

Report on the Legal Needs Assessment

Colorado Legal Services

Approved and Accepted
CLS Board of Directors
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Colorado Legal Services
Legal Needs Assessment
Table of Contents

Executive Summary

Report on Legal Needs Assessment

Appendixes

Executive Summary

Colorado Legal Services (CLS) is the only agency in the state that provides free legal services in civil cases to indigent clients in every Colorado county. For decades, CLS' attorneys and paralegals have assisted low-income individuals and families who have faced eviction, been threatened with the foreclosure of their homes, suffered from acts of domestic violence, or been improperly denied or terminated from public assistance benefits and health care benefits. CLS assists members of vulnerable populations who would otherwise have no access to services to address legal issues impacting safety, stability and health.

In order to ensure that CLS continues to appropriately target its limited resources to meet the most critical current and evolving legal needs of its client population, CLS conducted a comprehensive statewide legal needs assessment of its client community. The needs assessment was conducted in the midst of the nation's worst economic downturn since the Great Depression. The U.S. Census Bureau released its official 2010 statistics on poverty on September 13, 2011, and the data reveal that nearly one in five Americans qualifies for the civil legal assistance that is provided by legal aid offices across the country. The number of Americans eligible for civil legal services in 2010 was more than 60.4 million, which is an increase of 3.6 million from 2009. With an increasing demand for services in the midst of deteriorating housing and labor markets, and extremely high rates of unemployment, home foreclosures and bankruptcies, it was and continues to be incumbent upon CLS both to respond to emerging legal needs as they became apparent and to engage in a systematic and thorough process to ensure that CLS is attuned to as many pressing needs of its burgeoning client-eligible population as possible.

The needs assessment process consisted of the broad dissemination of an on-line survey as well as in-person participation, which was obtained by conducting 20 local focus group meetings with members of the client communities throughout the state, including mono-lingual Spanish speakers, homeless persons, seniors, African immigrants, Native Americans and migrant farm workers.

The survey respondents collectively ranked the following legal subject categories as the most important areas in which CLS should focus its resources: family law issues (particularly for victims of domestic violence), disability benefits, senior Issues (e.g., fraud against and abuse of the elderly, nursing home issues, Medicaid issues) and landlord/tenant Issues (e.g., eviction, lockouts, security deposit issues). Low-income survey respondents specifically identified pressing legal issues in the areas of family law and housing.

The focus group meetings also produced insights into the struggles of low-income Coloradans, particularly during a time of extended and extreme economic hardship. There were broad concerns expressed about domestic violence. Nearly every focus group had at least one participant who self-identified as a victim of domestic violence and at least five focus groups had from 30-50% of the participants reporting incidents of domestic violence. In addition, focus group participants identified income-related issues and housing-related issues as major concerns.

The information gleaned from both the survey and the focus group components of the process confirm that, to a large degree, CLS is appropriately targeting its resources in the legal subject areas that are the most critical for its client communities. For instance, providing legal assistance to victims of domestic violence, persons with housing problems, adults and children who have been denied or terminated from disability benefits, consumers with collection or home preservation issues, and seniors have been and will continue to be a priority for CLS. However, the needs assessment process did reveal possible gaps in CLS' services related to employment, immigration and the need for additional outreach to the financially-eligible client community. These areas will therefore be the subject of additional scrutiny by CLS in order to determine whether, within the parameters established by federal law and regulation, additional or enhanced services can be provided in those areas.

Within the framework of the needs assessment, CLS will continue to review and revise, as necessary, the program's goals and objectives in order to fulfill its mission to provide high quality civil legal services in the pursuit of justice for as many low-income persons and members of vulnerable populations throughout Colorado as possible.

Colorado Legal Services **Legal Needs Assessment**

I. Introduction

A. Overview of Colorado Legal Services

Colorado Legal Services (CLS) is a private, non-profit corporation that provides high quality legal services to low-income persons in every Colorado county. Incorporated as the Legal Aid Society of Metropolitan Denver in 1925, and then as Colorado Legal Services in 1999 with the consolidation of the three then-existing Colorado legal services programs, CLS is the only agency in the state that provides free legal services (including advice, brief services and extended representation) in civil cases to low-income persons and families. These clients otherwise have no access to help with legal issues that impact their safety, stability, and health.

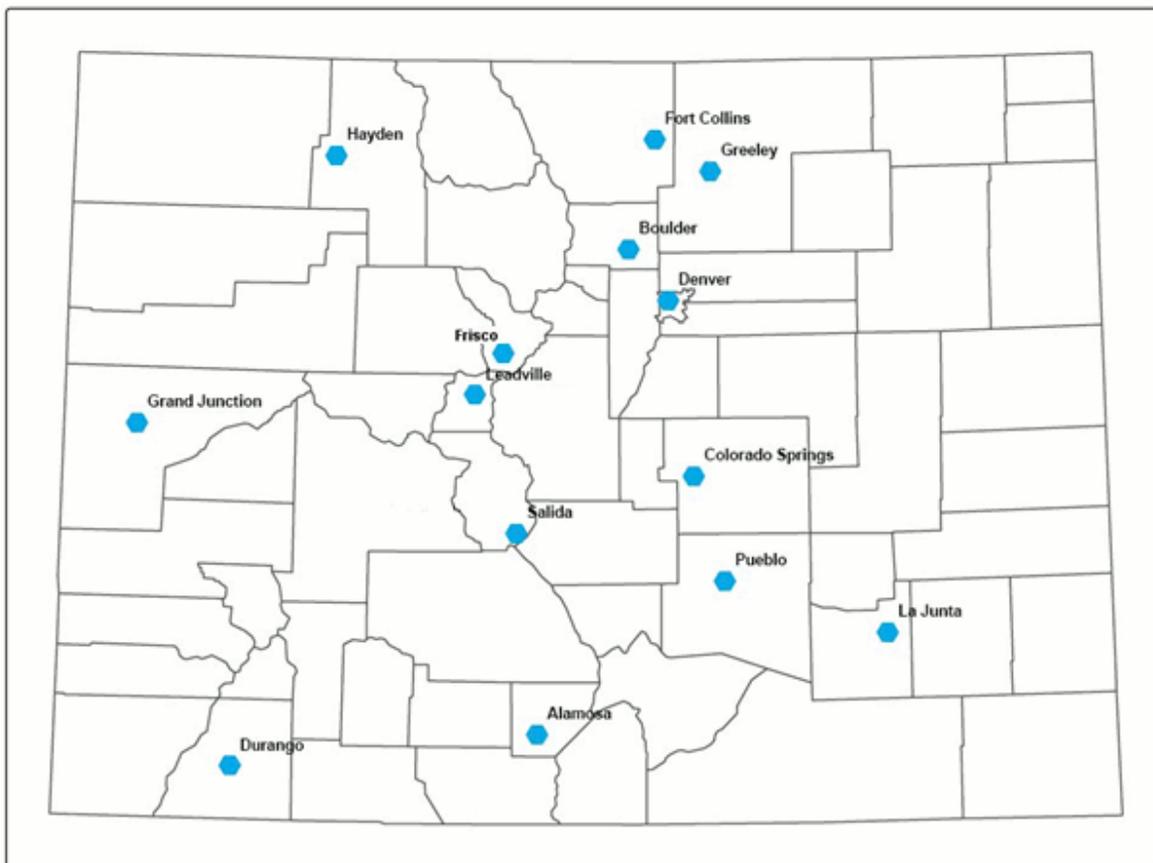
For decades, CLS attorneys and paralegals have assisted low-income adults and children who have been improperly denied or terminated from public assistance benefits (e.g., Temporary Assistance to Needy Families [TANF], Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program [SNAP, also known as food stamps], Supplemental Security Income [SSI], and Unemployment Compensation); denied or terminated from health care benefits (e.g., Medicaid, Medicare, and Children's Health Insurance); suffered from acts of domestic violence; faced eviction from public, subsidized or private rental housing; or been threatened with the foreclosure of their homes.

The pervasive and compelling need for free civil legal services for Colorado's low-income individuals and families continues to grow, as Colorado's population expands.¹ Limited access to legal assistance results in limited access to justice for Colorado's low-income individuals.

¹ According to the 2010 Census, Colorado's population is 5,029,196, reflecting an increase in population of 17% from 2000.

and Lake County in central Colorado where there are 1,098 indigent persons and 10 registered attorneys). In addition, this data reveals only the number of registered attorneys in each county, not whether the attorneys in fact provide pro bono assistance to low-income individuals.

In the effort to provide local access to services and to serve as many of the legal needs of as many members of its vulnerable client communities as possible, CLS has 14 local offices located throughout the state, in both urban and rural locations.



Location of CLS Offices

CLS employs 50 attorneys and 34 paralegals. These experts in poverty law provide highly-skilled legal services to CLS clients. In 2010 alone, CLS provided legal advice, brief services or extended representation in court or administrative hearings to over 11,000 indigent clients who had serious civil legal problems that affected their health, safety, stability and sufficiency. These

clients are low-income individuals and members of other vulnerable and exploited populations, including senior citizens, victims of domestic violence, persons with limited English proficiency, persons with mental and physical disabilities, Native Americans, migrant farm workers and immigrants.

The primary funding source for CLS is the federal Legal Services Corporation (LSC); CLS is the only recipient of LSC funds in Colorado. The remainder of CLS' funding comes from a variety of federal, state, and local sources, including foundations and other private entities. To qualify for CLS' services, an applicant's assets may not exceed CLS' asset ceiling, and an applicant's income, with few exceptions, may not exceed 125% of the current federal poverty guidelines. In addition to determining an applicant's financial eligibility for services, CLS is also required by federal regulation to determine if an applicant is a citizen or a legal non-citizen. An exception to this policy exists, however, that allows CLS to provide full legal representation to victims of domestic violence or victims of certain specified crimes, such as sexual assault or human trafficking, without regard to the applicant's immigration status.

In addition to the direct provision of legal services by CLS attorneys, CLS has secured the commitment of hundreds of private attorneys throughout the state who regularly accept referrals from CLS offices or bar association-sponsored pro bono programs and who provide pro bono or low-fee legal assistance (paid for pursuant to contracts with CLS) to eligible clients. All legal assistance provided by CLS is free of charge to clients.

B. Purpose of Legal Needs Assessment

To ensure that CLS fulfills its mission by establishing case-acceptance priorities that reflect the most pressing legal needs of its client population, CLS has conducted a comprehensive statewide legal needs assessment of its client community.

The assessment stems from CLS' desire to respond to the most critical needs of its client community as well as from its intention to meet the standards of and conform to the guidance

from LSC and the American Bar Association (ABA). LSC regulations require grantees of LSC funds to establish procedures that include “an effective appraisal of the needs of eligible clients in the geographic area served” by the grantee and to obtain information “from potential or current eligible clients that is solicited in a manner reasonably calculated to obtain the views of all significant segments of the client population.” (45 C.F.R. 1620.3(b)) “The appraisal must also include and be based on information from the recipient’s employees, governing body members, the private bar and other interested persons.” (45 C.F.R. 1620.3(b)) In addition, LSC’s Performance Criteria provide that legal services programs should periodically undertake “a comprehensive assessment of the most pressing legal problems and needs, both addressed and unaddressed, of the low-income population in its service area, including all major segments of that population with special or similar legal needs or access challenges.” (Performance Area One, Criterion 1) Results of the needs assessments are then used in establishing programmatic goals and objectives, developing strategies to achieve them and allocating resources to meet those goals, objectives and strategies.

Finally, the ABA’s Standards for the Provision of Civil Legal Aid specifically state that a legal services provider “should interact with low income individuals and groups serving low income communities to identify compelling legal needs and should implement plans to address those needs most effectively.” (Standard 2.1)

C. Economic Context of the Needs Assessment

CLS’ legal needs assessment was conducted in the midst of the nation’s worst economic downturn since the Great Depression. The recession began in December, 2007, and, although it may have officially ended in June, 2009, the fallout from the country’s acute economic distress, including the deterioration of the labor and housing markets, remains an everyday reality for thousands of individuals and families. Even into 2011, the country continued to grapple with very high, if not unprecedented, rates of unemployment, home foreclosures and bankruptcies. With rising costs of living and depleted savings, many more individuals and

families faced eviction, home foreclosure, delinquent child support, hunger, and domestic violence.

The struggles of the people of Colorado have been pronounced. In March and April, 2006, Colorado had the highest foreclosure rate in the United States. In 2007, foreclosure filings in the seven-county Metro Denver area were 41.5% above the previous year's filings. Since 2000, the number of children living in poverty has grown faster in Colorado than in any other state in the nation, and the number of children living at or below the federal poverty level rose 72% in Colorado between 2000 and 2008, according to U.S. Census Bureau data. From 2008-2009, the number of Coloradans receiving Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits, formerly known as food stamps, increased by 26%, the number receiving Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) increased by approximately 15%, and Medicaid enrollment for children increased by more than 18%, according to a report by the Colorado Children's Campaign.

CLS staff constantly assesses changing and emerging client needs, and responds with adjustments to its delivery system and case work when appropriate. For instance, when the foreclosure crisis struck Colorado, CLS created a Foreclosure Project that dedicated one attorney and one paralegal to provide legal assistance to seniors facing home preservation issues and to focus on combating predatory lending practices. In 2008, CLS applied for and received one of the original grants from the Institute of Foreclosure Assistance to hire a bilingual attorney to represent seniors and members of other vulnerable populations with home preservation issues. In 2007, CLS created the Collaborative ID Project to address the new requirements for low-income Coloradans to provide proof of their identity and lawful presence in Colorado in order to obtain or maintain public benefits. An attorney and two paralegals now assist clients in securing birth certificates, state identification cards and other supporting evidence necessary to acquire or preserve public benefits, including Medicaid, subsidized housing, SNAP (food stamps) and other benefits. In 2008, CLS created a Consumer Unit in

response to the increasing volume of clients with foreclosure, bankruptcy, consumer and debt issues. In 2009, CLS established a Medical-Legal Partnership in collaboration with Children's Hospital in Denver for the purpose of improving health outcomes for indigent children by providing legal assistance to patients and their families in the areas of law that directly impact health (e.g., substandard housing conditions, utility cut-offs or the denial or termination of public benefits, including Medicaid). Finally, in 2010, in response to increased demand for assistance from veterans, service members and their families, CLS initiated the Individuals with a Military Connection (IMC) Project, which uses an online "live help" model to link persons with a military connection to legal resources and information about benefits to which they may be entitled.

While CLS was aware of and responded to certain emerging legal needs, it, nonetheless, believed it necessary to engage in a more systematic and thorough process to ensure that CLS was attuned to the many new and evolving needs of its client communities. Thus, during this time of economic crisis and struggle when financial problems inevitably became legal problems for many, CLS conducted its comprehensive assessment of the critical legal needs of its client community.

II. Legal Needs Assessment Process

A. Overview of Process

In October, 2007, CLS established a widely-representative Advisory Committee, composed of 14 stakeholders, including representatives from human service agencies, who were invested in assuring that CLS thoroughly assessed the current and evolving legal needs, both addressed and unaddressed, of low-income Coloradans. The Advisory Committee provided oversight and guidance regarding the statewide legal needs assessment process.

With input from the Advisory Committee, CLS determined that the in-depth needs assessment process should be comprised of a widely disseminated online survey instrument as

well as in-person participation, which would be obtained by conducting a significant number of local focus group meetings.

To further assist with the process, CLS established an internal Legal Needs Assessment Committee made up of 15 CLS staff members. This committee had at least one staff member from each CLS office, and included attorneys, paralegals and support staff. The internal committee provided guidance and specific input as survey instruments were formulated, and was essential in the planning and implementation of the focus group meetings.

B. Survey Process

CLS developed a survey tool that asked respondents to rate legal subject areas as well as specific legal issues within each subject area. Survey respondents were asked to rate the overall legal subject's (e.g., Consumer Law) level of importance as an area of law where CLS should focus its resources, and to then indicate the specific legal issues within that subject area (e.g., issues with collection agencies, debt problems, garnishments, bankruptcy, contract/warranty issues) where CLS should concentrate its efforts. In addition, survey respondents were asked to provide narrative responses to additional questions, such as: 1) Please identify any barriers you believe exist that prevent low-income persons from accessing the services of Colorado Legal Services; and 2) Please identify technological tools that you believe would assist Colorado Legal Services in achieving its mission.

In addition to the online survey, CLS developed a paper survey instrument containing identical questions for those who were unable or unwilling to use the online survey. All completed paper surveys were included in the survey data.

In March, 2008, before disseminating the online survey to the public, CLS requested that each CLS staff member complete the survey. Sixty-seven staff members completed the survey and provided thoughtful observations and insight about the current and evolving legal needs of low-income persons and specific areas of law where CLS should focus its resources.

In May, 2008, after CLS staff completed the survey, the link to the online survey was posted in both English and Spanish on the CLS website. To obtain input from members of the State's local, specialty and minority bar associations, Colorado's judges and state judicial officers, and agencies that work closely with low income people, such as social service organizations, domestic violence agencies, housing authorities, and mental health clinics, CLS engaged in a mass email initiative to over 1,000 stakeholders inviting them to complete the online survey.

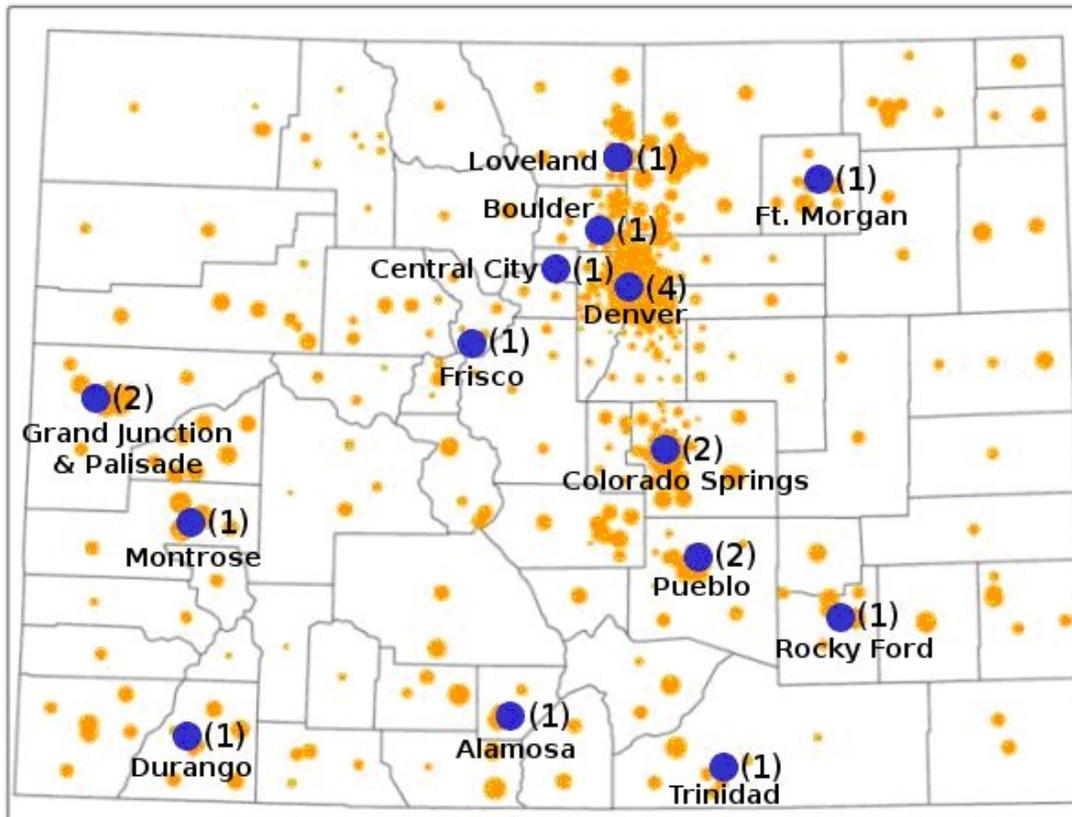
CLS also conducted a comprehensive mailing to 1,200 clients and former clients and to agencies and organizations that work closely with low-income persons and senior citizens. The mailing offered the option of accessing CLS' website to complete the online survey, or completing a paper survey that could be returned in a self-addressed, stamped envelope.

In total, CLS invited 2,290 individuals and organizations in Colorado to complete the survey. With 658 individuals responding to the survey, CLS obtained an impressive 29% response rate. Respondents included over 200 low-income persons, over 100 representatives of human service agencies, over 100 senior citizens, and approximately 100 private attorneys, bar association leaders and judges.

C. Focus Group Process

CLS used GIS mapping to determine concentrations of poverty in Colorado and relied on this information to decide locations of local focus group meetings.

In 2009, a total of 20 focus group meetings involving 323 participants were conducted around the state of Colorado. The purpose was to provide CLS with in-person information and narrative guidance from CLS clients about their perceptions of the most pressing and evolving legal needs confronting the poor in Colorado.



Households with less than \$25,000 in Income ● = 500 household
Based on 2000 Census Data
Location and Number of Focus Group Meetings ●

The focus group process also was designed to identify and accommodate those in the client-eligible population who had particular challenges in accessing legal services. The majority of focus groups were held in rural locations where geographic remoteness may otherwise have posed an access barrier. All of the focus groups were held in locations that were accessible to persons with physical disabilities. Child care services and interpreters were provided at CLS expense. The focus groups also were balanced to receive input from underserved populations and groups with specific access issues.

Focus groups were conducted in the following areas, and with the following specific populations:

1. Pueblo (southern Colorado): mono-lingual Spanish-speaking
2. Pueblo: general low-income population, including three deaf attendees who were assisted by an American Sign Language Interpreter
3. Las Animas (southeastern Colorado): general low-income population
4. Otero County (southeastern Colorado): mono-lingual Spanish-speaking
5. Alamosa (south central Colorado): general low-income population with emphasis on low-income Hispanics
6. Mesa County (far western Colorado): homeless persons
7. Mesa County: migrant farm workers
8. Montrose (western Colorado): general low-income population
9. Durango (southwestern Colorado): general low-income population, and Southern Ute and Ute Mountain Ute Native American tribes
10. Summit County (central mountain region): seniors
11. Colorado Springs (central Colorado urban center): mono-lingual Spanish-speaking
12. Colorado Springs: general low-income population
13. Morgan County (northeastern Colorado): general low-income population
14. Larimer County (northern Colorado): general low-income population
15. Gilpin County (central mountain region): seniors
16. Denver (major urban center): seniors
17. Denver: general low-income population
18. Denver: African immigrants
19. Denver: Asian American/Pacific Islander
20. Boulder County (north Denver metro area): migrant farm workers

CLS local office staff members, in collaboration with local service providers, organized and facilitated each of the meetings. At some focus groups, participants were provided light

refreshments and at other focus groups participants were given \$10 gift certificates for use at local grocery stores. The median number of people participating in each focus group was 10 individuals. With one exception,³ all of the focus groups were comprised of individuals who were eligible for CLS services.

At each focus group meeting, participants were asked to name the greatest or most significant hardships faced by their family, to discuss the main causes of poverty in their community, to indicate whether they had experienced any unmet civil legal needs in the past year, to indicate whether they had heard of CLS and the services it provides, and if they accessed or tried to access CLS services, to indicate their level of satisfaction with CLS' response. CLS staff members recorded the participants' responses to the questions, and the results of each focus group meeting were summarized in a written report. A member of the Legal Needs Assessment Advisory Committee, who is a professor at the University of Colorado School of Law and has experience with focus groups, then reviewed each of the 20 individual focus group reports and drafted an overall summary of the focus group component of the legal needs assessment process⁴.

III. Legal Needs Assessment Results

A. CLS Staff Survey Results

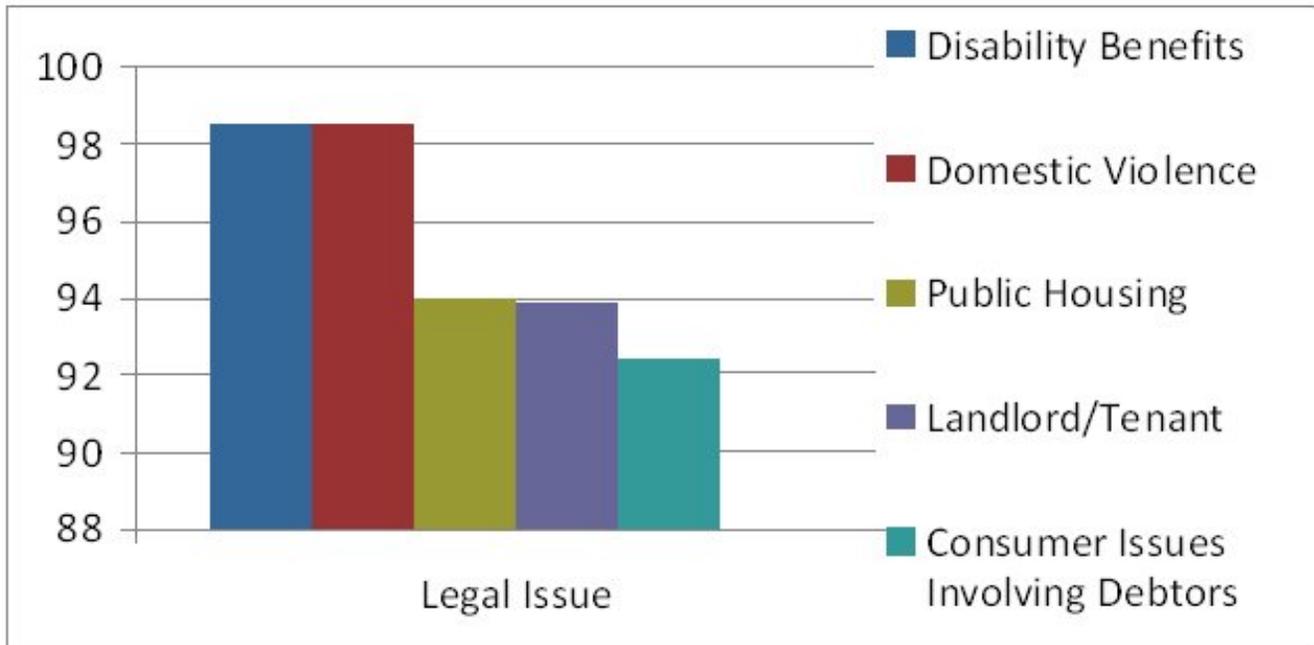
The survey of CLS staff revealed the following categories of law as the top-rated areas in which the staff believes the agency's resources should be targeted:

1. Disability Benefits
2. Family Law Issues Involving Domestic Violence
3. Public Housing
4. Landlord/Tenant Issues
5. Consumer Issues Involving Debtors

³ For linguistic and cultural reasons, the focus group for Asian and Pacific Islanders was held with community representatives, who spoke on behalf of their community, and were not screened for eligibility for CLS services.

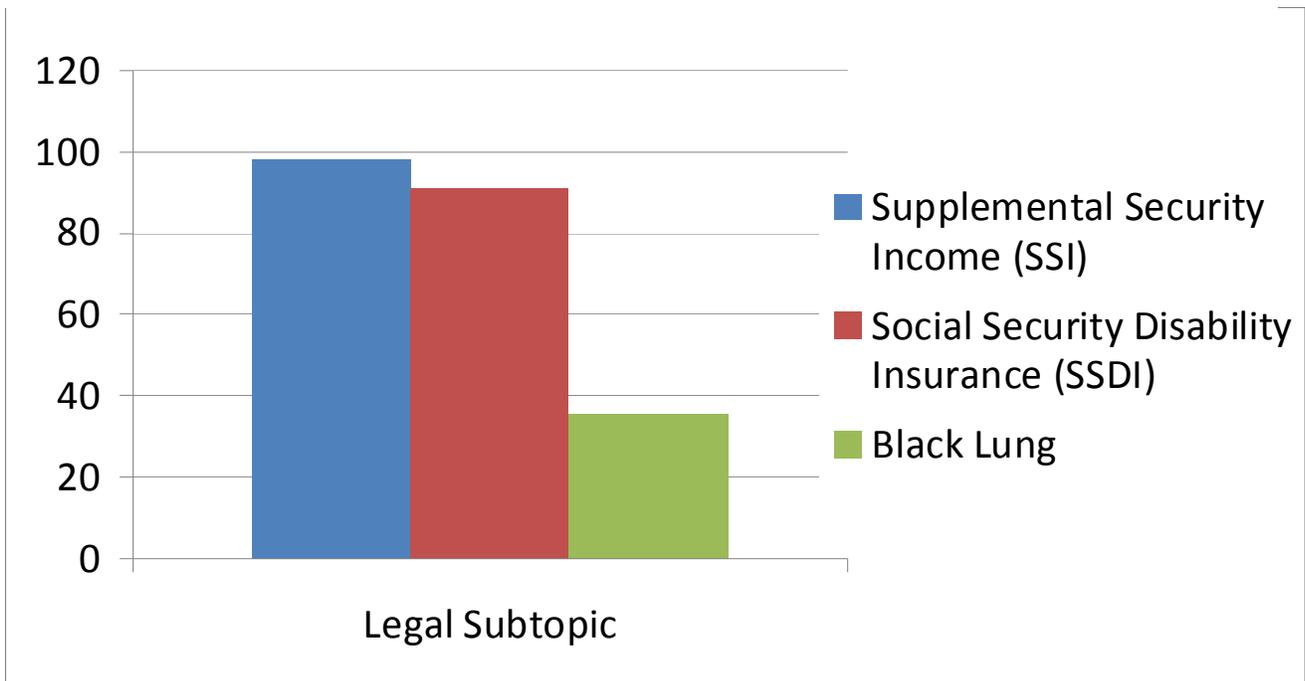
⁴ The individual focus groups reports, as well as the summary report from the focus group meetings are contained in the Appendix to CLS' Legal Needs Assessment.

Legal Issues with Over 90% Rating of 'Important' or 'Very Important'

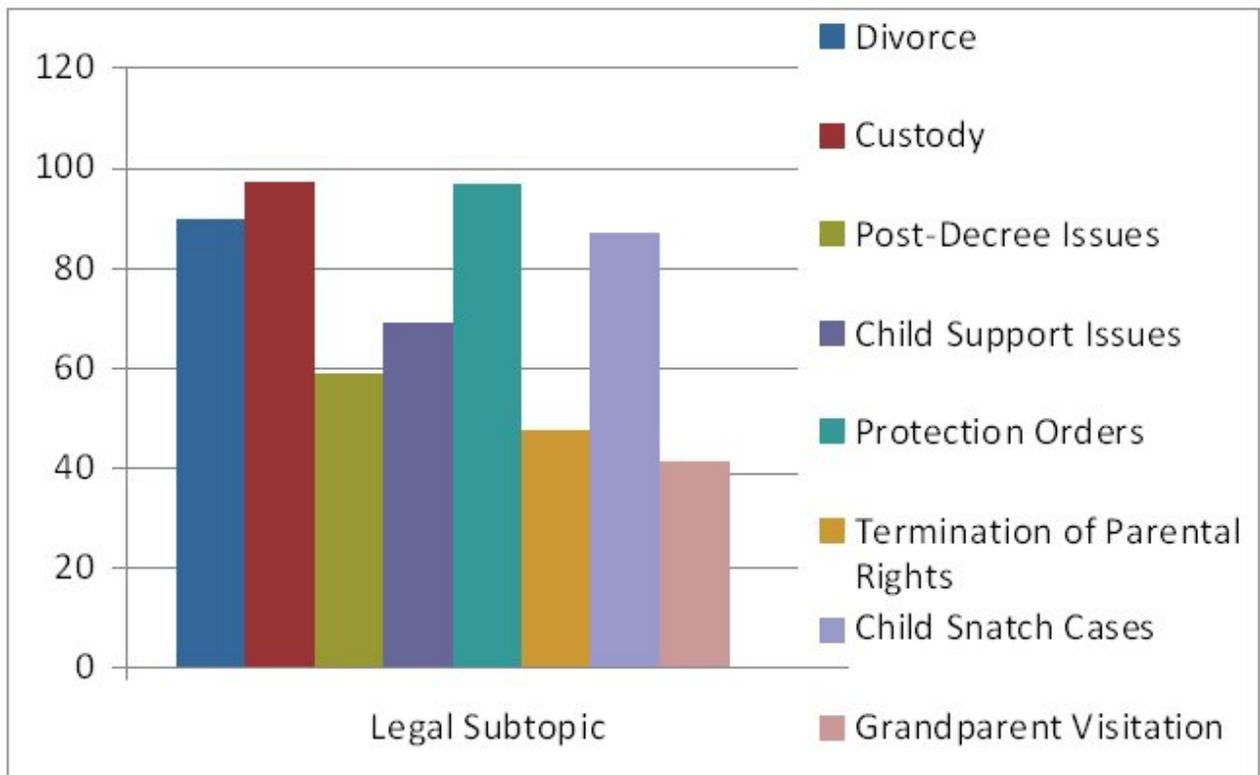


Staff members who found these five areas the most important further detailed their opinions regarding which specific legal issues within each general subject area are the most important:

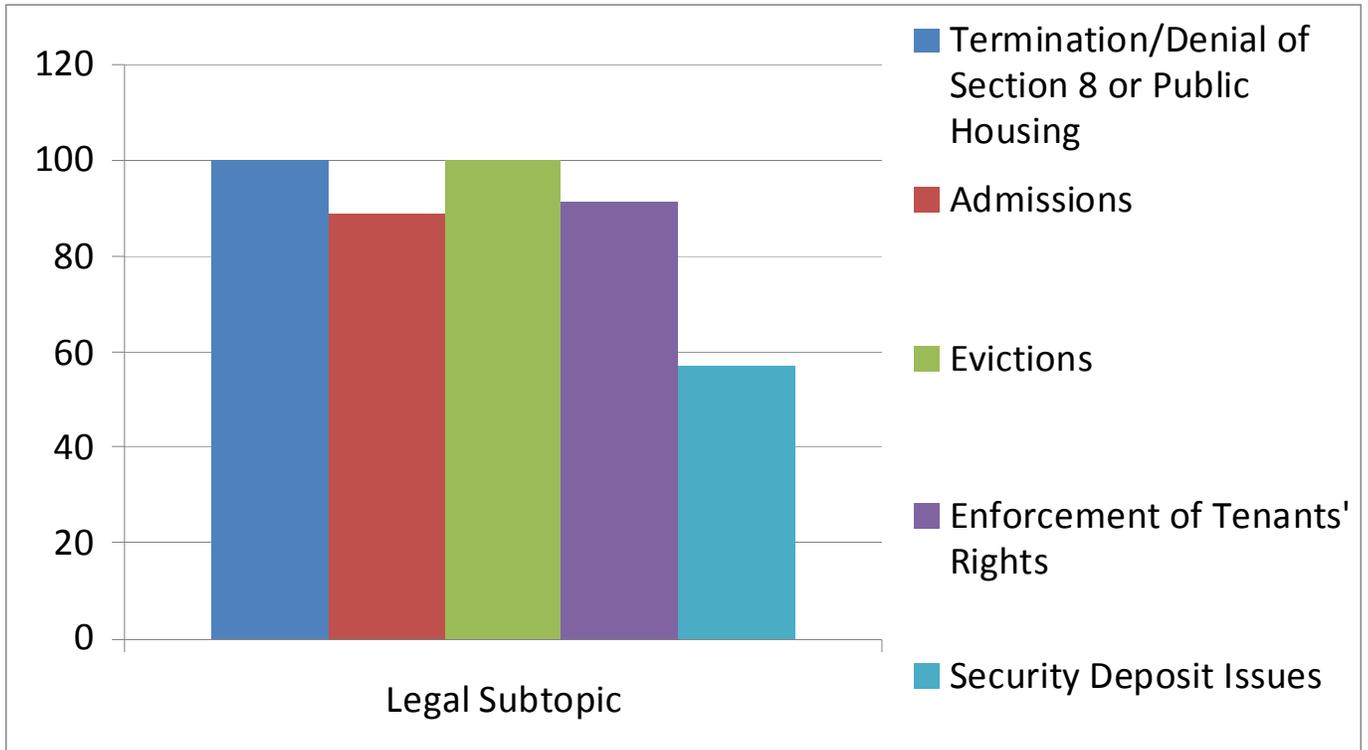
*Disability Benefits
Subtopic Importance*



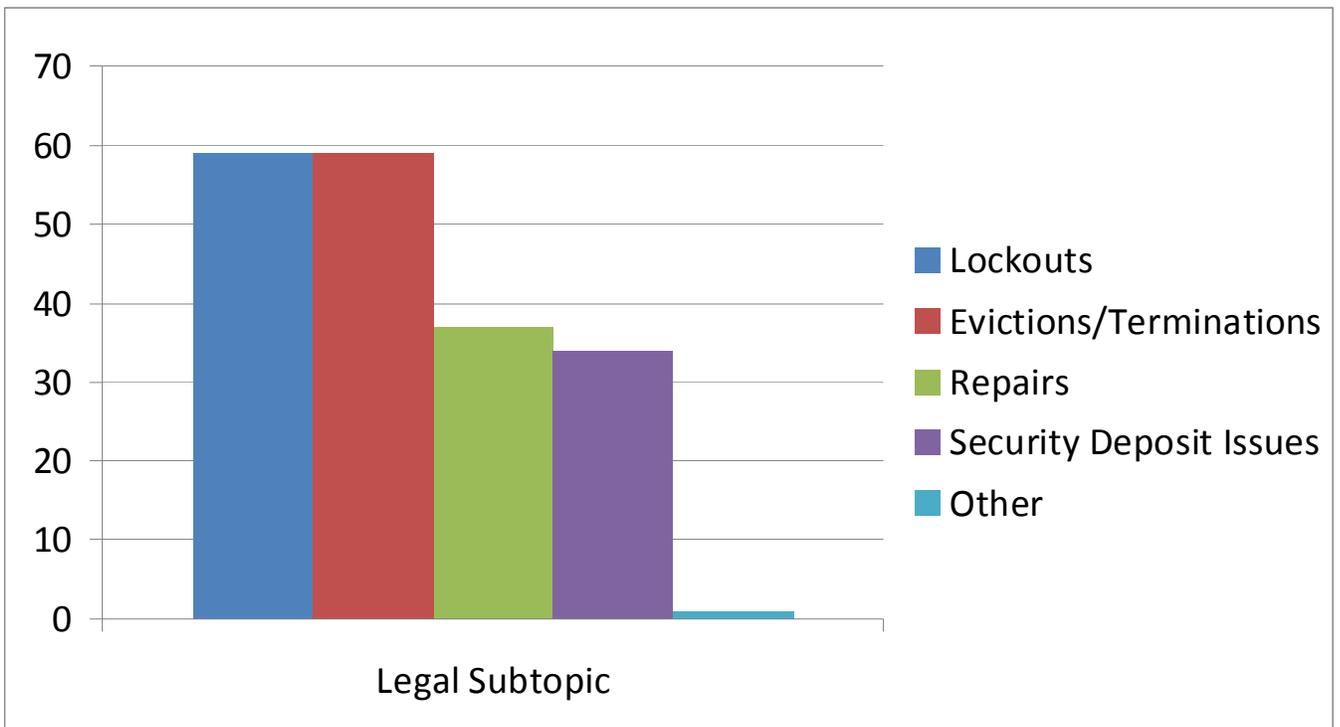
*Family Law Issues Involving Domestic Violence
Subtopic Importance*



