

SOUTHERN ARIZONA LEGAL AID, INC.
Applicant Number 703050
2013 PRIVATE ATTORNEY INVOLVEMENT (PAI) PLAN

Southern Arizona Legal Aid, Inc. (SALA) is committed to the provision of quality legal services to people who would not otherwise have equal access to justice in ways which affirm their individual and collective dignity, integrity, and power. SALA's staff and board understand that they cannot complete the organization's mission alone. SALA is committed to the involvement of and partnership with volunteer attorneys throughout SALA's service area in order to accomplish its mission. In addition to its effective staff model, SALA provides civil legal services to eligible clients through a pro bono model that serves residents in every county in its service area. The pro bono program, known as the Volunteer Lawyers Program (VLP), was originally launched in 1981 and has continued to grow each and every year since its inception. The VLP's mission is to foster hope, self-sufficiency, and equal access to the justice system by matching volunteer lawyers with low-income Arizonans who have nowhere else to turn.

VOLUNTEER LAWYERS PROGRAM

In 2013, SALA will coordinate the VLP throughout its nine county service area. The VLP, which is housed in SALA's Tucson office covers 33,000 square miles in Arizona. The program will utilize an estimated 1,100 volunteer attorneys in 2013. This number represents more than one-third of the attorneys that practice in the program's service area. These attorneys will provide assistance to a projected 3,500 families in need. In addition, it is expected that SALA's VLP will enlist the support of more than 100 law students and many undergraduate students to help deliver legal services.

The VLP is comprised of the following components:

- A. Delivery System
- B. Staffing and Organization
- C. Recruitment of Volunteers
- D. Intake/Referral to Attorney or Placement in Clinic/Project
- E. Quality Control, Outcomes and Evaluation
- F. Support Services
- G. Budget
- H. Other VLP Matters

A. Delivery Systems

The VLP will utilize volunteers in a variety of ways that include direct referral, self-help clinics, rural services and the VLP Advocate (student) Program.

Direct Referral -The VLP has one program coordinator who will refer cases throughout SALA's service area. When a new case comes to the VLP, the Program Director

reviews the case to determine if the coordinator will receive the case for placement with a volunteer attorney. After the coordinator receives a case, she will review the intake notes, determine if she needs to contact the client for additional information, and then begin to evaluate the list of volunteers to determine which volunteer would be most appropriate. The coordinator considers several factors in order to decide which volunteers to contact. Every effort is made to match attorney skill with client need. The VLP database allows the coordinator to search for volunteers by county and by substantive area. The database also provides information about the volunteers preferred method of contact. Most often, the coordinator places calls to attorneys. During the referral call the coordinator outlines the facts of the case and assesses the attorney's interest in the case and availability to take it on. This process may be repeated several times. When an attorney accepts a case, letters are sent to both the attorney and the client to confirm the referral. A phone call is also placed to the client to inform them that the referral has been made.

Self-Help Clinics - The VLP has created a variety of clinics (e.g., Advice-Only Clinic, Bankruptcy Reaffirmation Clinic, Domestic Relations in English and Spanish, and a Minor Guardianship Clinic) to assist a greater number of clients. Utilization of clinics continues to increase the number of clients that can be assisted.

In 2013, the VLP will streamline clinic materials and provide volunteers attorneys with additional ways in which to present the substance of the clinic in a more consistent manner. For example, the VLP plans to continue to create power points from the clinic forms to ensure that the same material is covered in every clinic.

In 2013, the VLP will expand existing clinics, such as the minor guardianship clinic. In 2013, the minor guardianship clinic will be offered in two additional counties. The program will also begin to offer the Guardianship Clinic in Spanish. The program will also continue to explore the development of a Trial Preparation Clinic that would help to educate and prepare self-represented litigants for court.

Rural Delivery - In addition to its Pima County program, SALA traditionally administered a pro bono program in each of the 8 outlying rural areas within its service area. In 2001, SALA consolidated its delivery of pro bono services to include its rural counties within the Tucson office. Intake is conducted in the appropriate SALA office and then a referral is made to the VLP by the office staff. All of the rural pro bono activities are coordinated from the Tucson office.

