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PROGRAM LETTER 98-8

To: All LSC Program Directors

**From: Karen J. Sarjeant
Vice President for Programs**

Date: November 24, 1998

Subject: Revised CSR Handbook

The House of Representatives has recently considered legislation which would amend the Government Performance and Results Act ("GPRA") to require Inspectors General to verify and validate data used in performance measures reported to the United States Congress by Federal agencies. Case statistics reported by legal services programs play a vital role in Annual Performance Plans which LSC submits to Congress under GPRA, as well as in LSC's annual requests for Federal funding for legal services.¹

We recognize that counting cases is only one measure of the many services which legal services programs provide to the client community. Development of a survey for gathering information about other measures, including case outcomes, matters and declinations, is underway at LSC. We expect the survey to lead to a thorough discussion about what measures LSC and legal services programs should employ to describe the impact of Federal funding on the delivery of legal services to eligible clients. We invite you to participate in that discussion.

¹ See H.R. 2883, 105th Congress. The LSC FY 1999 Budget Request and Performance Plan are accessible in the Public Affairs section of the LSC public website at <http://www.lsc.gov>.

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Until such time that additional measures are in place, case statistics will continue as the mainstay of our annual request for Federal funding for legal services. Therefore, the accuracy and reliability of case statistics which programs report to LSC for 1998 and 1999 is essential. All staff who have a role in opening, closing, or recording cases must have access to LSC guidance on reporting cases, and programs must take necessary steps to ensure that systems are in place to ensure accurate reporting of cases statistics to LSC.

Revision and Reissuance of the CSR Handbook

Because of the great need for accurate information about cases, and in order to ensure consistency in the reporting of CSR data, LSC is issuing a revised CSR Handbook. Two copies are enclosed with this letter. We ask that you distribute a copy of the revised Handbook to all staff involved in assisting clients or in preparing case service information for submission to LSC.

There are several significant changes in the Handbook. These changes, which take effect for 1999 cases to be reported to LSC in 2000, include:

- requirements to use automated case management systems;
- requirements to report LSC-eligible cases, regardless of funding source;
- requirements to report PAI cases separately from Basic Field cases;
- procedures for ensuring timely closing of cases;
- procedures for ensuring that individual cases are not reported more than once; and
- procedures for reviewing case information prior to its submission to LSC.

In addition, the revised Handbook contains new, clearer definitions of “case”, “client”, and “referred after legal assessment.” The Handbook also contains expanded guidance on: when to count referrals as cases; when to count repeated contacts with a client as single or separate cases; and when to count non-traditional forms of service such as *pro se* clinics as cases.

Applicability to 1998 Cases Reported to LSC in March 1999

The revised CSR Handbook does not apply to 1998 cases, except that the following two sections *do* apply to the submission of 1998 case information to LSC on March 1, 1999:

- Section 3.3 - Timely Closing of Cases
- Section 3.4 - Management Review of Case Service Reports

Also, the July 1993 version of the Handbook remains in effect until January 1, 1999, as does LSC Program Letter 98-3 (May 12, 1998), which requires that programs *not* report as 1998 cases:

- cases supported solely with non-LSC funds;
- cases in which clients do not meet LSC eligibility requirements; and
- cases in which the only service provided to a client is a referral.

Please contact John Meyer, LSC Program Counsel, at (202) 336-8909 with questions or comments about the revised CSR Handbook. Thank you for your continuing efforts to ensure the accuracy and reliability of CSR data.

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Enclosures: Two Copies of the Revised CSR Handbook