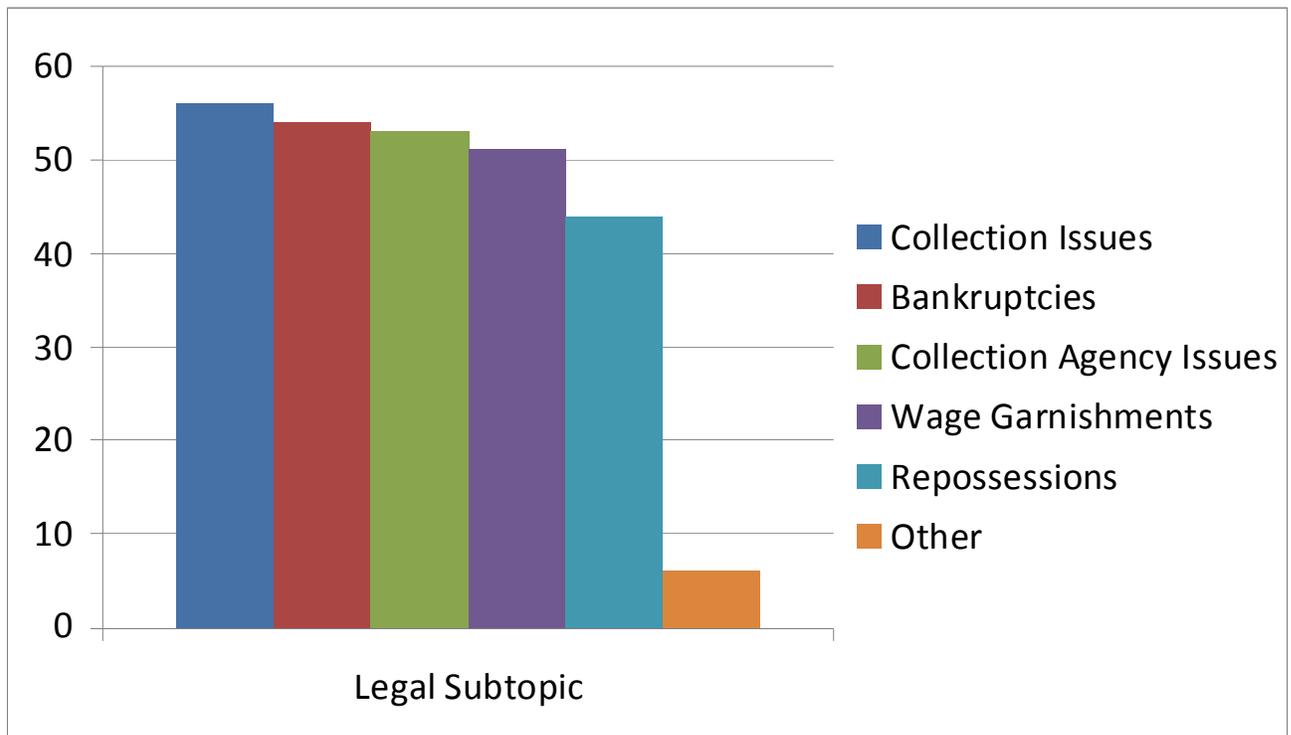
*Public Housing
Subtopic Importance*



*Landlord/Tenant Issues
Subtopic Importance*



*Consumer Issues Involving Debtors
Subtopic Importance*



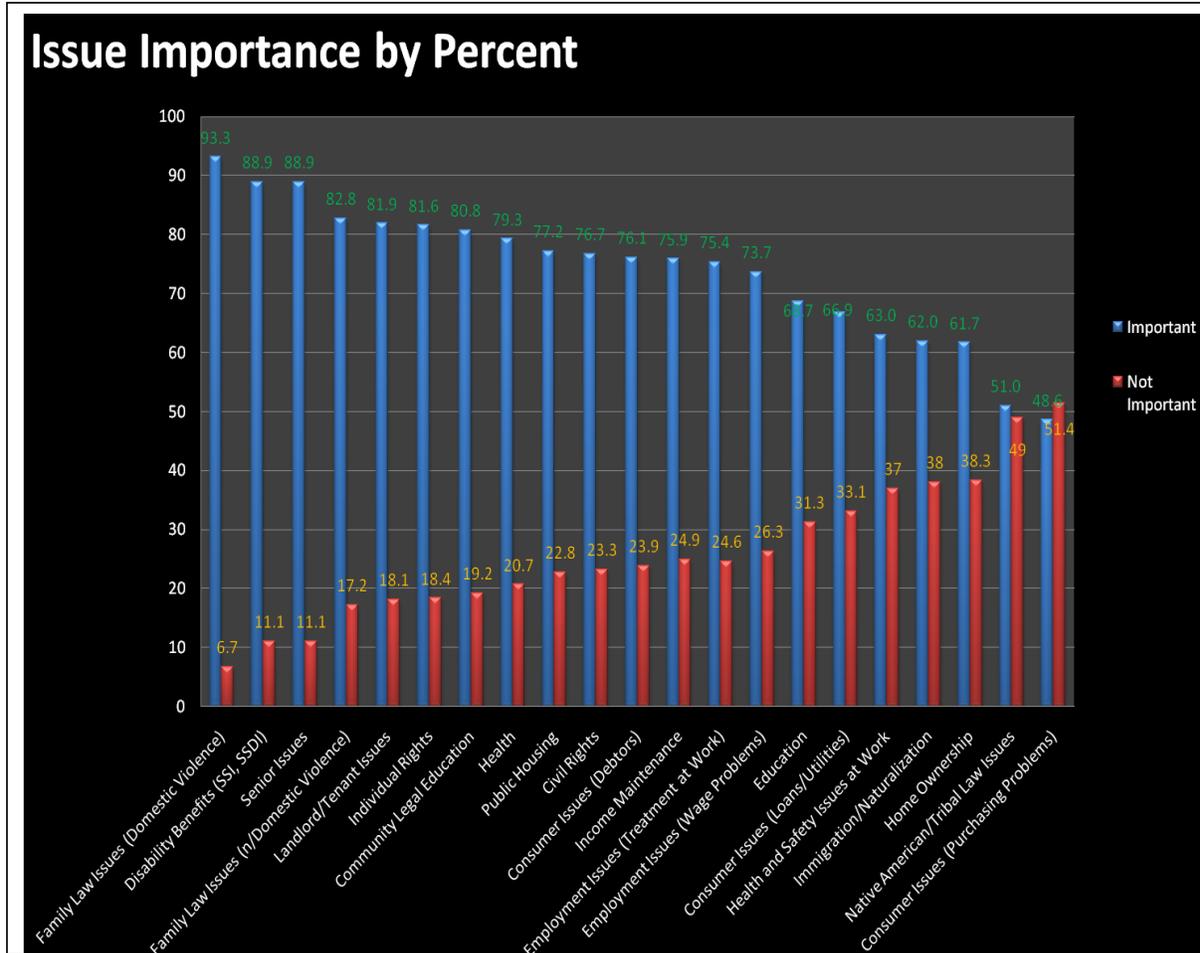
Community Survey Results

The 658 survey respondents from communities throughout the state of Colorado, included staff from social service agencies such as domestic violence agencies, mental health agencies, food banks, and housing authorities, 234 former clients and client-eligible individuals, 123 seniors, 47 judges and judicial officers, and 47 private attorneys who work closely with CLS. These respondents collectively ranked the following five legal subject categories as the most important areas where CLS should focus its resources:

1. Family Law Issues Involving Domestic Violence
2. Disability Benefits
3. Senior Issues (e.g., fraud against the elderly, abuse of the elderly, nursing home issues)
4. Family Law Issues Not Involving Domestic Violence
5. Landlord/Tenant Issues

The bar graph below shows the percentage of survey respondents who rated particular legal subjects as important for CLS to target its resources.

Community Survey Results

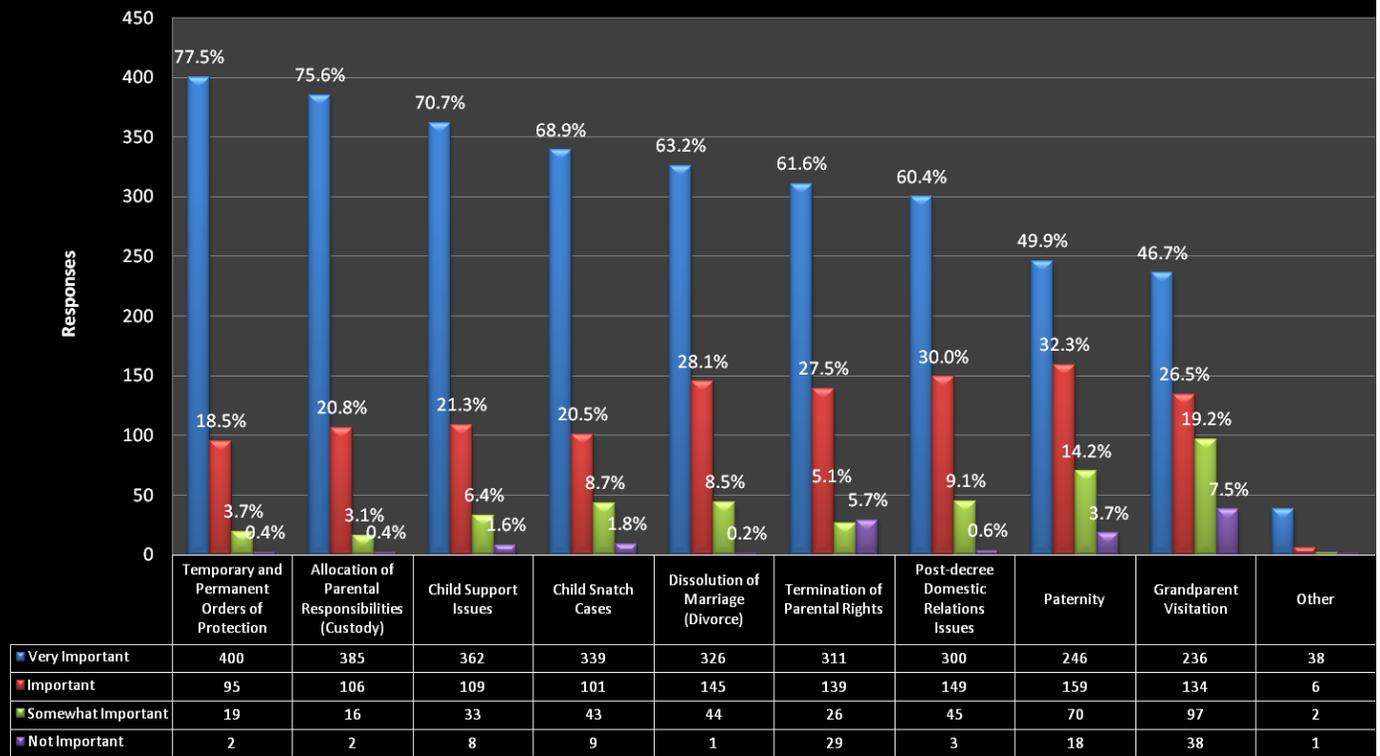


Within each legal subject area that survey respondents designated as “Important,” specific legal issues within each category were then ranked in order of importance. The following graphs reflect the relative importance of the legal issues within the respondents’ five most important areas of law affecting low-income individuals⁵ (the complete survey results can be found in the Appendix to CLS’ Legal Needs Assessment Report).

⁵ For instance, as can be seen in the graph on this page, of those survey respondents who determined that the area of Family Law Issues Involving Domestic Violence was an important area, 77.5% indicated that assisting clients with Temporary and Permanent Orders of Protection was important and 75.6% of respondents stated that helping clients with Allocation of Parental Responsibilities (Custody) cases was important. Child support cases, child snatch cases, divorces, termination of parental rights cases and post-

*Family Law Issues Involving Domestic Violence
Subtopic Importance*

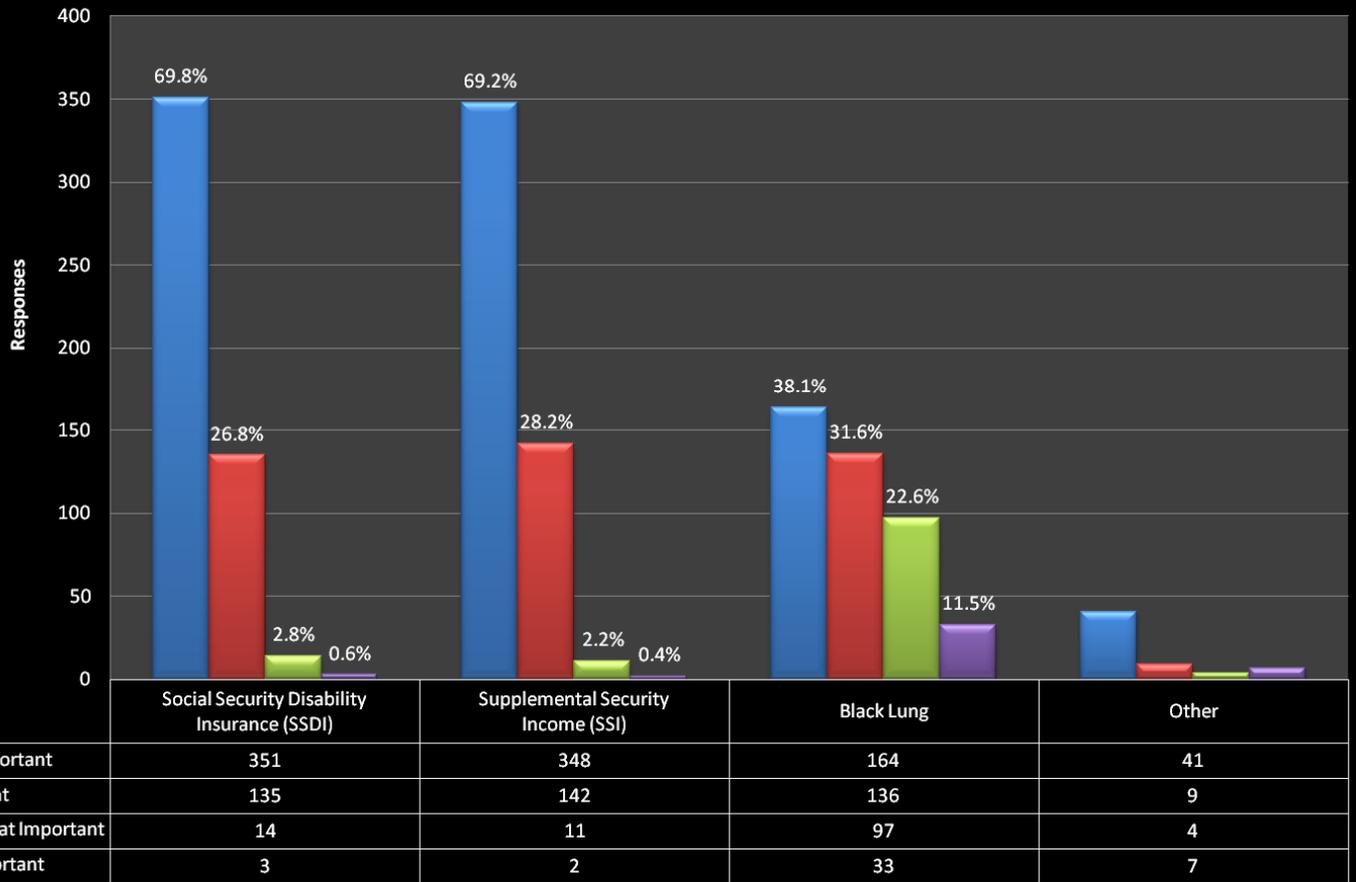
How important is it for CLS to focus on the following areas of Family Law Issues involving Domestic Violence:



decree issues were all rated by over 60% of respondents as important legal issues with respect to which CLS should focus its resources. However, paternity issues and grandparent visitation issues were areas with less than 50% of survey respondents who believed these were important areas where CLS should focus its resources.

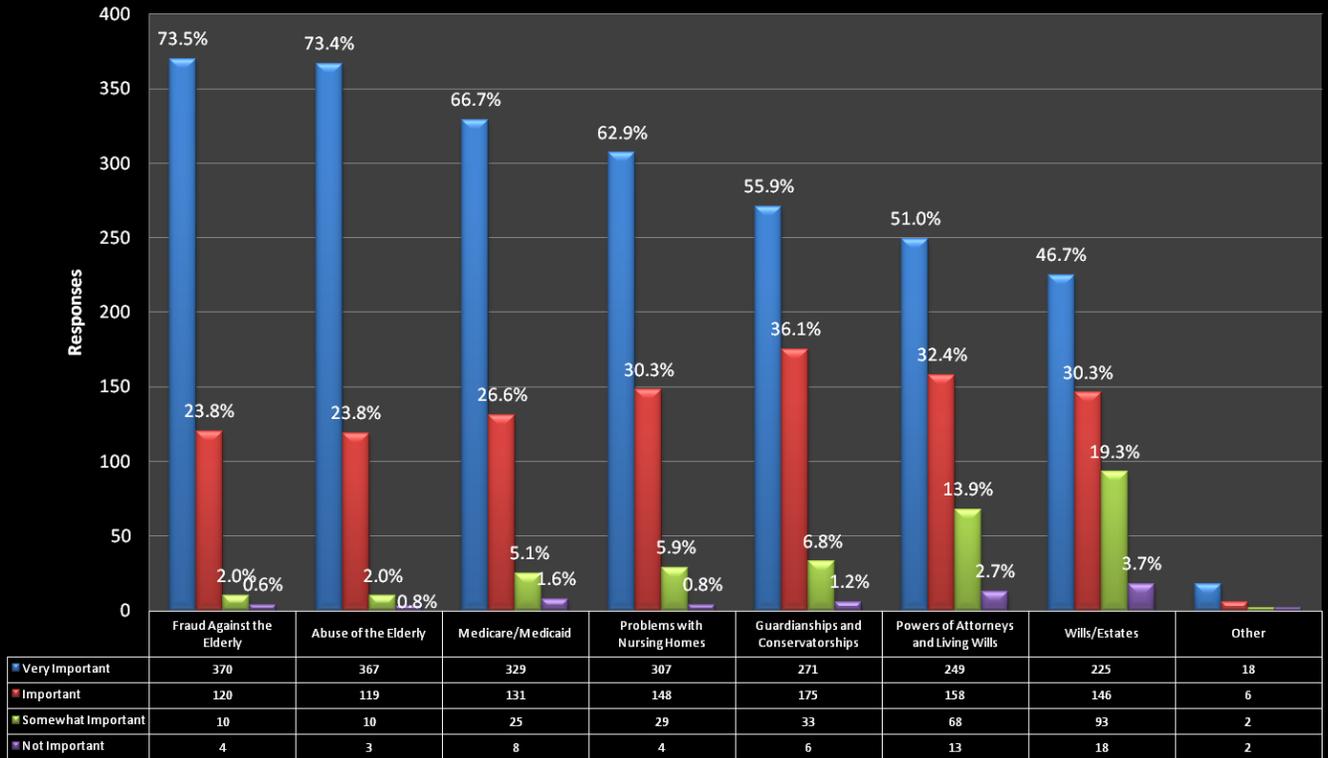
Disability Benefits
Subtopic Importance

How important is it for CLS to focus on the following areas of Disability Benefits:



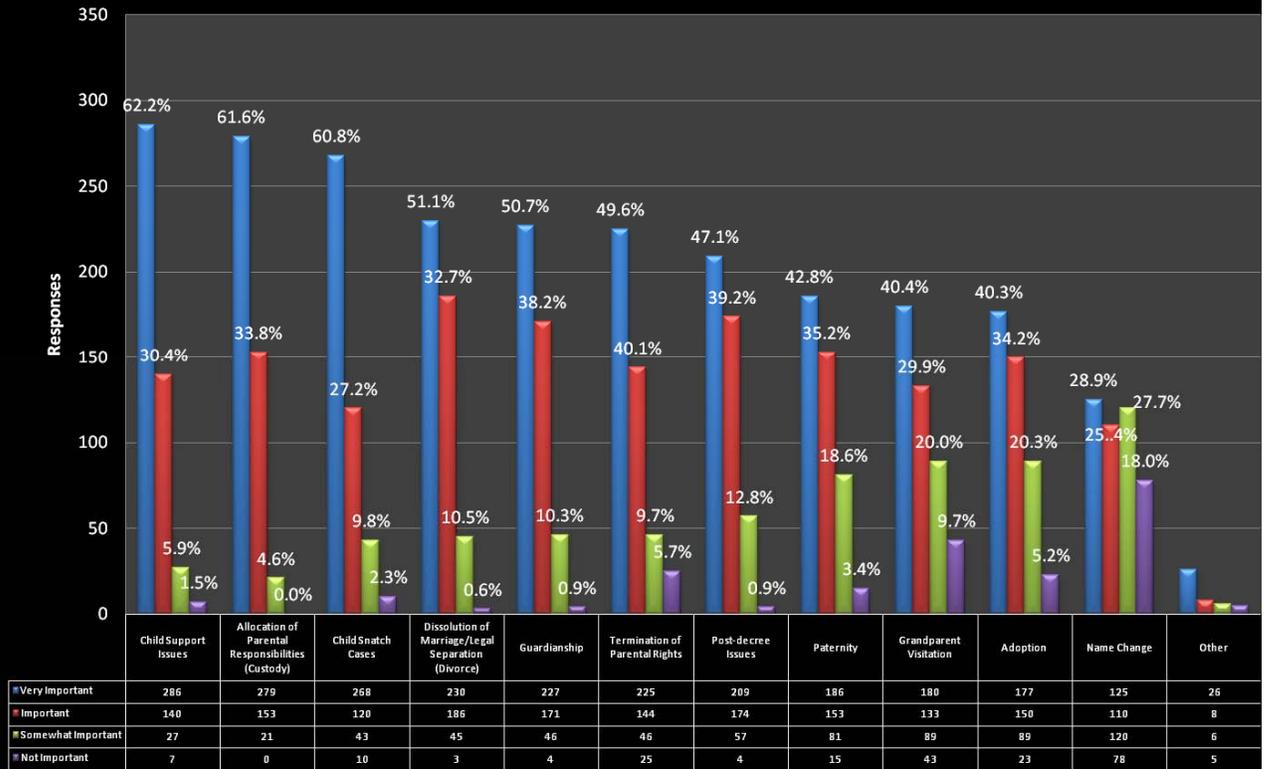
Senior Issues
Subtopic Importance

How important is it for CLS to focus on the following areas of Senior Issues:

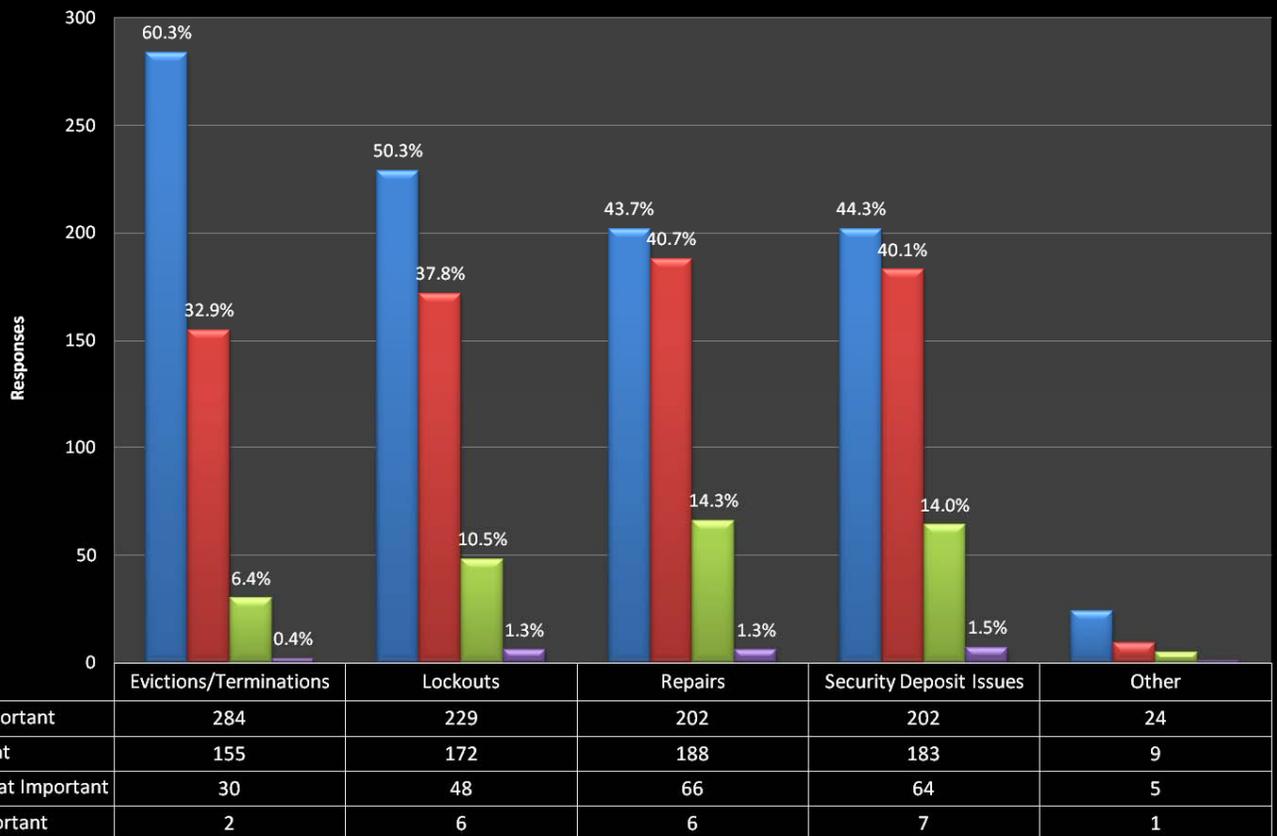


Family Law Issues Not Involving Domestic Violence
Subtopic Importance

How important is it for CLS to focus on the following areas of Family Law (not Domestic Violence):



How important is it for CLS to focus on the following areas of Landlord/Tenant Issues:



C. Survey Responses of Low-Income Individuals

The online survey tool (SurveyMonkey) allowed CLS to filter survey responses by certain groups. CLS was particularly interested in reviewing the survey results of the 234 low-income persons who completed the survey, to obtain their direct viewpoints as members of CLS' client community. CLS enlisted the assistance of three law school students from the University of Denver Sturm College of Law, who reviewed, synthesized, and analyzed the survey responses.

They determined that the three most pressing categories of issues for low-income survey respondents were housing, family law, and employment.

In the area of housing, locating affordable housing and ability to pay rent/mortgage and utilities were major concerns. Fear of eviction or foreclosure and resulting homelessness were primary issues faced by poor individuals and families. In the area of landlord/tenant issues, knowledge of tenants' rights, landlords' failure to maintain properties, and difficulty in recovering security deposits were serious problems.

In the area of family law, respondents outlined a wide range of legal issues, including dissolution of marriage, allocation of parental responsibility (custody), child support, abuse and neglect, and proving common law marriage. However, the most pressing issue cited by low-income survey respondents was legal protection for victims of domestic violence.

Inability to find work or work that provides livable wages were serious concerns for the low-income survey respondents. In addition, overtime pay, benefits, taxes, and discriminatory treatment were also listed as common employment issues.

The narrative comments provided by low-income survey respondents revealed the following types of barriers that prevent some applicants from accessing CLS' services: transportation problems (e.g., inability to afford gas to drive to CLS offices, and the cost and time it takes to use public transportation to access CLS offices); CLS' income and asset ceilings; a lack of awareness of CLS and the types of services it provides and limited resources that prevent CLS staff from providing full service for all clients. Challenges for CLS were also raised in some narrative responses, which cited instances in which applicants felt CLS staff displayed poor listening skills, lacked compassion or were unavailable to assist clients after work hours or on weekends, which is the only time some working clients are able to meet or discuss their legal issues.

Low-income survey respondents provided three main suggestions that would assist CLS in improving its client services: 1) Increase outreach efforts to raise the visibility and awareness

of CLS in the client community; 2) Increase the number of CLS staff and the number of CLS offices so that more eligible applicants can be assisted; 3) Improve staff/client relations so that all applicants for services are treated with respect and compassion, and feel that they are heard when sharing their legal problems.

D. Focus Group Results

The focus group meetings produced insights into the struggles of low-income Coloradans, particularly during a time of extended and extreme economic hardship. Professor Clare Huntington, a member of CLS' Advisory Committee for the Legal Needs Assessment Process, who reviewed the twenty focus group reports, noted the following themes that emerged from the focus group meetings:

1. Nearly every focus group (with the exception of senior citizens) identified income-related issues as their primary concern. For most participants, the problem was simply a lack of sufficient income due to the scarcity of jobs and the low wages paid by the jobs that were available. For most participants, the lack of income did not refer to a specific legal need. For some participants, there were specific issues, such as accessing unemployment compensation benefits or claims of employment discrimination. For migrant workers, low wages were a particular issue, with many noting that they are paid below minimum wage and have no recourse because their employers threaten to hire someone else if they complain.
2. Nearly every group identified housing issues as a dominant concern, including a lack of affordable housing as well as landlord/tenant issues. Many participants noted foreclosure problems, as well.
3. Most groups identified health care as a substantial concern – both the cost (affordability) and the availability of health care. However, there was not a specific legal issue accompanying the concern.
4. Focus groups repeatedly raised concerns about domestic violence. Nearly every group had at least one participant who had been a victim of domestic violence and many groups had a sizeable number of victims. For example, at least five groups had a substantial percentage of domestic violence victims, with 30-50% of the participants reporting incidents of domestic violence.

Professor Huntington also noted that there was a wide range of awareness of CLS by the focus group participants. Some participants, such as the migrant farm workers, were very familiar with CLS, while others had never heard of CLS and were unaware of the types of services CLS provides to the low-income community.

IV. Conclusions

The information gleaned from the legal needs assessment surveys and focus groups has been carefully reviewed by the Advisory Committee, the CLS staff committee and CLS management to determine whether adjustments to CLS' current priorities⁶ should be recommended to the CLS' Board of Directors. The CLS Board is required to consider a number of factors in addition to the results of the program's most recent legal needs assessment. These additional factors include suggested priorities promulgated by LSC, the population of eligible clients in the state, the resources of the program, the susceptibility of particular legal problems to solution through legal processes, and the presence of other legal resources⁷ that may be available to clients so that CLS resources are most wisely used.

The needs assessment results confirm that, to a large degree, CLS is appropriately focusing its limited resources in the legal subject areas that are most pressing for its client communities. For example, one area of law that manifested as a constant priority across every component of the needs assessment process (i.e., CLS staff survey, survey of low-income people, community survey, and focus groups) was legal protections for victims of domestic violence. Providing legal assistance to victims of domestic violence has been a priority for CLS since its inception, and CLS continues to focus the efforts of staff and other supporting resources on giving

⁶ The following are CLS' current priorities as approved by its Board of Directors: Provide Support for Families and Children, Preserve the Home, Maintain and Enhance Economic Stability, Assure Safety, Stability and Health, and Assist Members of Populations with Special Vulnerabilities.

⁷ For example, the Legal Center Serving People with Disabilities and Older People, the Colorado Lawyers Committee, the Colorado Center on Law and Policy, the American Civil Liberties Union, the Student Law Office of the Sturm College of Law at the University of Denver, the Legal Aid and Defender Office of the University of Colorado School of Law, the Indian Law Clinic at the University of Colorado School of Law, the Rocky Mountain Children's Law Center, and a variety of pro bono programs throughout Colorado.

preference to family violence victims and on providing critical legal services to those victims. In 2010, CLS provided direct full representation, legal advice (either in a clinic setting or on an individual basis), legal information or referral to approximately 6,325 victims of domestic violence.

Another area of legal need identified as a priority in every component of the needs assessment process was housing law and in particular, issues related to public housing, landlord-tenant issues, and foreclosure. As with family law issues involving domestic violence, housing law issues have been, are, and no doubt will continue to be a priority for CLS. In 2010, approximately 2,000 low-income individuals and families with housing problems received direct legal representation from CLS casehandlers; this number represents 17% of the total cases closed by CLS in 2010, which reflects an increased percentage of housing-related cases undertaken by CLS staff compared to prior years, and is a direct response to the magnified need for housing-related legal assistance in light of the prolonged economic and housing crises.

Consistent with the themes that emerged from the needs assessment, CLS is also appropriately targeting resources to address legal issues related to obtaining or maintaining disability benefits (e.g., Social Security Disability Insurance and Supplemental Security Income), consumer issues involving debtors (e.g., collection issues and bankruptcy) and issues particularly relevant to seniors (e.g., Medicare/Medicaid issues, powers of attorneys and living wills). With regard to the Community Survey results, which identified fraud and abuse of the elderly as very important legal areas, CLS notes that its casehandlers represent seniors who are the victims of predatory or unscrupulous lending practices or who are victims of improper foreclosure proceedings. However, CLS is also aware of the services provided by other agencies in Colorado that specialize in cases involving fraud and abuse of the elderly, such as the Attorney General's Consumer Protection Unit, the American Association of Retired Persons' (AARP) Elderwatch program, local Area Agencies on Aging, and the Legal Center for People with Disabilities and Older People, and therefore refers older persons who may be victims of

other types of abuse or fraud to one or more of those agencies, so as not to duplicate efforts or services.

While most categories of legal issues that were identified as most important in the needs assessment process are consistent with CLS' current priorities and local case acceptance protocols, the process did reveal possible gaps in CLS' services related to employment, immigration and the need for additional outreach to the financially-eligible client community. These three areas were underscored as very important in the needs assessment process and therefore are the subject of additional scrutiny by CLS staff, management and Board of Directors in order to determine whether additional or enhanced services can be provided in those areas.

In the area of employment law, CLS will look for strategic opportunities to impact job creation. CLS will also consider ways in which local offices may be able to assist clients in accessing unemployment compensation benefits and better address problems that result when an employer improperly withholds benefits or refuses to pay wages that are due or additional wages for overtime. With regard to immigration issues, CLS, as with all legal services agencies funded by LSC, is limited by federal law and regulation to provide services only to citizens or legal non-citizens, unless the applicant for services is a victim of domestic violence or a victim of certain specified crimes, such as sexual assault or human trafficking, in which limited legal representation is permitted. Within these parameters, CLS currently provides a high level of quality services to assist undocumented victims of violence and crime, particularly with applications for U-Visas (petitions by victims of violent crime), T-Visas (petitions by victims of human trafficking) and Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) Self-Petitions (petitions by battered spouses, children or parents of U.S. citizens or Lawful Permanent Residents). However, those legal services are provided primarily to clients residing in the Denver metro area, therefore CLS will allocate resources necessary to ensure that its services are available and accessible to eligible members of the immigrant community throughout the state.

The need for increased and improved general outreach and enhanced access to CLS services was also highlighted in the needs assessment. CLS will implement strategies in those regions of Colorado where there was an identified need for increased outreach efforts to improve CLS' visibility and to enhance community awareness of CLS and the services it provides for low-income individuals and families. CLS will also consider expanded hours of service. In addition, CLS will continue to improve upon the multitude of resources and informational materials that are available on its website, and to undertake efforts to increase awareness of the site and the resources it provides. CLS has also recently begun developing an online intake system that will improve access to CLS services by allowing applicants residing anywhere in the state to file an online application for services at any time, 24 hours per day, 7 days per week.

The needs assessment results will continue to inform regular reviews by CLS management staff and the staff of each local CLS office of the office's protocols for case acceptance. Local office staff will continue to assess whether resources should be redirected to target specific legal issues that were identified as important by survey respondents and focus group participants and that may not be adequately addressed. In addition, legal issues affecting vulnerable and exploited populations will continue to receive on-going scrutiny by CLS in order to determine if resources should be reallocated to focus more directly on areas of law that disproportionately impact those populations, such as seniors, persons with limited English proficiency, persons with disabilities, eligible immigrants, Native Americans, and migrant farm workers.

Therefore, within the framework of CLS' most recent comprehensive assessment of the legal needs of low-income Coloradoans and with full recognition of CLS' limited resources, CLS continues to review and adjust, as necessary, the program's goals and objectives as well as its

strategies to achieve them, in order to fulfill its mission to provide high quality civil legal services in the pursuit of justice for as many low-income persons and members of vulnerable populations throughout Colorado as possible.

Report on Legal Needs Assessment

Appendix

Table of Contents

Appendix A	Survey Instrument
Appendix B	Survey Results and Analysis
Appendix C	Summary of Focus Groups
Appendix D	Focus Group Reports
	1. Alamosa County
	2. Boulder County
	3. Denver County Detail out Denver County
	4. El Paso County Residents
	5. Gilpin County
	6. La Plata Archuleta & Montezuma Counties (Native Americans and Ute Mountain Ute Reservations)
	7. Larimer County
	8. Las Animas County (including migrant workers)
	9. Mesa County homeless
	10. Mesa County (including migrant workers)
	11. Montrose County
	12. Morgan County
	13. Otero County (including Spanish speakers)
	14. Pueblo County (including Spanish speakers)
	15. Pueblo County residents

16. Summit County (including Senior Citizens)

Appendix A: Survey Instrument

Legal Needs Assessment Survey - Colorado Legal Services - Community

Legal Needs Survey - Colorado Legal Services

The purpose of this survey is to determine the most pressing current and evolving legal needs of Colorado Legal Services' (CLS) low-income client community, so that CLS may appropriately focus its limited resources to meet those needs. You will be asked to rate, in levels of importance, both broad categories of law and subcategories of legal issues that are associated with each broad category. To help inform your choices, the following are the broad categories of law that will be listed in the survey: Civil Rights, Community Legal Education, Consumer, Disability Benefits, Education, Employment, Family, Health, Home Ownership, Immigration, Income Maintenance, Individual Rights, Landlord/Tenant, Native American, Public Housing and Senior Issues. Thank you for your time and assistance with this important survey.

1. How important is it for CLS to focus its resources in the area of Civil Rights?

	Very Important	Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important
Civil Rights	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

2. If you checked Very Important or Important in 1., how important is it for CLS to focus on the following areas of Civil Rights:

	Very Important	Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important
Discrimination by Government Officials	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Government Officials Detaining People without Cause	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Lack of Qualified Interpreters in the Courts, Welfare Offices, Police Stations	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

(Please define Other)

3. How important is it for CLS to focus its resources in the area of Community Legal Education?

	Very Important	Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important
Community Legal Education	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Legal Needs Assessment Survey - Colorado Legal Services - Community

4. If you checked Very Important or Important in 3., how important is it for CLS to focus on the following areas of Community Legal Education:

	Very Important	Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important
Information re: Consumer Issues	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Information re: Eligibility for Public Assistance Benefits	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Information re: Name Change	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Information re: Pro Se Filing in Family Cases	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Information re: Tenants' Rights	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Information re: Wills, Living Wills, Durable Powers of Attorney	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

(Please define Other)

5. How important is it for CLS to focus its resources in the area of Consumer Issues involving Debtors?

	Very Important	Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important
Consumer Issues involving Debtors	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

6. If you checked Very Important or Important in 5., how important is it for CLS to focus on the following areas of Consumer Issues involving Debtors:

	Very Important	Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important
Collection Issues	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Collection Agency Abuses	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Wage Garnishments	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Repossessions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Bankruptcies	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

(Please define Other)

7. How important is it for CLS to focus its resources in the area of Consumer Issues involving Loans and Utilities?

	Very Important	Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important
Consumer Issues involving Loans and Utilities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Legal Needs Assessment Survey - Colorado Legal Services - Community

8. If you checked Very Important or Important in 7., how important is it for CLS to focus on the following areas of Consumer Issues involving Loans and Utilities:

	Very Important	Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important
Loans/Installment Purchases	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Public Utilities (Deposits; Reconnections; Shut-offs)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

(Please define Other)

9. How important is it for CLS to focus its resources in the area of Consumer Issues involving Purchasing Problems?

	Very Important	Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important
Consumer Issues involving Purchasing Problems	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

10. If you checked Very Important or Important in 9., how important is it for CLS to focus on the following areas of Consumer Issues involving Purchasing Problems:

	Very Important	Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important
Problems with Faulty Merchandise or Dishonest Seller Practices	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Contracts/Warranties	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Problems with Repairs	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

(Please define Other)

11. How important is it for CLS to focus its resources in the area of Disability Benefits (SSI, SSDI)?

	Very Important	Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important
Disability Benefits (SSI, SSDI)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Legal Needs Assessment Survey - Colorado Legal Services - Community

12. If you checked Very Important or Important in 11., how important is it for CLS to focus on the following areas of Disability Benefits:

	Very Important	Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important
Supplemental Security Income (SSI)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Black Lung	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

(Please define Other)

13. How important is it for CLS to focus its resources in the area of Education?

	Very Important	Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important
Education	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

14. If you checked Very Important or Important in 13., how important is it for CLS to focus on the following areas of Education:

	Very Important	Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important
Special Education Issues	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Assistance and Representation in Due Process Hearings	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Discrimination Issues	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

(Please explain Other)

15. How important is it for CLS to focus its resources in the area of Employment Issues involving Treatment at Work?

	Very Important	Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important
Employment Issues involving Treatment at Work	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Legal Needs Assessment Survey - Colorado Legal Services - Community

16. If you checked Very Important or Important in 15., how important is it for CLS to focus on the following areas of Employment Issues involving Treatment at Work:

	Very Important	Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important
Retaliation (for applying for worker's comp or unemployment comp, for making a health or safety complaint, for asking for better wages or working conditions)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Sexual Harassment	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Discrimination Complaints	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Unscrupulous Farm Labor Contractors	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

(Please explain Other)

17. How important is it for CLS to focus its resources in the area of Employment Issues involving Wage Problems?

	Very Important	Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important
Employment Issues involving Wage Problems	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

18. If you checked Very Important or Important in 17., how important is it for CLS to focus on the following areas of Employment Issues involving Wage Problems?