Since 2001, attorney participation in the rural program has grown more than 100%. Until 2007, most of the pro bono work being done in the rural areas was being done on a direct referral basis. In 2007, the VLP began to expand services to rural county clients by offering services through a variety of clinics. The program began to offer domestic relations clinics in Cochise, Pinal and Santa Cruz counties. In Cochise and Santa Cruz counties the program offered these clinics in English and Spanish. In 2013, the VLP will continue to expand services to rural clients. Plans are underway that

would allow the program to offer some clinics in rural areas on a more frequent basis. Other plans will allow for the evaluation and possible implementation of additional clinics. Finally, the VLP plans to continue to expand the use of urban volunteers to support the rural areas.

VLP Advocate (Student) Program - In the fall of 1999, the VLP and the University of Arizona, James E. Rogers College of Law formed a partnership utilizing VLP Advocates and volunteer lawyers to help deliver legal aid to Pima County residents. To date, more than 1100 law students have volunteered with the VLP, and under the supervision of volunteer lawyers have assisted more than 13,000 people in need of civil legal services.

Currently the VLP Advocate Program offers five volunteer opportunities to students to provide legal assistance in the areas of Divorce, Child Custody and Support, Bankruptcy, Paternity and Guardianship. The following is a detailed explanation of each.

Self-Service Center Project - During the first quarter of 2009 the VLP began to implement a new project to assist domestic relations clients. The VLP launched the Self-Service Center Pilot Program in January 2009. Low-income clients with domestic relations matters are assisted at the Pima County Superior Court. The pilot phase of the project ran from January through December 2009 and took place twice a week at the Self-Service Center at the courthouse. Clients who attended this clinic had the opportunity to speak one-on-one with a volunteer attorney and law student about their family law case. The project has experienced overwhelming success and program staff hopes to expand the number of days and hours the project operates in 2013.

Bankruptcy Reaffirmation Clinic - Volunteer attorneys and law students help low-income clients protect their wages, homes, and vehicles from creditors, promoting self-sufficiency and independence by reviewing reaffirmation agreements with clients and explaining bankruptcy law to them.

Domestic Relations Follow Up Clinics - Under the supervision of a volunteer attorney, law students provide basic information and advice to clients who need help with family law issues. Students assist clients - most of whom are women with children and many of whom are domestic violence victims-with a wide range of family law issues that include assistance with divorce filings, orders of protection, temporary custody or support orders, and various other legal pleadings. In 2008, the VLP began to offer the clinic in Spanish to help address the great need to provide family law services to monolingual Spanish speakers. As a result of this new extension of the clinic the VLP experienced a 96% increase in the number of monolingual Spanish speaking clients served. In 2013, the VLP will continue to work with the University of Arizona and Pima Community College to recruit and train qualified volunteer translators for this clinic.

Minor Guardianship Project - Under the supervision of a volunteer attorney, law

students will meet with unrepresented clients who seek guardianship of a minor prior to the client's appointment hearing in probate court. The law students review the client's paperwork, explain the guardianship process and responsibilities, and appear before the court. This project helps provide children with stability, shelter, and access to medical care by helping clients obtain guardianships in a timely manner.

B. Staffing and Organization

The SALA VLP is staffed by six full time employees; one Program Director/attorney, one student coordinator/attorney, two paralegals and 2 administrative assistants. Together the VLP staff has more than forty years experience. The staff is a hardworking group of professionals dedicated to the delivery of legal services to those most in need in SALA's communities.

