

## **HOMELESS PREVENTION AND RAPID REHOUSING PROGRAM**

### **SOUTHEAST LA. LEGAL SERVICES**

The New Orleans office of Southeast La. Legal Services is poised to receive \$218,178 to spend over a 3 year period of time to deliver homeless prevention legal services under our local HPRP collaborative. Approximately 11 to 16 nonprofit agencies will participate in the effort with most agencies doing rental assistance, one central coordinating office, an outreach component including street outreach, and one legal services program. Unity of Greater New Orleans, our local continuum of care agency, will administer a total of about \$8.5 million in HPRP funds for the City of New Orleans. Between 2,000 to 2,500 families are projected to be served. Start up for HPRP is near early October 2009. Southeast La. Legal Services was the only agency to submit a proposal for homeless prevention legal services under the HPRP collaborative.

#### **I. PRIOR HOMELESS PREVENTION AND HOMELESS LEGAL SERVICES**

- a. Since 1994, SLLS has received Emergency Shelter Grant (ESG) funds from the City of New Orleans for homeless prevention work.
- b. Since 1996, SLLS has received a Supportive Housing Program (SHP) grant through our local continuum of care agency Unity of Greater New Orleans.
- c. SLLS has attended monthly homeless service provider meetings with our local continuum of care since 1996
- d. SLLS staff have chaired the Affordable Housing Committee of Unity for over 5 years
- e. SLLS has worked on several other collaborative efforts with local continuum of care agency including establishing special admission preferences for homeless populations for vouchers, having local continuum of care be the administrative agency for special post-Katrina disaster vouchers for the homeless, and submitting client referrals for other rapid rehousing programs.

#### **II. SLLS HPRP PROGRAM DESCRIPTION**

- Will accept referrals from other agencies in HPRP collaborative, self-referred clients, and referrals from other entities not participating in HPRP collaborative
- Homeless prevention legal services will include eviction defense, subsidy terminations, illegal lockouts, rent arrear disputes, other landlord-tenant disputes that could result in program termination, denials for admission to subsidized housing, and any other legal issue putting family at imminent risk of homelessness
- SLLS will refer clients needing rent assistance to central coordinating office

- SLLS will attend monthly meetings to evaluate HPRP with other agencies funded under HPRP initiative
- SLLS will train other collaborative members on landlord-tenant law
- SLLS will assist outreach team with working with eviction court staff and judges for referrals to HPRP
- SLLS will do HMIS data entry as it already does for its ESG and SHP grants

### **III. CONCERNS WITH HPRP PROGRAM DELIVERY**

- HPRP income eligibility is 50% of ami which is less than federal poverty guidelines so must flag issue for intake staff
- Double case management data entry into legal services system and HMIS
- Eligibility for rental assistance for subsidized tenants under HPRP
- Completing all required forms including for legal services and HPRP compliance
- Ensuring referrals from other HPRP agencies are routed to HPRP attorney(s)
- Making sure staff bill to correct homeless prevention grant. ESG requires match and HPRP does not.

## APPLICATION FOR HPRP FUNDING    SOUTHEAST LOUISIANA LEGAL SERVICES

1. Experience and Capacity - Southeast Louisiana Legal Services (SLLS) is the largest public interest law firm in the state. It is submitting this application for the \$218,178 set aside to provide legal assistance for this project over the next three years. In 2003, New Orleans Legal Assistance Corporation and SLLS joined forces to enhance our services to ten Louisiana parishes including Orleans Parish. NOLAC had served the parish since the program began in 1967. SLLS' largest office is in downtown New Orleans.

Since 1967 our program has focused exclusively on providing legal help and representation to low and moderate income people who need help with civil legal problems. Our program has offices in Marrero, Covington and Hammond, as well as New Orleans. The staff has 42 attorneys. The program completes between 6,000 and 7,000 cases every year. Since Hurricane Katrina, the program has prioritized handling cases to help rebuild our clients' lives and their homes.