	Very Important	Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important
Issues with Employers Paying Less than Minimum Wage or Less than Promised Wage	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Bonuses that are not Paid	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Unauthorized Deductions from Wages	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Working Conditions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

(Please explain Other)

19. How important is it for CLS to focus its resources in the area of Family Law Issues involving Domestic Violence?

	Very Important	Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important
Family Law Issues involving Domestic Violence	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Legal Needs Assessment Survey - Colorado Legal Services - Community

20. If you checked Very Important or Important in 19., how important is it for CLS to focus on the following areas of Family Law Issues involving Domestic Violence?

	Very Important	Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important
Dissolution of Marriage (Divorce)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Allocation of Parental Responsibilities (Custody)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Post-decree Domestic Relations Issues	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Child Support Issues	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Temporary and Permanent Orders of Protection	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Termination of Parental Rights	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Child Snatch Cases	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Grandparent Visitation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Paternity	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

(Please explain Other)

21. How important is it for CLS to focus its resources in the area of Family Law Issues not involving Domestic Violence?

	Very Important	Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important
Family Law Issues not involving Domestic Violence	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Legal Needs Assessment Survey - Colorado Legal Services - Community

22. If you checked Very Important or Important in 21., how important is it for CLS to focus on the following areas of Family Law Issues not involving Domestic Violence:

	Very Important	Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important
Dissolution of Marriage/Legal Separation (Divorce)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Allocation of Parental Responsibilities (Custody)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Child Support Issues	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Post-decree Issues	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Guardianship	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Adoption	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Paternity	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Name Change	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Termination of Parental Rights	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Child Snatch Cases	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Grandparent Visitation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

(Please explain Other)

23. How important is it for CLS to focus its resources in the area of Health?

	Very Important	Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important
Health	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

24. If you checked Very Important or Important in 23., how important is it for CLS to focus on the following areas of Health:

	Very Important	Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important
Access to Hospital and Emergency Care	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Home and Community Based services (HCBS)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Medicaid	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Medicaid Nursing Home Benefits	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Medicare	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

(Please explain Other)

Legal Needs Assessment Survey - Colorado Legal Services - Community

25. How important is it for CLS to focus its resources in the area of Health and Safety Issues at Work?

	Very Important	Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important
Health and Safety Issues at Work	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

26. If you checked Very Important or Important in 25., how important is it for CLS to focus on the following areas of Health and Safety Issues at Work:

	Very Important	Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important
Exposure to Pesticides	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Lack of Adequate Bathrooms	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Lack of Water or Hand-Washing Facilities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Presence of Hazards	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

(Please explain Other)

27. How important is it for CLS to focus its resources in the area of Home Ownership?

	Very Important	Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important
Home Ownership	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

28. If you checked Very Important or Important in 27., how important is it for CLS to focus on the following areas of Home Ownership:

	Very Important	Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important
Home Repair Issues	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Foreclosures	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Predatory Mortgage Lending	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Mobile Home Issues	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

(Please explain Other)

29. How important is it for CLS to focus its resources in the area of Immigration/Naturalization?

	Very Important	Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important
Immigration/Naturalization	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Legal Needs Assessment Survey - Colorado Legal Services - Community

30. If you checked Very Important or Important in 29., how important is it for CLS to focus on the following areas of Immigration/Naturalization:

	Very Important	Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important
Assistance with Applications	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Representation at Immigration Court Hearings	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Other (please explain)

31. How important is it for CLS to focus its resources in the area of Income Maintenance?

	Very Important	Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important
Income Maintenance	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

32. If you checked Very Important or Important in 31., how important is it for CLS to focus on the following areas of Income Maintenance:

	Very Important	Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important
Temporary Assistance to Needy Family (TANF)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Food Stamps	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Women, Infant, Children's Benefits (WIC)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Unemployment Compensation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Old Age Pension (OAP)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Aid to the Needy and Disabled (AND)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Low-Income Energy Assistance Program (LEAP)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

(Please explain Other)

33. How important is it for CLS to focus its resources in the area of Individual Rights?

	Very Important	Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important
Individual Rights	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Legal Needs Assessment Survey - Colorado Legal Services - Community

34. If you checked Very Important or Important in 33., how important is it for CLS to focus on the following areas of Individual Rights:

	Very Important	Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important
Rights of Persons with Physical or Mental Disabilities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Guardianship Issues	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Americans with Disabilities Act Issues	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

(Please explain Other)

35. How important is it for CLS to focus its resources in the area of Landlord/Tenant Issues?

	Very Important	Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important
Landlord/Tenant Issues	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

36. If you checked Very Important or Important in 35., how important is it for CLS to focus on the following areas of Landlord/Tenant Issues:

	Very Important	Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important
Lockouts	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Repairs	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Evictions/Terminations	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Security Deposit Issues	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

(Please explain Other)

37. How important is it for CLS to focus its resources in the area of Native American/Tribal Law Issues?

	Very Important	Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important
Native American/Tribal Law Issues	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Legal Needs Assessment Survey - Colorado Legal Services - Community

38. If you checked Very Important or Important in 37., how important is it for CLS to focus on the following areas of Native American/Tribal Law Issues:

	Very Important	Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important
Indian Civil Rights Act	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Enforcement of Native American and/or Tribal Law	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Bureau of Indian Affairs Probates	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

(Please explain Other)

39. How important is it for CLS to focus its resources in the area of Public Housing?

	Very Important	Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important
Public Housing	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

40. If you checked Very Important or Important in 39., how important is it for CLS to focus on the following areas of Public Housing:

	Very Important	Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important
Termination/Denial of Section 8 or Public Housing	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Admissions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Evictions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Enforcement of Tenants' Rights	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Security Deposit Issues	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

(Please explain Other)

41. How important is it for CLS to focus its resources in the area of Senior Issues?

	Very Important	Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important
Senior Issues	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Legal Needs Assessment Survey - Colorado Legal Services - Community

42. If you checked Very Important or Important in 41., how important is it for CLS to focus on the following areas of Senior Issues:

	Very Important	Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important
Abuse of the Elderly	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Fraud Against the Elderly	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Guardianships and Conservatorships	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Problems with Nursing Homes	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Wills/Estates	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Powers of Attorneys and Living Wills	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Medicare/Medicaid	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

(Please explain Other)

43. What are the three most pressing legal issues confronting poor people that you encounter in your work?

One

Two

Three

44. Are there any other areas of law in which you think CLS should focus its resources but that are not listed above? Please explain your comments.

45. Please identify any barriers you believe exist which prevent low-income persons from accessing the services of Colorado Legal Services.

46. Please identify technological tools that you believe would assist Colorado Legal Services in achieving its mission.

47. Which of the following best describes you or where you work?

- Attorney
- Judge
- Low-income Individual
- Senior Over 60
- Domestic Violence Agency
- Senior Citizens Agency
- Health Services Agency
- Housing Agency
- Public Librarian
- Mental Health Services Agency
- County Dept. of Social or Human Services
- Other Community Services Agency

Other (please specify)

48. If you are an attorney, judge or public librarian, in what counties do you work?

49. If you are a low-income individual or a Senior, in which Colorado county or city do you live?

50. If you are an agency representative, what counties are served by your agency?

51. If you are an agency representative, please describe the types of services your agency provides.

Legal Needs Assessment Survey - Colorado Legal Services - Community

52. What is Colorado Legal Services doing well that it should continue to do?

53. What is Colorado Legal Services not doing well that it should improve upon?

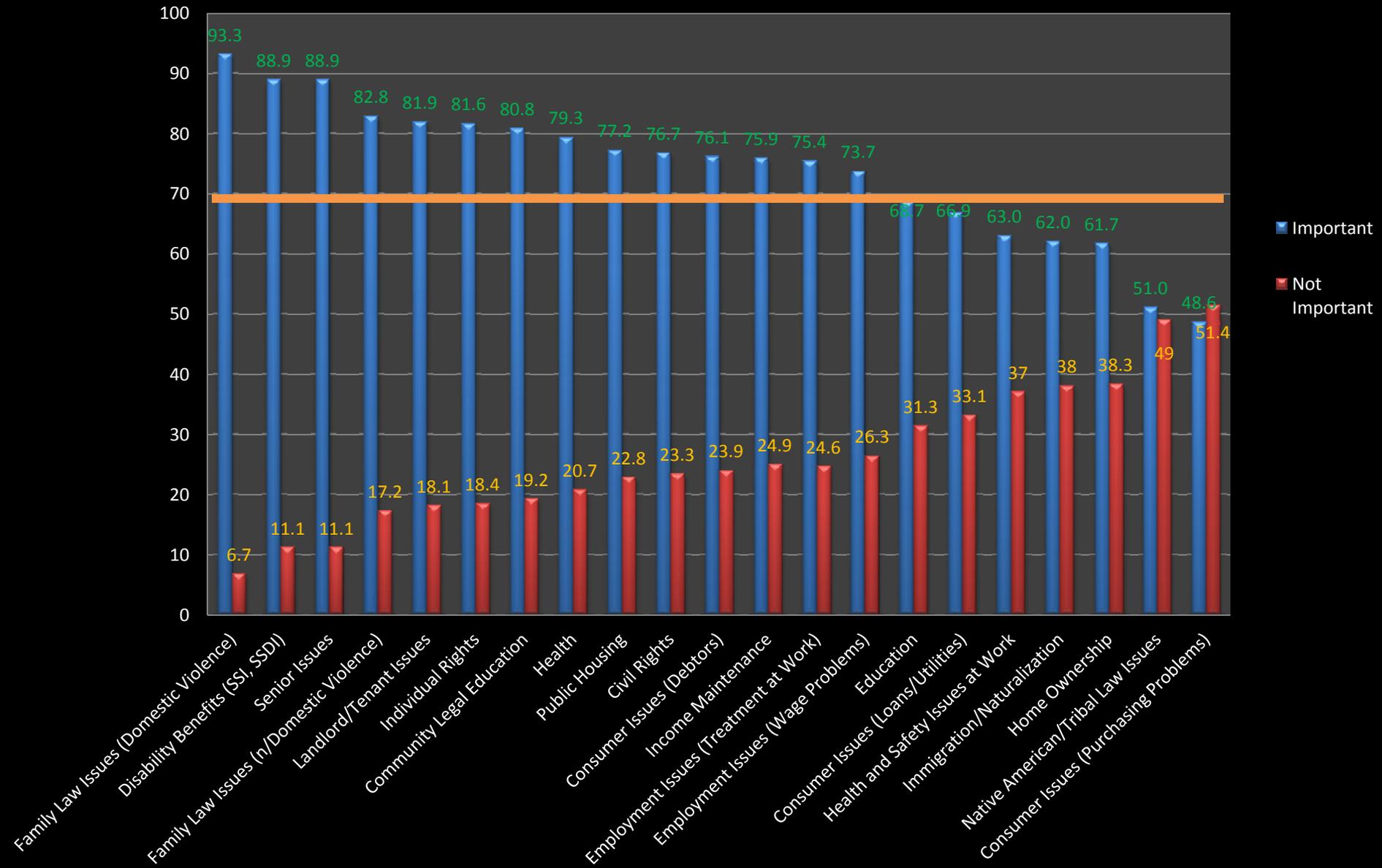
54. Please provide other suggestions that would help Colorado Legal Services improve its client services.

Thank You for your Assistance!

If you do not understand this survey, or have questions regarding it please contact your local CLS office, or Molly Ryan (719.395.0506), or Reenie Terjak (970.493.2891, ext. 220), Co-Directors of Administration and Access for CLS.

Appendix B: Survey Results and Analysis

Issue Importance by Percent



Most Important Issues



Family Law Issues (Domestic Violence) 93.3%



Disability Benefits (SSI, SSDI) 88.9%



Senior Issues 88.9%



Family Law Issues (Not Domestic Violence) 82.8%



Landlord/Tenant Issues 81.9%

Least Important Issues



Consumer Issues (Purchasing Problems) 48.6%



Native American/Tribal Law Issues 51.0%



Home Ownership 61.7%



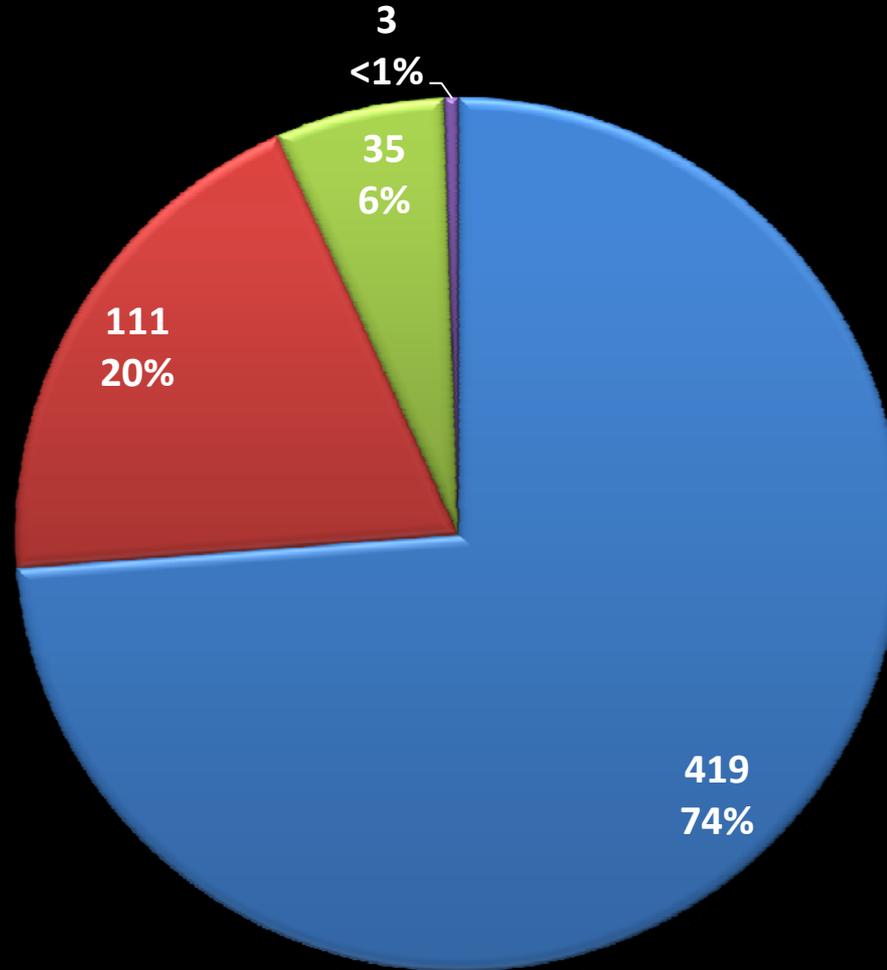
Immigration/Naturalization 62.0%



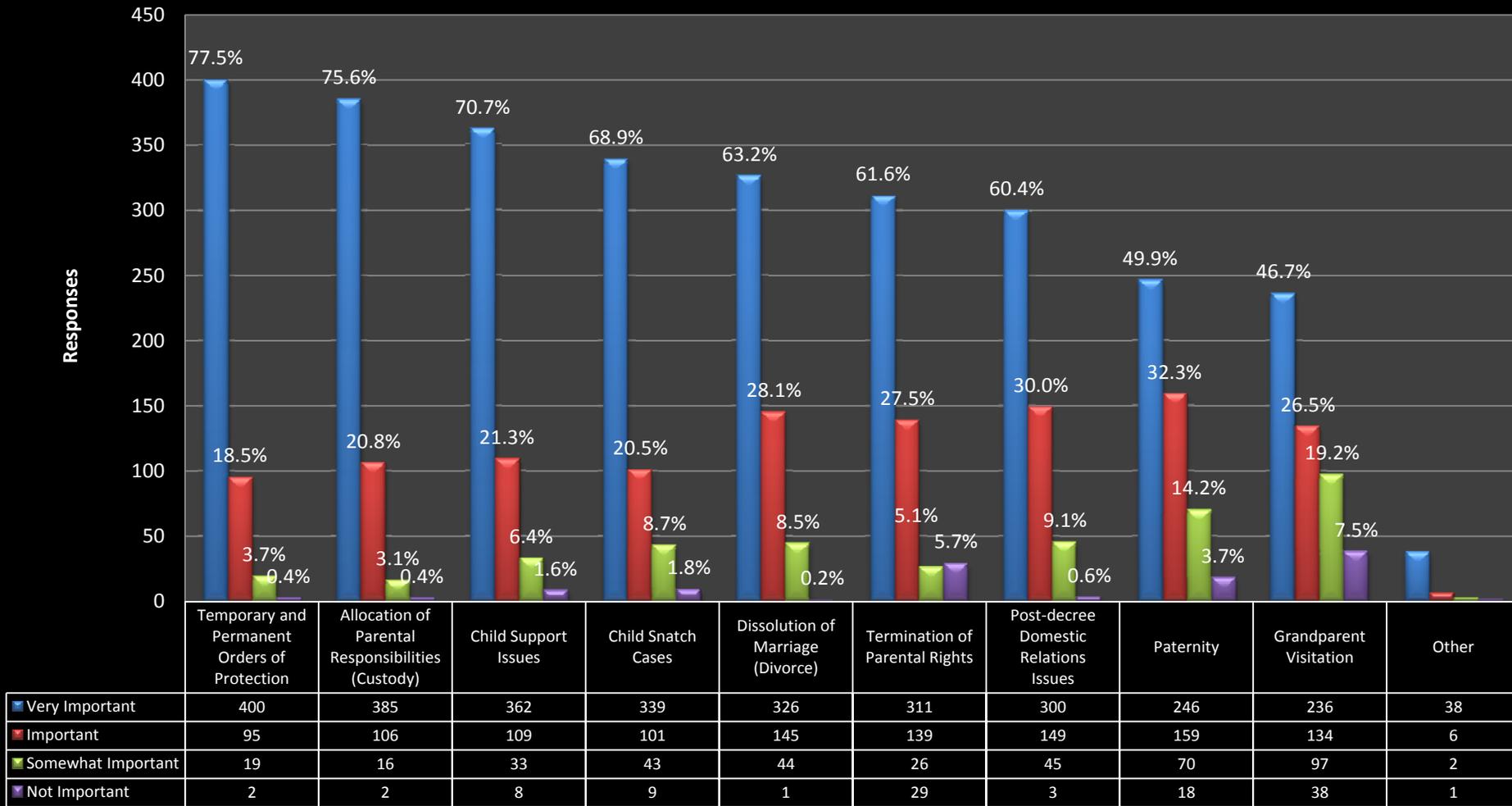
Health and Safety Issues At Work 63.0%

How important is it for CLS to focus its resources in the area of Family Law (Domestic Violence)?

Very Important Important Somewhat Important Not Important

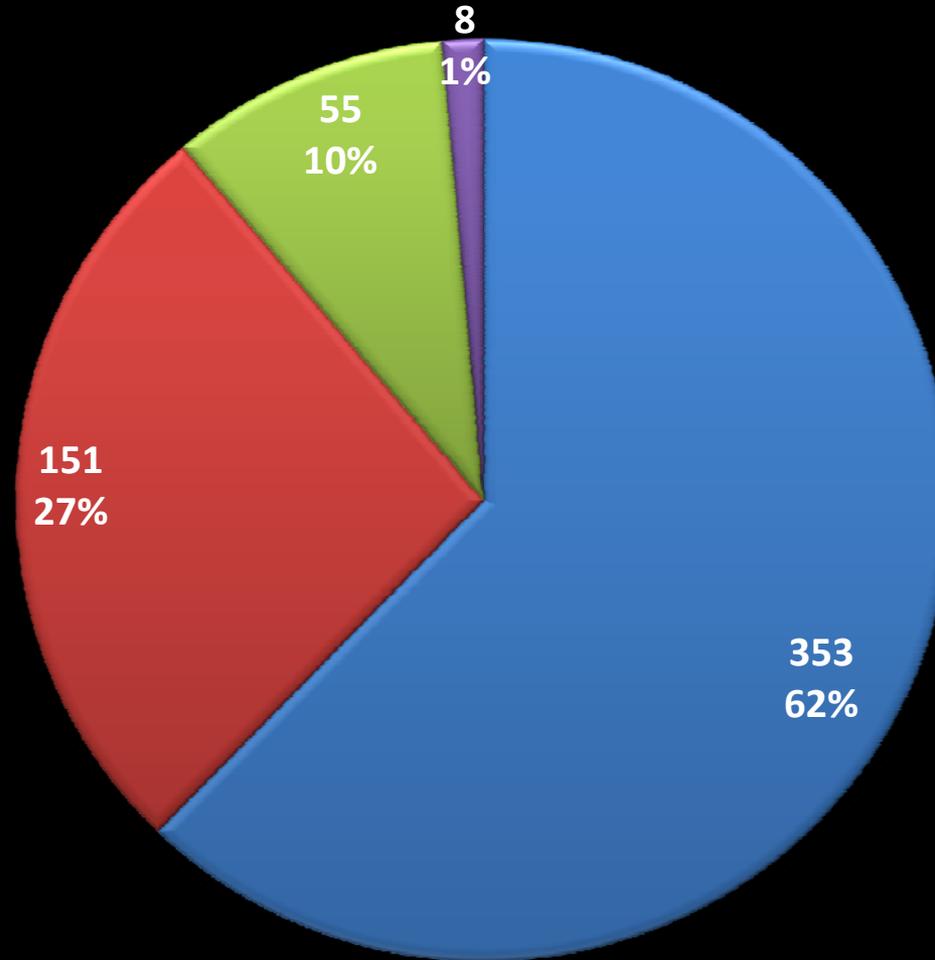


How important is it for CLS to focus on the following areas of Family Law Issues involving Domestic Violence:

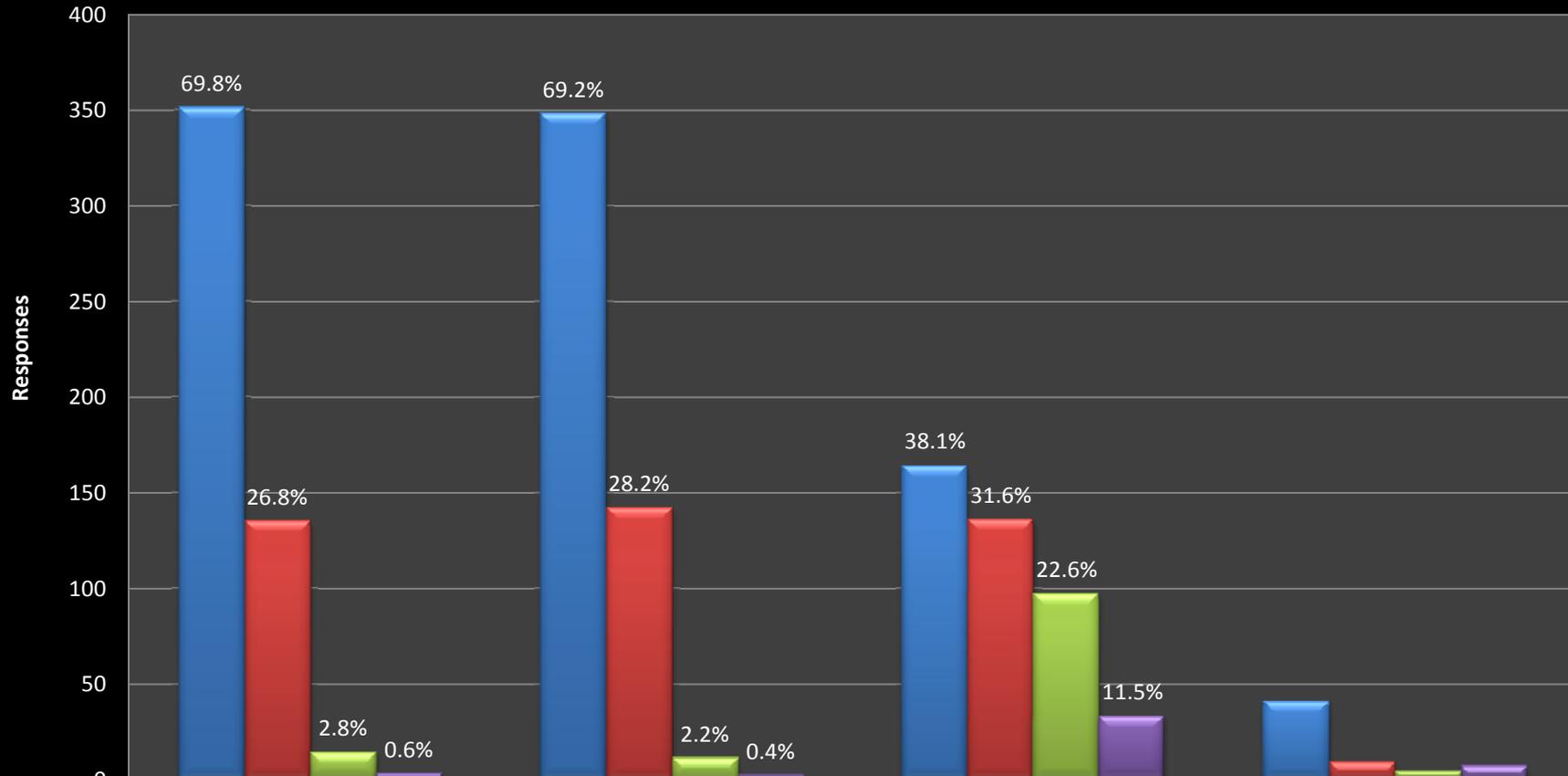


How important is it for CLS to focus its resources in the area of Disability Benefits (SSI, SSDI)?

■ Very Important ■ Important ■ Somewhat Important ■ Not Important



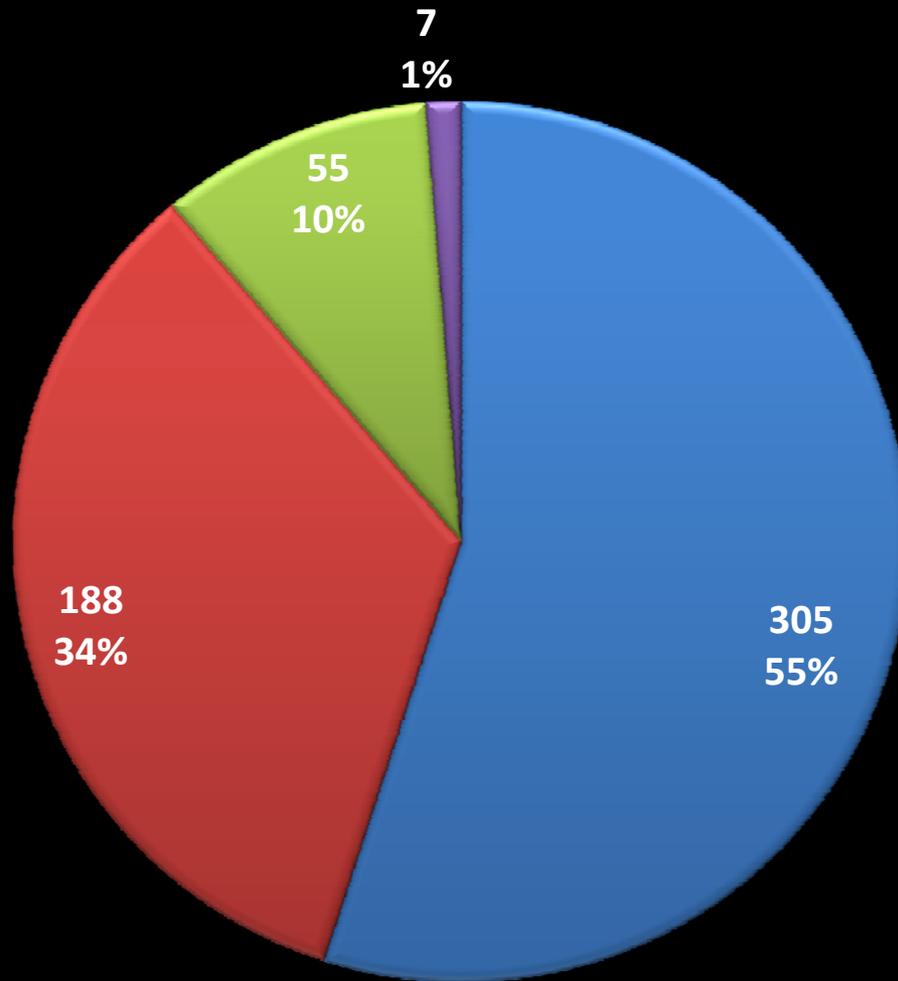
How important is it for CLS to focus on the following areas of Disability Benefits:



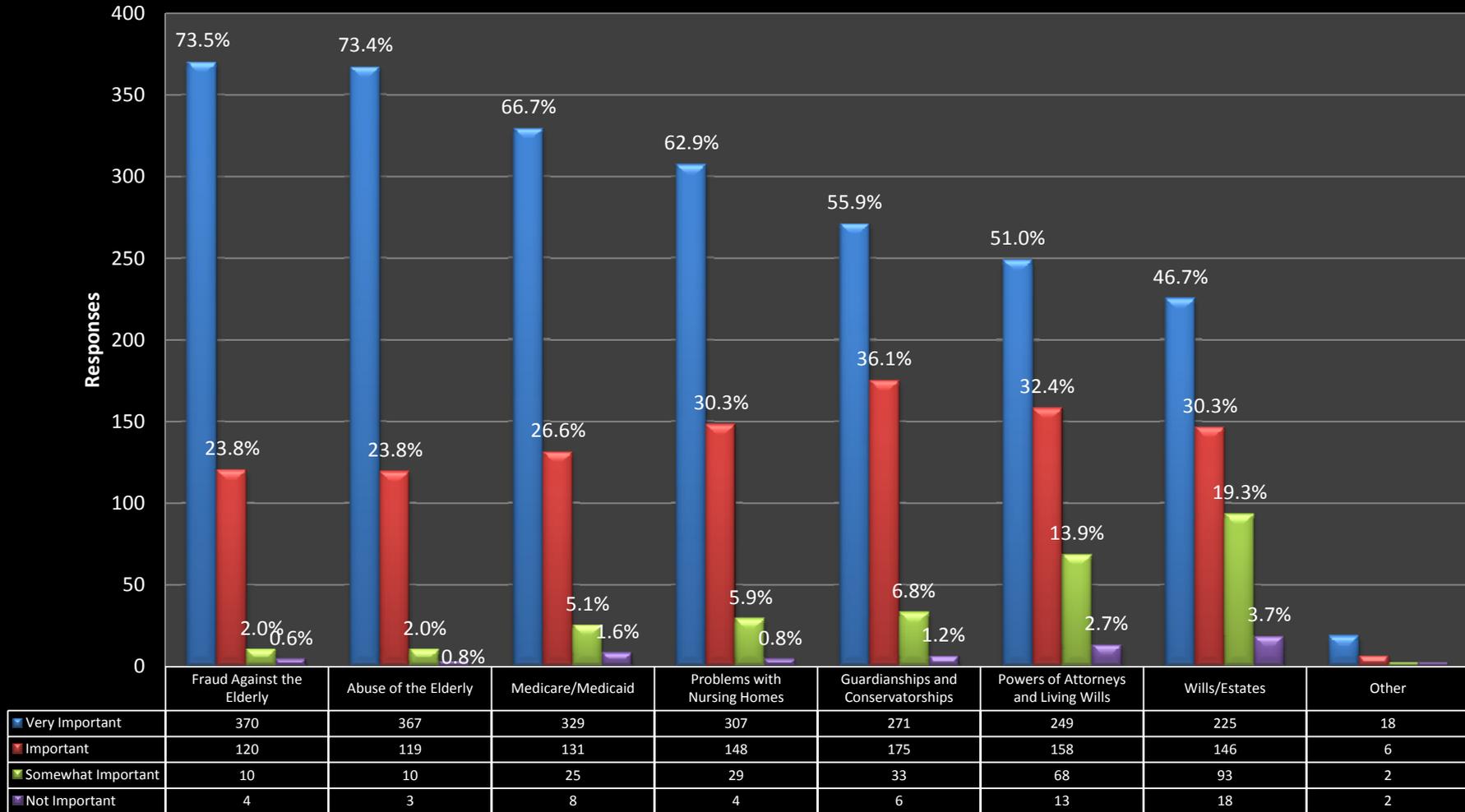
	Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI)	Supplemental Security Income (SSI)	Black Lung	Other
Very Important	351	348	164	41
Important	135	142	136	9
Somewhat Important	14	11	97	4
Not Important	3	2	33	7

How important is it for CLS to focus its resources in the area of Senior Issues?

Very Important Important Somewhat Important Not Important

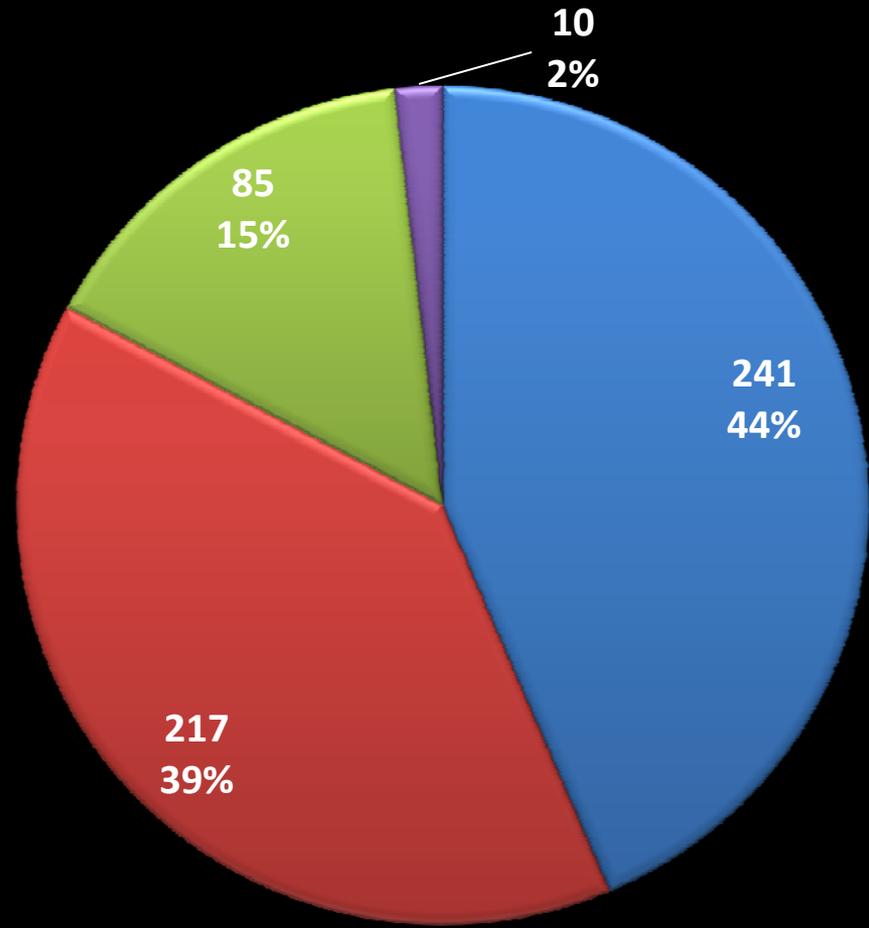


How important is it for CLS to focus on the following areas of Senior Issues:

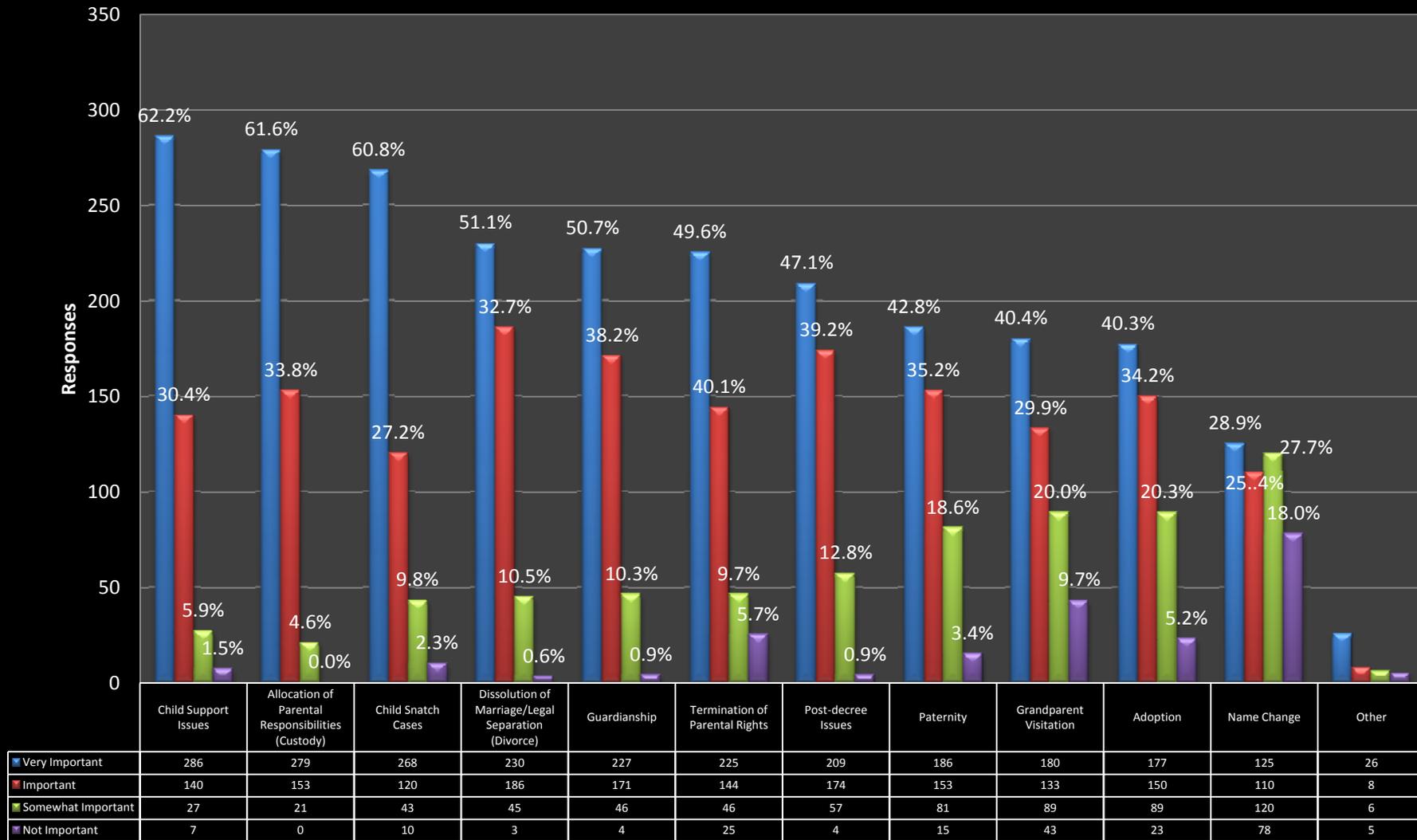


How important is it for CLS to focus its resources in the area of Family Law (not Domestic Violence)?