In addition to the staff, the program is supported by SALA's Board of Directors, and a VLP Advisory Board. The Advisory Board consists of fourteen prominent members of the legal community, which includes four Superior Court Commissioners, two Superior Court Judges, one Federal Court Magistrate, and seven exceptional members of the private bar. Advisory board members participate in the development of VLP PAI plans, and lend their invaluable insight, support and wisdom to the VLP staff. It is expected that local bar associations and SALA's client community will have an opportunity to comment on SALA's PAI efforts as part of SALA's civil legal needs assessment. The VLP also receives support from our partners, as both the law school and the Superior Court have designated contact persons to serve as liaisons between the program, the Court and the law school.

In addition to the wealth of experience brought to the VLP by the staff and board, the attorneys that volunteer with the VLP bring an enormous amount of legal experience to the program. Their vast legal expertise is equaled only by their sincere desire to see access to justice for those with nowhere else to turn in our community.

C. Recruitment of Volunteers

In 2013, the program will craft plans to target specific segments of the attorney population. The program will target the members of the domestic relations bar and offer CLE at no cost to attorneys willing to participate in a VLP clinic. In addition, the VLP plans to focus on the development of young lawyers. Specifically, the VLP and the Pima County Bar Association's Young Lawyers Division (YLD) will join forces in the summer of 2013 to conduct a volunteer attorney recruitment campaign targeted at young lawyers (those that have been practicing for 5 years or less, or who are under the age of 36). The goal of the campaign is to increase the number of young lawyers who participate in the VLP, thereby increasing the number of clients who receive civil legal assistance. The campaign provides an opportunity for young lawyers to learn from experienced volunteers, improve their skills and give back to their community.

The VLP and the YLD will coordinate the young lawyer recruitment campaign throughout June and July. At the conclusion of the campaign the organizations will publish, in local and statewide publications, the names of all new YLD members who sign up to participate in the VLP.

Law Students - Recruitment will occur three times during the year. Three student coordinators and VLP staff will conduct presentations at the law school orientation and student meetings. At these meetings, the VLP will provide students with a VLP Advocates brochure which explains all of the volunteer opportunities available to law students. The program will also send recruitment materials, holiday cards and website information to all current law students.

Lay Volunteers and Support Service Businesses - The process of recruiting lay volunteers will be ongoing throughout 2013. Many volunteers come to the program through the VLP website or on the recommendation of a friend or colleague. In 2013 this effort will be supplemented by an organized effort lead by the programs advisory board. The effort will challenge law firms to donate and commit administrative/clerical resources to The VLP. The goal will be to identify 10 law firms to donate a staff member on a bi-weekly basis for 3 or 4 hour blocks. Collectively, the 10 law firms will provide the equivalent of one half time employee to VLP. The Advisory Board will look for one firm to become the first 'donor' in this initiative. Once the Board has identified this initial law firm, the Board will take the campaign to the larger legal community, featuring the 'pioneer' firm in local and statewide publications.

D. Intake/Referral to Attorney or Placement in a Clinic or Project

SALA will screen clients for financial eligibility and priority for VLP cases. The priorities for the VLP are the same as those adopted by SALA's Basic Field Program and essentially involve basic human needs or survival issues faced by clients (e.g., loss of home, personal safety, consumer protection, health care, income maintenance). Intake attorneys or paralegals will perform an initial client interview and prepare a memo to describe the case. Each case will then be reviewed by the intake attorneys to determine whether the case should be assigned to the VLP.

The VLP program coordinator will make referrals from the cadre of volunteers attorneys that participate in the program and attempt to match client need with attorney expertise. Once an attorney has been found, letters that formalize the referral will be sent both to the attorney and the client.

E. Quality Control, Outcomes and Evaluation

Case status reviews will be conducted quarterly. An interim status report form will be mailed to each attorney in January, April, July and October. The form asks the attorney to report on what work has been done to date, what work is expected in the future, and the estimated completion date. If procedural or legal questions arise, the VLP Director/attorney assists with their resolution.

When the VLP receives notice that the work on a case has been completed, the VLP will send a Client Satisfaction Questionnaire to the client. The client will be provided with a self-addressed stamped envelope and asked to complete the questionnaire and return it to the VLP. A closing letter will be sent to the attorney to thank them for their work on the case and their continued participation in the VLP.