A hallmark of our efforts has been working with other agencies, both legal and non-legal, to serve our client population. SLLS has been a leader in statewide efforts. For the last four years one of the directors has been the co-chair of the Access to Justice Committee of the Louisiana State Bar. The program is the lead agency on two statewide technology projects, one of which operates the statewide website for clients to obtain legal information, [www.lawhelp.org/la](http://www.lawhelp.org/la). The other project is to put all of the Louisiana public interest law firms on a uniform case management system. The program operates a statewide low-income tax clinic that helps taxpayers with IRS problems. Working with non-legal?

The program has a long history of leadership in the area of housing litigation. The program is always ahead of the other Legal Services programs in the state in the number of housing cases it handles, and many years the New Orleans office handles more housing cases than the rest of the state combined. The New Orleans Housing unit has five full-time attorneys. In 2005, the manager of the unit, Laura Tuggle, received the Reginald Heber Smith award from the National Legal Aid and Defender Association. This once annual, nationally recognized award, was awarded to Ms. Tuggle because of her outstanding housing advocacy work. During the past year, the housing unit has had over 1900 cases open. The homeless unit (funded with a Chronically Homeless grant and a Supportive Housing grant from UNITY) has had almost 600 cases open at some point in the past year. The program was the lead agency in 2007 and 2008 of a consortium of programs resolving title issues for Road Home applicants. For 14 years, SLLS and its predecessor have received ESG funding or SESG funding from the City of New Orleans to do legal work to prevent homelessness. Since the storm, this work has become even more important as the number of homeless and precariously housed persons has skyrocketed. This is a direct result of the unbelievable damage and destruction done to the Orleans Parish housing stock. The City has consistently contacted us since the storm to offer us money left unspent by its other grantees, because they know what a good job the program is able to do with extra funding. The program worked closely with the National Housing Law Project for two years on policy issues that were affecting tenants and homeowners trying to recover from the storm. In the last four years, SLLS has obtained grants from The United Way, AARP, Grantmakers in Aging, Louisiana Disaster Relief Foundation and Equal Justice Fellowships to deal with post-storm housing problems.

2. Interest in this service - Housing problems have always been a priority of SLLS. It is a primary legal problem for low-income persons in southeast Louisiana, which is our target population. We endeavor to offer services to homeowners, renters and the homeless to address the legal problems they face in having and keeping a safe, sanitary place to live. Because of its experience in serving the low-income population, the staff is aware that loss of a home can snowball into an ever increasing number of both legal and non-legal problems. The HPRP program fits squarely into the mission of the program.

SLLS values its work with Unity for the Homeless and the many agencies it funds. The program works closely with a number of these agencies to provide a holistic approach to resolving the obstacles facing our clients. We have found this collaboration to be essential to the success of our clients.

Similarly, the system that Unity envisions for HPRP funds will offer a new opportunity to work with other agencies that can provide assistance to our mutual clients. We believe that a strong network with agencies referring people in need of help to one another will help the project attain the planned results. Our interest includes both working with the homeless and those threatened with homelessness to overcome legal obstacles, but also working with outreach to eviction courts and municipal courts to ensure that those who want this help can access it. We look forward to being a part of this solution.

3. Housing First Approach - While our program is not applying for the Rapid Rehousing part of the rfp, a hallmark of our work with all clients including the ones that will be served under this grant is to permit the client to make the decisions about the goals of the case and what options to pursue. This decision is made by the client after discussing options, both legal and non-legal, with an attorney. We do not require clients to seek help for other non-legal problems as a condition of getting help from the program.

4. Program Component and design - SLLS is applying to provide the legal services as outlined in this rfp.

B. - How will services be provided - SLLS will hire an attorney to work primarily with this project. The attorney will be located in the housing unit of our New Orleans office at 1010 Common Street, Suite 1400A. Other attorneys in the housing unit will assist with the work. The work will be:

- Prevention of homelessness by addressing evictions and disputes between landlords and tenants that would probably result in eviction.
- Assisting people to resolve legal problems that prevent them from acquiring safe, stable housing. For instance, some unresolved issue may prevent someone from qualifying for subsidized rental assistance.

