

## Program Letter 02-9

**To:** All LSC Program Directors  
**From:** Randi Youells, Vice President for Programs  
**Date:** October 16, 2002  
**Subject:** Revisions to Matters Service Reports

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The 2001 implementation of the Matters Service Reports (MSR) gave our programs a vehicle for reporting on the extensive non-case services they deliver. Thus the MSR for the first time provides an opportunity for grantees to describe and count those services which they cannot in the CSR. In 2002, its first full year, the MSR gives us a new capacity to describe to stakeholders at all levels of the legal services system - national, state and local - and to the general public the full scale and scope of legal services being delivered in communities across the nation.

In July and August of this year, we completed an analysis of the initial six-months of MSR data covering July-December 2001 submitted to LSC in March. The report, which we presented to the LSC Board of Directors in August, is now posted on the LSC web site at [www.lsc.gov/websitedocs/MR080802.pdf](http://www.lsc.gov/websitedocs/MR080802.pdf). It shows, among many other things, that:

- \* *The total number of people being served annually by LSC grantees is several times the number of cases being reported on the Case Service Report (CSR). In just one area alone, grantees reported serving more than 1.4 million people in the second half of 2001.*
- \* *More than 75 percent of grantees are providing various forms of pro se assistance. In addition to providing an important service to people who cannot afford lawyers, LSC grantees are playing a significant role in helping courts to deal with the flood of self-represented litigants appearing in courtrooms across the nation.*
- \* *LSC grantees are increasingly serving as gatekeepers in referral networks of agencies and service providers serving low income people.*

**Our review of the 2001 data also identified some issues that need to be addressed.** As with any new system, the MSR requires some adjustments, especially in the first year or two of implementation, to reach its full potential. Several categories of data turned

out to be too “soft” to be used in our initial report. Some of them can be tightened up, with the changes in data collection methods and definitions discussed in items a-c below. Others are not suited to accurate reporting of numbers served and will be reported in a separate Part 1 C of the MSR, as discussed in item d below.<sup>1</sup> These adjustments will benefit everyone by making the MSR numbers more solid and reliable so all of us can use them with confidence.

**Our request to you** We are asking you to review your Matters data collection system in light of the updated guidelines (see enclosed), and to make adjustments that are necessary. Please do this as soon as possible, so that the data your program is collecting now will provide as accurate a picture of your Matters services as possible when you submit your report next March.

**Following are highlights of the changes reflected in the enclosed guidelines:**

- a. Brochures and newsletter articles.** Guidelines were added to clarify the distinction between "Measured" and "Estimated" figures.
- b. Legal education and pro se materials posted on web sites and kiosks.** The unit to be counted was changed to number of page "views" (formerly page "hits").
- c. Web-related matters.** Guidelines were added for web related activities (additional to those in “b” above).
- d. Legal education items published in newspapers and aired in video and radio spots.** A new category was added to capture newspaper items published, and radio and video spots aired. This appears as a third form, labeled “1C”, in the “Community Legal Education” section of the Matters Report. These items were removed from and are not to be reported under any other category.

**For a detailed listing of the changes in reporting, please see the first page of Enclosure #3 entitled Guidelines for Data Collection and Reporting..**

**Thank you.** We appreciate the efforts you have already made to implement this system, and your help in continuing to improve it. We knew at the onset that the implementation of this system would be a work in progress and that, when you started collecting the data on July 1, 2001, everything might not be perfect. For any questions that you have about these guidelines or Matters data collection in general, please email [resultsproject@lsc.gov](mailto:resultsproject@lsc.gov). We will try to respond to all inquiries within three business days. Also, we will continue to post on the RIN site under

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<sup>1</sup> Articles in newspapers, PSA TV spots and PSA radio spots do not lend themselves to a good count of numbers served because of questions of targeting (how much of the reading, listening or viewing audience is eligible clients) and because, even if they are reading the newspaper or listening/viewing the station, they often will not read, view or listen to the legal education item. In contrast, a specifically targeted newsletter is much more likely to get to its target audience and the legal education article(s) are more likely to be read, because the newsletter is probably picked up by persons already looking for this information, while a newspaper may be bought for the sports, the weather, news, comics or many other features.

Reference Materials (<http://www.rin.lsc.gov/rinboard/>) an updated list of frequently asked questions we are compiling from the implementation effort to date.

Enclosures (3):

- 1) **Matters Service Report** — the format for annual submission of matters as a component of the existing “Grant Activities Report” (in two parts – [Part I, Statistical Portion](#), and [Part II, Narrative Portion](#)).<sup>2</sup>
- 2) [Definitions of Key Terms](#)
- 3) [Guidelines for Data Collection and Reporting](#) — describes the data to be collected and suggests methods for collecting it

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<sup>2</sup> The actual report submission mechanism will continue to be an Internet-based program, as is true for all components of the GAR. As usual, detailed instructions for the actual submission to LSC will be provided as a part of the GAR process.