Very Important Important Somewhat Important Not Important

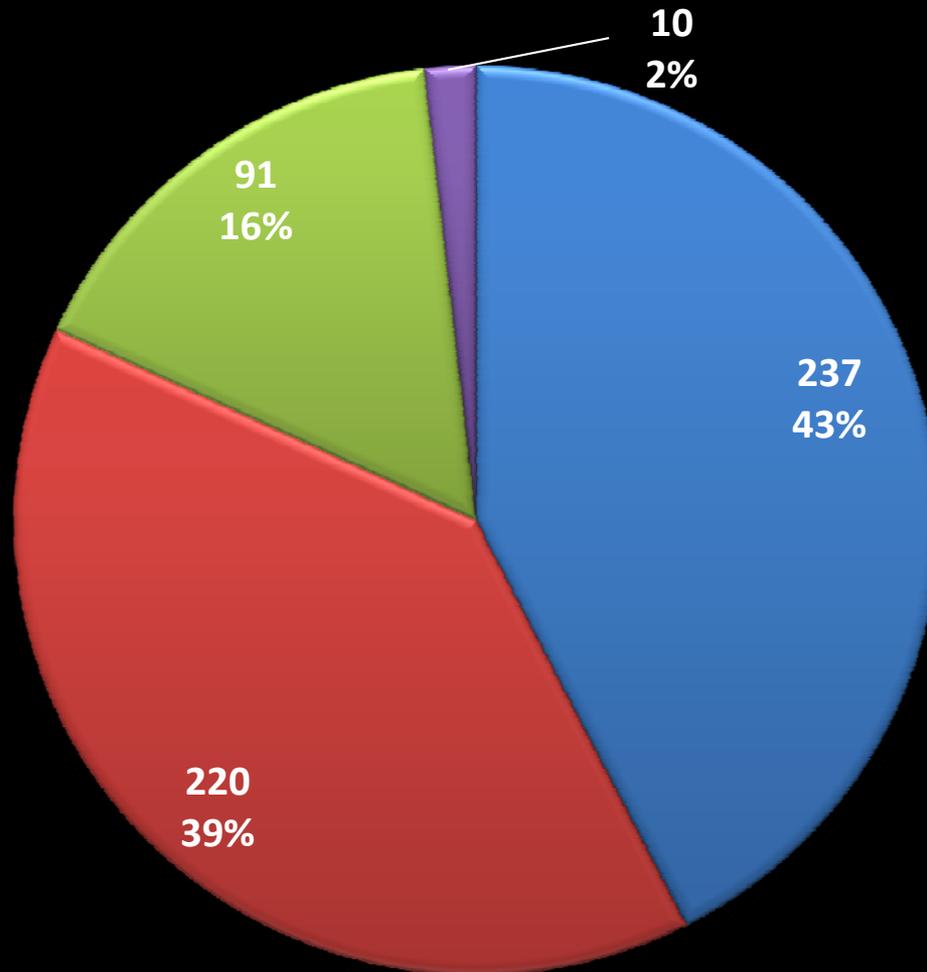


How important is it for CLS to focus on the following areas of Family Law (not Domestic Violence):

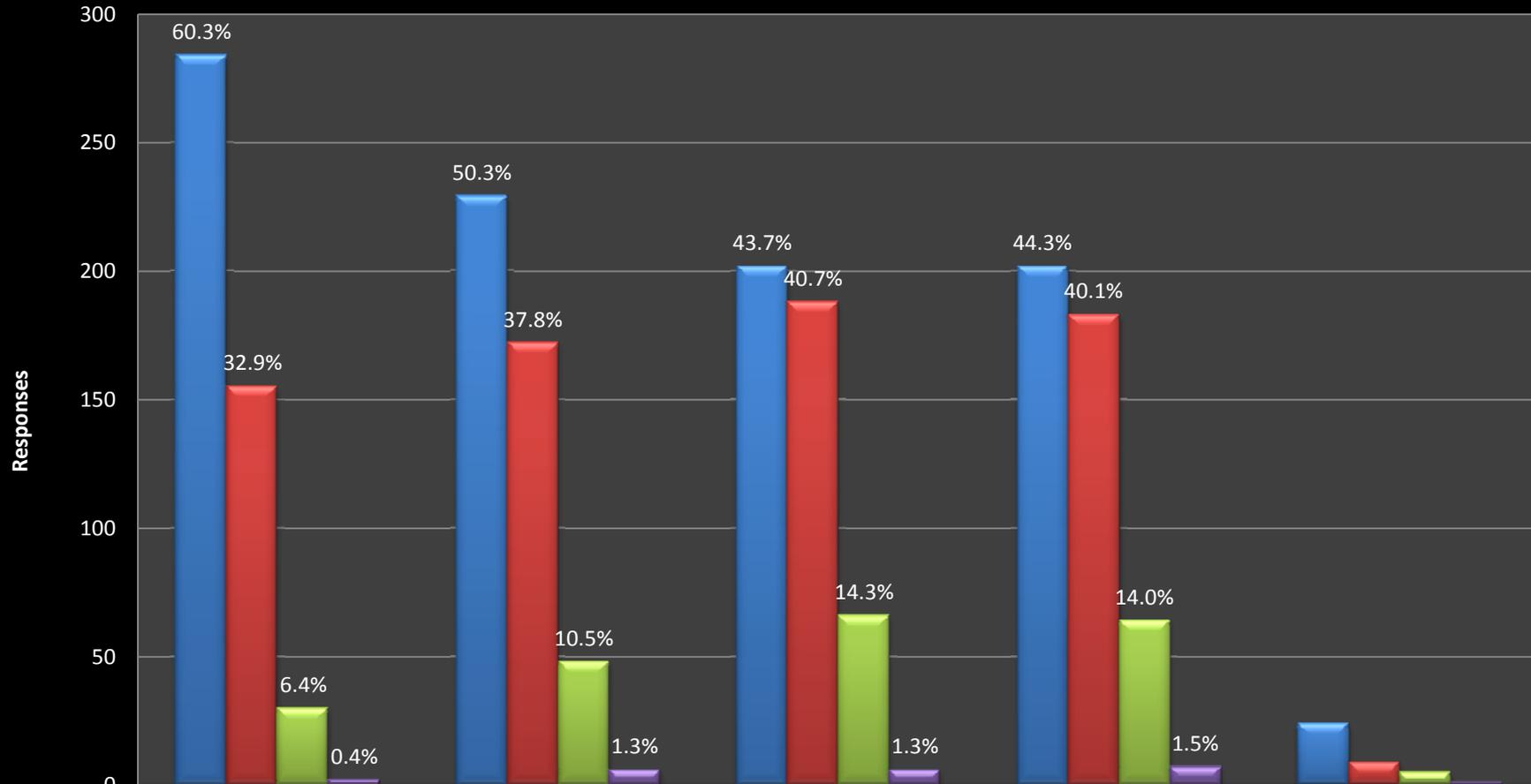


How important is it for CLS to focus its resources in the area of Landlord/Tenant Issues?

Very Important Important Somewhat Important Not Important



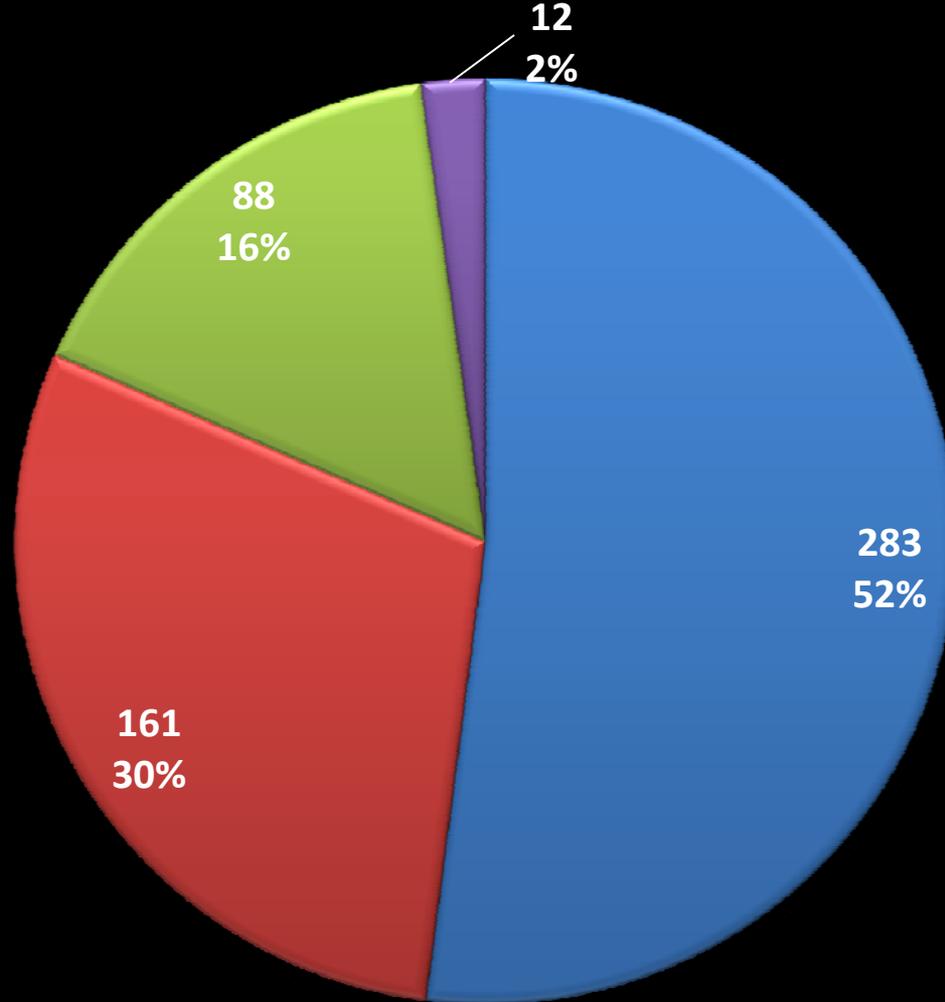
How important is it for CLS to focus on the following areas of Landlord/Tenant Issues:



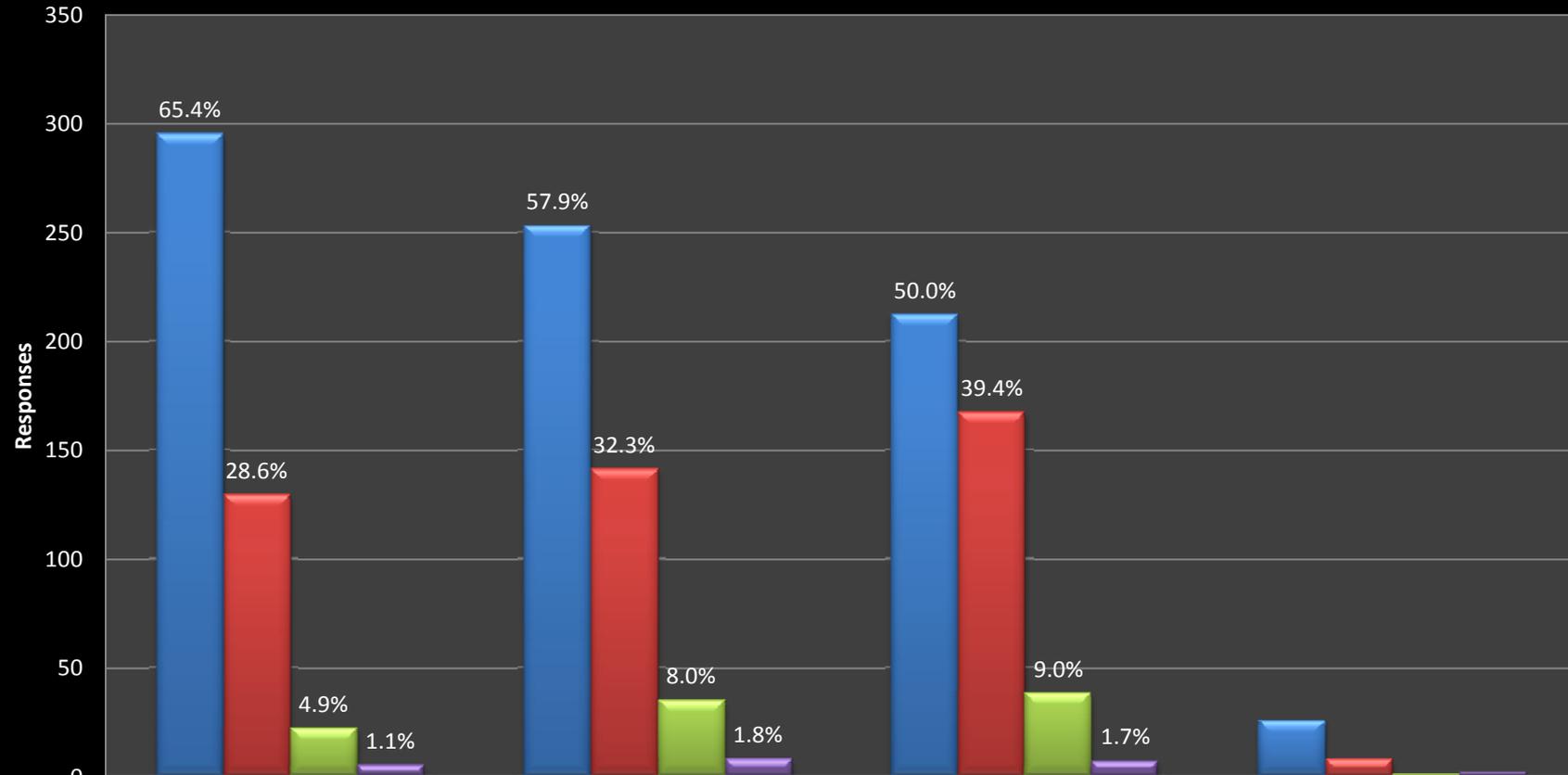
	Evictions/Terminations	Lockouts	Repairs	Security Deposit Issues	Other
Very Important	284	229	202	202	24
Important	155	172	188	183	9
Somewhat Important	30	48	66	64	5
Not Important	2	6	6	7	1

How important is it for CLS to focus its resources in the area of Individual Rights?

Very Important Important Somewhat Important Not Important



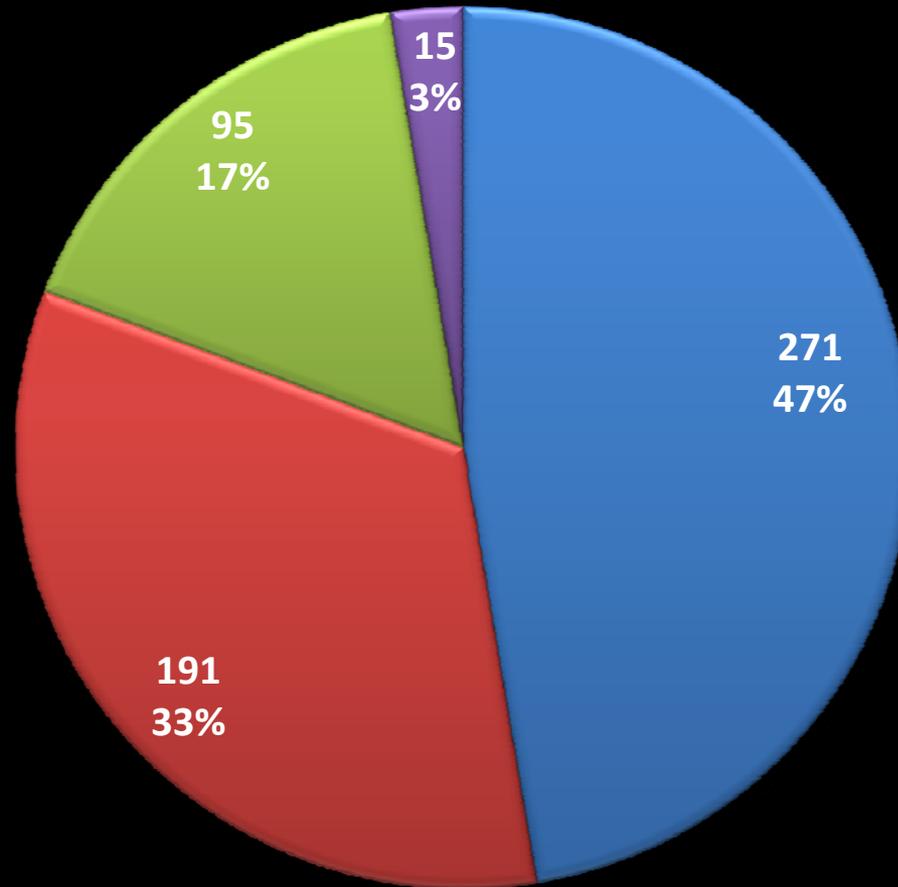
How important is it for CLS to focus on the following areas of Individual Rights:



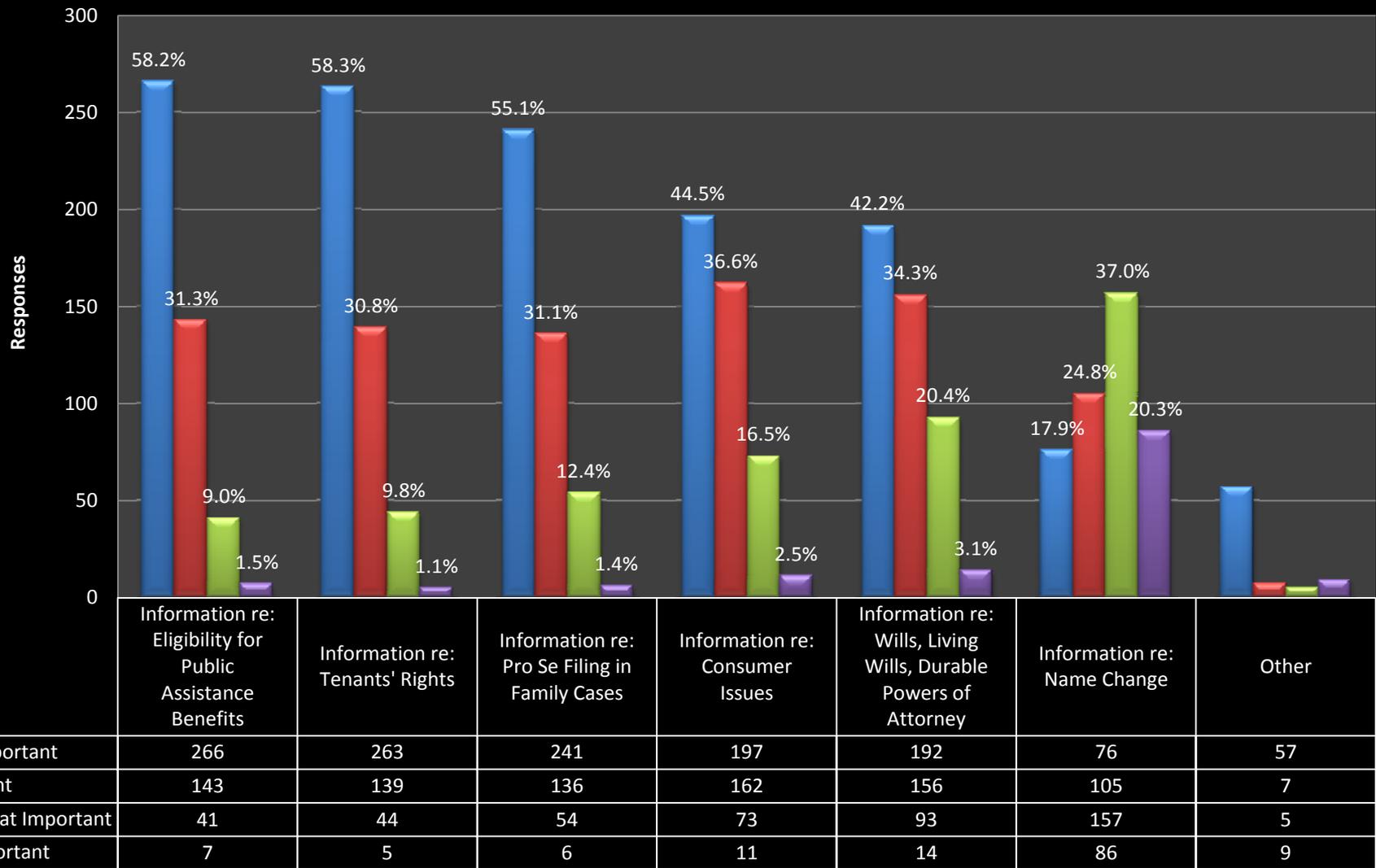
	Rights of Persons with Physical or Mental Disabilities	Americans with Disabilities Act Issues	Guardianship Issues	Other
Very Important	295	253	212	26
Important	129	141	167	8
Somewhat Important	22	35	38	1
Not Important	5	8	7	2

How important is it for CLS to focus its resources in the area of Community Legal Education?

Very Important Important Somewhat Important Not Important

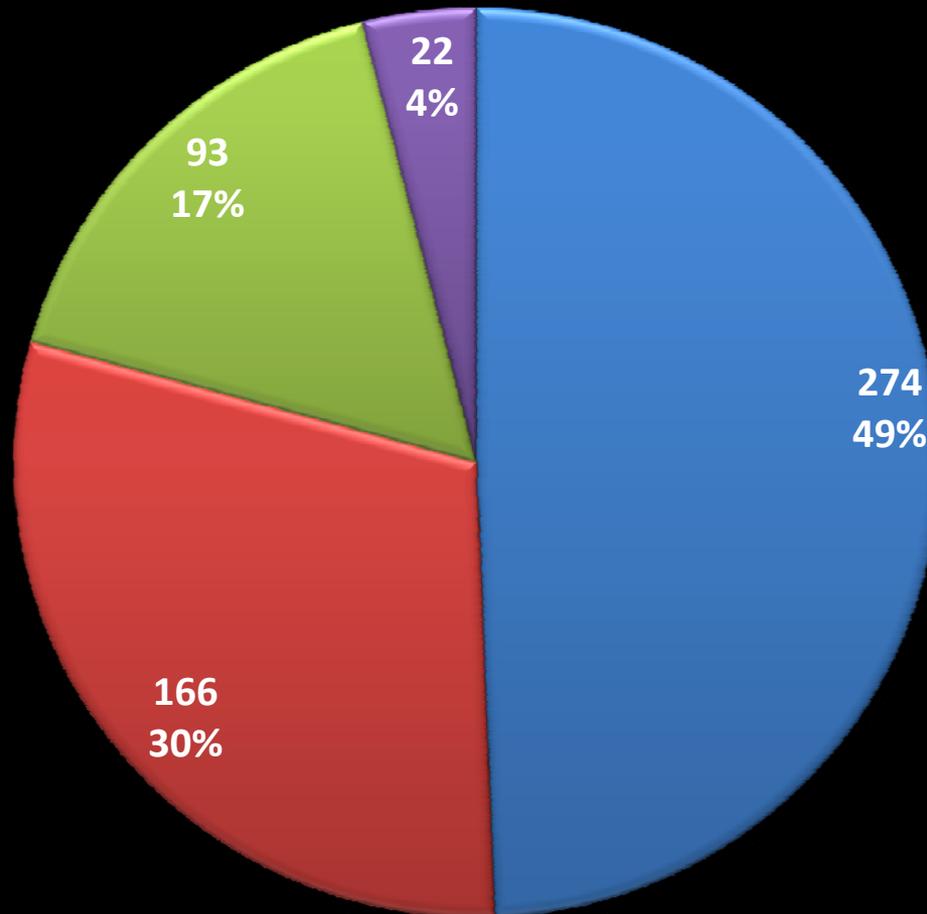


How important is it for CLS to focus on the following areas of Community Legal Education:

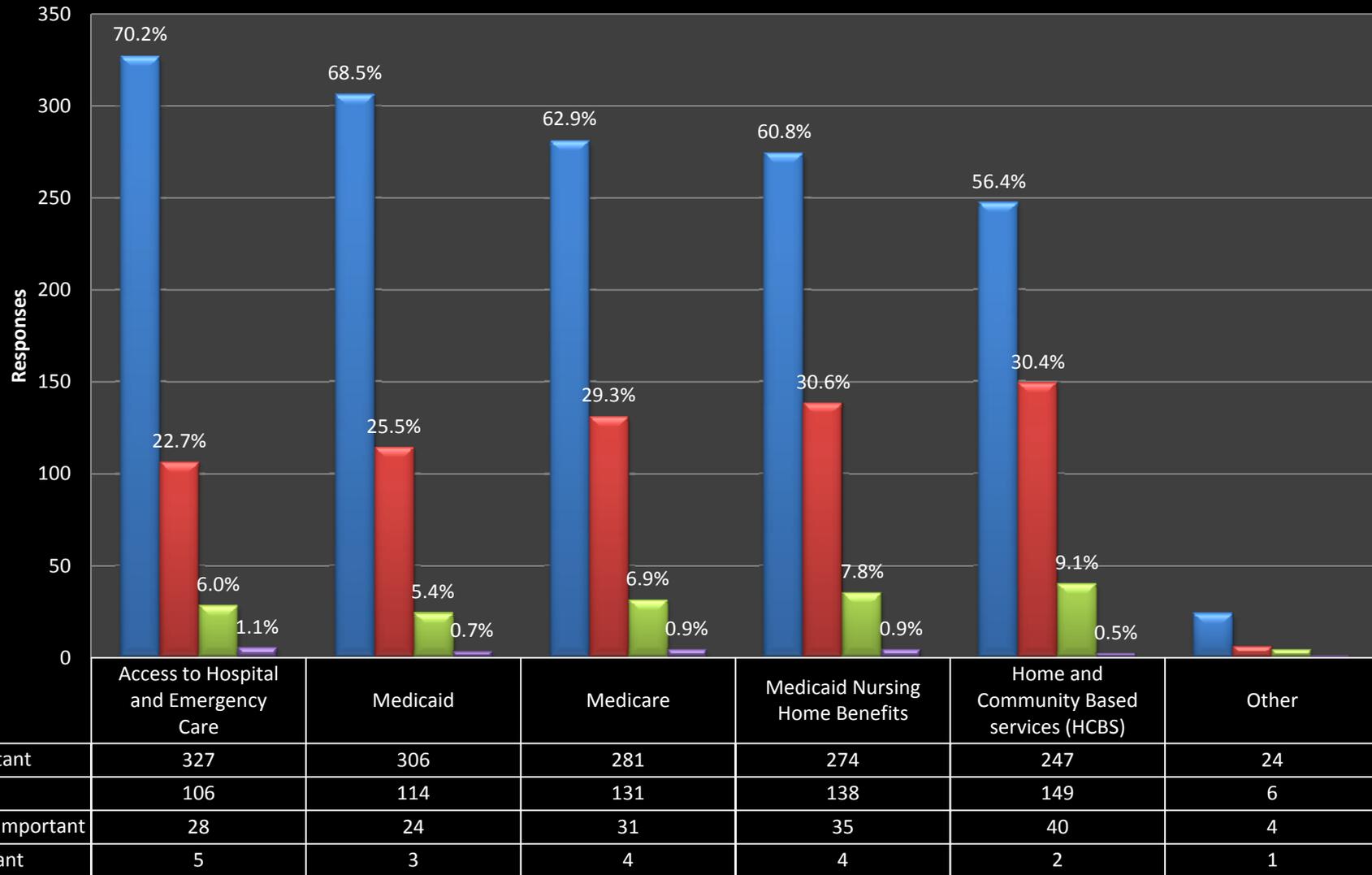


How important is it for CLS to focus its resources in the area of Health?

Very Important Important Somewhat Important Not Important

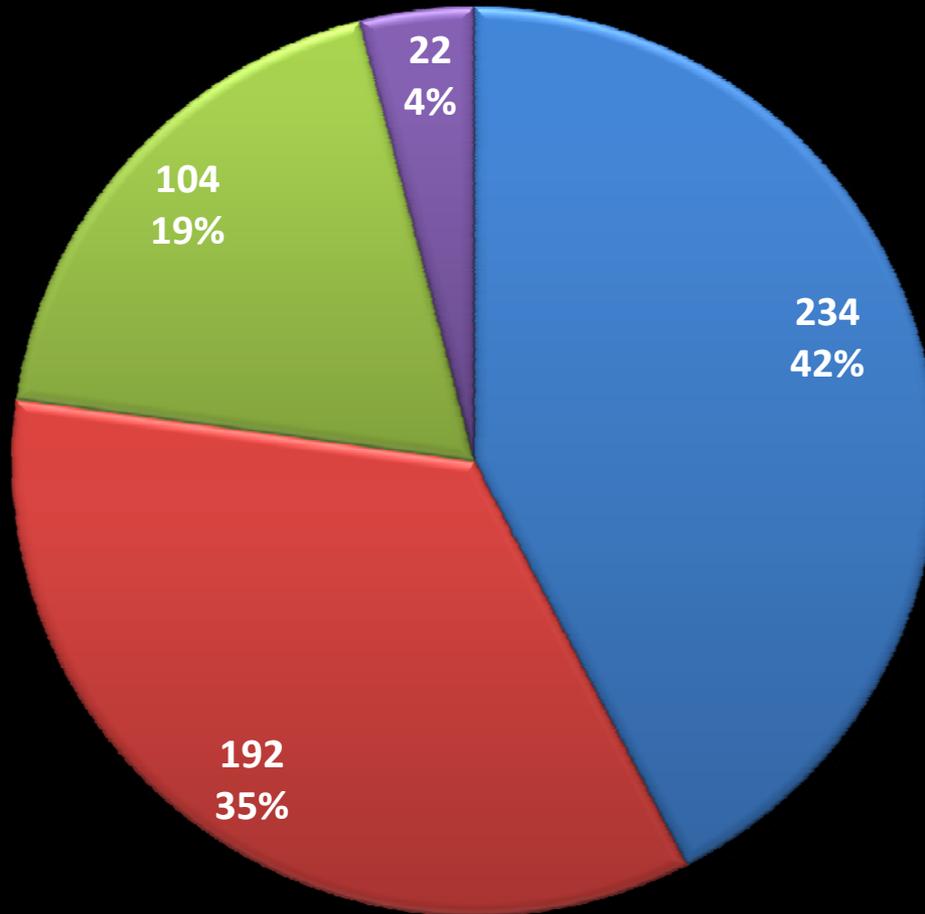


How important is it for CLS to focus on the following areas of Health:

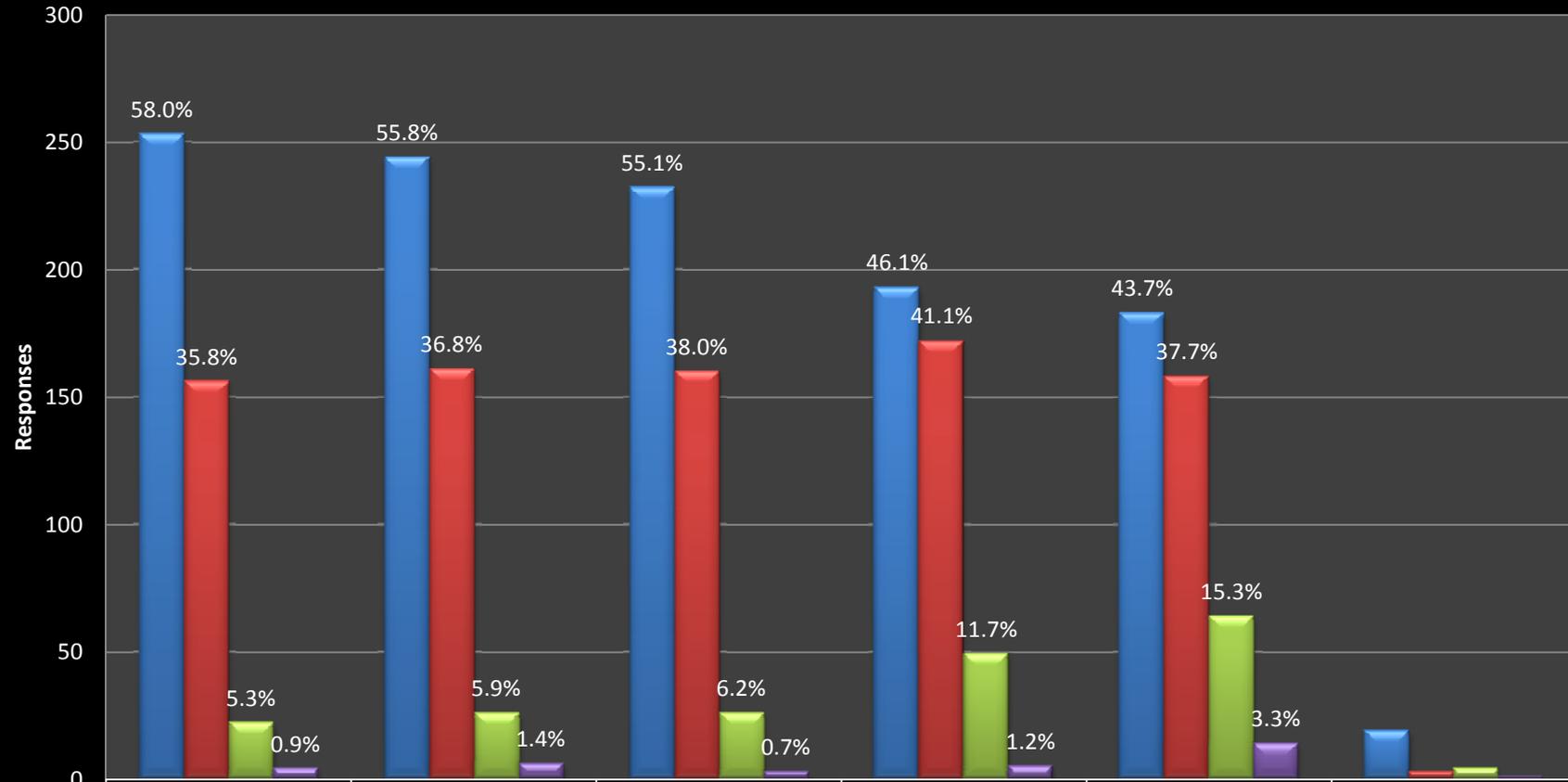


How important is it for CLS to focus its resources in the area of Public Housing?

Very Important Important Somewhat Important Not Important



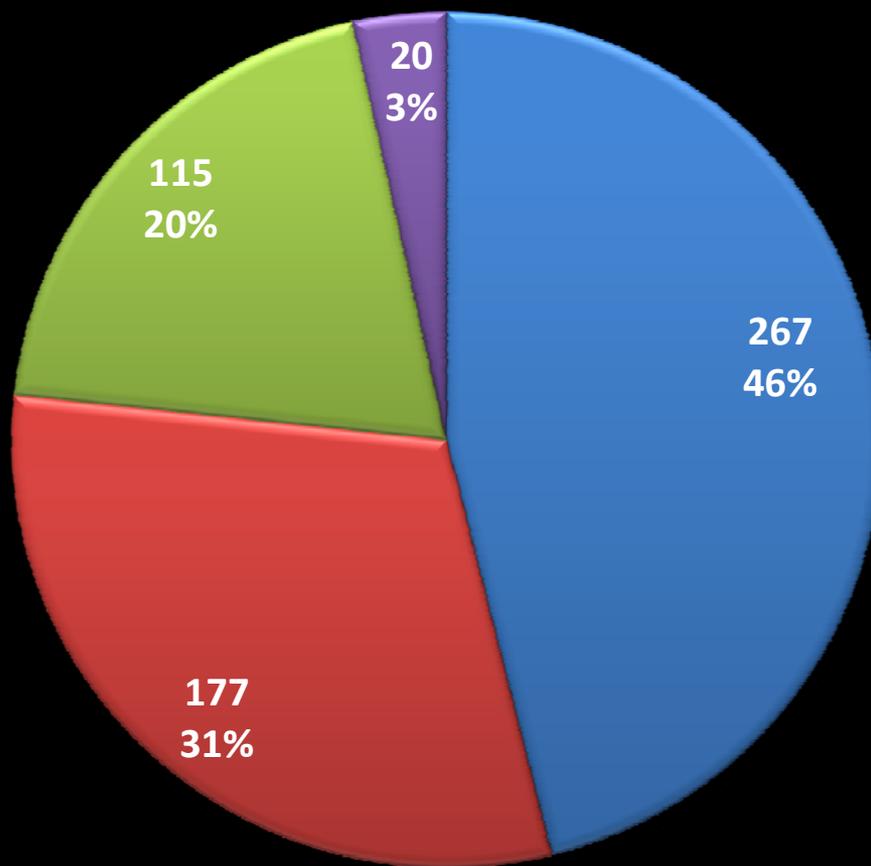
How important is it for CLS to focus on the following areas of Public Housing:



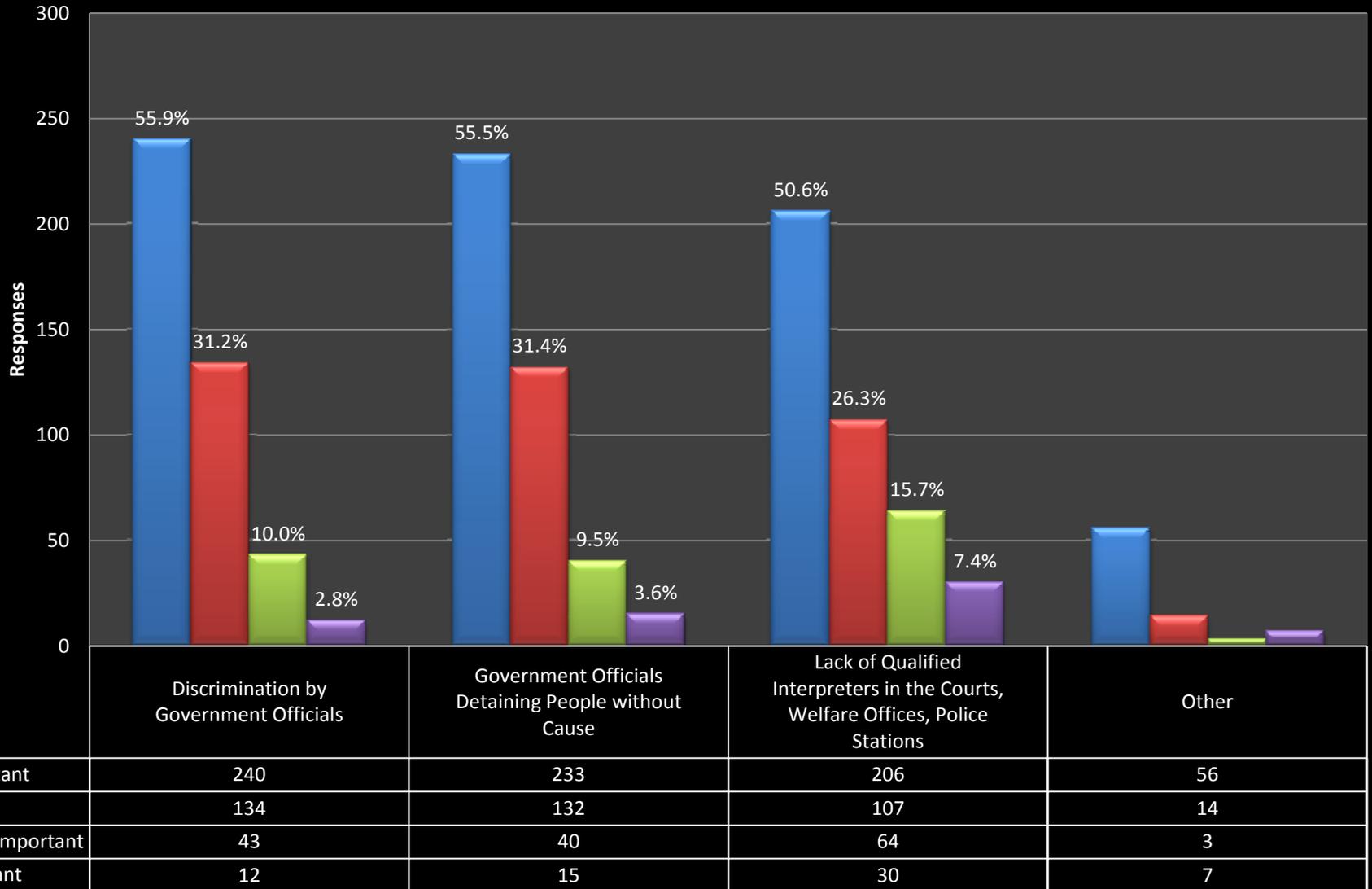
	Termination/Denial of Section 8 or Public Housing	Enforcement of Tenants' Rights	Evictions	Admissions	Security Deposit Issues	Other
Very Important	253	244	232	193	183	19
Important	156	161	160	172	158	3
Somewhat Important	22	26	26	49	64	4
Not Important	4	6	3	5	14	1

How important is it for CLS to focus its resources in the area of Civil Rights?

