

Maximizing Client Services Through Collaborative Partnerships with Law Schools

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Brief Description:

One of the ongoing challenges faced by legal service organizations is to meet the evolving needs of the diverse client communities it serves. Partnerships with law school pro bono, clinical, and other programs can help meet these needs by providing resources, research, student attorneys, and more. Panelists will discuss models for successful partnerships between legal service organizations and law schools based on their own experiences. Participants will then break into small groups for an interactive exercise to help them think through the steps of matching a legal service organization with a law school partner.

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Topical Outline:

I. Creating a Partnership

- a. The Big Picture**
 - i. The ability to create effective partnerships relies on an assessment of each parties' resources.
 - ii. Get to know the lay of the land in your community when identifying prospective partners.

- b. Resources and Institutional Support**
 - i. Determine the proper contacts at the law school.
 - ii. Assess your institutional culture and know your allies.
 - iii. Utilize existing structure institutionally to support the goals of your initiative.
 - iv. Determine the availability of people, funding and time available before launching a program.
 - v. Learn creative ways to maximize existing resources and uncover new ones.

- c. Time Commitment**
 - i. Consider the expenditure of time to foster a relationship with the law school and staff.
 - ii. Create short-term and long-term goals for project implementation.
 - iii. Realistic timelines are critical for the successful implementation of programs, which requires coordination of the academic cycle with the legal services agency.

II. Overview of Legal Services/Law School Partnerships

- a. The view from a law school**
 - i. Plan for success.
 - ii. Identifying opportunities in line with your institutional mission and vision of the law school administration.
 - iii. Exploring pathways for collaboration – looking inside your curriculum for building opportunities with existing courses and regular faculty.
 - iv. Including Adjunct Faculty provides added value.
 - v. Create value for students, alumni, community partners and clients.

- b. The view from a legal services organization**
 - i. Need the ability to expand legal services and garner an interest in public interest law.
 - ii. How much time is “worth it” when engaging in partnerships?
 - iii. Consider the costs of training.
 - iv. Think about defining discrete projects for partnership opportunities.
 - v. Define the screening criteria for and the role of participants.
 - vi. Leverage people resources (students) in the partnership process.

III. Maintaining the Partnership

- a. Coordinating training and supervision**

- i. Define supervision structure: faculty/attorney team, externship model (attorney supervisor), or pro bono attorney/student team.
- ii. Both the law school and legal services should conduct end of semester reviews, as well as beginning of the semester referrals.
- iii. Develop appropriate training programs to ensure competency and quality of delivery of services.
- iv. Create opportunities for junior attorneys to mentor through training and supervision.
- v. Involve the private bar to generate resources via pro bono attorneys and sponsorship.
- vi. Design opportunities for ongoing training.
- vii. Utilize experts to showcase the issues.
- viii. Create CLE opportunities to yield participation.

b. Communication

- i. Maintaining open lines of communication and finding new ways to communicate with potential law student volunteers is extremely important.
- ii. Create systems for ongoing mentoring and communication.
- iii. Maximize the use of technology to facilitate communication with individuals or groups.
- iv. Use media to celebrate and recognize efforts and maximize gain for schools, agencies and attorneys
- v. Maintain statistics to ensure access to grant opportunities

IV. Challenges

a. The role of deferred associates in the effort to provide access to justice

- i. Discussion of their usefulness in certain avenues; but concerns with the likelihood that they will be able to fully resolve many cases due to time constraints (the time following training until they leave to begin their law firm position).
- ii. Dealing with the flood of “pro bono” energy in the market.
- iii. Identifying the right projects for pro bono assistance.
- iv. Managing the volunteers while maintaining quality control.
- v. Utilizing law schools as a resource for training and matching law student/attorney teams.

b. Law student intern status

- i. Volunteers
- ii. Certified legal interns
- iii. Pro bono attorneys
- iv. Need to define appropriate roles and guidelines for involvement and supervision.

V. Benefits

- a. Meeting the needs of clients during the economic downturn.
- b. The use of different outreach programs gives clients information and an opportunity to be proactive.

- c. Greatly enhance the delivery of services through law related education programming and outreach.
- d. Identify creative ways to provide services to groups and communities – for example, intake days.
- e. Enhance one-to-one representation through the use of pro bono attorney/student teams.
- f. Save on actual costs of recruitment and training by partnering and reaching out to alumni and student populations.