access to Justice Project of the Brennan Center for Justice
161 Avenue of the Americas, 12th Floor
New York, NY 10013
<http://www.brennancenter.org>

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Contact:

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In 1997, the Brennan Center for Justice launched the Access to Justice Project as the centerpiece of its Poverty Program to help strengthen civil legal services for the poor in this country and to respond to relentless attacks that had culminated in 1996 with the imposition of a comprehensive set of funding restrictions on the Legal Services Corporation. The Access to Justice Project engages public education, counseling, litigation and scholarship in pursuit of its goals. As part of its work, the Brennan Center seeks to harness the power of the mass media to help expand public understanding and support for legal aid lawyers and clients. The Brennan Center resources described below are available through the center's Web site.

How You Can Use the Brennan Center in Your Media Outreach Efforts

- Send news about your legal services program to print in the Legal Services E-lert.

This e-mail publication reaches almost 3,000 people each week, including journalists, legislators, lobbyists, academics, judges and activists, and legal services lawyers nationally. In it, the Brennan Center reports on published news articles about legal services, and they also include original reporting based on extensive correspondence with legal services advocates and activists

- Send contact information for the person in your office in charge of media work. In combination with, and in addition to, the E-lert, the Brennan Center works closely with many journalists who are interested in learning about legal services programs.
- Use the Access to Justice Series to educate your local media and others about legal services. The Brennan Center's Access to Justice Series of eight reports illuminates the work of legal services programs and the impact of federal restrictions on those programs. They have also developed profiles of individual legal services clients, adapted from the Access to Justice Series.

Two Publications We Recommend

News for a Change: An Advocate's Guide to Working with the Media

By Lawrence Wallack, Katie Woodruff, Lori Dorfman and Iris Diaz (Copyright 1999 by Sage Publications, Inc.) ISBN 0761919236

The Jossey-Bass Guide to Strategic Communications for Nonprofits

By Kathy Bonk, Henry Griggs and Emily Tynes (Copyright 1999 by Jossey-Bass, Inc., Publishers) ISBN 0787943738