Very Important Important Somewhat Important Not Important

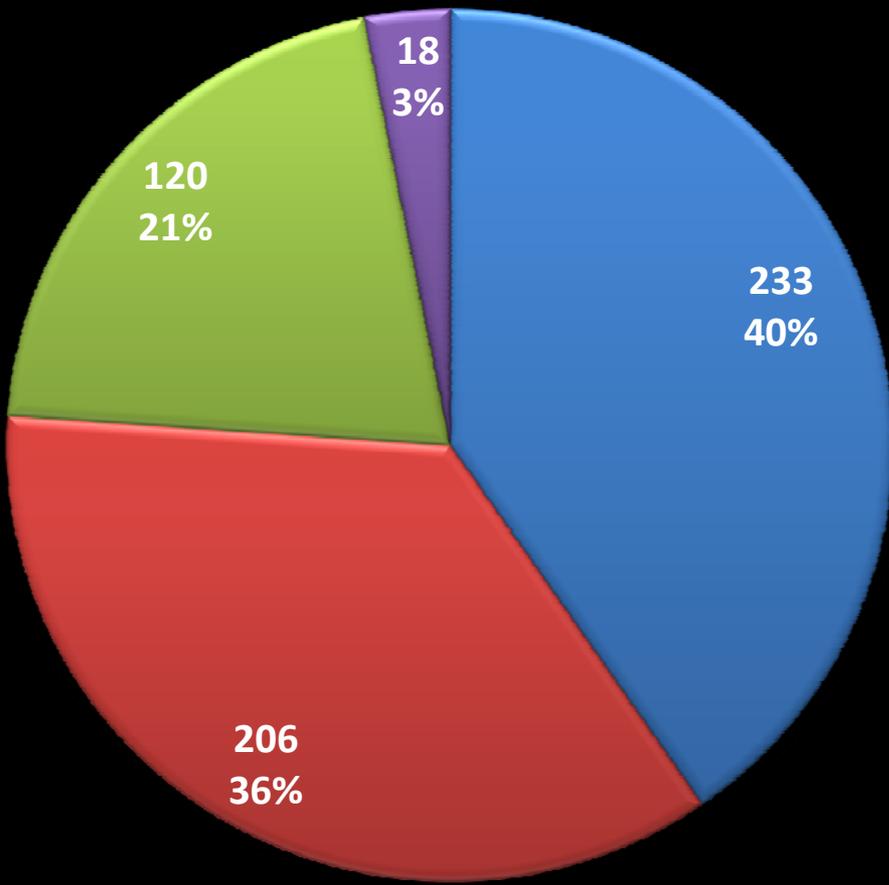


How important is it for CLS to focus on the following areas of Civil Rights:

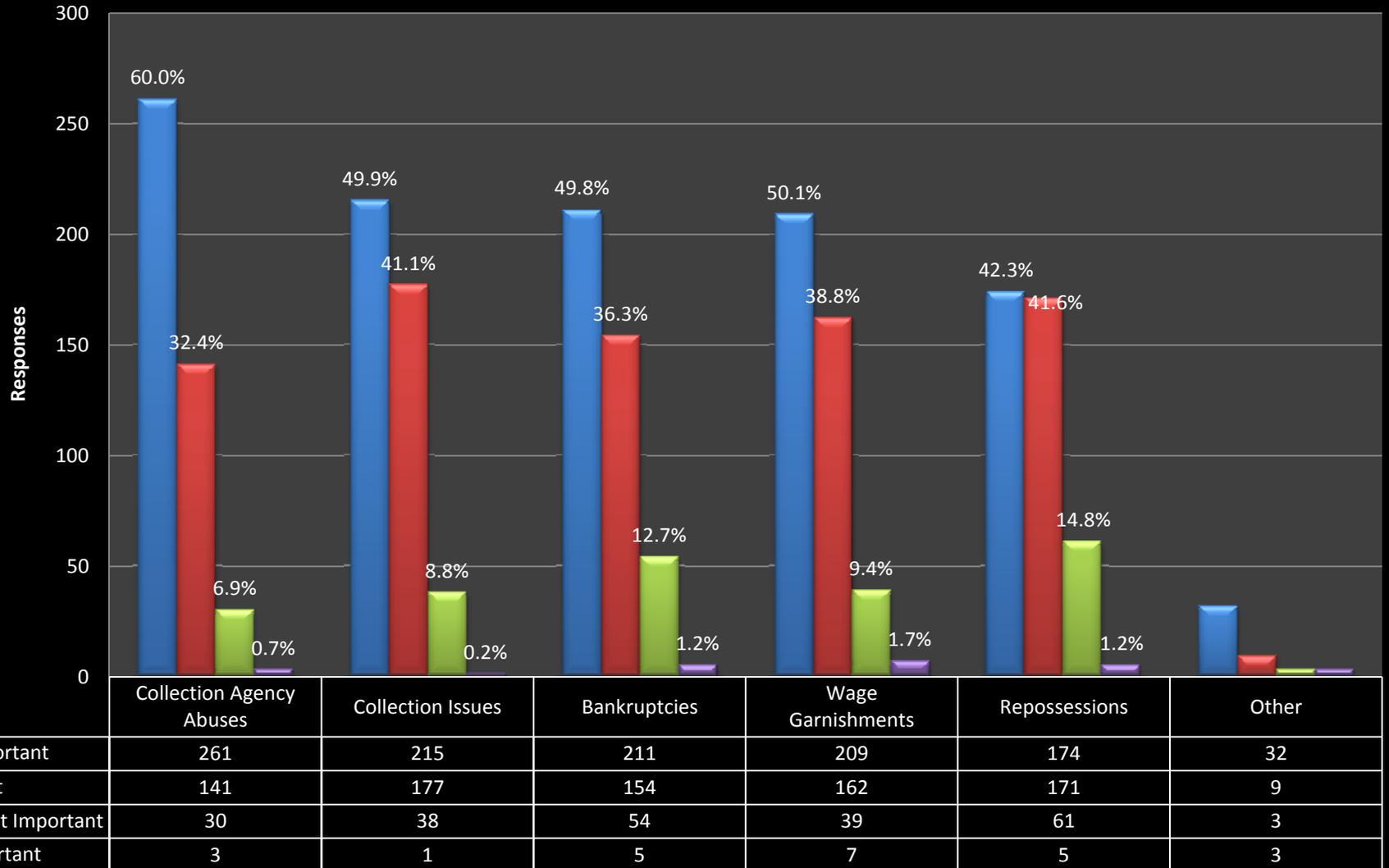


How important is it for CLS to focus its resources in the area of Consumer Issues involving Debtors?

Very Important Important Somewhat Important Not Important

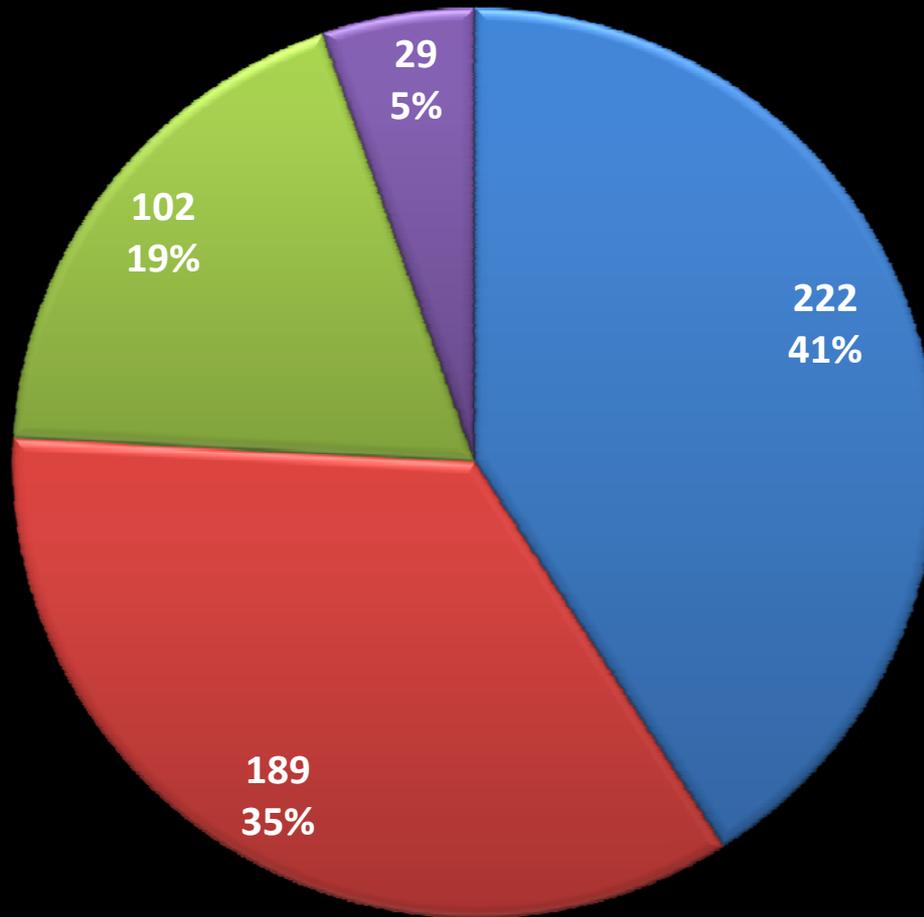


How important is it for CLS to focus on the following areas of Consumer Issues involving Debtors:

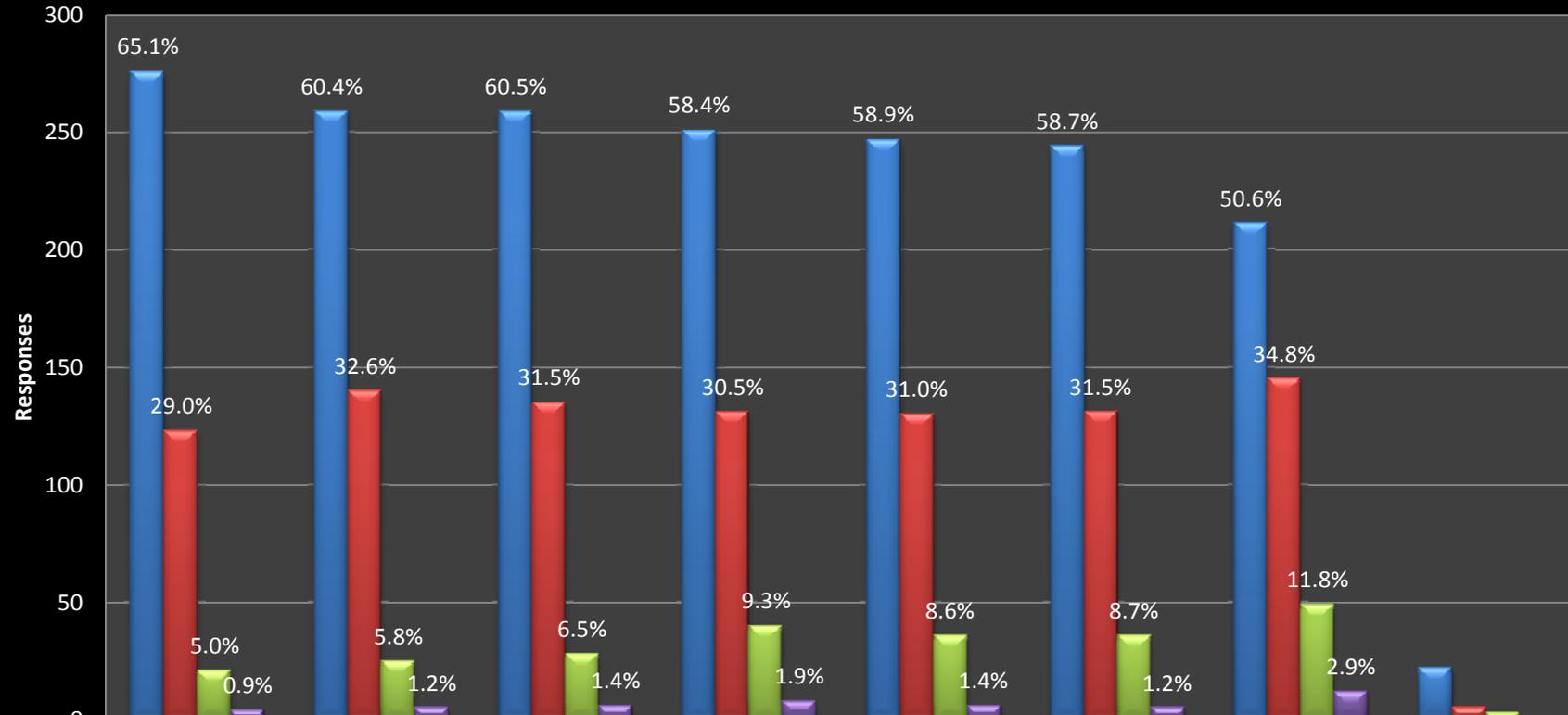


How important is it for CLS to focus its resources in the area of Income Maintenance?

Very Important Important Somewhat Important Not Important



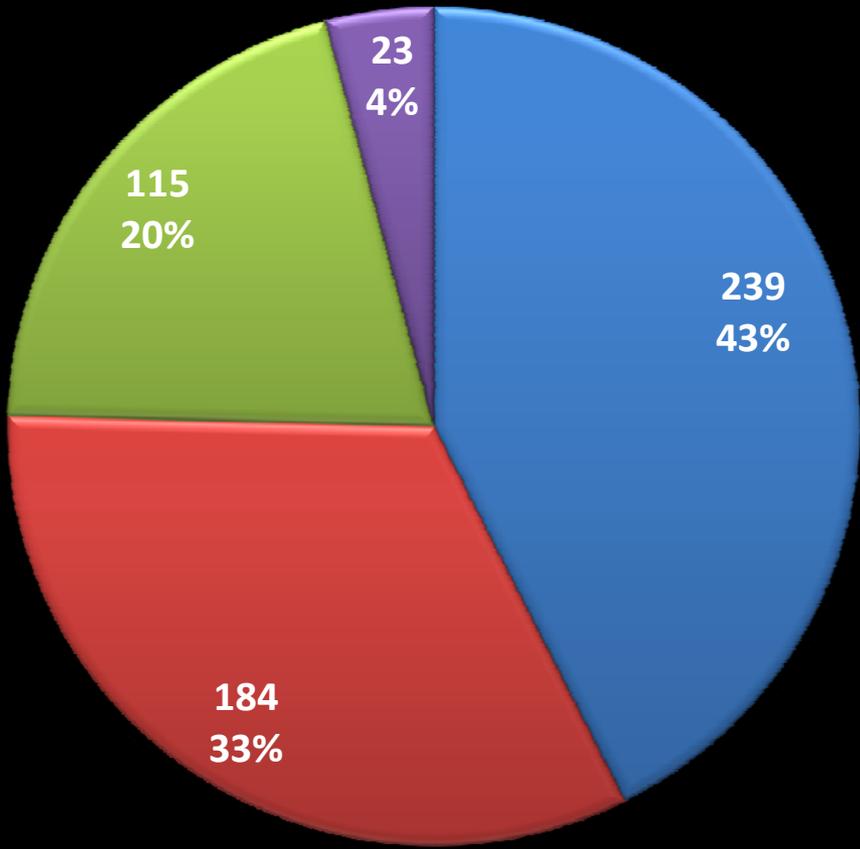
How important is it for CLS to focus on the following areas of Income Maintenance:



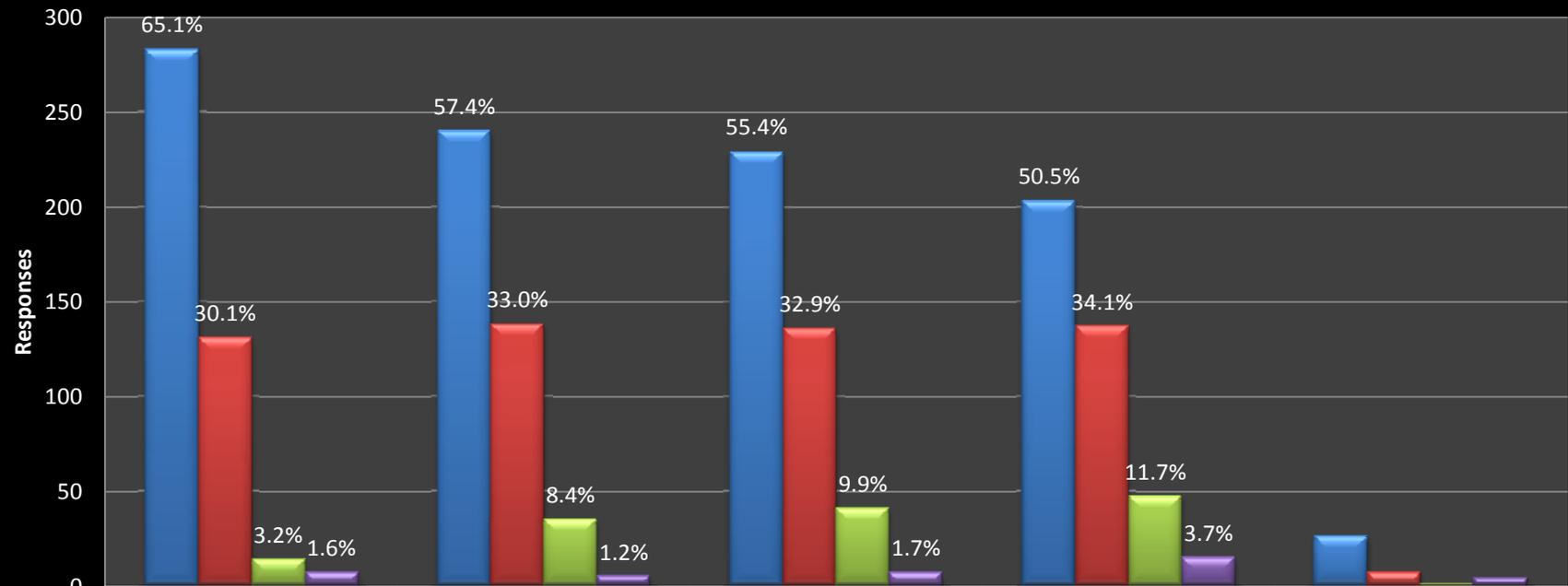
	Aid to the Needy and Disabled (AND)	Temporary Assistance to Needy Family (TANF)	Food Stamps	Low-Income Energy Assistance Program (LEAP)	Old Age Pension (OAP)	Women, Infant, Children's Benefits (WIC)	Unemployment Compensation	Other
Very Important	276	259	259	251	247	244	211	22
Important	123	140	135	131	130	131	145	5
Somewhat Important	21	25	28	40	36	36	49	3
Not Important	4	5	6	8	6	5	12	1

How important is it for CLS to focus its resources in the area of Employment Issues involving Treatment at Work?

Very Important Important Somewhat Important Not Important



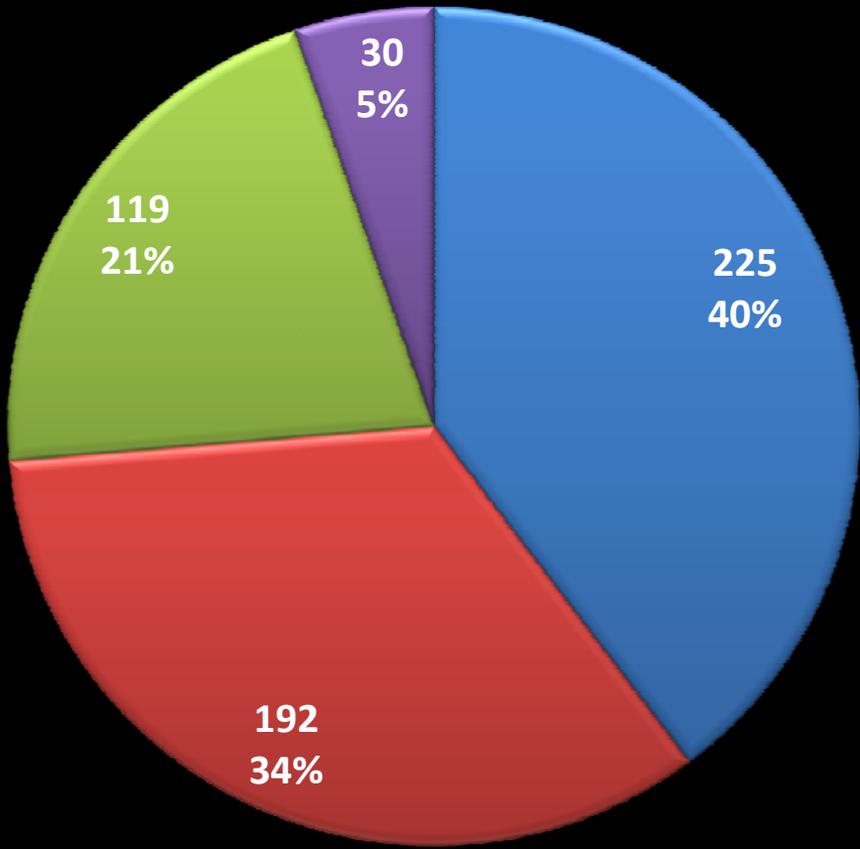
How important is it for CLS to focus on the following areas of Employment Issues involving Treatment at Work:



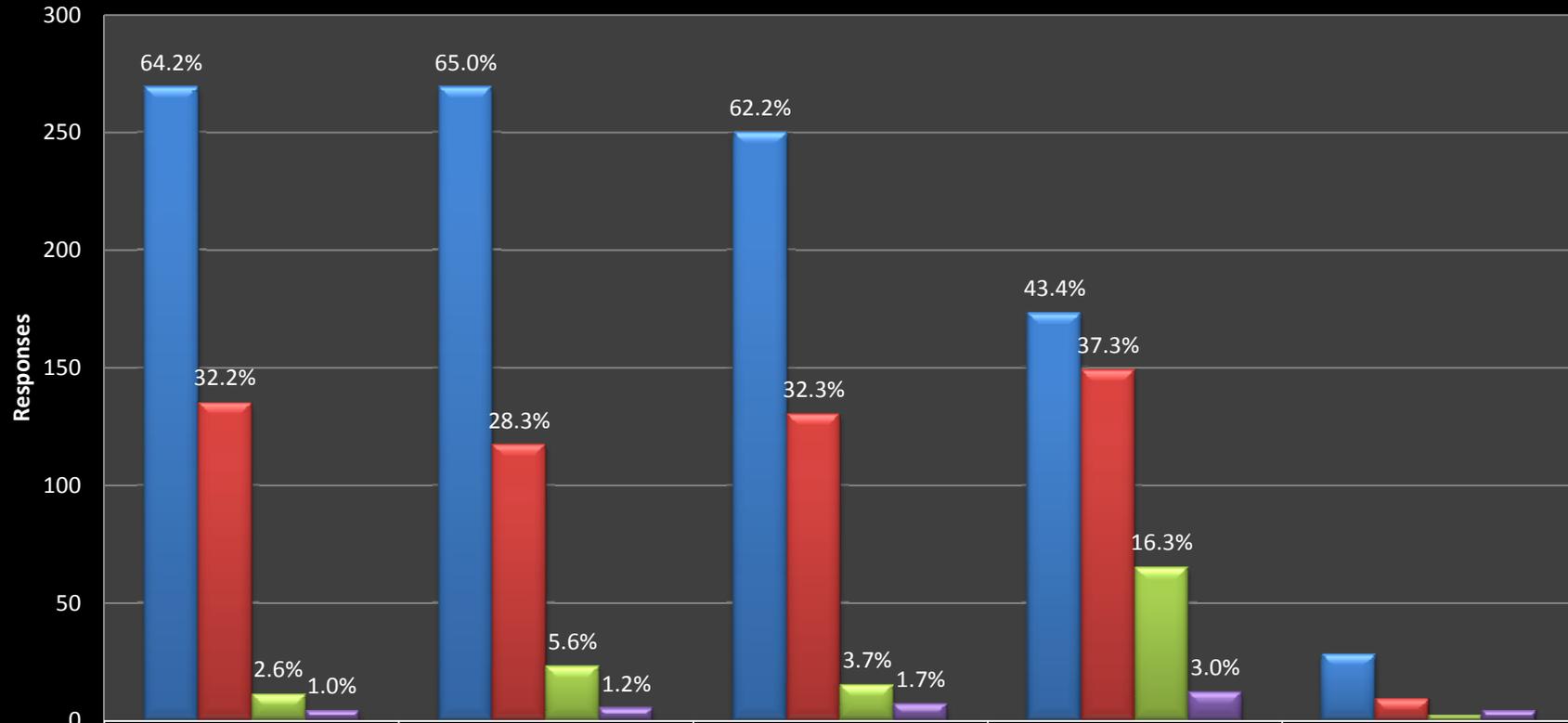
	Retaliation (for applying for worker's comp or unemployment comp, for making a health or safety complaint, for asking for better wages or working conditions)	Discrimination Complaints	Sexual Harassment	Unscrupulous Farm Labor Contractors	Other
Very Important	283	240	229	203	26
Important	131	138	136	137	7
Somewhat Important	14	35	41	47	1
Not Important	7	5	7	15	4

How important is it for CLS to focus its resources in the area of Employment Issues involving Wage Problems?

Very Important Important Somewhat Important Not Important



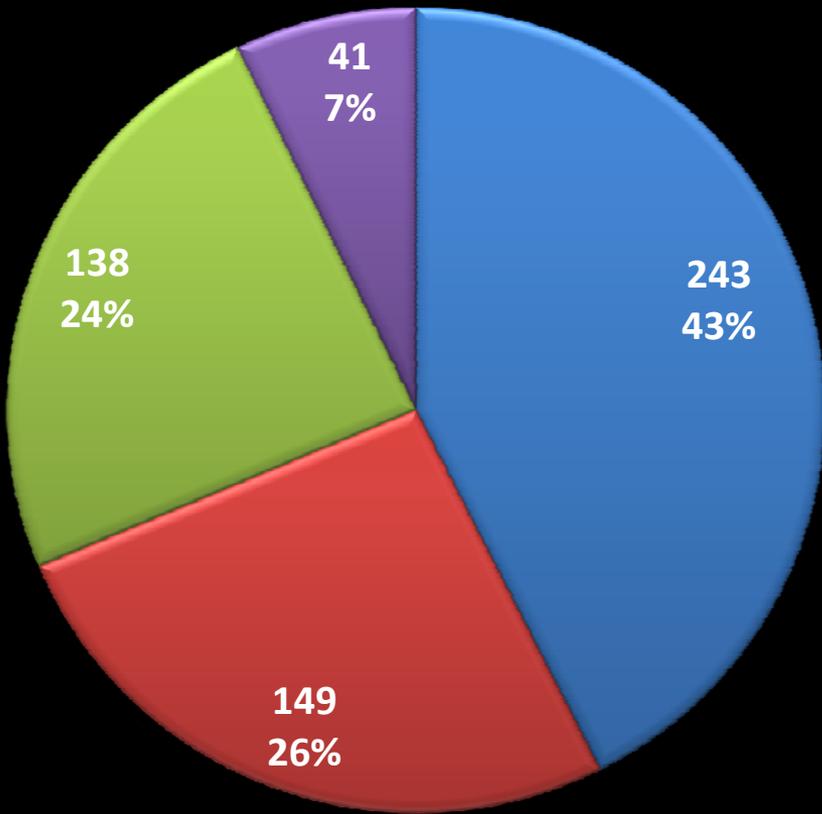
How important is it for CLS to focus on the following areas of Employment Issues involving Wage Problems?



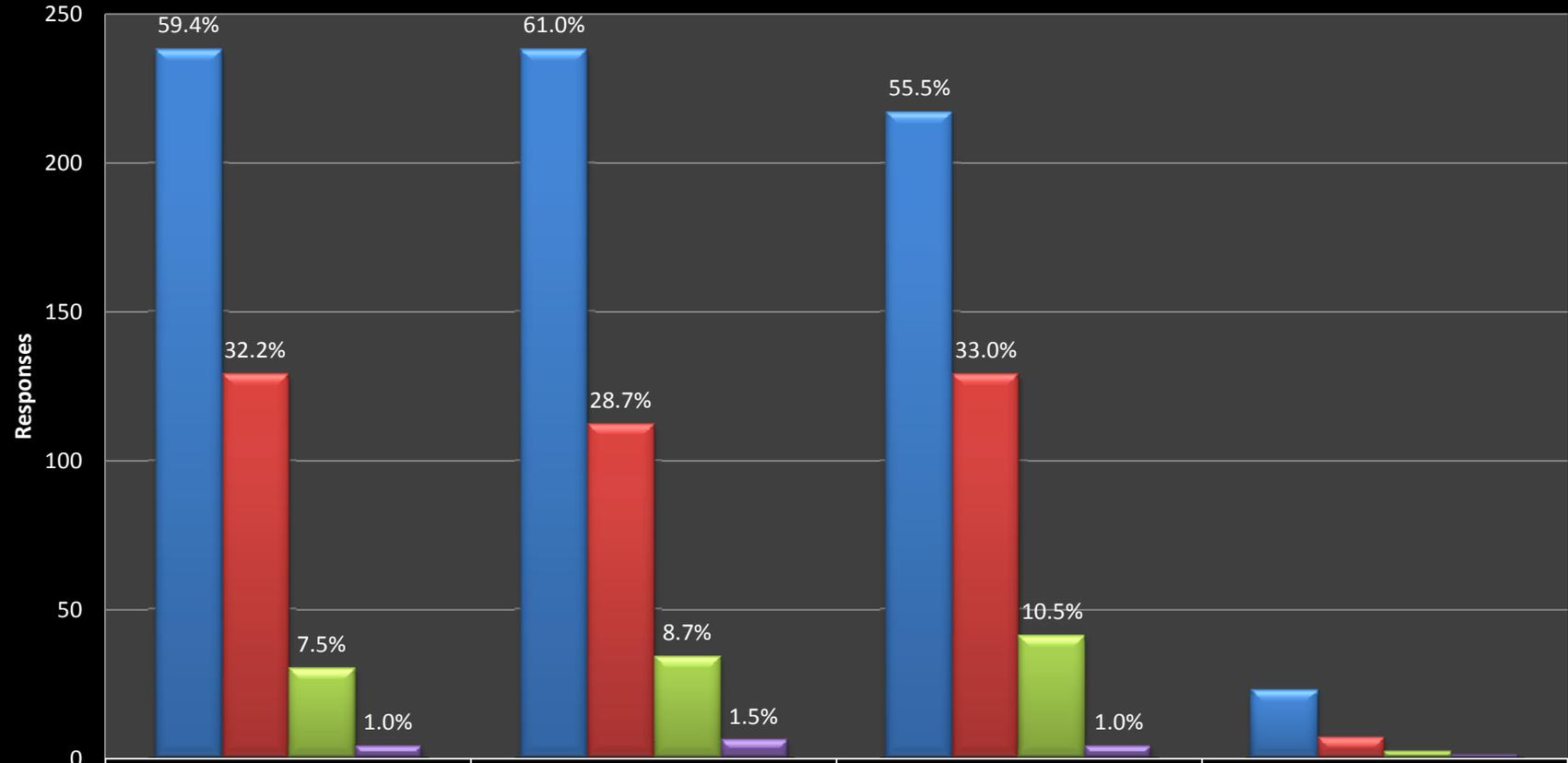
	Issues with Employers Paying Less than Minimum Wage or Less than Promised Wage	Working Conditions	Unauthorized Deductions from Wages	Bonuses that are not Paid	Other
Very Important	269	269	250	173	28
Important	135	117	130	149	9
Somewhat Important	11	23	15	65	2
Not Important	4	5	7	12	4

How important is it for CLS to focus its resources in the area Education?

Very Important Important Somewhat Important Not Important



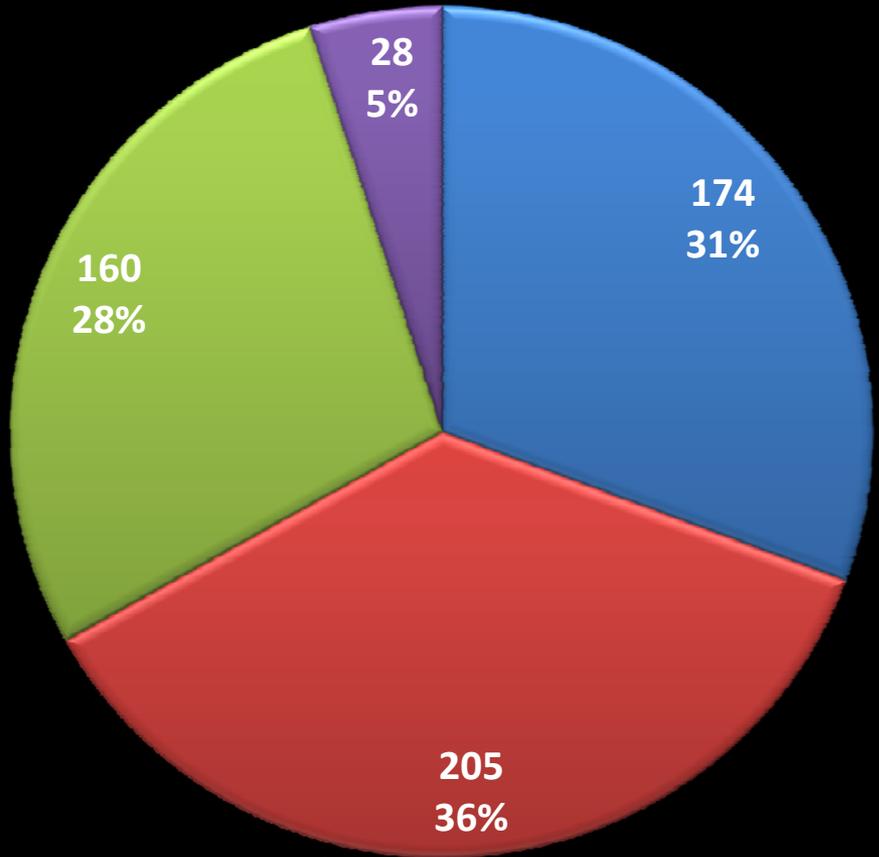
How important is it for CLS to focus on the following areas of Education?



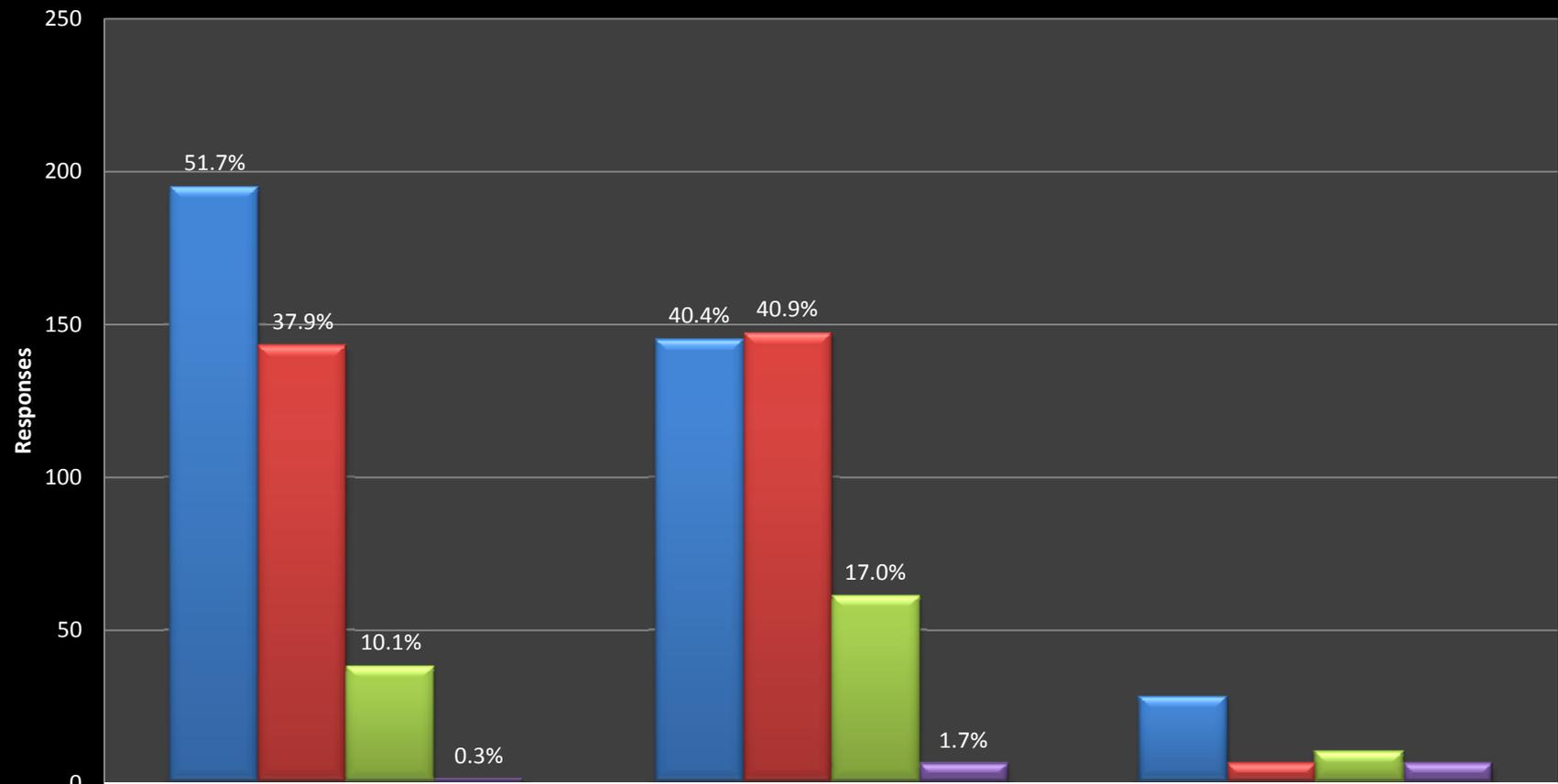
	Assistance and Representation in Due Process Hearings	Discrimination Issues	Special Education Issues	Other
Very Important	238	238	217	23
Important	129	112	129	7
Somewhat Important	30	34	41	2
Not Important	4	6	4	1

How important is it for CLS to focus its resources in the area of Consumer Issues involving Loans and Utilities?

Very Important Important Somewhat Important Not Important



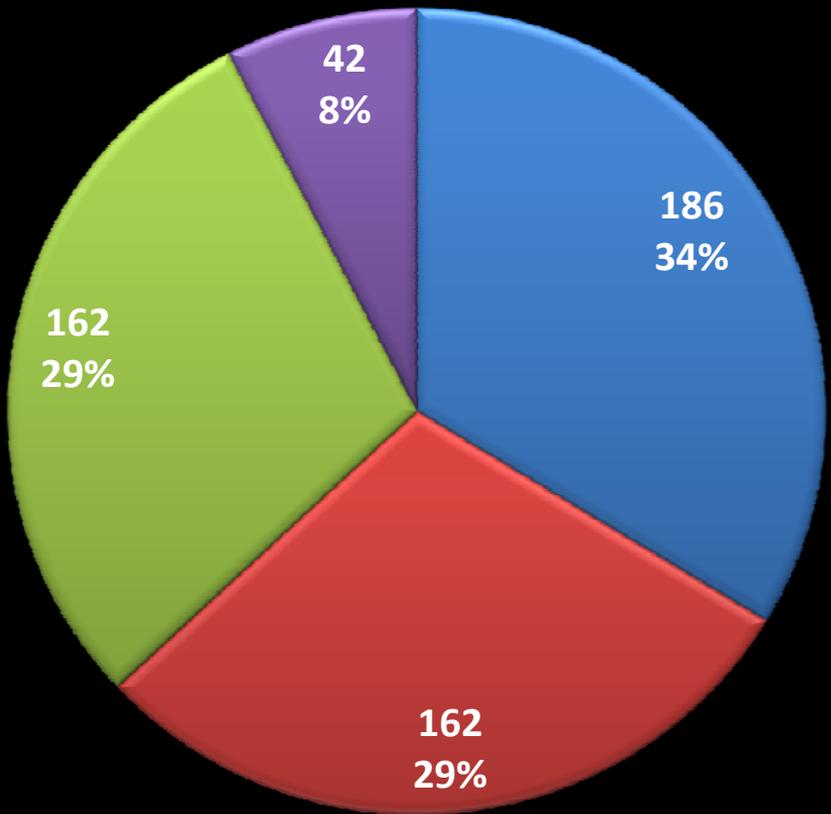
How important is it for CLS to focus on the following areas of Consumer Issues involving Loans and Utilities?



