

Locating and Serving Hidden Client Populations

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Brief Description:

We have a duty to reach and assist client populations who will likely not just walk in our doors. How do we reach immigrants workers in the underground economy, for example, who are in great need of legal information and assistance? It is often very difficult to get information out to them, and to provide services at a place and time that works for them and their work schedules. What are the ways that we can work with these communities and other organizations to maximize our limited resources and ensure that they receive the legal services they need and deserve?

Topical Outline:

- I. How do we locate "hidden" client populations?
 - a. Workers in the underground economy (day laborers, domestic workers as examples)
 - b. What kinds of issues are they facing?
 - c. Why don't they just walk in our door?
 - d. Why are they hard to find?
 - e. How to find them?

- II. How do we gain their trust? Get them to listen to "us" and not to poverty predators?
 - a. Partnerships with organizations they know and trust
 - b. Bringing information to them
 - c. Talking to them about the issues they are facing
 - d. "speak their language"

- III. What kinds of materials will "reach" people? (discussion and examples)

- IV. What kinds of presentations work to get the message across? (discussion and examples)

- V. How do we need to adapt our services to accommodate them?
 - a. Model programs to reach and assist day laborers and domestic workers:
 - i. Adopt a Corner: In the late 1980's legal aid organizations and community groups recognized a need for outreach and education to day laborers who solicit work on street corners all over L.A. County. As workers they were victims of unscrupulous employers

who didn't pay their wages, and didn't compensate them for workplace injuries. They also were often targeted by local authorities in violation of their civil and constitutional rights. We partnered with college and law students, with religious groups, government agencies and community based organizations to develop the "adopt a corner" program. Each group would take a corner and visit it 2-4 times a month, armed with legal rights information often displayed in comic strip style. We would encourage workers to utilize "libretas" where they could write down information about the jobs they went on, the employer's date, the dates and hours they worked and any wages they were paid, as well as information about co-workers who could later serve as witnesses for their wage claims or other legal matters.

- ii. Domestic Worker Outreach Project: Day laborers are in a way a "captive audience", but domestic workers, especially live-in domestic workers are especially hard to find. They often work in very abusive workplaces, and are horribly underpaid. But reaching someone who lives in 5-6 days a week is a challenge. Outreach workers rode the bus lines frequented by domestic workers, or went to the parks where "nannies" took their charges to talk to them about their rights, their problems, and where they could go to get help. They were also given legal rights materials presented in comic strip or other easy to read and understand formats.
- iii. Neighborhood Legal Services Workers Rights Clinics: community-based walk-in legal clinics where workers receive free legal assistance with a variety of employment problems. Clinics are staffed by volunteer law students and lawyers, and trained and supervised by NLS.

Notes: These are a few examples of how we have adapted outreach and legal services to serve these populations. Partnerships with other organizations that compliment our legal services work is an ideal way to gain trust, to maximize resources, and to build a network of support for often very exploited and isolated populations of workers. Partnering with other non-legal organizations makes it possible to implement projects that we as legal services providers may not have the power or ability to carry out, but we can play a key role in workers' access to justice through these collaboratives.