In addition, the VLP staff makes every effort to obtain feedback from every person who participates in the program. All clinic clients are asked to complete a survey each time they receive a service from the VLP. Staff consistently solicits feedback from our volunteer attorneys in an effort to continuously improve our programs. Our volunteer students are surveyed each semester and staff utilizes three student coordinators to pass mid-semester, student recommendations onto VLP staff. Every suggestion is taken seriously and evaluated to see if implementation should occur. The VLP staff uses the input we receive to make adjustments so programs continue to evolve and adjust to meet both client and volunteer needs.

F. Support Services

Various incentives and support services are provided to VLP attorneys. In 2013 the VLP will provide the following:

- (1) Malpractice Coverage
- (2) Access to computer-assisted research tools for volunteers and their staff
- (3) Mentoring
- (4) Co-Counseling
- (5) Litigation Expenses - The VLP has a litigation fund to advance or cover expenses associated with cases referred to volunteers.
- (6) CLE - In 2013 the VLP plans to provide Continuing Legal Education (CLE) seminars to assist volunteer attorneys. The seminars will be offered at no cost to attorneys who currently participate in the program or who are willing to register. In this way, the CLE seminars will also serve as an attorney recruitment tool for the VLP. Specific plans for 2013 include seminars in the following substantive areas: Ethics – Nuts and Bolts of the Attorney Client Relationship, and Updates and Changes to the Domestic Relations Laws. In addition, the program plans to develop and implement a day long "How to Practice" seminar targeted at new law school graduates. The seminar will include helpful advice and information from seasoned members of the bench and bar.
- (7) Translation and Interpreting

(8) In-kind services - The VLP coordinates volunteer court reporters, process servers, accountants and real estate professionals who will donate their time and expertise to assist volunteer attorneys in their representation of pro bono clients.

G. Budget

SALA's 2013 PAI budget is \$366,805 with \$150,623 of the costs allocated to LSC funds. The budgeted amount represents 20.4% of SALA's 2013 final LSC Basic Field annualized grant. The following is a breakdown of the budget:

Revenue:

Legal Services Corporation	\$ 150,623
Arizona Foundation for Legal Services & Education	130,209
Arizona Foundation for Legal Services & Education-IOLTA	5,000
Arizona Children's Association-K.A.R.E. Grant	35,000
Pima County Bar Association	5,000
Pima County Attorney's Office-DOJ Grant	21660
Pima County Superior Court	14,313
Contributions/Recovered Costs (LSC and non-LSC)	<u>5,000</u>
Total Revenue:	\$ <u>366,805</u>

Expenses:

Personnel:	
Salaries: Attorneys	\$ 79,019
Salaries: Paralegals	46,617
Salaries: Other staff	103,056
Employee benefits	<u>24,013</u>
Total Personnel	252,705
Space	48,131
Equipment Rental	7,142
Office Supplies	21,999
Telephone/Communication	4,310
Travel -Staff/Other	5,500
Training-Board	1,000
Training-Staff/Other	3,500
Library	1,969
Insurance	612

Audit	1,974
Litigation	500
Contract Services	17,463
Total Expenses:	\$ <u>366,805</u>

H. Other VLP Matters

1. Technology

VLP Website - In 2005 the VLP launched its website, VLPArizona.org. The site provides basic information for volunteer lawyers, law students and support service professionals. The site also serves as a mechanism to register new attorney and student volunteers. The site has continued to grow and now appears to be utilized as a resource for many of the programs volunteers. It is expected that in 2013 the site will receive an average of 6,500 unique visitors and 23,000 hits per month.

In addition to increasing awareness of the site, the VLP also intends to expand the capacity of the site in 2013. Specifically, the VLP will utilize the research conducted in 2008, and implemented in 2009 to build the capacity of the site to include financial transactions. This will allow attorneys to pay for CLE and other VLP sponsored events simply by going to the website. In addition, the VLP hopes to expand the capacity of the website for fundraising purposes as well. In 2013 staff will utilize software to allow the public to make donations directly to the program simply by going to the program website.