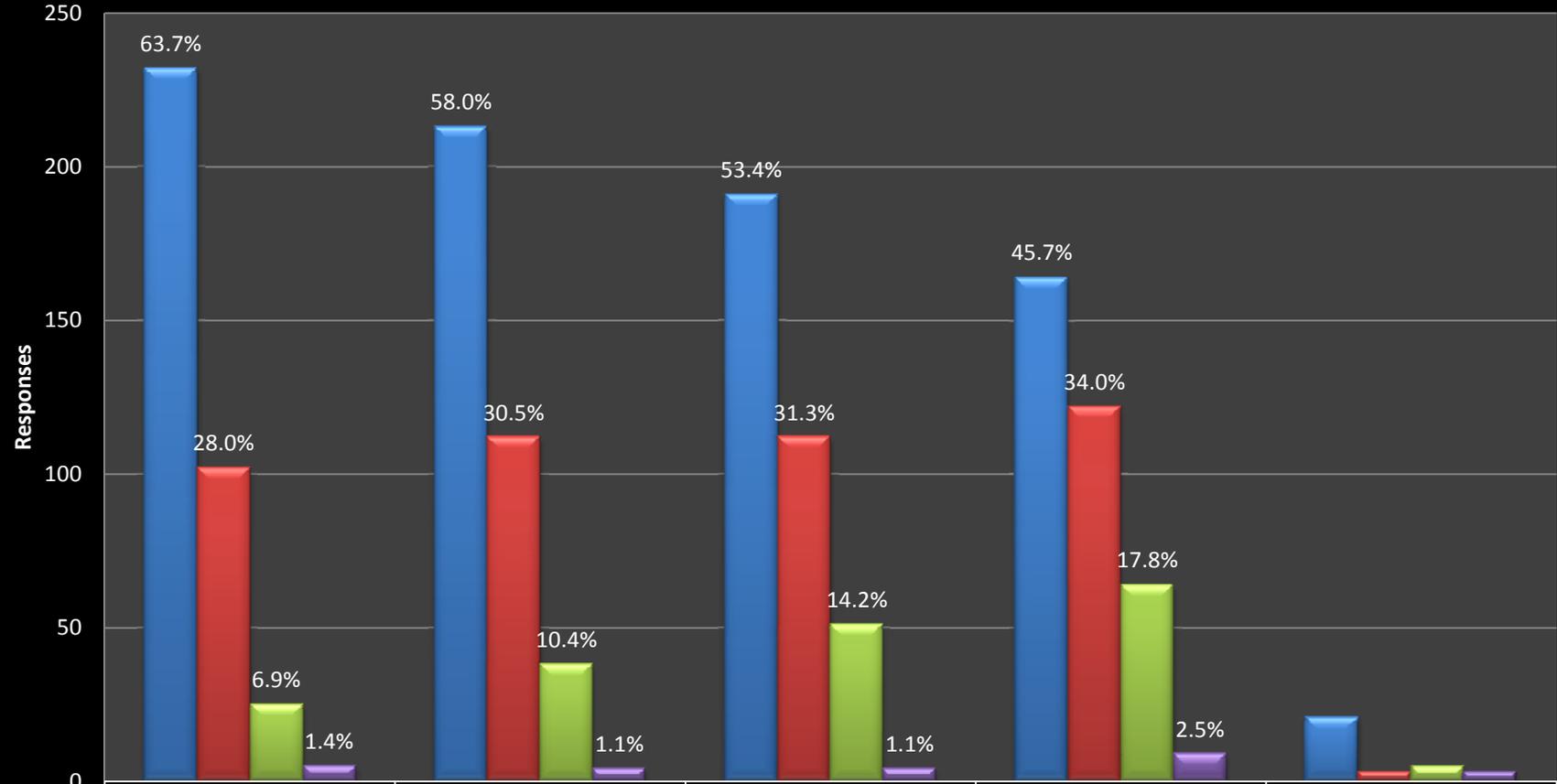
	Public Utilities (Deposits; Reconnections; Shut-offs)	Loans/Installment Purchases	Other
Very Important	195	145	28
Important	143	147	6
Somewhat Important	38	61	10
Not Important	1	6	6

How important is it for CLS to focus its resources in the area of Health and Safety Issues at Work?

Very Important Important Somewhat Important Not Important



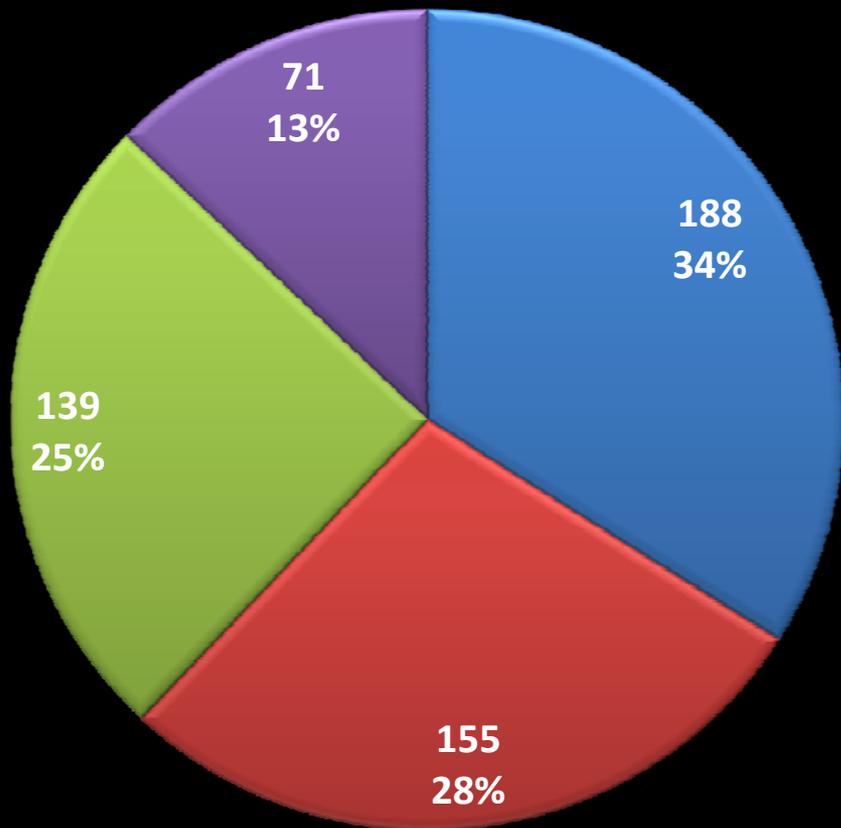
How important is it for CLS to focus on the following areas of Health and Safety Issues at Work?



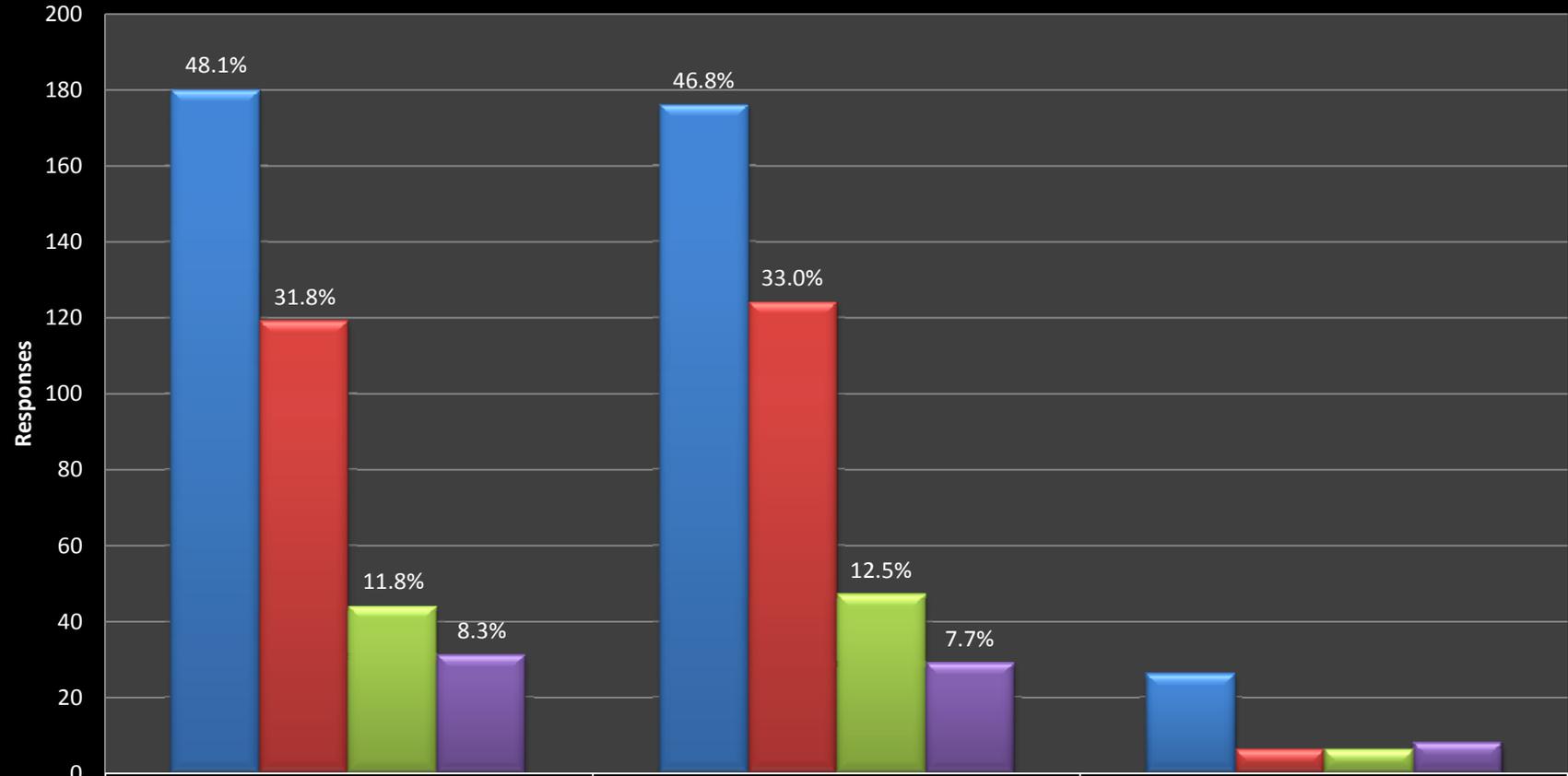
	Presence of Hazards	Exposure to Pesticides	Lack of Water or Hand-Washing Facilities	Lack of Adequate Bathrooms	Other
Very Important	232	213	191	164	21
Important	102	112	112	122	3
Somewhat Important	25	38	51	64	5
Not Important	5	4	4	9	3

How important is it for CLS to focus its resources in the area of Immigration/Naturalization?

Very Important Important Somewhat Important Not Important



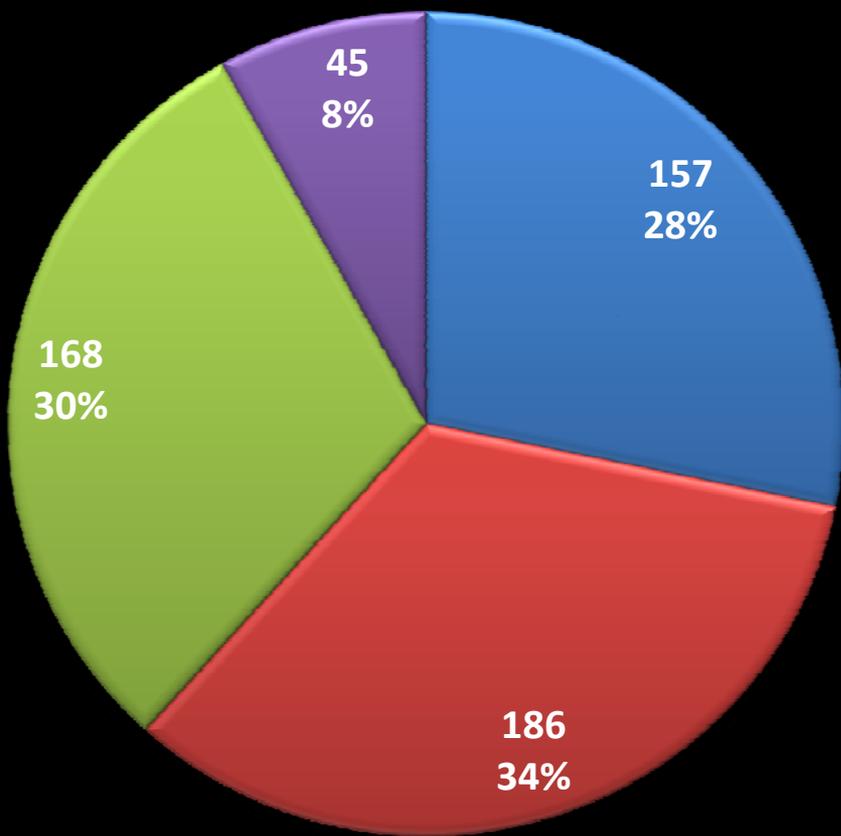
How important is it for CLS to focus on the following areas of Immigration/Naturalization?



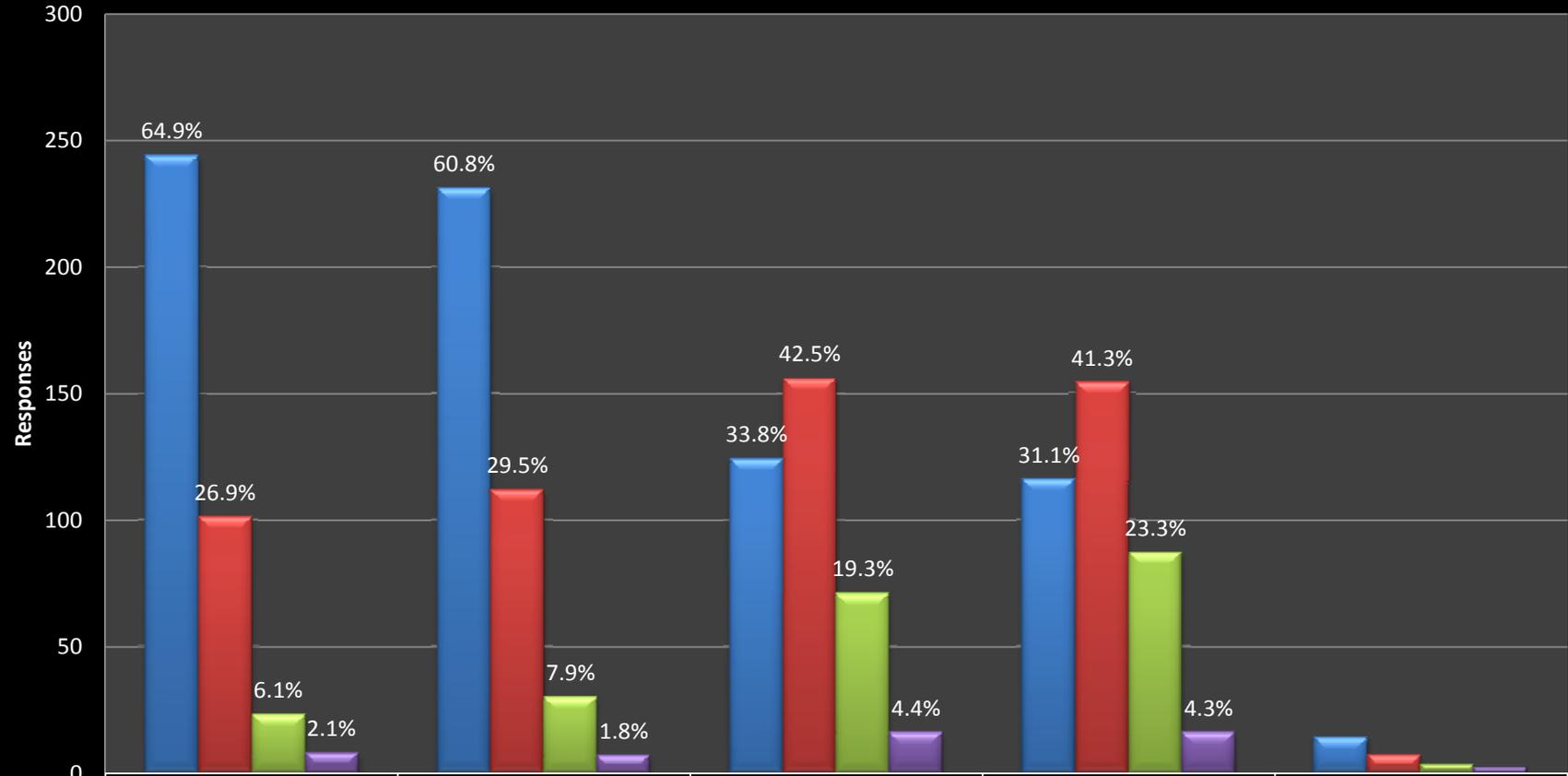
	Representation at Immigration Court Hearings	Assistance with Applications	Other
Very Important	180	176	26
Important	119	124	6
Somewhat Important	44	47	6
Not Important	31	29	8

How important is it for CLS to focus its resources in the area of Home Ownership?

Very Important Important Somewhat Important Not Important



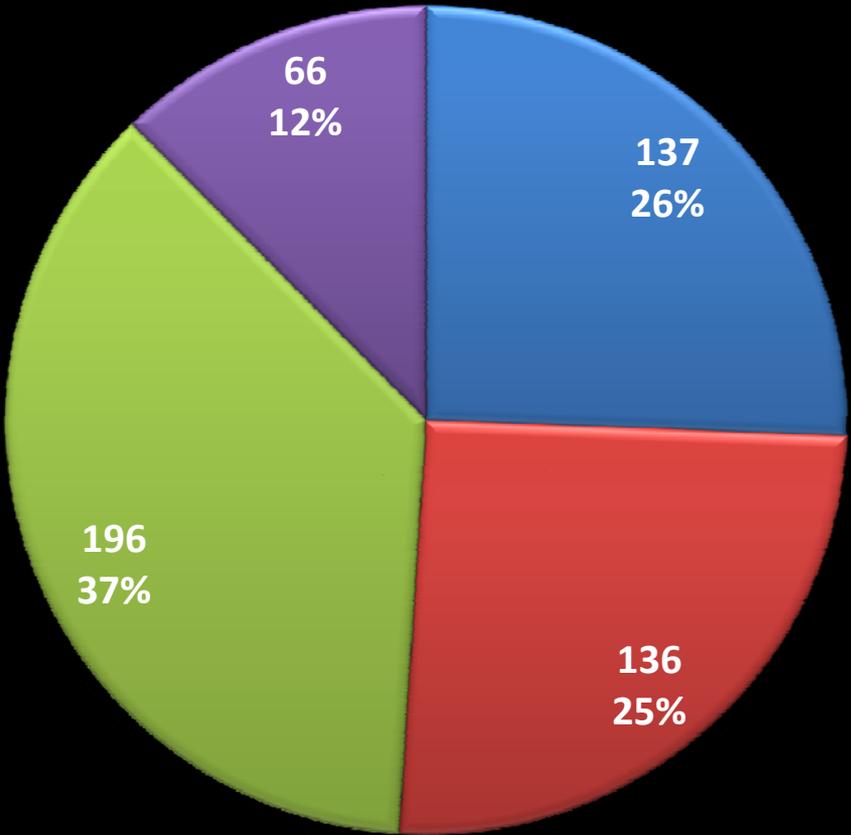
How important is it for CLS to focus on the following areas of Home Ownership?



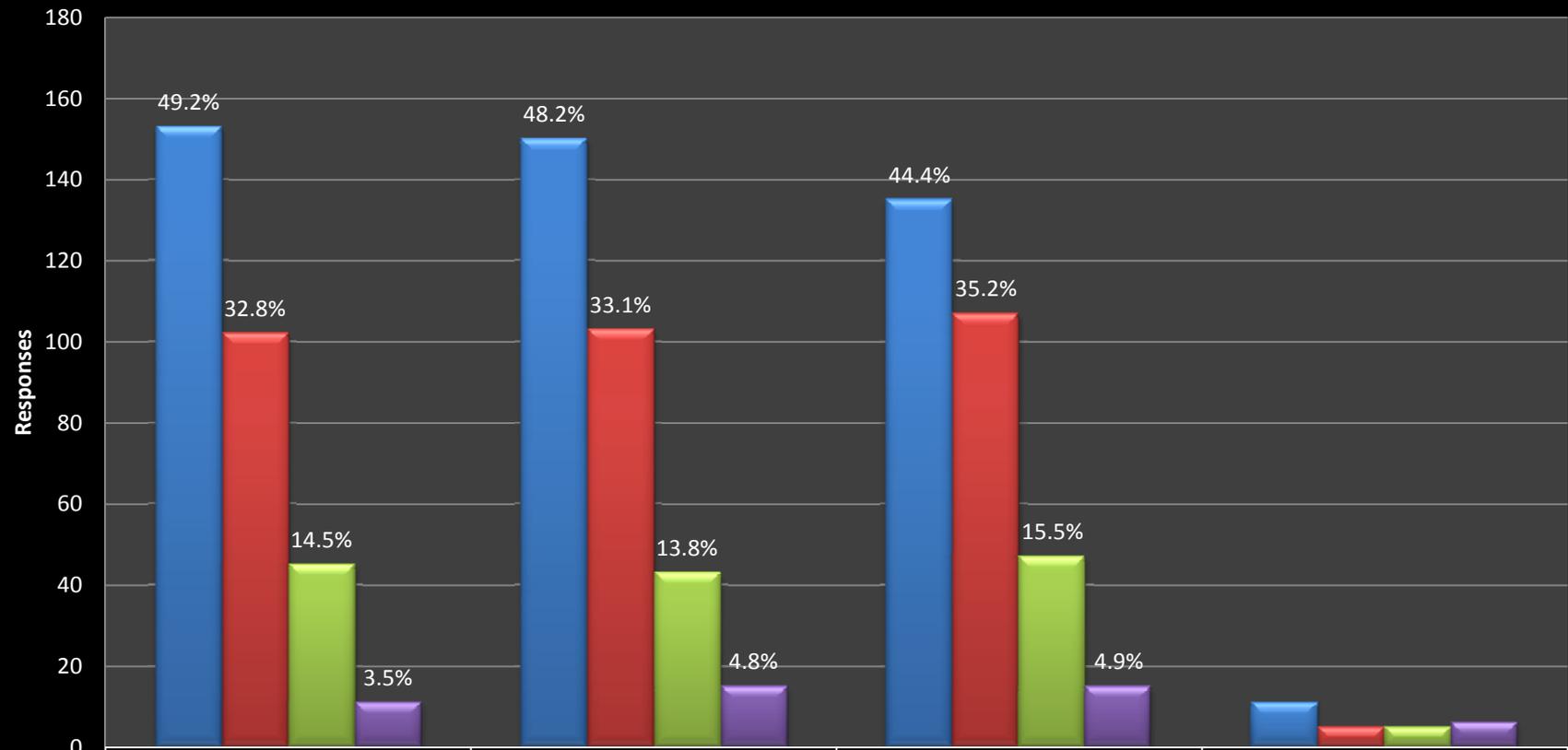
	Predatory Mortgage Lending	Foreclosures	Mobile Home Issues	Home Repair Issues	Other
Very Important	244	231	124	116	14
Important	101	112	156	154	7
Somewhat Important	23	30	71	87	3
Not Important	8	7	16	16	2

How important is it for CLS to focus its resources in the area of Native American/Tribal Law Issues?

Very Important Important Somewhat Important Not Important



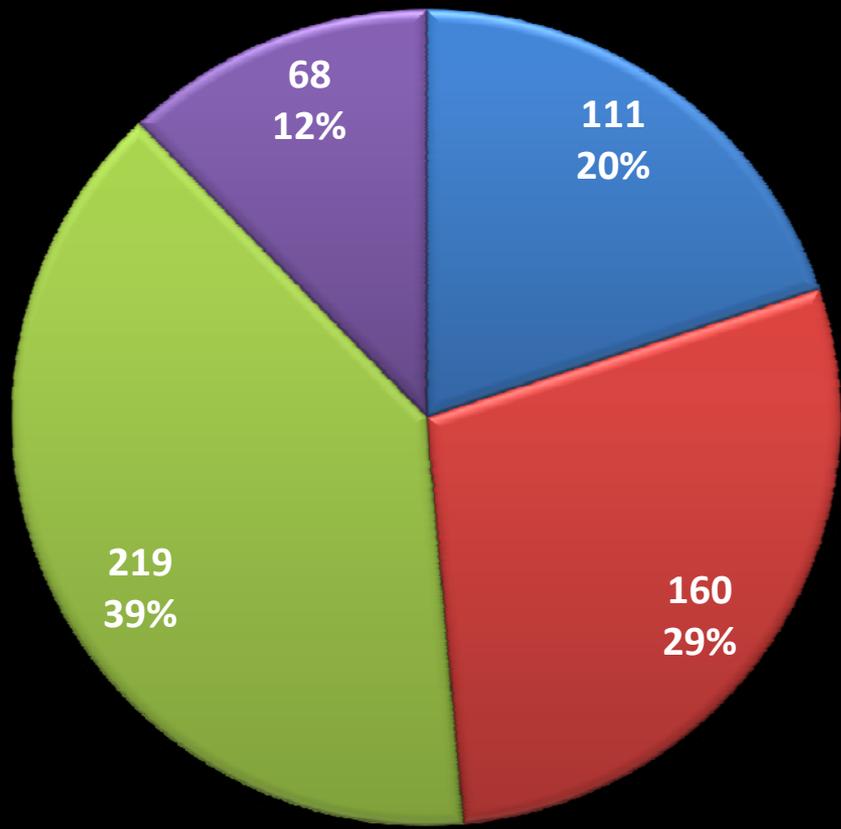
How important is it for CLS to focus on the following areas of Native American/Tribal Law Issues?



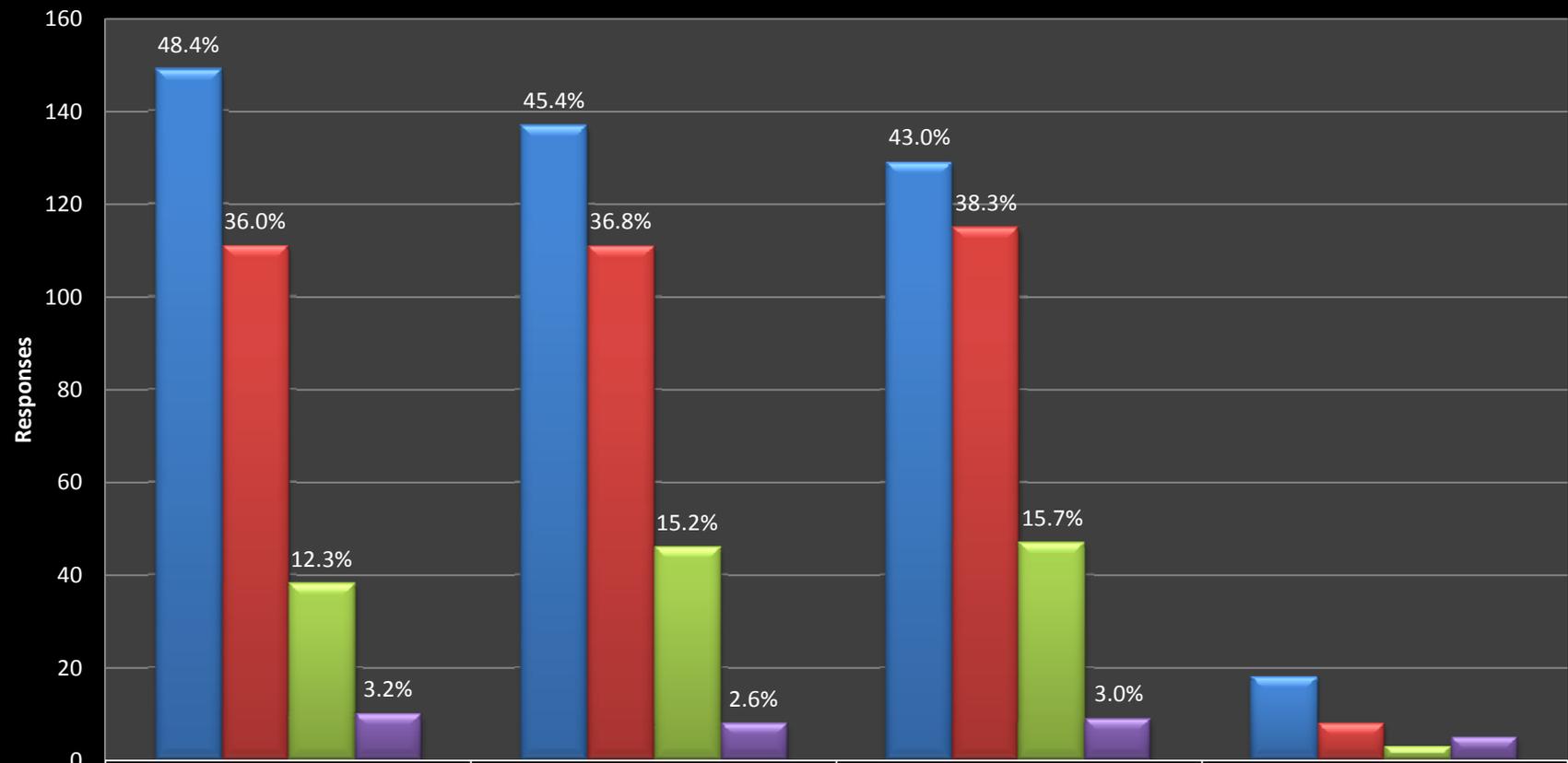
	Indian Civil Rights Act	Enforcement of Native American and/or Tribal Law	Bureau of Indian Affairs Probates	Other
Very Important	153	150	135	11
Important	102	103	107	5
Somewhat Important	45	43	47	5
Not Important	11	15	15	6

How important is it for CLS to focus its resources in the area of Consumer Issues Involving Purchasing Problems?

Very Important Important Somewhat Important Not Important



How important is it for CLS to focus on the following areas Consumer Issues Involving Purchasing Problems?



	Problems with Faulty Merchandise or Dishonest Seller Practices	Contracts/Warranties	Problems with Repairs	Other
Very Important	149	137	129	18
Important	111	111	115	8
Somewhat Important	38	46	47	3
Not Important	10	8	9	5

Appendix C: Summary of Focus Groups

Summary of Focus Groups

Between February and October 2009, CLS conducted twenty focus groups in fourteen different counties with a total of 323 participants. As the following summary elaborates, these focus groups produced a series of insights about the diverse, unmet legal needs of low-income Coloradans. The overall picture is one of low-income individuals struggling with economic and social issues, many of which have a legal component. Although the specific issues vary by demographic group, there are several common themes, principally employment-related concerns, housing, health care, and domestic violence.

Methodology

Local service providers assisted CLS staff in organizing and conducting the focus groups. With the exception of one focus group,¹ all participants were eligible for CLS services. Several focus groups were aimed at a particular demographic, including senior citizens, Spanish-speaking residents, migrant farm workers, African immigrants, and Asian and Pacific Islanders.

Participants responded to questions and CLS staff recorded the responses. In some focus groups, participants were given a small value gift certificate (e.g., \$10) for use at a local grocery store. In other focus groups, participants were provided a simple meal or light refreshments. Child care and translation were provided when needed.

There were likely more female participants than male participants,² although almost all groups had a mix of men and women. The focus groups reflected considerable racial diversity, with 66 Caucasian, 54 Latino, 35 African American or African, 12 Native American, and 2 Asian participants.³ The median number of people participating in the focus group was 10, with a high of 28 and a low of two participants.

Consistent themes

Although there was some diversity in legal needs, four issues surfaced repeatedly. First, nearly every group (with the exception of senior citizens) identified employment-related issues as their primary concern. For most participants, the problem was simply a lack of jobs and the low wages paid by the jobs that were available. For some participants, there were specific issues, such as accessing unemployment or claims of discrimination. For migrant workers, low wages were a particular issue, with many noting that they are paid below minimum wage and have no recourse because their employers threaten to hire someone else if they complain.

Second, nearly every group identified housing issues as a dominant concern, including a lack of affordable housing as well as landlord/tenant issues. Some participants noted foreclosure problems.

¹ For a mixture of linguistic and cultural reasons, the focus group for Asian and Pacific Islanders in Denver was a collection of community leaders, not necessarily low-income individuals.

² Although some focus group reports noted the split between men and women (thus, we can tell that 89 women and 49 men participated), numerous reports did not, only noting that some men and some women participated.

³ Again, not all focus group reports noted the racial make-up of the group.

Third, most groups identified health care as a substantial concern—both the affordability and availability of health care. There was not a specific legal issue accompanying the concern

Finally, focus groups repeatedly raised concerns about domestic violence. Nearly every group contained at least one member who had been a victim of domestic violence and many groups had a sizeable number of victims. For example, at least five groups had a substantial percentage of domestic violence victims, with 30 to 55% of the participants reporting incidents of domestic violence.

In addition to these dominant needs, most groups also reported concerns about other legal issues, including family law (particularly grandparent rights), identity theft, access to credit, and access to public benefits, including Social Security.

Diverse needs

Beyond these common needs, specific demographic groups reported particular needs. For example, as might be imagined, senior citizens were focused on the medical directive and wills. By contrast, migrant farm workers were concerned about exploitation by employers. And non-citizens were particularly concerned about immigration-related issues. The immigration-related issues included the need for documentation and defense against removal. Non-citizens also noted a strong reluctance to report domestic violence when the abuser is the primary wage earner.

Awareness of CLS

There was a tremendous range of awareness about CLS. The migrant farm workers were the most familiar with CLS, whereas most other groups had never heard of CLS or were only somewhat familiar with the available services.

Synthesis

Although there are a variety of legal needs, many diverging along demographic lines, there are also several consistent needs, primarily related to employment, housing healthcare, and domestic violence. For the first three needs, there was not one outstanding legal issue, such as employment discrimination, but rather the simple lack of jobs, affordable housing, and affordable, accessible health care.

Focus groups, by county

Alamosa County

- October 2009, local residents (12 participants)
 - Employment (lack of jobs, low wages)
 - Housing (lack of affordable housing)
 - Some familiarity with CLS

Boulder County

- August 5, 2009, migrant farm workers (10 participants)
 - Employment (lack of jobs, low wages)
 - Immigration issues
 - Language barriers
 - Domestic violence
 - High degree of familiarity with CLS through the CLS Migrant Farm Worker Division

Denver County

- July 8, 2009, senior citizens (10 participants)
 - Employment (lack of jobs, especially for ex-convicts)
 - Domestic violence
 - Health care
 - Housing
 - Identity theft
 - Participants thought CLS should do more education and outreach about their services because an overall theme was a lack of familiarity with accessing legal assistance
- August 31, 2009, African immigrants (9 participants)
 - Employment (discrimination)
 - Social Security issues (e.g., letter saying had been overpaid by Social Security but participant did not understand what this meant)
 - Housing
 - Immigration-related issues (specifically, concern about being defrauded by would-be lawyers)
- August 2009 representatives from the Asian American/Pacific Islander community (11 community leaders)
 - For both cultural and linguistic reasons (members of the community speak thirteen different languages), the participants in this focus group were community leaders
 - Difficulty navigating the legal system and obtaining effective representation
- Sept 4, 2009, residents in Denver (10 participants)
 - Employment (including verification of employment and discrimination)
 - Housing
 - Domestic violence (50% had been victims)

- Very little familiarity with CLS

El Paso County

- July 14, 2009, Spanish speaking residents (9 participants)
 - Employment (including wrongful discharge, wages falling below the minimum wage, and sexual harassment)
 - Immigration-related issues
 - Financial needs: inability to obtain credit/loans
 - Domestic violence (44% had been victims)
 - Accessing public assistance
 - Health care
 - Need for a bilingual reception in the Colorado Springs office
- July 22, 2009, local (16 participants)
 - Employment (lack of training, low wages)
 - Housing (lack of affordable housing, evictions, foreclosures, discrimination)
 - Domestic violence (55% had been victims)
 - Financial issues (debt collection; obtaining loans)
 - Identity theft
 - Immigration-related issues
 - Health care (affordability & access)
 - Public assistance access

Gilpin County

- July 29, 2009, senior residents (15 participants)
 - Health care (affordability, too few health care providers for seniors)
 - Affordable housing (lack of subsidized units, insufficient assisted living facilities)
 - Inadequate income
 - Domestic violence

La Plata, Archuleta & Montezuma Counties

- July 2009, residents in and around Durango and La Plata (28 participants)
 - Employment (difficulty obtaining unemployment benefits; wrongful discharge)
 - Domestic violence (30% had been victims)
 - Wills/trusts
 - Housing
 - Family Law
 - Health care
 - Very little familiarity with CLS

Larimer County

- October 22, 2009, local residents (4 participants)
 - Employment (lack of jobs paying livable wage)
 - Housing (lack of affordable housing)
 - Health care (including lack of access to mental health)
 - No familiarity with CLS

Las Animas County

- August 26, 2009, local residents (12 participants)
- Employment (lack of jobs)
- Housing (foreclosures)
- Wills and medical directives
- Domestic violence
- Low level of familiarity with CLS

Mesa County

- June 23, 2009, homeless persons (9 participants)
 - Employment (lack of jobs, low wages)
 - Housing (affordability & discrimination by landlords)
 - Discrimination by employers, landlords, law enforcement (e.g., citations for minor infractions such as jaywalking)
 - Domestic violence (33% had been victims)
 - Moderate awareness of CLS
- July 2009, migrant farm workers (9 participants)
 - Legalization and other immigration-related issues
 - Employment (lack of jobs, low wages)
 - Language barriers
 - Familiar with CLS

Montrose County

- June 16 & 23, 2009 (12 participants total)
 - Employment
 - Healthcare
 - Housing
 - Domestic violence (one person)
 - No familiarity with CLS

Morgan County

- October 22, 2009, residents (2 participants)
 - Family law (issues related to raising grandchildren, such as securing guardianship and custody orders)
 - Employment (lack of jobs)
 - Low level of familiarity with CLS

Otero County

- June 27, 2009, persons with limited English proficiency (14 participants)
 - Discrimination and exploitation in the workplace: numerous participants said that if they complained at work, they risked losing their jobs; as a result, they accept below-minimum-wage pay
 - Housing (landlord/tenant issues)
 - Domestic violence (one person)

- Immigration-related issues (including difficulty obtaining necessary documentation)
- Health care (affordability)
- Very little familiarity with the court system and considerable barriers to access because of language and limited proficiency with technology

Pueblo County

- February 2009, Spanish-speakers, including migrant farm workers (14 participants)
 - Employment (low wages, high cost child care)
 - Housing (landlord/tenant issues)
 - Domestic violence (including concern about reporting it for fear the perpetrator will be deported)
 - Immigration-related issues
 - Health care
 - Need for interpreters in courts
 - Limited knowledge of CLS services, limited literacy, limited access to and knowledge of technology

- February 2009, English-speaking residents (8 participants)
 - Employment (discrimination, low wages, high cost of child care)
 - Housing (landlord/tenant)
 - Family Law (parenting time for fathers, grandparent visiting time)
 - Discrimination against deaf people
 - Domestic violence, especially for members of the deaf community
 - Little familiarity with CLS

Summit County

- May 19, 2009, senior citizens in Summit County (9 participants)
 - Health care (affordability, gaps in Medicare coverage)
 - Simple estate planning and advanced medical directives
 - High degree of familiarity with CLS

Appendix D: Focus Group Reports

Alamosa County

Legal Needs Assessment Focus Group Summary

October, 2009

In October, 2009, CLS income-eligible clients residing in Alamosa County were surveyed to assist in determining current legal needs in the community. The assessments were conducted at the CLS office in Alamosa. The following is a summary report from those survey results.

