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April 18, 2013

Angela Thornton
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Re: Draft of Program Quality Visit Report for Central Virginia Legal Aid Society

Ms. Thornton:

Please find enclosed our comments on the PQV report for CVLAS dated March 18, 2013.

Overall we could find very few inaccuracies or misunderstandings in the report. A minor correction is found on page 11 where it states that Doris Causey, a Richmond based staff attorney, is on the Virginia State Bar Claims Committee when she is actually on the Client Protection Fund Board. In addition, on page 26 it is implied that the Homelessness Prevention & Rapid Re-Housing Program still was being operated by CVLAS & William Byrd Community House. In fact, HPRP started July 1, 2009 and ended June 30, 2012.

Since your visit we have made several changes, some which directly correspond to recommendations in the report and we appreciate the opportunity to update you on these developments. Any recommendation not mentioned is one with which we agree and acknowledge that we need further efforts and planning in that area.

II.1.5.1: A committee was set up on April 2, 2013 to rework the telephone messages particularly in light of the staff reductions carried out on April 1, 2013 – more on those herein. Part of their charge was to add automated advice and counsel options. CVLAS has carefully and thoughtfully studied the issue of the automated attendant script, and whether the first choice ought to be an option for general intake or an option for one of the specialty intakes (DV, elder, Spanish, no-fault divorce). Years of experience have taught us that regardless of the script, a significant number of callers will choose the first available option. Given this reality and the inevitability that many callers will select the option which is not correct for them, we believe it is far better for callers who need specialty intake to mis-choose general intake than for callers who need general intake to mis-choose specialty intake.

II.1.5.2: Following your visit we researched, (re)discovered the reporting capabilities of



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our telephone system, and began tracking calls, dropped calls, and worker productivity

II.1.5.3: We agree with the recommendation to hold regular intake staff meetings and reinstated monthly meetings in April 2013.

II.1.5.4: Last month CVLAS entered into an agreement with a "Law and technology" class at University of Richmond School of Law. The class has accepted the design of an A2J online intake application for CVLAS and is on course to complete it in May 2013.

II.1.5.5: In mid March, the CVLAS board met and amended our case acceptance priorities to limit representation in SSDI cases to advice and counsel.

II.1.5.6: A committee was set up on April 2, 2013 to review and amend our website and include links to other resources and the changes to our policies.

II.3.6.1: Christiane Queiroz, the Director of the Virginia Farmworker's Program at CVLAS has agreed to update our LEP policy and be responsible for the program's language access efforts.

II.3.6.2: See above.

III.1.13.1: Bi-weekly case review meetings have been reestablished with staff attorney Palma Pustilnik taking the lead and coordinating the meetings.

III.2.16.3: In the past six weeks CVLAS, the University Of Richmond School Of Law and the Family law section of the Richmond Bar Association planned our first divorce clinic and a Wills and Powers of Attorney clinic. The divorce clinic was made more effective by recent changes in the law, which allow affidavits in lieu of a deposition and A2J technology which allows clients to complete the forms with very little assistance.

III.3.18.3. We disagree with this recommendation in the sense that it is our view that CVLAS' Executive Director should be a partner with the director of the Migrant program and the person to attend farm worker law trainings to acquire familiarity with Farm Worker Law and the Farm Worker Program and its mission

IV.1.19.1: The CVLAS Board of Directors began discussions over formal conflict of interest policies at its March 2013 meeting.

IV.1.20.1: The CVLAS Board of Directors will evaluate the Executive Director this summer.

IV.3.22.2: From mid February to mid March 2013 the CVLAS Board of Directors reviewed its fiscal situation and priorities and decided to make some difficult staff changes. On April 1, 2013 five staff positions were eliminated or reduced to part time, including the Director of Operations, the Fiscal Manager, two intake positions and a Senior Managing attorney. The two administrative positions were consolidated into one and existing staff was encouraged to apply. Full representation in SSI cases was eliminated from CVLAS' priorities and a full time

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attorney who worked on these cases was reduced to part time. The board was motivated to restructure CVLAS to better weather economic upheaval and provide more efficient service.

IV.4.22.4: CVLAS will put its Audit out for competitive bid in 2013.

IV.6.23.1: Staff was involved to some extent on the decisions to restructure but much of the decision making was done by the board. This was because I requested that the board put every position, including the executive director, on the table for consideration.

IV.7.28.1: LAJC and CVLAS will continue joint fundraising and have had several meetings regarding this matter since the OPP visit.

Thank you very much again for the report and the opportunity to respond. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions regarding this letter.

Very truly yours,

Stephen E. Dickinson