Database - Approximately nine years ago the VLP implemented a database that was specifically designed for VLP work. The database has provided the program the ability to link volunteers and clients and to track data for recognition and grant reporting. In 2013 it is anticipated that the database utilized by SALA will be customized to meet the needs of the VLP, and that the VLP will then merge its database with KEMPS, SALA's program wide database.

Improved Communication with Volunteers and Board— In 2013 the VLP will increase the circulation of the programs e-newsletter, expand the content of the newsletter, increase submissions to the programs Advocacy Report and expand the use of email blasts to notify volunteers of CLE's and other events.

2. Recognition - The VLP staff strongly believe that it is important to recognize volunteers for their pro bono work. The program actively seeks local, statewide and national recognition for its volunteers.

Volunteer Attorney Recognition - Local - In 2013, the VLP will recognize an Outstanding Pro Bono Attorney each month in Pima County. The attorney selected will

be featured in the newsletter of the local bar association, on the VLP website and in the VLP newsletter. In addition, a plaque with the attorneys name and photo will hang in the Superior Courthouse throughout the month. The attorneys selected for this honor will receive a plaque and be honored at the VLP's annual recognition event in the fall. In the fall of 2013, the VLP will sponsor its 17th annual awards event. At the event the VLP will present awards in approximately twenty categories including the Pro Bono Attorney of the Year and the Law Firm of the Year. The VLP will also present awards to those who provide support services to the VLP, including process servers, court reporters, and interpreters. A committee of the VLP Advisory Board will work to recruit a national speaker for this event.

In conjunction with the awards event the VLP will produce an annual report. The report will be distributed at the event. It will also be utilized as a recruitment tool throughout the year.

Statewide - The VLP will participate in the Arizona Foundation for Legal Services and Education's Top 50 Pro Bono Attorneys. The Foundation instituted these annual awards to recognize the Top 50 attorneys who give their time and expertise to assist low-income Arizonans with their civil legal needs. Both urban and rural volunteers with SALA's VLP will be nominated for these awards.

In addition to the Top 50 Pro Bono Attorney Awards the VLP also plans to nominate volunteers for the Foundation's *William E. Morris Pro Bono Service Award*. The VLP will also nominate a volunteer for the Arizona Supreme Court *Award for Outstanding Pro Bono Service*.

Student Recognition - In 2013, the VLP will continue to recognize the efforts of its student volunteers. The VLP will honor a law student as the Outstanding Volunteer each month. A plaque will hang in the law school and will display the name and photo of the student honored each month. In addition, the student selected for this award will be acknowledged on the College of Law's website and the VLP's website. The student will also receive a letter from the VLP Advisory Board to thank them for their volunteer efforts.

The students are all invited to attend the VLP's fall recognition event. In addition the program will hold special events for the students three times during the year. During finals week in the fall semester the program will host a study break party at the law school for the students. The program will provide the students with food and soft drinks as well as small gifts such as highlighters and pens.

During the spring, the VLP will organize a recognition event held at the law school. This luncheon provides the VLP with an opportunity to specifically thank all of the students who participate in the program. The VLP will provide the students with awards, t-shirts bearing the VLP logo, food and refreshments. The law school faculty and administration, the VLP advisory board, the local judges who work with students,

frequent volunteers attorneys, and the program's funders will all be invited to attend.

During the summer, the VLP will host a barbecue dinner for the student volunteers. The informal event will provide an opportunity for everyone involved to interact and for the program staff to thank our volunteers.

In 2013, the VLP staff will search for additional ways to honor volunteers. The program will also continue to seek out other local, statewide and national awards to honor the good work of VLP volunteers.

