Legal Services Funders Network
Covid-19 and Legal Services – an Update
Vulnerable clients will still face the same issues

- Tenants: threat of eviction, inadequate housing, overcrowding
- Homeowners: foreclosure, consumer scams
- Family safety: domestic violence on the rise, child abuse
- Income insecurity: government benefits, child support
New legal issues clients may see
Employment

- People who are sick or caring for someone who is sick
  - Sick leave? Firing for taking off
  - Documenting condition with scarcity of test kits
- People who are afraid to go to work
- Discriminatory work conduct
- OSHA concerns
- Privacy issues
Housing issues

- Eviction rules, moratoria, possible discrimination by LLs
- Foreclosure, forebearance/forgiveness, and pandemic specific scams
- Covid-related evictions
- “Self help” evictions when courts closed
- Defaults due to fear of going to court
Civil Rights Issues

- Enforcement of “shelter in place,” including interrogation of those stopped, demands for ID, etc., and the impact on immigrant communities especially
- Hate crimes and discrimination (“Chinese virus”)
- Age discrimination issues
Domestic violence and family

- Obtaining, serving, and enforcing a DV restraining order if Court shut down
- Status of DV shelters
- Custody order complications with school closings
Income and Benefits

- Continued receipt of existing benefits (esp for the “unbanked”)
- Applying for benefits or recertification in an era where government offices are closed
- Specialized benefits relating to the pandemic
Other issues

- Public health rights concerns within detention facilities (immigration, juvenile, jails, prisons)
- Access to health care – cost, prioritization
- Immigration hearings, orders to appear, etc. – how to handle?
Service Delivery Challenges and Options

Remote Legal Support
- Phone advice
- Online, asynchronous forums
- Chat-based assistance
- Online/virtual clinics
- Broad-based access to legal rights resources and self-advocacy tools

Challenges & Design Considerations
- Intake and screening
- Managing, assigning & scheduling volunteers
- Document scanning, sharing and co-preparation
- Internet access and device capability
- App requirements (e.g. downloads, account creation)
- Data privacy and storage
Impact on Staff and Operations Management

- Orgs that already do work in the cloud/remotely are managing better
  - But of course, mail? Copiers?
  - Staff whose work is office/court dependent
  - Staff taking risks because they are committed to clients

- Orgs that are not working in the cloud are struggling
  - Takes a year or more to move platforms; this must be done in days
Anxieties

- Our deliverables will go down
- Revenue from fee-for-service grants will go down
- Our ability to do thorough grant reporting may diminish
- Our spending will vary from grant budgets
- Staffing may change
- Service delivery models may change

****Will we be penalized???****
Pro Bono Connections

- Reaching people who are working remotely
- Persuading volunteers to use it
- Getting peoples’ attention
- Training – Covid-19 specific issues

- Created in collaboration with 10 organizations
- Profiles successful models
- Details a variety of tools, workflows and processes surrounding them

Remote Legal Support uses technology to connect underserved communities to the legal services they need.

Learn how your organization can incorporate these models.

#RLS
probono.net

www.connectingjusticecommunities.com/remote-legal-support
Remote Legal Support Platform Example

familyLEGALconnection.org
Upstream & hybrid assistance models

Person in Need of Assistance → Issue-Spotting / Screening Tools & Partners → Virtual assistance

Self Advocacy

In-Person Assistance

Organizations

Attorneys
How can digital tools expand meaningful roles by community-based partners and allies?

- Community health, social services & information services workers, educators
- Tools to facilitate on-site or phone-based legal health “check-ups” & referrals to a partnering legal services program

LEGAL SERVICES

Express Risk Assessment

Instructions
John: Please ask the client the following questions (feel free to re-phrase in your own words) and provide inputs below based on:
1) the client’s statements AND
2) your observations and interpretations of the client’s situation

2 of 6: CONSUMER DEBT & OTHER INCOME ISSUES

Regarding your CREDIT CARDS, BILLS, and INCOME are any of these TRUE?

- I have one or more debt collectors calling me -- and because I’m and am on a very limited income (Social Security Retirement, SSI, etc.), I cannot pay these debts.
- My limited income is being garnished and I cannot afford basic necessities.
- I have Social Security / SSI / Disability Income that has stopped or decreased.
- I received a letter that says the County will stop giving me food stamps, Medi-Cal, General Assistance, or other public benefit that I currently receive.
- I received a letter that says the County has denied my application for a benefit that I recently applied for.
- I am having problems with my pension -- or I believe I earned a pension, but cannot locate it or am having problems with receiving pension payments.
- I have another problem or concern related to debt.

CLIENT: JOHN DOE

John Doe, Male, Age 78
2 Main Street, Anywhere, New York 14202
555-555-5555, email: john@doe.com

The client OWNS home -- and has an annual household income of $23,168.

For additional profile information, see the Transcript below.

Overall Finding: VERY HIGH RISK for JOHN

Staff member, XXXX XXXX, elected to perform the Standard Risk Assessment for John Doe ("the client") and selected the following topic:

- HOUSING (eviction, conditions, utilities, etc.)
- CONSUMER DEBT (judgments, collections, mounting debt, etc.)

As indicated below, the MAXIMUM LEVEL OF RISK found during this assessment is VERY HIGH:

The SPECIFIC RISK LEVELS identified for John Doe are as follows:

- Risk of Near-Term Housing Foreclosure: LOW
- Risk of Other Housing Problems: VERY HIGH
- Risk of Consumer Debt Legal Action: HIGH

Below are explanations of how these estimated risk levels were determined, along with corresponding guidance for the client and those who are advising the client.
Examples of financial need

- One full-time person to help transition to remote office and pro bono management
- License fees for online platforms
- Cost of translating Covid-19 legal FAQs into other languages
- Technical assistance in doing PSA’s, other outreach models
- (Of course) General Operating
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