

ABA/NLADA 2004 Equal Justice Conference

Partnerships in Law and Aging Program: Lessons Learned from an Evaluation

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The American Bar Association Commission on Law and Aging and the Borchard Foundation Center on Law and Aging recently completed an evaluation of the Partnerships in Law and Aging Program. Information from that evaluation will be shared to encourage expanded participation in the grants program, to assist advocates and funders as they develop creative collaborations, and to stimulate discussion about measuring the outcomes of those collaborations.

I. Partnerships in Law and Aging Program

a. History and program development

- (1) The ABA Commission and other ABA entities sponsored the Marie Walsh Sharpe Endowment Legal Awareness of Older Americans program (1986-1996)
- (2) The Borchard Foundation Center on Law and Aging and the ABA Commission created the Partnerships in Law and Aging Program in 1998; first year of funding was 1999-2000.

b. Program objectives

- (1) Spur collaboration among providers of law-related services to older persons
- (2) Enhance legal awareness and autonomy and promote the legal rights of older persons
- (3) Improve elder access to legal system

- (4) Serve as a catalyst for the development of permanent resources and replication of successful projects

c. Grant length and funding

- (1) Annually, up to 10 grants of \$7500 each are funded
- (2) Future grant cycles will experiment with longer grant terms and higher grant amounts for selected projects

d. Grant making history

60 awards have been awarded over 6 years (including current year) – see complete project listing, attached

e. Types of projects funded

- (1) Projects have covered consumer legal information on issues such as predatory lending, health care decision making, kinship care, and guardianship
- (2) Projects have focused on language and culture outreach, multidisciplinary approaches to service delivery, education, and senior lawyer and other volunteer representation
- (3) Projects have resulted in the development of professional training materials, consumer booklets, websites, videos, and telephone

f. Location of projects funded

Projects have been developed in rural, urban and suburban areas, in 30 states.

II. Background of the Evaluation

a. Reasons undertaken

The evaluation was undertaken primarily to assess degree to which objectives are being met

b. Major questions – program objectives

- (1) Are overall program objectives being met?
- (2) What factors influence effectiveness of individual project collaborations?
- (3) How well do grant-term partnerships continue beyond the end of the grant, and what factors support or hinder continuation?
- (4) Do partnerships translate into improved access to justice, legal awareness?

c. Additional question - program design and administration

Should there be changes in program management to better meet program goals?

d. Additional question - content design

Should there be any change in program content (grant terms, priorities, funding levels) to better meet program goals?

III. Evaluation Process

a. Time frame

Evaluation conducted January 2002 – January 2003, covering three grant years

b. Survey of grant recipients and partners

Survey information obtained from 16 grantees and 9 partner organizations

c. Survey of proposal reviewers

Survey information obtained from 12 grant reviewers with the primary purpose being on the selection process

d. Follow up telephone interviews

Interviews of 17 selected respondents from grantee and partner categories

e. Document reviews (proposals, reports, products)

Reviewed for historical and demographic data

f. Data analysis

Analysis of all data collected from sources listed above

IV. Major Findings

a. Grantee location

Of 31 grantees, the majority was from East and West coasts (21), others were from Midwest (6) and a few (4) have been from South/Southwest

b. Types of programs funded

Of primary grantees, most were legal services programs, with the remainder being bar associations and coalitions, plus a few law-related non-profits.

c. Degree to which objectives were met

- (1) Improved existing working relationships and networking
- (2) Did not result in large numbers of new partnerships, but those created were effective
- (3) Were effective in educating elders about legal rights and were effective in educating service providers who in turn help seniors to identify legal problems and find resources to address them
- (4) Resulted in fewer direct services projects, but those that were initiated were effective
- (5) Expanded access through the development of Internet websites
- (6) Collected very little actual outcomes data, but there was significant anecdotal evidence of enhanced access
- (7) Generally did not result in additional or new funding but did result in increased awareness and in some cases, in-kind support and professional resources
- (8) Did not result in a great deal of replication, but when replication did occur it was very successful

V. Principal Recommendations (Discussion)

- a. Program goals**
- b. Outcome measures**
- c. Subject matter eligibility**
- d. Funding levels**
- e. Program outreach**
- f. Use of technology**

VI. Future Plans and Lessons of Value to Others (Discussion)