

## ABA/NLADA 2004 Equal Justice Conference

### Loan Repayment Assistance Programs: Paving the Way to Public Service

**Presenters:** Terry Brooks, Jane Curran, Lillian Johnson and Karen Lash

#### Presentation Outline

- I. Law School LRAP Programs (Karen Lash)
  - A. What is the Problem?
    1. Escalating tuition costs
    2. Static public sector salaries
    3. Staggering educational debt
  - B. Does Law School Debt Impact Career Choice?
    1. Equal Justice Works report *From Paper Chase to Money Chase: Law School Debt Diverts Road to Public Service* says "yes"
    2. Law school debt prevents 66% of student respondents from considering a public interest or government job
  - C. Are Public Interest and Government Employers Noticing?
    1. 68% of public interest and government employers reported difficulty recruiting the attorneys they need
    2. 62% of public interest and government employers reported difficulties retaining experienced attorneys
    3. 45% of employer respondents expressed an increase in attorney turnover over the past several years
    4. 69% of attorneys in public service jobs leave within five years of employment
  - D. What Can Be Done?
    1. Provide financial aid to law school graduates working in public sector through loan repayment assistance programs
    2. LRAPs can be offered by law schools; employers; state-sponsored programs; fellowship programs; Federal Perkins Loan Forgiveness; some programs are available to federal employees
  - E. What are Law Schools Doing?
    1. There are currently 74 law school LRAPs, up from 46 reported in Equal Justice Works 2000 report, *Financing the Future*.
    2. Many law schools are working on creating and funding an LRAP

F. Advocating for an LRAP on your Campus

1. Form a committee
2. Make the case
3. How do LRAPs benefit law schools?
  - i. LRAPs are strong recruiting tools
  - ii. LRAPs cultivate a diverse student body
  - iii. LRAPs help fulfill the law school's mission
  - iv. LRAPs preserve career choices for graduates

G. What is Equal Justice Works doing?

1. LRAP trainings
2. LRAP training workbook available on the web to member law school representatives, students and graduates
3. *Financing the Future* report on the web (2004 version available in June 2004)
4. *From Paper Chase to Money Chase* report provides data on the need for LRAPs

H. What Other National Organizations are Working on This?

1. American Bar Association  
(<http://www.abanet.org/legalservices/lrap/home.html>)
2. National Legal Aid and Defender Association
3. National Association for Law Placement
4. Partnership for Public Service

II. Florida Bar Foundation LRAP Program (Jane Curran)

A. Types of Programs

1. Regular Program (non-taxable to participants using Foundation funds earmarked for this Program)
2. Supplemental Program (non-taxable to participants using Foundation general support legal assistance grant funds that otherwise would be awarded to the grantee employer)

B Program statistics

C. Program Purpose

1. To support recruitment and retention of the most qualified advocates by legal assistance programs in Florida
2. Survey of legal assistance grantee project directors

D. Regular Program Benefits

1. 75% of annual law school debt payments (maximum of \$6,000) for need-based government or private loans, such as GSL, ALAS-SLS-FISL, Law Access Loans 9LAL), Law Loans and National Direct Student Loans (NDSL or Perkins Loans), or university or other private institutional loans

- E. Regular and Supplemental Program Form of Benefits
  - 1. One-year loan (promissory notes) paid semi-annually
  - 2. Loan forgiven at the end of the one-year period provided staff attorney remains employed on a full-time basis by an Foundation legal assistance grantee

F. Eligibility

- 1. Regular Program
  - i. Annual debt payment load of at least \$1,800
  - ii. Employed full-time by a Foundation funded legal assistance for the poor grantee
  - iii. Maximum annual salary of \$40,000 for newly graduated staff attorney with \$3,000 increments for each year of legal experience
  - iv. Admission to The Florida Bar by end of first year of participation in LRAP Program
- 2. Supplemental Program
  - i. Annual debt payment load of at least \$1,800 in need-based government or private loans, such as GSL, ALAS-SLS-FISL, Law Access Loans (LAL), Law Loans and National Direct Student Loans (NDSL or Perkins Loans), or university or other private institutional loans

G. Term of Assistance

- 1. Regular Program
  - i. Five years, subject to availability and allocation of future funding by the Foundation.

H. Program Administration

- 1. Regular Program
- 2. Supplemental Program

III. Community Legal Services LRAP Program (Lillian Johnson)

A. Reasons for Legal Services Organizations to Offer a Loan Repayment Assistance Program to its Legal Staff

- 1. Increases opportunities to recruit new lawyers from a variety of law schools with diverse backgrounds
- 2. Improves retention of legal staff with 3 to 5 years of legal experience

B. Elements of Employer Sponsored LRAP

- 1. Budget
- 2. Description of who among staff will be eligible to participate
- 3. Administration and monitoring of program

- C. Example of Employer Sponsored Program
  - 1. Description of CLS' program
  - 2. Budgetary decisions
  - 3. Administration and monitoring process
  - 4. Impact on recruitment and retention of legal staff

#### IV. Federal LRAP Programs (Terry Brooks)

- A. Potential Legislation
  - 1. Dubin Bill
  - 2. Potential Harkin Bill
  - 3. Kennedy Bill
  - 4. Other Possible Modifications to Loan Programs

- B. Potential for Legal Services Corporation Action