Introduction

Colorado Legal Services (CLS) is a non-profit corporation that has assisted low-income persons and seniors in the State of Colorado for 85 years. The mission of CLS is to provide meaningful access to high quality, civil legal services in the pursuit of justice for as many low-income persons and members of vulnerable populations throughout Colorado as possible.

Background

The purpose of this CLS client survey conducted in Alamosa County was to provide information and guidance to Colorado Legal Services that will assist in assessing the most pressing current and evolving legal needs of low-income persons and members of other vulnerable populations so that CLS may appropriately focus its limited resources to meet those in greatest need. The survey process was also a means for gaining information about the specific legal needs of the low-income population in Alamosa County.

Methodology

- The surveys were conducted with CLS income-eligible clients at the Alamosa CLS Office.
- The surveys were completed by selected clients on an individual basis.
- Interpreters were not needed.

Process Overview

The survey process included 12 participants.

- The information from the surveys was reviewed, coded into categories, and organized by themes.
- Legal/social issues included: employment, affordable housing, child custody and other family law issues, and access to utilities.

Highlights of Findings

This section contains highlights of the key points identified from the surveys.

Availability and/or Use of CLS

Survey participants were aware of CLS services through a variety of sources including:

- Private attorney referrals
- Friends and relatives
- Social Services staff
- Court staff

Participants had used legal services in the past 12 months in the following areas:

- Adoption
- Allocation of parental responsibilities
- Visitation
- Divorce
- Utilities dispute

Employment

Lack of jobs and low wages for existing jobs were considered the biggest personal and community hardships for survey participants.

Housing

There were various concerns expressed by survey respondents regarding the lack of affordable housing.

Domestic Violence

None of the survey respondents indicated a history or incidence of domestic violence.

Observations and Conclusions

The following is a summary of general observations and conclusions taken from the results of the survey:

- Lack of jobs and low wages for existing jobs were major concerns for participants.
- Family law issues and lack of affordable housing were major concerns for participants.
- Several participants felt that CLS staffing should be increased in the Alamosa office in order to meet more of the legal needs of low-income residents in the San Luis Valley.

Boulder County

Legal Needs Assessment: Migrant Focus Group Summary

August 5, 2009

On August 5, 2009 a focus group was conducted with migrant farm workers residing in a semi-rural section of Boulder County, Colorado, who were eligible for CLS services. The following is a summary report from that event.

Introduction

Colorado Legal Services (CLS) is a non-profit corporation that has assisted low-income persons and seniors in the State of Colorado for 85 years. The mission of CLS is to provide meaningful access to high quality, civil legal services in the pursuit of justice for as many low-income persons and members of vulnerable populations throughout Colorado as possible.

Background

The purpose of the focus group conducted in Boulder County was to provide information and guidance to Colorado Legal Services that will assist in assessing the most pressing current and evolving legal needs of low-income persons and members of other vulnerable populations, so that CLS may appropriately focus its limited resources to meet those most pressing needs. The focus group was also a means for gaining information about the specific legal needs of the migrant farm worker population in Boulder County.

Methodology

- The focus group meeting was held at Casa De La Esperanza (U.S. Department of Agriculture-sponsored public housing for farm workers), located in Longmont, Colorado. The focus group meeting was part of CLS' regular migrant outreach meeting.
- Participants in the focus group were asked to respond to questions and CLS staff members recorded the responses.
- Childcare was provided
- Spanish-speaking interpreters were available and were used as needed

Process Overview

The focus group included a total of 10 participants, including male and female, some of whom were single and some married and ages ranged from 23 to 72 years old, with an average age of 41 yrs.

- All participants were Hispanic.
- Household size ranged from four to six persons, and the number of children per household ranged from two to four.

- Five (5) participants had access to computers/internet.
- All participants were residing in Boulder County.
- Five (5) participants reported income between \$10,000-\$15,000, Four (4) reported income between \$15,000-20,000 and one reported income between \$20,000-\$25,000.
- The dialogue from focus group was reviewed, coded into categories and organized by themes.
- Legal/social issues included: lack of employment and low wages.

Highlights of Findings

This section contains highlights of the key points identified in the focus group.

Availability and/or use of CLS

Most of the participants were aware of the existence of CLS through the outreach efforts of CLS' Migrant Farm Worker Division staff.

Employment

Participants cited the lack of employment opportunities and low wages as creating the biggest hardship on families.

Domestic Violence

One participant indicated that she had been a victim of domestic violence.

Immigration and Residency Status

Participants expressed a need for information about immigration issues but also expressed concern with accepting assistance regarding immigration or residency status issues, unless they were with someone they trusted.

Discrimination

Participants suggested that more education about discriminatory practices would be helpful for migrant farm workers.

Observations and Conclusions

The following is a summary of general observations and conclusions taken from the results of the focus group:

- Migrant farm workers in Boulder County are generally familiar with CLS as a result of its outreach efforts, and the farm workers' connections with service agencies and community resources.
- Persons who need help with immigration and residency status issues are hesitant to accept assistance unless they are with someone they trust.
- Language is a barrier in addressing many of the problems faced by Spanish-speaking persons in Boulder County.

Denver County

Legal Needs Assessment: African Immigrant Focus Group Summary

August 31, 2009

On August 31, 2009, a focus group was conducted with African immigrants living in the Denver Metro Area who were eligible for CLS services. The focus group was held at the Colorado African Organization (CAO), located in Denver, Colorado.

Introduction

Colorado Legal Services (CLS) is a non-profit corporation that has assisted low-income persons and seniors in the State of Colorado for 85 years. The mission of CLS is to provide meaningful access to high quality, civil legal services in the pursuit of justice for as many low-income persons and members of vulnerable populations throughout Colorado as possible.

Background

The purpose of the focus group conducted with African immigrants was to provide information and guidance to Colorado Legal Services that will assist in assessing the most pressing current and evolving legal needs of low-income persons and members of other vulnerable populations, so that CLS may appropriately focus its limited resources to meet those most pressing needs. The focus group was also a means for gaining information about the specific legal needs of African immigrants living in the Denver metro area.

Methodology

- The focus group was held in August 2009 with the cooperation and assistance of the Colorado African Organization (CAO). The CAO is a nonprofit organization serving African immigrants, refugees and asylees in Colorado.
- The CAO was used as an agent to conduct significant outreach and to contact low-income and vulnerable African immigrants throughout their community regarding the focus group. The CAO screened focus group participants to determine if they were income-eligible for CLS services.
- A \$10 gift certificate to a local supermarket was given to each participant as thanks for participating in the discussion.
- The focus group discussion was recorded by a CLS staff member with the consent of the participants.

Process Overview

The focus group included a total of 9 participants, 4 male and 5 female, single and married, and with ages ranging from 31 to 55 years old, with an average age of 41.

- Three participants were from the Ivory Coast, three were from Somalia, one was from Senegal, one from Sudan, and one from Cameroon.
- The discussion from the sessions was reviewed, coded into categories and organized by themes.

- Legal/social issues included: employment, housing, immigration, fraud and discrimination.
- Interpreters were available, however all participants spoke English.

Highlights of Findings

This section contains highlights of the key points identified in the focus group discussions.

Employment Discrimination

A common concern was that the participants' skills were not transferable to U.S. jobs because of licensure issues, problems with acceptance of degrees and discrimination. Following are some illustrative statements:

"For me, people don't think I can do the job when they see I am from Africa. I can write better than most and can do projects. I can't get credit in this country for my knowledge".

"Employers do not recognize my skills from my country. I can't get past the application process. They ask my race and I say African and that makes many people uncomfortable".

"I am a certified Nurse but cannot get a job. I say I am from Somalia and I do not get an interview".

"On the forms we cannot put Black African. It only says Black American. I am educated but cannot get credit for my skills. I cannot find a job".

Social Security

Several participants did not understand letters they had received from the Social Security Administration:

"I got a letter from Social Security saying that they over paid me. I went there but they will not explain what I need to do. I don't understand". "I had a Social Security application. I have diabetes and my wife is disabled. I got a letter telling me to appeal in 15 days and I did not understand. I missed the date and I need someone to help me understand".

Housing

Some participants had difficulty obtaining rental housing because they did not have required state identification or adequate immigrant documentation.

Residency Status and Immigration

Many participants expressed a need for legal assistance regarding immigration issues, such as obtaining green cards. They also stated that persons pretending to be attorneys have defrauded members of the African community.

Observations and Conclusions

The following is a summary of general observations and conclusions taken from the focus group:

- Immigration and employment discrimination issues were major concerns of participants.
- Participants stated that many members of the low-income African immigrant community are being duped or defrauded by people posing as lawyers or other officials.

Denver County

Legal Needs Assessment: Asian American/Pacific Islander Focus Group Summary

August 2009

In August 2009, a focus group was conducted with representatives from the Asian American/Pacific Islander (AA/PI) community who were eligible for CLS services. The focus group was hosted by the Asian Pacific Development Center (APDC), located in Denver, Colorado. The following is a summary report from that event.

Introduction

Colorado Legal Services (CLS) is a non-profit corporation that has assisted low-income persons and seniors in the State of Colorado for 85 years. The mission of CLS is to provide meaningful access to high quality, civil legal services in the pursuit of justice for as many low-income persons and members of vulnerable populations throughout Colorado as possible.

Background

The purpose of the focus group conducted in Denver County was to provide information and guidance to Colorado Legal Services that will assist in assessing the most pressing current and evolving legal needs of low-income persons and members of other vulnerable populations, so that CLS may appropriately focus its limited resources to meet those most pressing needs. The focus group was also a means for gaining information about the specific legal needs of the low-income Asian American and Pacific Islander population in Denver County.

Methodology

- The focus group was held in Denver and was hosted by The Asian Pacific Development Center. The Asian American and Pacific Islander clients were represented by their specific community leaders for several cultural reasons: 1) There is a prohibitive sense of embarrassment and personal shame associated with being involved in a legal conflict; 2) It is culturally forbidden to speak of personal problems in a group setting. In addition, there were several logistical issues: 1) There are at least 13 different languages and/or dialect variations which make direct interpretation impractical as well as financially difficult; 2) There is an inherent distrust of outsiders and time is needed to understand cultural sensitivities and build a trust-based relationship with clients before they might be comfortable speaking in a group setting.
- The Director of Programs for APDC arranged representation by individual community leaders and provided the meeting facility.
- The conversation and comments were recorded by a CLS staff member with consent from the participants.
- Lunch was provided prior to the event.
- A \$10 gift certificate to a grocery store was given to each community leader, each of whom agreed to forward the gift certificate on to a low-income member of the Asian American or Pacific Islander community.

Process Overview

The focus group included a total of 11 community leaders.

- The individual community leaders had reviewed the focus group questionnaires prior to the meeting.
- Each community leader discussed community legal/social concerns. All of the community leaders reiterated that extreme cultural and language barriers existed and provided a challenge to CLS in providing services to their respective and collective community.

Highlights of Findings

Following are several highlights identified during the process and/or during discussions:

- The community leaders were Laotian, Chinese, Vietnamese, Korean, and Cambodian.
- Unique cultural sensitivities and/or barriers were encountered as previously noted.
- Community leaders believed that CLS was not as responsive as it should be to their community and/or requests for assistance because of the extreme language barriers that exist.

The following are excerpts and/or summarized statements taken from each Community Leader:

Community Leader 1

Poverty is a common community hardship. Understanding and navigating the legal system is difficult, because of language barriers and cultural differences.

Community Leader 2

I agree with Community Leader 1's statement. Laotians are also afraid of issues with legal ramifications; they avoid anything involving legal issues. Laotians lack education and knowledge and are dependent on interpreters for everything.

Community Leader 3

Cultural differences create major barriers. Lack of knowledge creates a lot of fear and lack of confidence. We are very generational dependent and trust only each other.

Community Leader 4

Language is the major barrier. It affects all aspects of life.

Community Leader 5

It is language and trust. We do not trust legal services agencies because the word of mouth in the community is that the job won't be done well because legal aid is free.

Community Leader 6

When we have called CLS before we didn't get a return phone call.

Community Leader 7

I don't understand the fee schedules of attorneys.

Community Leader 8

There are people who say that they will help us obtain visas and that if we do not work with them, our kids will be deported. As soon as they get our money, they run out on us.

Community Leader 9

University Hospital refuses medical care to our community members because of the language barrier

Community Leader 10

In addition to all the other problems, transportation is a big issue. People cannot travel outside their small community area

Community Leader 11

It would be beneficial for Colorado Legal Services to meet with community leaders to help us understand the services CLS provides and to develop a working relationship.

Discrimination

There is a sense that discrimination exists outside of the specific local communities because of the significant language barriers and cultural differences.

Observations and Conclusions

The following is a summary listing of general observations and conclusions taken from the results of this focus group:

- There are cultural sensibilities in the AA/PI community that make it challenging for service providers to gain the trust of community members. Interaction with community leaders is essential to the development of dialogue and trust with individual clients.
- There is not a single point of access to which low-income members of the AA/PI community may be directed. This makes it difficult to make use of the available resources in the community and in Denver County.
- Language is a major barrier not only with regard to accessing legal services, but also in every aspect of daily life.
- Members of the AA/PI community are unable to navigate legal issues on their own (pro se), due to extreme language and cultural barriers.

Denver County

Legal Needs Assessment Focus Group Summary

September 4, 2009

On September 4, 2009, a focus group was conducted with persons residing in Denver, Colorado, who were eligible for CLS services. The following is a summary report from that event.

Introduction

Colorado Legal Services (CLS) is a non-profit corporation that has assisted low-income persons and seniors in the State of Colorado for 85 years. The mission of CLS is to provide meaningful access to high quality, civil legal services in the pursuit of justice for as many low-income persons and members of vulnerable populations throughout Colorado as possible.

Background

The purpose of the focus group conducted in Denver County was to provide information and guidance to Colorado Legal Services that will assist in assessing the most pressing current and evolving legal needs of low-income persons and members of other vulnerable populations, so that CLS may appropriately focus its limited resources to meet those most pressing needs. The focus group was also a means for gaining information about the specific legal needs of the low-income population in Denver County.

Methodology

- The focus group was held at Catholic Charities' Good Samaritan House, located in Denver.
- Good Samaritan House assisted CLS in organizing and conducting the focus group.
- Participants were asked to respond to questions and CLS staff members recorded their responses.
- CLS provided lunch for the participants prior to the meeting.
- Childcare was provided.
- A \$10 gift certificate to a supermarket was given to each participant at the conclusion of the session as thanks for participating in the discussion.

Process Overview

The focus group included a total of 10 participants, including male and female, some of whom were single and some married, and ages ranged from 23 - 61 years.

- The discussion from the session was reviewed, coded into categories and organized by themes.
- Legal/social issues included: access to the legal system, employment, housing, discrimination, and difficulty securing a Colorado driver's license or identification card from the Department of Motor Vehicles.

Highlights of Findings

This section contains highlights of the key points identified in the focus group.

Access/Availability of Legal Services

Many of the participants did not know how to access legal assistance and had not heard of CLS. They suggested that CLS undertake efforts to increase its visibility in the community and strengthen its communication with Good Samaritan House.

Some participants felt that court personnel in Denver were hostile toward pro se or self-represented litigants. Many participants indicated that they had difficulty trying to file a case pro se.

One participant stated, "I tried to do pro se, but it was difficult and the people at the courts were rude and abusive."

Another participant said, "I cannot understand the legal language in the documents or the process. Eventually, you get lost in the process or do things wrong."

Employment

Many participants believed that employment issues were a major concern. Comments by the participants included the following:

"My company laid me off then went out of business."

"I was working for Wal-Mart and had surgery. They said that I was taking too much time off and fired me. They had me sign a piece of paper and I thought that if I co-operated they would be helpful, but they fired me."

"I was a nanny for six years and when I applied for a new job, the former employer would not provide verification that I had worked for him for room and board and a

little cash. He will not answer calls and I cannot verify employment for the past six years.”

Housing

There were various concerns expressed regarding housing, including lack of affordable housing, lack of safe housing, and problems in being evicted. Comments by the participants included the following:

“My apartment had black mold and a faulty heater. I asked for repairs and the landlord evicted me and my 5-month-old baby. I could not find legal help and am now in a shelter.”

“My company bankrupted and I cannot find a job. I used all my resources trying to survive and now am homeless.”

“I got a DUI and went to jail for two months. My landlord threw out all my belongings including my identification.”

Domestic Violence

- 50% of participants (5) indicated that they had been the victims of domestic violence.

Discrimination

One participant believed she had been a victim of employment discrimination on the basis of age and race, and another participant believed she had been discriminated against due to a disability.

Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV)

Several participants stated that the DMV failed to assist them and to treat them with respect. One participant said that staff at the DMV were rude and antagonistic. Another participant stated that she needed an attorney to advocate for her with DMV to obtain documentation necessary to obtain state identification papers.

Observations and Conclusions

- Participants identified a wide range of issues in Denver County, including difficulty accessing the legal system, employment issues, housing issues, discrimination, and difficulty dealing with the state Department of Motor Vehicles.
- CLS should engage in more outreach to increase its visibility in the community.

Denver County

Legal Needs Assessment: Senior Focus Group Summary

July 8, 2009

On July 8, 2009 a focus group was conducted with persons residing in Denver County who were eligible for CLS services. The focus group was held at a Denver County Public Library. The following is a summary report from that event.

Introduction

Colorado Legal Services (CLS) is a non-profit corporation that has assisted low-income persons and seniors in the State of Colorado for 85 years. The mission of CLS is to provide meaningful access to high quality, civil legal services in the pursuit of justice for as many low-income persons and members of vulnerable populations throughout Colorado as possible.

Background

The purpose of the focus group conducted in Denver County was to provide information and guidance to Colorado Legal Services that will assist in assessing the most pressing current and evolving legal needs of low-income persons and members of other vulnerable populations, so that CLS may appropriately focus its limited resources to meet those most pressing needs. The focus group was also a means for gaining information about the specific legal needs of the senior population in Denver County.

Methodology

- The meeting was held at a Denver County Public Library.
- Childcare was not needed.
- Interpreters were not needed.
- Participants were asked to respond to questions and CLS staff members recorded their responses.
- CLS provided light refreshments for the participants.

Process Overview

The focus group included a total of 10 participants, including 1 male and 9 females, some of whom were single and some married, and ages ranged from 51 to 82 years old with an average age of 67 yrs.

- All participants were African-American.
- Two (2) participants lived in a one-person household; two lived in a two-person household; two lived in a three-person household; two lived in a four-person household; one lived in a six-person household and one lived in a seven-person household.

- Two (2) participants had access to the Internet.
- Two (2) participants had annual income between \$10,000-\$15,000; two participants had income between \$15,000-\$20,000; one participant had income between \$20,000-\$25,000; one had income between \$25,000-30,000; three had income over \$30,000 and one person did not respond to that question.
- The discussion from the session was reviewed, coded into categories and organized by themes.
- Legal/social issues included health care/prescription drug related issues, housing, poverty, lack of support and employment for ex-convicts, and ID theft.

Highlights of Findings

This section contains highlights of the key points identified in the focus group.

Availability and/or use of CLS

4 participants reported unmet legal needs within the past 12 months: one homeowner's insurance claim, one unemployment claim, one denial of Social Security benefits, and a conservator/guardianship issue.

Two people who had used CLS previously were very satisfied with the services they received.

Participants felt that CLS should provide greater outreach and more education.

Employment

Employment-related issues were very prevalent, with concern across the group about overall poverty, lack of jobs and low wages. This focus group was also very concerned about employment issues related to ex-convicts, stating that:

- There were no opportunities available for ex-convicts.
- There is no support system for ex-convicts.
- Hiring practices regarding ex-convicts are too strict.

Other issues related to employment were also expressed as follows:

- Cost of living was going up too fast.
- Taxes were increasing.
- High cost of childcare offset already low wages.
- Social Security COLA should be raised, not lowered.
- Families should not have to wait 45 days for food stamps and food stamps should be more accessible to homeless persons.

Domestic Violence

Three (3) participants responded on the demographic sheet that s/he had been a victim of domestic violence.

Residency Status and Immigration

There were no issues in these areas.

Health Care

Participants expressed an overall concern about the cost of health care and prescription drugs. There was some discussion regarding health care reform with the desire to see an expansion of Medicare coverage.

Identity Theft

All participants expressed concern about the seriousness of and increase in the number of identity theft cases.

Discrimination

Past and/or present issues of discrimination were not apparent during the course of discussion nor were they noted as responses on the demographic sheet.

Housing

There were many concerns related to housing:

- Housing is becoming even more unaffordable under the present economic circumstances.
- Vacant properties are an increasing problem in some neighborhoods.

Observations and Conclusions

The following is a summary of general observations and conclusions taken from the focus group:

- Most people who are low-income and/or vulnerable do not know how to access legal assistance.
- Those who had heard of CLS knew of it by word of mouth.
- Providing social service agencies and/or other community service groups with information about CLS would help potential clients learn about and access CLS services.
- Some participants felt strongly that there was a disproportionate incarceration of minorities and limited services available for those returning home.
- These participants also felt that there is a real need for a support structure for ex-convicts and that city-held prisoners with families should receive leniency or have the ability to participate in work-release programs so they could go work to help their families financially.
- Because of stricter hiring practices, several participants suggested legislative initiatives to “clear records” so that ex-convicts would eventually have a better chance at gainful employment.
- Several participants felt that eligibility standards should be raised so that more people might have access to help.
- One recommendation was to develop some type of initiative and/ or effort(s) to help people stay in foreclosed and/or vacated homes.

Durango

Legal Needs Assessment Focus Group Summary

July 2009

In July, 2009 a focus group was conducted with persons residing in and around Durango, Colorado, who were eligible for CLS services. The following is a summary report from that event.

Introduction

Colorado Legal Services (CLS) is a non-profit corporation that has assisted low-income persons and seniors in the State of Colorado for 85 years. The mission of CLS is to provide meaningful access to high quality, civil legal services in the pursuit of justice for as many low-income persons and members of vulnerable populations throughout Colorado as possible.

Background

The purpose of the focus group conducted in Durango, Colorado was to provide information and guidance to Colorado Legal Services that will assist in assessing the most pressing current and evolving legal needs of low-income persons and members of other vulnerable populations, so that CLS may appropriately focus its limited resources to meet those most pressing needs. The focus group was also a means for gaining information about the specific legal needs of the low-income population in Durango and La Plata and surrounding counties.

Methodology

- Two staff members from the Durango office of CLS conducted interviews in the local community during July, 2009.
- Interviews were conducted in public venues as well as at a local senior citizens center.
- Participants were asked to respond to questions and CLS staff members recorded their responses.
- Interpreters were not required except in the case of one elderly Ute tribal member whose relatives, who were with him, were used as interpreters.
- A \$10 gift certificate to a retail store was given to each participant at the conclusion of the interview as thanks for participating in the discussion.

Process Overview

The focus group included a total of 28 participants, including 10 males and 18 females, some of whom were single and some married, and with ages ranging from 16 to 81 years old.

- Twelve (12) participants identified themselves as Native American, nine (9) as Caucasian, four (4) as Hispanic, one as African-American, and two chose not to reply to this question.
- All participants were from La Plata, Archuleta, or Montezuma Counties.
- The responses from interviews were reviewed, coded into categories and organized by themes.
- Legal/social issues included: housing, health care, public assistance, poverty, domestic violence, discrimination, family law issues, bankruptcy, and wills.

Highlights of Findings

This section contains highlights of the key points identified in the interviews which constituted the focus group.

Availability and/or use of CLS

Five participants reported the following unmet legal needs within the past 12 months: a post-decree domestic relations issue, assistance with filing for bankruptcy, small claims cases, landlord/tenant disputes, and a car repossession.

Employment

Participants stated that employment-related issues are prevalent in the community:

- Two participants were having difficulty with obtaining unemployment benefits
- One participant felt that he had been wrongfully discharged from his employment.

Domestic Violence

Approximately 30% (8) of the participants indicated that they were victims of domestic violence.

Wills/Trusts

Three participants stated that they needed assistance in executing a will and/or a trust.

Housing

Three participants stated that they had experienced housing-related issues, including eviction actions and alleged lease violations. The participants stated that there is a lack of affordable and decent housing in the area.

Family Law

Six participants indicated that they had experienced family law issues.

Healthcare

Participants expressed an overall concern about the cost of health care and prescription drugs.

Miscellaneous

One participant was seeking a guardianship for her aging parents, one participant thought she needed assistance with filing for bankruptcy, and one participant had been terminated from food stamp benefits.

Observations and Conclusions

The following is a summary of general observations and conclusions taken from the results of the interviews:

- There is a need for public education regarding the availability of CLS in this region.
- High cost of health care and medical debt, especially for the elderly, was a recurring concern.
- Those who had heard of CLS had heard of it by word of mouth.
- Over a third of all respondents indicated that there was a lack of affordable and decent housing in the area.

El Paso County

Legal Needs Assessment Focus Group Summary

July 22, 2009

On July 22, 2009, a focus group was conducted with persons residing in El Paso County, Colorado, who were eligible for CLS services. The focus group was held at the CLS office in Colorado Springs. The following is a summary report from that event.

Introduction

Colorado Legal Services (CLS) is a non-profit corporation that has assisted low-income persons and seniors in the State of Colorado for 85 years. The mission of CLS is to provide meaningful access to high quality, civil legal services in the pursuit of justice for as many low-income persons and members of vulnerable populations throughout Colorado as possible.

Background

The purpose of the focus group conducted in El Paso County was to provide information and guidance to Colorado Legal Services that will assist in assessing the most pressing current and evolving legal needs of low-income persons and members of other vulnerable populations, so that CLS may appropriately focus its limited resources to meet those most pressing needs. The focus group was also a means for gaining information about the specific legal needs of the low-income population in El Paso County.

Methodology

- The focus group was held at the CLS Office in Colorado Springs.
- Three human service organizations assisted CLS in organizing and conducting the focus groups: a local senior citizens' center, TESSA (a domestic violence agency), and the Independence Center (a disability rights agency).
- Participants were asked to respond to questions and CLS staff members recorded their responses.
- The meeting was held on the first floor of the office to accommodate an elderly woman in a wheelchair.
- CLS provided a light dinner for the participants prior to the meeting.
- A \$10 gift certificate to a supermarket was given to each participant at the conclusion of the session as thanks for participating in the discussion.

Process Overview

The focus group included a total of 16 participants, including 2 males and 14 females, some of whom were single and some married, and ages ranged from 18 to 87 years old, with an average age of 47 years old.

- 8 participants were Caucasian, 1 was Caucasian/Asian, 3 were Hispanic and 4 were African American.
- 13 participants had access to the Internet.
- 9 participants indicated that they had been victims of domestic violence.
- 7 participants lived in a one-person household; 5 lived in two-person households; 1 lived in a three-person household; 2 lived in a four-person household and 1 lived in a seven-person household.
- 9 participants reported annual income of less than \$10,000; 1 reported income between \$10,000-15,000; 2 reported an income between \$15,000-20,000; 2 reported an income between \$20,000-25,000 and; 2 reported income above \$30,000.
- The discussion from the session was reviewed, coded into categories and organized by themes.
- Legal/social issues included: Employment, discrimination, ID theft, public benefits, housing, healthcare, domestic violence, immigration, debt collection, and bankruptcy.

Highlights of Findings

This section contains highlights of the key points identified in the focus group.

Legal Issues Experienced by Participants

9 participants indicated that they had required legal assistance in the past 12 months. Legal issues included immigration, foreclosure, custody, collection issues and bankruptcy.

Employment

Participants cited employment-related issues as a major cause of poverty in the region. Some issues discussed included the following:

- Lack of affordable training in specific skill related areas.
- A lack of overall job training opportunities.
- Low wages created by the presence of military bases which drives down wages (presumably because of a large transient secondary workforce).

Housing

There were various concerns expressed regarding housing. Specific issues included:

- Lack of affordable housing
- Lack of safe housing
- Evictions
- Foreclosures
- Alleged discrimination when applying for low-income housing.

Domestic Violence

56% of participants (9) indicated that they had been the victims of domestic violence. Some of the specific issues and/or concerns included:

- Lack of enforcement of protection orders
- Lack of legal representation, especially in cases involving children
- Complaints that law enforcement is unresponsive to calls regarding domestic violence
- Financial problems resulting from domestic violence, which can include displacement from housing

Financial Issues

Complaints regarding financial issues included:

- General debt collection issues
- Inability to obtain cred

Identity Theft

There were several complaints regarding identity theft.

Residency Status and Immigration

Several issues regarding residency status and immigration were discussed, including:

- Difficulty in obtaining legal status
- Issues related to U.S.-born children of illegal parents
- A lack of knowledge about available resources regarding immigration issues
- The high fees charged by attorneys for assistance with immigration issues

Health care

Access to health care was expressed as a concern by many participants, and included the following issues:

- Overall lack of affordable and/or available insurance coverage
- Long waiting periods for applications and/or acceptance of coverage
- Lack of availability of medical services in the community
- Lack of available substance abuse treatment for low income persons and/or the disabled

Public Assistance

Participants complained that the Department of Human Services is slow and often unresponsive to requests for assistance. Some of the specific complaints included:

- Long and complicated application forms
- Excessive waiting periods for food stamps
- Long applications and lengthy waiting periods for TANF and Medicaid benefits
- Lack of benefits and/or programs for the disabled

Discrimination

There was one complaint of discrimination related to low-income housing.

Observations and Conclusions

- Participants identified a wide range of issues that contribute to poverty in El Paso County, including employment, housing, domestic violence, immigration and difficulty obtaining public assistance, health insurance and health care.

El Paso County

Legal Needs Assessment: Spanish-Speaking Focus Group Summary

July 14, 2009

On July 14, 2009, a focus group was conducted with Spanish-speaking persons residing in El Paso County who were eligible for CLS services. The focus group was held at Centro De La Familia, an organization that provides services to Spanish-speaking families in El Paso County. The following is a summary report from that event.

Introduction

Colorado Legal Services (CLS) is a non-profit corporation that has assisted low-income persons and seniors in the State of Colorado for 85 years. The mission of CLS is to provide meaningful access to high quality, civil legal services in the pursuit of justice for as many low-income persons and members of vulnerable populations throughout Colorado as possible.

Background

The purpose of the focus group conducted in El Paso County was to provide information and guidance to Colorado Legal Services that will assist in assessing the most pressing current and evolving legal needs of low-income persons and members of other vulnerable populations, so that CLS may appropriately focus its limited resources to meet those most pressing needs. The focus group was also a means for gaining information about the specific legal needs of the Spanish-speaking client community in El Paso County.

Methodology

- The focus group was held at Centro De Le Familia, which is located in Colorado Springs.
- A CLS Spanish-speaking attorney and a CLS Spanish-speaking paralegal facilitated the focus group.
- Childcare was provided for the participants' children.
- CLS provided a light dinner to participants and their children.
- A \$10 gift certificate to a local supermarket was given to each participant as thanks for participating in the discussion.

Process Overview

The focus group included a total of 9 female participants, some of whom were single and some married, with ages ranging from 25 to 56, with an average age of 38 years old.

- All participants were Hispanic.
- Four (4) participants had access to the Internet.

- Four (4) participants indicated that they had been victims of domestic violence.
- Five (5) participants lived in a two-person household; 1 participant lived in a three- person household; 2 participants lived in a four-person household and 1 participant lived in a five-person household.
- Four (4) participants indicated an annual income of less than \$10,000; 5 participants indicated their income was between \$10,000-15,000.
- The focus group discussion was reviewed, coded into categories and organized by themes.
- Legal/social issues included: employment, health care, immigration, public benefits, issues regarding law enforcement, domestic violence, and collections.

Highlights of Findings

This section contains highlights of the key points identified in the focus group.

Availability and/or use of CLS

- Four (4) participants indicated that they had required legal assistance in the past 12 months.
- Participants believed that it would be beneficial to have a bilingual receptionist at the Colorado Springs office.
- Participants felt that the Colorado Springs office staff should be more sensitive to the needs of Spanish-speaking clients.
- Participants felt that CLS should provide more assistance regarding immigration issues.

Employment

Participants stated that their most important legal needs related to employment issues, such as:

- Wages for employment are below minimum wage
- Wrongful discharge from jobs

- Child care is far too expensive
- Sexual Harassment in the workplace

Financial Issues

- General collection issues
- Inability to obtain credit/loans

Domestic Violence

44% of participants (4) indicated that they had been the victims of domestic violence. Some of those complained that law enforcement is unresponsive to calls regarding domestic violence.

Law Enforcement

There were a number of complaints and/or issues specifically related to “Law Enforcement,” including:

- Police harassment/retaliation for calling for services
- Warrantless searches

Residency Status and Immigration

Issues related to immigration issues included:

- Difficulty in obtaining legal status
- Issues related to U.S. born children of illegal parents
- Lack of knowledge about available resources to assist with immigration issues.
- The high fees charged by attorneys for assistance with immigration issues.

Health care

Access to health care was expressed as a concern of participants. Issues included:

- Long waiting periods for applications for and/or acceptance of coverage

- Lack of availability of medical services in the community

Public Assistance

Participants raised issues that the Department of Human Services is slow and often unresponsive to requests for assistance. Some of the specific complaints included:

- Long applications and lengthy waiting periods for TANF and Medicaid
- The Department of Human Services fails to ask for children's SSN for needed benefits

Observations and Conclusions

The following is a summary of general observations and conclusions taken from the focus group:

- According to the 2000 census, the Hispanic population in Colorado Springs has risen by 12% over the prior ten years and is likely to have risen even more in the past decade.
- The Colorado Springs CLS office should take steps to be more responsive to the needs of the Spanish-speaking clients.
- Participants identified a wide range of issues that contribute to poverty in El Paso County: employment, health care, immigration, public benefits, issues regarding law enforcement, domestic violence, and collections and consumer problems.

Gilpin County

Legal Needs Assessment: Senior Focus Group Summary

July 29, 2009

On July 29, 2009 a focus group was conducted with seniors residing in Gilpin County who were eligible for CLS services. The focus group was held at the Gilpin County Recreational Center. The following is a summary report from that event.

Introduction

Colorado Legal Services (CLS) is a non-profit corporation that has assisted low-income persons and seniors in the State of Colorado for 85 years. The mission of CLS is to provide meaningful access to high quality, civil legal services in the pursuit of justice for as many low-income persons and members of vulnerable populations throughout Colorado as possible.

Background

The purpose of the focus group conducted in Gilpin County was to provide information and guidance to Colorado Legal Services that will assist in assessing the most pressing current and evolving legal needs of low-income persons and members of other vulnerable populations, so that CLS may appropriately focus its limited resources to meet those most pressing needs. The focus group was also a means for gaining information about the specific legal needs of the senior population in Gilpin County.

Methodology

- The focus group meeting was held at the Gilpin County Recreational Center, following a regularly scheduled lunch held for seniors at the Center.
- Childcare was not needed.
- Interpreters were not required.
- Participants were asked to respond to questions and CLS staff members recorded the responses.

Process Overview

The focus group included a total of 15 participants, including 8 men and 7 women, some of whom were single and some married, and with ages ranging from 63 to 83 years old with an average age of 70 yrs.

- All participants were Caucasian.
- Eight (8) participants lived in a one-person household.
- Seven (7) Participants lived in a two- person household.
- Ten (10) participants had access to a computer/internet.

- All participants resided in Gilpin County.
- Two (2) participants had income ranging between \$10,000-\$15,000, six (6) participants had an income between \$20,000-\$25,000, one participant had income between \$25,000-\$30,000 and six participants did not respond to this question.
- The dialogue from the focus group was reviewed, coded into categories and organized by themes.
- Legal/social issues included: health care issues, affordable housing and inadequate income.

Highlights of Findings

This section contains highlights of the key points identified in the focus group.

Availability and/or use of CLS

The participants stated that they believed CLS should engage in more outreach efforts and provide more printed materials to make its services better known to the senior community in Gilpin County. Fourteen of the participants indicated that they did not have any current unmet legal needs, while one participant indicated that she had a real property boundary dispute with a neighbor.

Employment

All participants were retired; the most common concern was that retirement incomes are not adequate to meet basic living expenses. Participants also stated that Social Security cost of living adjustments did not keep up with the rising costs of goods and services in Gilpin County.

Domestic Violence

One female participant indicated that she had been a victim of domestic violence.

Health Care Issues

Health care issues were the major concern for this focus group, including the following:

- High cost of health care

- Too few health care providers for seniors

Housing Issues

Participants also expressed concern regarding housing issues, including:

- A lack of subsidized housing units in Gilpin County
- An inadequate number of assisted living facilities in Gilpin County

Observations and Conclusions

The following is a summary of general observations and conclusions taken from the results of the focus group:

- CLS should engage in greater outreach activities and provide printed materials regarding the availability of its services for seniors.
- Participants felt that the federal government should do more to assist seniors.
- Major concerns were a lack of subsidized housing and assisted living facilities and inadequate access to quality and affordable health care in Gilpin County.

Larimer County

Legal Needs Assessment Focus Group Summary

October 22, 2009

On October 22, 2009, a focus group was conducted with persons residing in Larimer County, Colorado, who were eligible for CLS services. The focus group was held in Loveland, Colorado. The following is a summary report from that event.

Introduction

Colorado Legal Services (CLS) is a non-profit corporation that has assisted low-income persons and seniors in the State of Colorado for 85 years. The mission of CLS is to provide meaningful access to high quality, civil legal services in the pursuit of justice for as many low-income persons and members of vulnerable populations throughout Colorado as possible.

Background

The purpose of the focus group conducted in Larimer County was to provide information and guidance to Colorado Legal Services that will assist in assessing the most pressing current and evolving legal needs of low-income persons and members of other vulnerable populations, so that CLS may appropriately focus its limited resources to meet those most pressing needs. The focus group was also a means for gaining information about the specific legal needs of the low-income population in Loveland and in Larimer County.

Methodology

- Staff from the House of Neighborly Services, an agency that provides emergency social services to people in need, assisted CLS by referring income-eligible participants for the focus group.
- The focus group discussion and comments were recorded by a CLS staff member, with consent of the participants.
- Childcare was offered but was not needed.
- A light lunch was served prior to the event.
- A \$10 gift certificate to a local grocery store was given to each participant at the conclusion of the session as thanks for participating in the discussion.

Process Overview

The focus group included a total of four participants. Participants were male and female and they were all single and all Caucasian.

- The dialogue from the focus group participants was reviewed, coded into categories, and organized by themes.
- Legal/social concerns included: unemployment, landlord/tenant issues, health care, and the availability of legal services.

Highlights of Findings

This section contains highlights of the key points identified in the focus group.

Employment

Participants felt that the lack of employment options in Loveland was a major concern. They felt that even before the current recession, Loveland lacked jobs that paid a livable wage. Comments by participants were as follows:

- “Most entry level jobs are in the retail and restaurant industries and they pay only minimum wage (or less for restaurant jobs)”.
- “Loveland used to have large businesses that paid good wages and had good benefits. But those employers have left and no businesses have stepped in to replace them”.

Landlord/Tenant Issues

- Participants expressed concern regarding a local management company that they said treated tenants unfairly, failed to return security deposits, and forced out tenants who complained.
- Participants were also concerned about the lack of affordable housing in the area. They stated that the waiting list for Section 8 housing is very long, that there are not many other affordable housing options, and that the documentation requirement for subsidized and private housing has become increasingly cumbersome.

Health Care

One participant stated that a health clinic in Loveland, which includes a dental clinic, is not accepting new patients. Everyone felt that low-income residents have few options for affordable health care. Participants stated that unemployment has contributed to the lack of affordable health care because families lose their health insurance when they lose their jobs. Other concerns included:

- Individuals who are not eligible for Medicaid have difficulty getting health care.
- Lack of access to mental health care was also a concern of the group.

Unemployment

One client had been denied unemployment benefits and did not know that CLS could help with an appeal of the denial of benefits.

Access/Availability of Legal Services

None of the participants had heard of CLS. The agency staff member from the House of Neighborly Services who sat in on the focus group later indicated that she had referred some people to CLS and others to the Larimer County Bar Association Pro Bono Legal Clinic. She suggested that CLS engage in more community education about the services that CLS provides.

