



MEMORANDUM

TO: All LSC Program Directors

FROM: Helaine M. Barnett, President

DATE: December 6, 2004

SUBJECT: Program Letter on Serving Client Eligible Individuals with Limited English Proficiency

Attached is a Program Letter and Guidance to LSC Programs providing LSC's expectations and suggested approaches to the delivery of legal services to client eligible individuals with limited English proficiency (LEP).

Many individuals contributed significantly to the development of the Program Letter and Guidance, and I would like to thank everyone who contributed to this effort. They include representatives from the LSC Leadership and Diversity Advisory Committee and LSC programs including Neil Dudovitz and Kate Meiss (Neighborhood Legal Services of Los Angeles County), Irene Morales (Inland Counties Legal Services), Lillian Moy (Legal Aid Society of Northeastern New York) and, from non-LSC funded providers, Larry Lavin and Doreena Wong (National Health Law Project), Paul Uyehara (Community Legal Services, Philadelphia) and Keith Talbot (Legal Services of New Jersey). Comments and suggestions were also made by Christine Stoneman (LEP Coordinator at the U.S. Department of Justice) and Linda Perle (Center for Law and Social Policy). Pat Hanrahan, John Idleman and other LSC staff provided support and assistance.

Prior versions of the document were circulated to the field for comments in November 2003 and January 2004, and this Program Letter and Guidance responds to many of those comments.

The Program Letter addresses the responsibility of LSC funded programs to provide services to client eligible individuals who do not speak English well or at all that are equal to the services they provide to eligible individuals who speak English without difficulty. While limited resources and locally determined program priorities inevitably mean that many eligible individuals are not represented by LSC funded programs, the decision whether or not to help someone should not be made on the basis of his or her language abilities. The Program Letter and Guidance to LSC Programs also follow quite closely the Guidance issued by the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) for all recipients of DOJ funding, but place it in the context of civil legal services providers.

I hope that the Program Letter and Guidance are helpful as you attempt to improve services to this significant population.