3. Significant Accomplishments for Clients (over past two years)

a) **Juvenile Law**

Development of Partnership with the Arizona Children's Association's Kinship Adoption Resource & Education (KARE) Family Center - In October of 2012 SALA's Volunteer Lawyers Program (VLP) formalized its partnership with the KARE Family Center to provide legal assistance to grandparents, relatives and adoptive parents caring for children under the age of 18. The project enables the VLP to fast track the applications of an estimated 1125 families in need of legal assistance with minor guardianship matters annually. The VLP receives client referrals from KARE, conducts an initial intake and provides weekly guardianship clinics. The clinics provide prospective guardians of minors with the legal assistance necessary to request a guardianship in Probate Court. Through this project volunteer attorneys answer questions concerning guardianship and help the prospective guardians complete the requisite legal paperwork. As a result of the partnership, the VLP will lead similar clinics in rural counties within its service area in 2013. The clinics are also offered in Spanish in order to accommodate monolingual Spanish speakers. The collaboration, funded by the Department of Health & Human Services, will enable caretakers to enroll children in school, ensure that the children in their care receive necessary medical attention, and enable children to reside in safe and loving homes.

b) **Family Law**

In 2012 Arizona's Family Law Statutes were updated and changed significantly. The changes were implemented in 2013. As a result of these changes in the law, the Pima County Superior Court formed a working group to revise all of the family law forms utilized by the Court. When the Court decided to form the group their first call was to the VLP. VLP staff and volunteer attorneys joined with the Pima County Superior Court to revise all of the family law forms utilized by the Court, 24 packets in all. The forms are now available to self-represented litigants through the Court's Self-Service Center and the Court's website. The Court relied heavily on VLP staff and volunteers to draft and update all of the forms required to file an action in Family Court. In conjunction with the forms, the working group created instructions to accompany the forms. They used conversational language and easy-to-read flow charts. The VLP also adapted the

forms for use by SALA clients in the nine counties served by the program. The end result is that thousands of clients around the state now have access to user friendly forms and instructions, and can file an action with the court and obtain the relief that they so desperately need.

c) Evaluation & Program Planning

In 2012, SALA began a self-imposed evaluation process of its VLP to assess program operations and to hone a vision for the future. SALA identified a volunteer consultant to identify the steps needed to make that vision a reality. The nine month process of reflection, examination and creative problem solving began in 2012 with a series of meetings with stake holders. The process concluded in March of 2013 with the presentation of the assessment report, *A Blueprint for the Future*. The *Blueprint* report identified program strengths and challenges and offered both short and long term recommendations. With the support of SALA's leadership, the VLP staff has already begun to implement many of the recommendations suggested in the report. These recommendations have improved program efficiency and have had a direct impact on the staff's ability to deliver high quality legal services to the clients who reside in the program's service area.

d) Program Hosts Morris Dees, Founder of the Southern Poverty Law Center -

In October of 2012, Southern Arizona Legal Aid's Volunteer Laweys Program hosted Morris Dees, Founder of the Southern Poverty Law Center. The VLP was honored to welcome Mr. Dees as its keynote speaker for the program's celebration and awards luncheon. Mr. Dees delivered a very thoughtful and memorable keynote address, and thanked the VLP volunteers for their pro bono service.

Mr. Dees' appearance at the VLP function generated a great deal of good will throughout the legal community, and resulted in renewed interest in the program. Mr. Dees' encouraged and motivated a new crop of volunteers, as well as sparking an interest among current volunteers. The new volunteers have benefited clients by participating in VLP clinics and accepting cases for direct representation. The program is grateful to Mr. Dees for recognizing the strong commitment of it's volunteers and for celebrating the program's accomplishments.

4. Other Significant Plans

Development of the VLP Law Student Alumni Project – The VLP and the University of Arizona have been partners for the last fourteen years. During this time more than 1,100 law students have volunteered with a variety of VLP projects. In 2012 the VLP began to design a law student alumni project. In 2013, the VLP will complete the initial research necessary to fully design and implment the project in 2014. The goals of the Student Alumni Project are to remain connected to student volunteers after graduation, to recruit those students that remain in the service area, to generate

resources from those that leave the area, and to link those in other parts of the country with their local VLP program.