Observations and Conclusions

The following is a summary of general observations and conclusions taken from the results of this focus group:

- All participants felt that affordable housing and attracting good jobs were all essential to the well being of the community.
- Most low-income and/or vulnerable individuals do not know how to access legal assistance and do not know about CLS unless they are referred by an agency.
- Employment, affordable housing, and access to health care are critical and interrelated issues in Loveland and Larimer County.

Las Animas County

Legal Needs Assessment Focus Group Summary

August 26, 2009

On August 26, 2009, a focus group was conducted with persons residing in Las Animas County who were eligible for CLS services. The focus group was held at the Trinidad Chamber of Commerce. The following is a summary report from that event.

Introduction

Colorado Legal Services (CLS) is a non-profit corporation that has assisted low-income persons and seniors in the State of Colorado for 85 years. The mission of CLS is to provide meaningful access to high quality, civil legal services in the pursuit of justice for as many low-income persons and members of vulnerable populations throughout Colorado as possible.

Background

The purpose of the focus group conducted in Las Animas County was to provide information and guidance to Colorado Legal Services that will assist in assessing the most pressing current and evolving legal needs of low-income persons and members of other vulnerable populations, so that CLS may appropriately focus its limited resources to meet those most pressing needs. The focus group was also a means for gaining information about the specific legal needs of the low-income population in Trinidad, Colorado and Las Animas County.

Methodology

- Three human service organizations assisted CLS in organizing and conducting the focus groups: the Las Animas County Health Department, Advocates for Victims of Domestic Violence, and Seniors in Las Animas County.
- The Trinidad Chamber of Commerce provided meeting facilities for the focus group.
- Participants were asked to respond to questions and their responses were recorded by a CLS staff member, with the consent of the participants.
- A \$10 gift certificate to a supermarket was given to each participant at the conclusion of the session as thanks for participating in the discussion.

Process Overview

The focus group included a total of twelve (12) participants:

- Eleven (11) participants were female and one was male; ages ranged from 27 to 83 years old; Nine (9) participants were Caucasian and three (3) were Hispanic.
- The dialogue from the focus group participants was reviewed, coded into categories and organized by themes.

- Legal/social concerns included: bankruptcy, foreclosure, Social Security issues, identity theft, wills and advanced medical directives, utilities, and family law issues.

Highlights of Findings

This section contains highlights of the key points identified in the focus group.

Availability and/or use of CLS

Most of the participants stated that they were unaware of CLS and the services it provides. Two participants stated that they had received assistance from CLS and said they were pleased with the services they had received.

Employment/Economy

Participants stated that Pioneer Natural Resources had been the major employer and taxpayer in Las Animas County for many years. With the decrease in natural gas prices, Pioneer drastically curtailed development activities, which created a major drop in County revenues as well as the loss of many local jobs. Participants stated that the overall effects on this small community by the job losses at a major employer have been significant.

Foreclosures

One participant stated that “foreclosures have skyrocketed” because of the economy.

One participant stated, “I lost my house to foreclosure and so did others in my family. My son was one; we just didn’t know where to go for help.”

Bankruptcy

One participant stated that she needed assistance in filing for bankruptcy.

Wills/Medical Directives

An older participant stated, “I need help with a will and an advanced medical directive. I worry every night because I don’t have one and I don’t have the \$1500 to pay a lawyer.”

Social Security

One participant said, “I could not find anyone to help me with a Social Security appeal. I was very confused.”

Identity Theft

One participant said that she was a victim of identity theft.

Consumer Issue

One participant stated, “I bought a hearing aid for \$7,000 and it did not work. I cannot pay that and they sued me and got a judgment. I cannot find help.”

Domestic Violence

The representative from “Advocates for Victims of Domestic Violence” stated that domestic violence is a major problem in Las Animas County.

Observations and Conclusions

The following is a summary of general observations and conclusions taken from the results of this focus group:

- Many people who are low-income and/or vulnerable do not know how to access legal assistance and do not know about CLS.
- Lack of employment opportunities is a major concern for persons living in Las Animas County.
- Legal problems in the area include domestic violence, bankruptcy, foreclosures, identity theft and consumer issues.

Mesa County

Legal Needs Assessment: Homeless Focus Group Summary

June 23, 2009

On June 23, 2009 a focus group was conducted with homeless persons in Mesa County, Colorado who were eligible for CLS services. The focus group was held at the Grand Valley Catholic Outreach Center, in Grand Junction. The following is a summary report from that event.

Introduction

Colorado Legal Services (CLS) is a non-profit corporation that has assisted low-income persons and seniors in the State of Colorado for 85 years. The mission of CLS is to provide meaningful access to high quality, civil legal services in the pursuit of justice for as many low-income persons and members of vulnerable populations throughout Colorado as possible.

Background

The purpose of the focus group conducted in Mesa County was to provide information and guidance to Colorado Legal Services that will assist in assessing the most pressing current and evolving legal needs of low-income persons and members of other vulnerable populations, so that CLS may appropriately focus its limited resources to meet those most pressing needs. The focus group was also a means for gaining information about the specific legal needs of homeless persons in Mesa County.

Methodology

- The focus group was held at the Grand Valley Catholic Outreach Center Soup Kitchen for the Homeless in Grand Junction, Colorado.
- The meeting followed the regularly scheduled lunch service to clients.
- Participants were asked to respond to questions and a CLS staff member recorded their responses.
- Interpreters were not needed.
- Childcare services were not needed.
- A \$10 gift certificate to a supermarket was given to each participant at the conclusion of the session as thanks for participating in the discussion.

Process Overview

The focus group consisted of a total of 9 participants, including 5 males and 4 females, some of whom were married and some single, and ages ranged from 23 to 58 years, with an average age of 41 years.

- 7 participants were Caucasian, 2 were Hispanic.
- All participants were homeless and lived “under the bridge” or “on the river”.

- None of the participants had access to the Internet.
- All participants reported an annual income that was less than \$10,000.
- The discussion from the session was reviewed, coded into categories and organized by themes.
- Legal/social issues included: employment, child custody, landlord/tenant, discrimination, domestic violence, and worker's compensation.

Highlights of Findings

This section contains highlights of the key points identified in the focus group.

Availability and/or use of CLS

Several of the participants were aware of CLS' services from the Catholic Outreach program. Two of the participants had contacted CLS in the past.

Employment

Lack of jobs and low wages for existing jobs were serious concerns expressed by most of the participants. All participants were homeless and many felt that employers discriminated against them due to their homeless status.

Housing

There were various concerns expressed regarding the lack of affordable housing:

- Housing is expensive in Mesa County.
- There was concern that landlords discriminate against homeless persons.

Landlord /Tenant

Participants related examples of situations where private landlords discriminated against homeless persons by refusing to rent to them.

- Participants related several instances in which they had called ahead about a rental unit, and were told it was available and that they should pick up an application. When they arrived at the rental office, they were told that the housing unit had been rented prior to their arrival.

- Participants felt that they were identified as being homeless by their means of arrival (walking, bike, bus) and/or their “looks”.
- The participants believed that the advertised rental had not, in fact, been rented prior to their arrival.

Domestic Violence

Three (3) of the participants indicated that they had been the victims of domestic violence.

Law Enforcement

Participants felt that homeless persons are targeted by law enforcement and in some cases receive citations where “regular” citizens are not given citations for the same behaviors (e.g., jaywalking).

There was discussion about the city of Grand Junction considering an ordinance against panhandling.

Worker’s Compensation

One participant indicated that s/he once needed legal assistance with a worker’s compensation case.

Social Services

Two participants had their children taken from them in Dependency & Neglect actions. According to both, the actions were taken strictly because of the participants’ homeless status, since they had committed no crimes, and had not abused drugs or alcohol. They described the impossibility of meeting the requirements set by the county, due to the obstacles caused by their poverty, such as:

- Difficulty in obtaining or maintaining a driver’s license.
- Inability to afford a vehicle (and insurance) for transportation to and from a job.
- Inadequacy of the public transportation system to get to interviews and/or jobs.
- Employment discrimination because of homeless status.

Discrimination

There were two types of complaints regarding discrimination:

- Private landlords' refusal to rent to homeless persons because of their homelessness.
- Discrimination in employment due to homelessness.

Observations and Conclusions

The following is a summary of general observations and conclusions taken from the focus group:

- Homeless persons in Mesa County encounter barriers in securing employment and finding housing due to their homeless status.
- Lack of jobs, low wages for existing jobs, and lack of affordable housing are major causes of poverty in Mesa County.

Mesa County

Legal Needs Assessment: Migrant Focus Group Summary

July, 2009

In July, 2009, a focus group was conducted with migrant farm workers in Palisade, Colorado, which is located in Mesa County. The following is a summary report from that event.

Introduction

Colorado Legal Services (CLS) is a non-profit corporation that has assisted low-income persons and seniors in the State of Colorado for 85 years. The mission of CLS is to provide meaningful access to high quality, civil legal services in the pursuit of justice for as many low-income persons and members of vulnerable populations throughout Colorado as possible.

Background

The purpose of the focus group conducted in Mesa County was to provide information and guidance to Colorado Legal Services that will assist in assessing the most pressing current and evolving legal needs of low-income persons and members of other vulnerable populations, so that CLS may appropriately focus its limited resources to meet those most pressing needs. The focus group was also a means for gaining information about the specific legal needs of the low-income migrant farm worker population in Palisade and Mesa County.

Methodology

- The focus group was held in July, 2009 as a part of CLS' regular migrant outreach to the migrant farm worker community located in Palisade.
- Interpreters were available and used as needed.
- Childcare was provided.
- Participants were asked to respond to questions and CLS staff members recorded their responses.

Process Overview

The focus group included a total of 9 participants, male and female, single and married and, with ages ranging from 35 to 65 years old with an average age of 53.

- All participants were Hispanic.
- Eight (8) participants did not have access to a computer/internet.
- The discussion from the session was reviewed, coded into categories and organized by themes.
- Legal/social issues included immigration and residency status issues, inadequate wages, and lack of employment opportunities.

Highlights of Findings

This section contains highlights of the key points identified in the focus group.

Availability and/or use of CLS

Most of the participants were aware of the existence of CLS from local service providers, friends, relatives and/or community members. Several participants had used CLS services; others had relatives who had accessed services through CLS.

Employment

Several of the participants cited the lack of employment opportunities and low wages as creating the biggest hardships for families.

Residency Status and Immigration

Legalization and immigration issues were the dominant areas of concern for participants.

Observations and Conclusions

The following is a summary listing of general observations and conclusions taken from the results of the focus group.

- Potential clients from the farm worker community in Palisade most often know about CLS from service agencies, friends, or other community resources.
- The populations who need help with immigration and residency status issues often do not know how to access legal assistance and many are very suspicious unless they are with someone they trust.
- Language is a barrier for Spanish-speaking individuals who are in need of legal assistance.

Montrose County

Legal Needs Assessment Focus Group Summary

June 16 & June 23, 2009

On June 16 and June 23, 2009 two focus groups were conducted with persons residing in Montrose County who were eligible for CLS services. Both focus groups were held at the Mexican-American Development Association (MADA) in Montrose, Colorado. The following is a summary report from those events.

Introduction

Colorado Legal Services (CLS) is a non-profit corporation that has assisted low-income persons and seniors in the State of Colorado for 85 years. The mission of CLS is to provide meaningful access to high quality, civil legal services in the pursuit of justice for as many low-income persons and members of vulnerable populations throughout Colorado as possible.

Background

The purpose of the focus groups conducted in Montrose County was to provide information and guidance to Colorado Legal Services that will assist in assessing the most pressing current and evolving legal needs of low-income persons and members of other vulnerable populations, so that CLS may appropriately focus its limited resources to meet those most pressing needs. The focus groups were also a means for gaining information about the specific legal needs of CLS' client communities in Montrose County.

Methodology

- The focus groups were held at the Mexican-American Development Association (MADA) in Montrose following two regularly scheduled weekday luncheons provided by Christ Kitchen.
- Three service organizations assisted CLS in organizing and conducting the focus groups: Uncompahgre Volunteer Legal Aid, Christ Kitchen and the Mexican-American Development Association (MADA).
- A staff member with Christ Kitchen facilitated one focus group meeting and a staff member with MADA facilitated the second meeting. A CLS staff member recorded participants' responses to questions.
- Interpreters and child care were not needed.
- A \$10 gift certificate to a supermarket was given to each participant at the conclusion of the session as thanks for participating in the discussion.

Process Overview

The focus groups consisted of a total of 12 participants, including 6 males and 6 females, and ages ranged from 25 to 80 years old, with the average age of 51 years old.

- 1 participant was Asian American, 1 was African American, 5 were Hispanic and 5 were Caucasian.
- None of the participants had access to the Internet.
- One male participant indicated that he had been a victim of domestic violence.
- 5 participants lived in a single person household; 5 lived in a two-person household; 1 lived in a three-person household; 1 lived in a four-person household.
- Three participants indicated that they had moved to Montrose from East Texas and/or Louisiana following Hurricane Rita in September of 2005.
- 10 participants reported annual income of less than \$10,000; 1 indicated income between \$10,000-15,000; 1 reported income above \$30,000.
- The discussion from the session was reviewed, coded into categories and organized by themes.
- Legal/social issues included: Employment, domestic relations and family issues, landlord/tenant issues, affordable housing, healthcare and domestic violence.

Highlights of Findings

This section contains highlights of the key points identified in the focus groups.

Availability and/or use of CLS

Six participants had unmet legal needs within the past 12 months. None of the participants had heard of Colorado Legal Services, however three people were aware of pro bono legal aid provided through the Uncompahgre Volunteer Legal Aid (UVLA) office in Montrose. The following are examples of legal issues discussed among the participants:

- The need for modification of parenting time orders.
- One female participant was in an abusive relationship, but did not know where to go for help.
- One male participant felt there was a need for litigation against a management company of a low-income housing complex.

Employment

Employment was the most significant concern of the majority of participants. Most people indicated that they had been laid off and/or were searching for work. Others indicated that they were working part-time at low paying jobs. Participants also cited the need for good public transportation to and from job opportunities (both locally and regionally).

- Many thought that the cost of living was very high in Montrose County.
- Others felt that the poor condition of the local and national economies were the major cause of poverty in the area.
- Telluride has good paying jobs tied to high- end tourism, however it is a long commute and there is no available worker housing in Telluride.
- Some participants noted that there are little higher education and job opportunities for high school graduates. They indicated that Delta, which is 22 miles away, has a vocational college, but the lack of public transportation is a deterrent to attendance.

Healthcare

The next greatest concern among the participants was access to affordable healthcare and health insurance. Most participants were unable to pay for healthcare and there was little availability of free health care services:

- Participants stated that Montrose Memorial Hospital no longer had an indigent care program.
- The nearest facility known to provide indigent care was the Delta County Memorial Hospital, which is at least 22 miles away from Montrose.

Housing

There were many concerns expressed regarding housing issues. Specific issues included:

- Lack of affordable housing
- One participant described a 2-year battle against the manager of a low-income housing project who threatened and bullied residents while refusing to address concerns about housing units.

Domestic Violence

One male indicated that he had been the victim of domestic violence.

Observations and Conclusions

The following is a summary of general observations and conclusions taken from the focus group:

- Participants were unaware of CLS and the services it provides.
- Several participants were aware of the Umcompahgre Volunteer Legal Aid program (ULV) in Montrose.
- Employment, access to health care, and housing were the primary concerns for the participants.

Morgan County

Legal Needs Assessment Focus Group Summary

October 22, 2009

On October 22, 2009, a focus group was conducted with persons residing in Morgan County, Colorado, who were eligible for CLS services. The focus group was held at the Morgan County Family Center. The following is a summary report from that event.

Introduction

Colorado Legal Services (CLS) is a non-profit corporation that has assisted low-income persons and seniors in the State of Colorado for 85 years. The mission of CLS is to provide meaningful access to high quality, civil legal services in the pursuit of justice for as many low-income persons and members of vulnerable populations throughout Colorado as possible.

Background

The purpose of the focus group conducted in Morgan County was to provide information and guidance to Colorado Legal Services that will assist in assessing the most pressing current and evolving legal needs of low-income persons and members of other vulnerable populations, so that CLS may appropriately focus its limited resources to meet those most pressing needs. The focus group was also a means for gaining information about the specific legal needs of the low-income population in Morgan County.

Methodology

- The focus group was held at the Morgan County Family Center.
- Participants were English-speaking residents from Morgan County.
- Staff from the Morgan County Family Center assisted CLS in organizing and conducting the focus group.
- Participants were asked to respond to questions and CLS staff members recorded their responses.
- CLS provided lunch for the participants prior to the meeting.
- A \$10 gift certificate to a supermarket was given to each participant at the conclusion of the session as thanks for participating in the discussion.

Process Overview

The focus group included two (2) participants. One participant was male and one was female. Both participants were married.

- The dialogue from the focus group participants was reviewed, coded into categories, and organized by themes.

- Participants voiced legal/social concerns about the following: access to legal services, grandparents' rights, unemployment, foreclosures, affordable housing, eviction, legal separation, Social Security Disability and immigration.

Highlights of Findings

This section contains highlights of the key points identified in the focus group.

Access/Availability of Legal Services

- The participants indicated that they had sought assistance with CLS in the past, but the issues were not areas in which CLS provided assistance. The participants also indicated that when they asked for assistance at the courthouse, they were told to hire an attorney, but they were unable to afford a private attorney.

Grandparents' Rights

The participants stated that many grandparents in Morgan County are raising their grandchildren. There are no legal resources to help them with obtaining guardianship or custody orders or modifying existing orders.

- The Morgan County Family Center does offer a support/resource group for grandparents and other relatives who have adopted and/or are raising these children.
- Participants suggested offering grandparents' rights clinics or legal information sessions on a regular basis in Morgan County.
- The participants also suggested that CLS collaborate with an existing grandparent/kinship/adoption group run by the Morgan County Family Center.

Unemployment

The participants felt that the lack of jobs is a huge issue and concern in Morgan County, and also noted that many people have been laid off from work. They stated that it is hard for new businesses from outside Morgan County to establish within Morgan County.

- With the high unemployment rate, many Morgan County residents also have no health insurance and cannot access affordable health care services.
- Participants believed that this lack of health care was related to unemployment and not a problem separate and distinct from the high unemployment rate.

Foreclosures and Affordable Housing

The participants had no personal experience with foreclosure, but reported that many families in Morgan County are struggling with foreclosures and at the same time, there are very few affordable rental units.

- With the increasing number of families looking for rental housing, the number of affordable units has dropped significantly.
- For families that relied on rental housing even prior to the time when the rates of foreclosures increased dramatically, the lack of affordable housing has become even more critical.

Immigration

Participants had no personal experience with immigration issues. They reported that a large number of “Spanish-speaking” residents in Morgan County were struggling with issues around their immigration status and that of family members and relatives.

Observations and Conclusions

The following is a summary of general observations and conclusions taken from the results of this focus group:

- Most people who are low-income and/or vulnerable do not know how to access legal assistance and do not know about CLS unless they are referred by an agency.
- Participants suggested advertising in the local newspaper, at Social Services, at the Morgan Family Center, and at the courthouse to reach out to the low-income members of the community. In the past, Social Services and the Morgan County Family Center have referred clients to CLS.
- Grandparents’ rights, including custody, guardianship and adoption, is a growing area of need in Morgan County.

Otero County

Legal Needs Assessment Focus Group Summary

June 27, 2009

On June 27, 2009, a focus group was conducted with persons with Limited English Proficiency (LEP) residing in Otero County who were eligible for CLS services. The following is a summary report from that event.

Introduction

Colorado Legal Services (CLS) is a non-profit corporation that has assisted low-income persons and seniors in the State of Colorado for 85 years. The mission of CLS is to provide meaningful access to high quality, civil legal services in the pursuit of justice for as many low-income persons and members of vulnerable populations throughout Colorado as possible.

Background

The purpose of the focus group conducted in Otero County was to provide information and guidance to Colorado Legal Services that will assist in assessing the most pressing current and evolving legal needs of low-income persons and members of other vulnerable populations, so that CLS may appropriately focus its limited resources to meet those most pressing needs. The focus group was also a means for gaining information about the specific legal needs of the low-income LEP population in Otero County.

Methodology

- The focus group was held in Rocky Ford, Colorado, with the cooperation and assistance of Valleywide Health Systems, Inc., a community/migrant health center that targets medically underserved populations, and staff from the local Head Start early-childhood education program.
- Valleywide Health Systems and Headstart conducted significant outreach to contact low-income and vulnerable persons with Limited English Proficiency (LEP) throughout Otero County regarding the focus group.
- Valleywide Health Systems and Headstart screened focus group participants to determine if they were income-eligible for CLS services.
- A \$10 gift certificate to a local retail store was given to each participant at the conclusion of the session as thanks for participating in the discussion.
- A light lunch was provided prior to the focus group.
- Childcare was provided.
- Two Spanish-speaking interpreters were available and used as needed.
- The focus group discussion was recorded by a CLS staff member with the consent of the participants.

Process Overview

The focus group consisted of 14 participants, including male and female, single and married and ages ranged from 16 to 72 years old.

- The focus group discussion was reviewed, coded into categories and organized by themes.
- Legal/social issues included: housing issues (including landlord/tenant disputes regarding leases, evictions, landlords raising rent, and security deposits), utility problems, domestic violence, immigration, residency status, employment and lack of affordable healthcare.

Highlights of Findings

This section contains highlights of the key points identified in the focus groups.

Access/Availability of Legal Services

- The participants did not know how to obtain legal assistance and did not have a single point of contact for accessing community resources.
- Navigation of the court system was a major barrier to securing redress for legal problems.
- Many participants lacked basic literacy and awareness of technology and the internet.
- LEP participants in particular identified problems with accessing legal services and the court system. A major issue for LEP participants was the lack of interpreters in the court system.

Comments from participants are as follows:

“We paid a local lawyer but he never would get back to us.”

“We don’t go to Legal Aid because we don’t know about it.”

“All instructions need to be in Spanish, but not all Spanish is the same and sometimes Spanish instructions are hard to understand.”

“I am a single mother with 3 kids and I don’t know where to go to get help.”

“We might be able to get a day off on the weekend but not during the week.”

“A big problem is even getting information about where to go to get help. There is no single place to go that can help or can tell you where to go to get help.”

Discrimination

Several of the participants felt that the cause of many of their specific issues was discrimination. Several participants believed that a discriminatory attitude was ingrained throughout the community and always has been. The following comments illustrate the participants’ concerns:

“We are treated differently at the plant. We are not friends of the supervisor or a relative. They were all Anglo and I am Hispanic. I finally just left because I just couldn’t take it any more. I was so uncomfortable all the time. I don’t speak English and they constantly criticized me and harassed me.”

“The schools do not make information available but will call in white kids to tell them about scholarships.”

“I heard about the National Honor Society from another kid and I wanted to apply, but when I went in I was told that I had missed the deadline. Then a white girl I know who did not have grades as good as mine applied and was accepted later. I worked so hard and it made me feel so bad.”

“There is cultural discrimination that has been going on for years. The school district is 90% white and 10% Hispanic and they have been under investigation for 10 years and nothing has happened or changed.”

“You have to be very careful what you say and who you talk to because they retaliate and they will fire you. I lost my job because I spoke out.”

Employment

- Participants expressed concern that if a matter of discrimination, working conditions or wages was raised with an employer, it might result in the loss of the job.
- Spanish-speaking participants stated that they were often paid below minimum wage, but they would not complain for fear they would lose the job.

Other comments by participants included the following:

“There are no winter jobs; some get unemployment but many do not.”

“There is an unwritten rule among local farmers not to pay above a certain level.”

“We are afraid to complain about anything because the contractor says that if you don’t like it, quit. Ten other people want your job. They offer bottom dollar and we need the work so we take it.”

“I cut myself while slicing vegetables and when I reported it, they told me they didn’t have any forms. After it got worse, I went back and they told me that it was past the time period for reporting.”

“The owner denied my unemployment but I was afraid to appeal because I thought I would not be hired back.”

Landlord Tenant

- Participants expressed the need for assistance in understanding leases and the eviction process.
- Participants were concerned about increases in their rent, and substandard housing conditions such as lack of heat, lack of air conditioning, and the presence of rodents and insects.

The following are comments by several of the participants:

“When you complain about things, no one is in charge and they keep passing the buck and nothing ever gets done.”

“The landlord ignores requests for refrigerators or air conditioning.”

“They tell us that someone else will take our place when we ask them to fix things or when they raise the rent.”

Domestic Violence

One participant indicated that she was a victim of domestic violence.

Residency Status and Immigration

Participants expressed concern about the difficulty in obtaining necessary documentation for residency and identification purposes:

“I worked on getting my documentation for 12 years and finally saved enough money for a lawyer. I got my documentation in less than a year.”

“I worked on getting my documentation for 10 yrs. Then it took me nine years for my daughter. I kept submitting the papers and finally I got a lawyer and he submitted them and got it done.”

“A lot of places require identification and if you don’t have it, you won’t get services.”

“I got my ID stolen and could not get it replaced.”

“My California Driver’s license expired and when I went in to get a new one here in Colorado, they took my old one and would not give me a new one because I did not have the right documentation.”

Law Enforcement

Spanish-speaking participants are wary of law enforcement officials, stating that they are afraid to drive to the store for food because if they were pulled over, they were afraid they would be arrested.

Health care

Many participants were concerned with access to and the quality and affordability of health care:

“We cannot afford health care or dental care.”

“There is never enough money to cover basic things like rent and food. Just cannot afford health care let alone dental.”

“I was told that if I could not pay up front then they would not treat me, then they point to the sign which says **“Right to Refuse Service to Anyone.”**”

Income Maintenance

Participants expressed concern with delays in processing applications for public assistance benefits:

“We apply and do not hear back for months and no one will help us get emergency food stamps.”

Observations and Conclusions

The following is a summary of general observations and conclusions taken from the focus group:

- Persons who are low-income or members of vulnerable populations do not know how to access legal assistance and are not able to access CLS services unless they are referred by an agency or a member of the private bar.
- Persons with Limited English Proficiency are often victims of discrimination and are fearful of reporting concerns about alleged discrimination, working conditions, or wages for fear of retaliation and being terminated from employment.
- The lack of access to affordable, quality health care is a major concern.

- Legal assistance is needed to explain rental housing leases, the eviction process, and the process for obtaining public assistance benefits.
- Persons who need assistance with immigration and residency status issues do not know how to access legal help. Many persons are suspicious of the process unless they are with someone they trust.

Pueblo County

Legal Needs Assessment Focus Group Summary

February, 2009

In February 2009, a focus group was conducted with persons residing in Pueblo County, Colorado, who were eligible for CLS services. The focus group was held with English-speaking low-income residents of Pueblo County. The following is a summary report from that event.

Introduction

Colorado Legal Services (CLS) is a non-profit corporation that has assisted low-income persons and seniors in the State of Colorado for 85 years. The mission of CLS is to provide meaningful access to high quality, civil legal services in the pursuit of justice for as many low-income persons and members of vulnerable populations throughout Colorado as possible.

Background

The purpose of the focus group conducted in Pueblo County was to provide information and guidance to Colorado Legal Services that will assist in assessing the most pressing current and evolving legal needs of low-income persons and members of other vulnerable populations, so that CLS may appropriately focus its limited resources to meet those most pressing needs. The focus group was also a means for gaining information about the specific legal needs of the low-income population in Pueblo County.

Methodology

- The meeting was held at the First Methodist Church in Pueblo, Colorado.
- Participants in the focus group were asked to respond to questions and CLS staff members recorded their responses.
- CLS provided a light meal for the participants of the focus group prior to the meeting.
- Childcare was provided.
- American Sign Language interpreters were available and used as needed.
- A \$15 gift certificate to a supermarket was given to each participant at the conclusion of each focus group as thanks for participating in the discussion.

Process Overview

The focus group included a total of 8 participants, including 5 male and 3 female, 2 of whom were single and 6 of whom were married, and with ages ranging from 23 to 46 years old.

- The focus group was conducted in English and with the assistance of an American Sign Language interpreter, as three of the participants were deaf.
- All participants were from Pueblo County
- 5 participants reported income between \$10,000-\$15,000 and 3 participants reported income of less than \$10,000.

- 2 participants lived in a one-person household; 2 participants lived in a two-person household; 1 participant lived in a three-person household; 2 participants lived in a four-person household and 1 participant did not respond to the question.
- 2 participants had access to the internet.
- The discussion from the session was reviewed, coded into categories and organized by themes.
- Legal/social issues included: custody and parenting time issues, employment, low wages, lack of affordable health care, landlord/tenant issues, utility problems, domestic violence, lack of support for single fathers, identity theft, and issues regarding discrimination toward members of the deaf community.

Highlights of Findings

This section contains highlights of the key points identified in the focus group.

Availability of Legal Services

- Many of the participants did not know how to obtain legal assistance.
- Many of the participants had limited literacy levels and limited knowledge of technology, including limited knowledge of the use of computers and the internet.
- Language barriers and difficulties accessing the legal system were identified as concerns by all participants, but particularly by participants who were deaf, and persons with disabilities.
- The participants who were deaf indicated that there was a lack of available TTY's, which facilitate communication.
- The participants who were deaf also noted that service agencies, as well as legal services, lacked understanding of how to effectively use the RI Relay System.

Employment

Employment-related issues and low wages were concerns:

- Transportation to employment is difficult due to high gas prices and because many people cannot afford car insurance.
- Many jobs pay only minimum wage and do not offer benefits.
- High cost of child care impedes the ability to be employed.

Landlord Tenant

Participants expressed the need for assistance with housing:

- The participants wanted help understanding leases and the eviction process.
- The participants expressed concern that rent keeps going up.
- Many participants indicated that they lived in substandard housing with very bad conditions, such as lack of heat and air conditioning, rodent infestation and lack of insect control.
- The participants indicated that security deposits were rarely returned.
- The participants noted that utility companies require the payment of all past-due utilities for an address. If the property has any amount owed, the tenant who wants to rent has to pay it to clear the record (whether the delinquent amount is in his/her name or not).
- Some participants indicated that landlords refuse to rent to those with a criminal record.

Custody and Parenting Time

Participants expressed concern with issues regarding custody and parenting time:

- The participants noted that there is a growing need for help for single fathers who want to establish contact with their children.
- The participants stated that both parents and grandparents raising their grandchildren need help with parenting plans and understanding how to request parenting time or grandparent visitation.
- The participants who were fathers stated that it is very difficult to understand how to modify a child support order if there has been a change in income.

Domestic Violence

Four participants in the focus group indicated that they were victims of domestic violence. Domestic violence was reported as a significant problem for members of the deaf community. Participants indicated that many members of the deaf population do not read or write and that the language barrier presents significant problems in seeking help and accessing services.

Health Care

- Participants stated that individuals who are not eligible for Medicaid have difficulty obtaining affordable health care.
- Lack of mental health care services was also a concern in the group.
- Participants stated that the health clinics in Pueblo have a long waiting list.

Identification Theft

Participants were concerned about an increase in identity theft.

Societal Attitudes

The inability of members of the deaf community to effectively access legal services was a theme heard from participants.

- Participants felt that discrimination exists toward deaf people who are living in the Pueblo area.
- Participants stated that the deaf community has many of the same needs for legal service as other participants but access and other problems unique to their community are not being recognized.
- One deaf participant stated that “relationships between law enforcement and the deaf population are a problem.” If a deaf person gets stopped for a traffic violation, first, he might not see the lights for a long time, so by the time the officer gets him to pull over, the officer is already “pumped,” since traffic stops are the second most dangerous for an officer (DV is the first). Then the deaf person often does not have speech to tell the officer the problem, so the person reaches for a pen, which makes the officer upset and the officer may even pull a weapon.”
- Participants stated that there is often a perception in the community that single fathers are “deadbeats.”

Observations and Conclusions

The following is a summary listing of general observations and conclusions taken from the results of the focus group:

- Employment issues, housing issues, low wages and domestic violence are major issues of concern in Pueblo County.
- Many people who are low-income and/or vulnerable do not know how to access legal assistance and do not know about CLS unless they are referred by an agency or members of the legal community.
- Available healthcare is a primary issue for families.
- Pueblo has a growing population of single parents (mothers, fathers and grandparents) who need help establishing a parenting plans and visitation rights.
- Domestic violence is a significant issue for the deaf community.
- Language is a barrier for accessing legal services for members of the deaf community, and particularly those seeking help regarding domestic violence.

Pueblo County

Legal Needs Assessment: Spanish-Speaking Focus Group Summary

February, 2009

In February 2009, a focus group was conducted with persons residing in Pueblo County, Colorado, who were eligible for CLS services. The focus group was held with Spanish-speaking low-income persons, including migrant farm workers. The following is a summary report from that event.

Introduction

Colorado Legal Services (CLS) is a non-profit corporation that has assisted low-income persons and seniors in the State of Colorado for 85 years. The mission of CLS is to provide meaningful access to high quality, civil legal services in the pursuit of justice for as many low-income persons and members of vulnerable populations throughout Colorado as possible.

Background

The purpose of the focus group conducted in Pueblo County was to provide information and guidance to Colorado Legal Services that will assist in assessing the most pressing current and evolving legal needs of low-income persons and members of other vulnerable populations, so that CLS may appropriately focus its limited resources to meet those most pressing needs. The focus group was also a means for gaining information about the specific legal needs of migrant farm workers and other persons with Limited English Proficiency (LEP) in Pueblo County.

Methodology

- The meeting was held at Los Pobre Center in Avondale, Colorado.
- Participants in the focus groups were asked to respond to questions and CLS staff members recorded their responses.
- CLS provided a light meal for the participants of the focus group during the meeting.
- Childcare was provided.
- The focus group was conducted in Spanish with the assistance of Spanish-speaking interpreters.
- A \$15 gift certificate to a supermarket was given to each participant at the conclusion of the focus group as thanks for participating in the discussion.

Process Overview

The focus group included a total of 14 participants, including 9 males and 5 females; 10 of the participants were married and 4 were single, and ages ranged from 19 to 48 years old.

- All participants were Hispanic.

- The size of households ranged from 1 to 7 and the number of children per household was between 2-4.
- 8 participants reported income between \$10,000-\$15,000, 2 participants reported income between \$15,000-\$20,000 and 4 participants reported income less than \$10,000.
- The discussion from the session was reviewed, coded into categories and organized by themes.
- Legal/social issues included: landlord/tenant issues (e.g., disputes over leases, evictions, increases in rent, disputes over the return of security deposits), utility problems, domestic violence, immigration, residency status, employment, and lack of affordable health care.

Highlights of Findings

This section contains highlights of the key points identified in the focus group.

Availability of Legal Services

- Many of the participants did not know how to obtain legal assistance.
- Many of the participants had limited literacy levels and very limited knowledge of technology, including limited knowledge of the use of computers and the internet.
- Language barriers and difficulties accessing the legal system were identified as concerns by persons with Limited English Proficiency (LEP).
- The major concern of the LEP participants was the need for interpreters in the court system.

Employment

Employment-related issues and low wages were concerns:

- The participants expressed concern that if an issue regarding alleged discrimination, work conditions, or low wages was raised with an employer, it might result in the loss of the job.
- The participants stated that they would not talk to employers about accidents and injuries or low wages for fear of losing employment.
- The participants stated that they were often paid below minimum wage, but that they did not complain for fear of losing their job.

Landlord Tenant

Participants expressed the need for assistance with housing:

- The participants wanted help understanding leases and the eviction process.
- The participants expressed concern that rent keeps going up.
- Many participants indicated that they lived in substandard housing with very bad conditions, such as lack of heat and air conditioning, rodent infestation and lack of insect control.
- The participants indicated that security deposits were rarely returned.
- The participants noted that utility companies require the payment of all past-due utilities for an address. If the property has any amount owed, the tenant who wants to rent has to pay it to clear the record (whether the delinquent amount is in his/her name or not).

Domestic Violence

Several participants indicated that they were victims of domestic violence.

The participants stated that domestic violence is a “silent” problem in the LEP community. Women are afraid to talk about it because they do not want to lose the only financial support they have for their family, if the man involved is deported. The participants stated that if they have anyone in their family who is not documented, they fear that asking for help will involve the authorities and result in the relative’s deportation.

Residency Status and Immigration

The participants stated that the population that has residency status issues is growing in Pueblo County. The problems are impacting families at every level and include the following issues:

- Inability to obtain affordable and habitable housing.
- Problems with landlords (evictions, leases, security deposits, rent increases).
- The requirement that all past-due utility payments must be made before a property can be rented.
- Lack of knowledge regarding resources for assistance with domestic violence and employment problems.

Health Care

- Participants stated that they have few options for affordable health care.

Observations and Conclusions

The following is a summary of general observations and conclusions taken from the focus group:

- Employment issues, housing issues, low wages and domestic violence are major issues of concern in Pueblo County.
- Many people who are low-income and/or vulnerable do not know how to access legal assistance and do not know about CLS unless they are referred by an agency or members of the legal community.
- The participants stated they need help with immigration and residency status issues but do not know how to access legal assistance and many are very suspicious unless they are with a person they trust.
- Language is a barrier for accessing legal services for members of the Spanish-speaking community, and particularly those seeking help regarding domestic violence.

Summit County

Legal Needs Assessment: Senior Focus Group Summary

May 19, 2009

On May 19 2009, a focus group was conducted with senior citizens residing in Summit County, Colorado. The focus group was held at the Summit County Community and Senior center, located in Frisco, Colorado. The following is a summary report from that event.

Introduction

Colorado Legal Services (CLS) is a non-profit corporation that has assisted low-income persons and seniors in the State of Colorado for 85 years. The mission of CLS is to provide meaningful access to high quality, civil legal services in the pursuit of justice for as many low-income persons and members of vulnerable populations throughout Colorado as possible.

Background

The purpose of the focus group conducted in Summit County was to provide information and guidance to Colorado Legal Services that will assist in assessing the most pressing current and evolving legal needs of low-income persons and members of other vulnerable populations, so that CLS may appropriately focus its limited resources to meet those most pressing needs. The focus group was also a means for gaining information about the specific legal needs of the senior population in Summit County.

Methodology

- Staff from the Summit County Community and Senior Center assisted CLS in organizing and conducting the focus group.
- Participants were asked to respond to questions and CLS staff members recorded their responses.
- A \$10 gift certificate to a local grocery store was given to each participant at the conclusion of the session as thanks for participating in the discussion.

Process Overview

The focus group included a total of 9 senior participants, including 5 males and 4 females, some of whom were single and some married, and ages ranged from 60 to 79 years old.

- All participants were Caucasian.
- All participants had access to the Internet.
- None of the participants indicated that they had been victims of domestic violence.
- 3 participants lived in a one-person household and 6 participants lived in two-person households.

- One participant reported annual income between \$25,000-30,000; 5 participants reported income above \$30,000, and 3 participants did not answer the question.
- The discussion from the session was reviewed, coded into categories and organized by themes.
- Legal/social issues included: lack of affordable health care, the need for advanced medical directives, and lack of employment opportunities for persons living in Summit County.

Highlights of Findings

This section contains highlights of the key points identified in the focus group.

Availability of Legal Services

CLS services were known to the senior participants through their attendance at the senior lunches at the Summit County Community and Senior Center. Two participants had also used the “Ask A Lawyer” advice clinic provided by CLS to seniors, and were satisfied with the advice and services they received at the clinic.

Health care

Access to affordable health care was the primary concern of the participants in the focus group and included the following issues:

- the high cost of health care
- gaps in Medicare coverage and the high cost of co-pays and deductibles
- Summit County currently does not have long-term care facilities

Estate Planning and Advanced Directives

Several participants expressed the need for assistance with simple estate planning and securing advanced medical directives.

Services for Legal Immigrants

Three of the participants were legal immigrants to the U.S. and they noted that there is a lack of services in Summit County to assist legal immigrants in learning how to navigate the court system and how to obtain legal assistance for legal problems.

Observations and Conclusions

The following is a summary of general observations and conclusions taken from the focus group:

- CLS and the services it provides are known to the senior community in Summit County.
- Access to affordable health care is the dominant concern of seniors living in Summit County.
- Seniors also need assistance with simple estate planning and obtaining advanced medical directives.
- It would be helpful for legal immigrants to have access to resources that would help them navigate the court system and direct them to appropriate legal services providers that can assist with legal problems.