- Accepting referrals from the Central Coordinating Office and other agencies funded under this proposal of clients in need of legal help, as well as taking clients who come in unrefereed.
- Referring the homeless and those threatened with homelessness to the Central Coordinating Office and other agencies funded under this proposal for financial assistance and other non-legal help when the client has agreed to it.
- Working with other agencies and institutions to prevent homelessness and to work to get homeless people into housing
- Entering data into HMIS as required by UNITY and HUD.

Each applicant for help will be interviewed to determine if they are eligible for services under this grant. Then their options will be discussed with them as possible ways to resolve their legal problems. In those situations where the legal problem is not directly a housing issue and instead involves many of the other legal issues SLLS handles for low-income people, then the matter may be assigned to an attorney outside the housing unit. The client will then decide how s/he wants the case handled and the attorney assigned to the case will then pursue the chosen course of action.

In addition, the unit will offer training to other agency staff on the services available from our program and the types of problems that their clients may encounter that should be referred for legal help. The unit already has strong relations with the courts in New Orleans that handle housing problems and will offer to help the Central Coordinating office with its outreach efforts to these agencies.

C. The attorney will be directly supervised by Laura Tuggle, the managing attorney of the housing unit. The overall project will be overseen by Mark Moreau, Executive Director, Program Services. Their resumes are attached.

D. Indicate any specific at-risk or homeless populations you will target:

- Persons about to be evicted from private dwellings
- Persons at-risk of homelessness due to doubling up with other households or due to other circumstances
- Persons living with HIV/AIDS or other disabilities
- Persons living on the street or in abandoned buildings
- Persons living in emergency shelters or other homeless residential programs
- Persons leaving hospitals, mental health or substance abuse institutions
- Persons leaving jails/prisons or involved with Municipal or Criminal Court
- Families of at-risk students in New Orleans schools

E. Indicate specific zip codes you will target - The program will serve the entire City of New Orleans. In addition to the office located in 70112, SLLS regularly staffs outreach offices at the following locations, and would hope to continue these or similar locations during the grant:

Treme Under the Bridge

Claiborne & Gov. Nichols (outdoors) 70116 - 3d Saturdays of month

Disaster Housing Assistance Program (DHAP) Outreach Office

3630 MacArthur Blvd.

New Orleans, LA 70114 - Mondays, 9 am to 12 noon—Housing

HANO Voucher Office

4100 Touro St.

New Orleans, LA 70122 - Tuesdays, 1:30 pm to 4:30 pm—Housing

River Garden Resident Services

600 Felicity St.

New Orleans, LA, 70130 - Thursdays, 3 pm to 5 pm—Housing

Abstract Last Hope

1302 Magazine St.

New Orleans, LA 70130 - Last Thursday, 10 am until finished—Homeless Outreach

Ozanam Inn

843 Camp St.

New Orleans, LA 70130 - Last Thursday, 2:15 pm until finished

Total Community Action "Families Matter"

1420 S. Jefferson Davis

New Orleans, LA 70125 - Last Thursday, 5:00 pm to 6:00 pm —Homeless Outreach

5. Timeliness - We would be able to get this program up and running immediately. There is already staff present who are trained and experienced in delivering these services. With respect to hiring a new attorney, which would be key to being fully operational, we already have a list of candidates who have been interviewed that is only a couple of months old. Hopefully we would be able to find the right person in that group. It would probably take several weeks to check references, offer the job and have the new hire in place in the office.

6. Program enhancement - SLLS is recognized as a leader throughout the state in the area of housing advocacy. Normally, when housing law training is being conducted, it is our staff that is called upon to act as trainers. SLLS staff wrote the two chapters on Louisiana housing law found in the most recent Louisiana Legal Services and Pro bono Desk Manual.

SLLS is able to offer a holistic range of legal services. In addition to housing and homelessness, we have units dedicated to consumer, employment law, public benefits, family law, tax problems, and foreclosure. This means that we can offer a wide range of services to the clients who come to us.

The program has established relationships with many of the agencies that offer subsidized housing, whether it is shelter for a night or permanent housing and everything in between. It has relationships with the other agencies that work on housing problems and address the needs of those who are homeless or in danger of becoming homeless. It has good working relationships with the courts in the city.

The program has a well-established reputation as a place where people can get help with housing problems. This is true not only among the institutions named above, but also among the low-income community of the city. Many people who are in need of the services funded by this grant will come directly to our offices seeking help, without the need for referral. Last year 7740 people applied to our program for help. 4637 of them applied through the New Orleans office.

The program is aggressive in doing outreach. This is demonstrated in part by the large number of outreach sites we have in New Orleans. This is also shown by the amount of favorable media attention the program gets locally regarding housing recovery issues.

## 7. Cultural Competence

- Describe your organization's cultural competence. Include experience in serving with cultural sensitivity people who are racially, ethnically and religiously diverse; who speak languages other than English; who have a range of physical and mental disabilities; and who are extremely low-income.

The staff or the program has a long history of serving a diverse group of people, including people of different races and ethnic groups, people with mental or physical disabilities, or both, people who are homeless, and people who speak a language other than English. Since the storm, the staff has added half a dozen people who are fluent in Spanish. Another staff member is fluent in Vietnamese. We have also served people from diverse

religious backgrounds, which can become a factor in our work with domestic violence victims.

The program held a training most recently specifically on working with homeless people. More than a few staff members experienced homelessness themselves as a result of Hurricane Katrina. In the past training has been held on serving domestic violence survivors and meeting their particular needs. Orientation of new staff always includes a section on being culturally sensitive to people from different backgrounds. In 2002 one of the executive directors of the program served on the national committee to design the training package on leadership and diversity for the Legal Services Corporation. SLLS is committed to further developing its staffs' cultural competency.

With respect to serving people who are extremely low-income, well over 95% of our clients live at or below 200% of the federal poverty guideline. While there is no direct correlation between the poverty guideline and the Average Median Income on which the definition of extremely low-income is based, it is clear that a large number, well over half, of our clients would meet the definition.

- Describe the diversity of your board and staff and your agency's non-discrimination policies.

The Board has 12 members presently. 5 are low-income people and 7 are attorneys. 6 are African-American and 6 are white. 5 are women and 7 are men. The program has 68 staff members. 14 are men and 54 are women. 34 are African-American, 26 are white and the remaining 8 are of other ethnic groups. The program has had in place an anti-discrimination/ affirmative action policy promoting diversity in our board, staff and clients since the program began.

- Describe how you ensure that your staff meets the needs of clients with sensitivity toward clients' varied cultural and life experiences.

Through experience, and transferring that experience to newer staff members through mentoring. By hiring a diverse staff and having diverse leadership in the program. By training staff as outlined above.

### **Attachments**

Resume of Laura Tuggle

Resume of Mark Moreau

SLLS' 501(c)(3) letter

2007 and 2008 financial audit and management letter

SLLS Articles of Incorporation

SLLS Bylaws

Certificate of Good Standing from the Louisiana Secretary of State

## Annual Budget

Salary	
Administration	\$ 1,726
Attorney (1.35 attorneys)	\$57,258
Fringe	\$13,742
TOTAL	\$72,726

### Budget Narrative -

Administration - The rfp sets aside \$1,726 a year for the legal provider to administer the program. This money will be spent in reporting and responding to requests from the grantor and overall management of the program.

Attorney - SLLS will hire an attorney to work on this project. We do not know the salary at which the attorney would be hired. In addition, other members of the housing unit's legal staff will provide services under this project. We do not know which attorney will provide what work. Some attorney staff outside the unit may also contribute to this project. The average salary of \$42,400 was used for the attorney time that will be spent. The total effort will be equal to the FTE of 1.35 attorneys. SLLS tracks attorney time that is spent throughout the day and which grant the time should be charged to. The calculation of the cost is based solely on these time records.

Fringe - SLLS presently pays 100% of the cost of the employee's health, life and disability insurance. The program also contributes the equivalent of 3% of employee's salary to a pension plan once the employee has been here a year. Fringe was calculated at 24% of salary, though the actual amount is 26% presently.