

# Translating the Results of a Legal Needs Assessment *into Updated Priorities, New Initiatives, & More Resources in Tough Economic Times*

## Presenters:

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**NLADA Conference – Nov. 12, 2010. Atlanta, GA**

The Resource for Great Programs, Inc.; [www.greatprograms.org](http://www.greatprograms.org)

## Legal Needs Assessment – Session Description

Conducting a successful, legal needs assessment can be viewed through two primary lenses:

- ▶ 1) The regulatory requirement by LSC & other funders.
- ▶ 2) The opportunity to boost your program's effectiveness.

# Legal Needs Assessment – Regulatory & Best Practices

## Guidance:

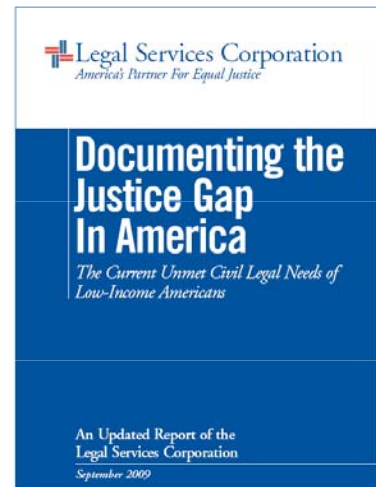
- ▶ LSC – Needs assessment at least every 5 years; 45 CFR Part 1620—Priorities in Use of Resources
- ▶ LSC Performance Criteria (April 2006) – “periodically undertakes comprehensive assessment of the most pressing legal problems and needs...”
- ▶ ABA Standards – “provider ... focuses its resources and what delivery strategies it employs on its awareness of the low income communities’ critical legal needs.”

# Legal Needs Assessment – The Justice Gap

## Measuring the justice gap:

- ▶ The number of low-income people with legal problems/yr
- ▶ MINUS the number of people served/yr.

= the “Justice Gap”



# Legal Needs Assessment – Four Methods

## Four methods:

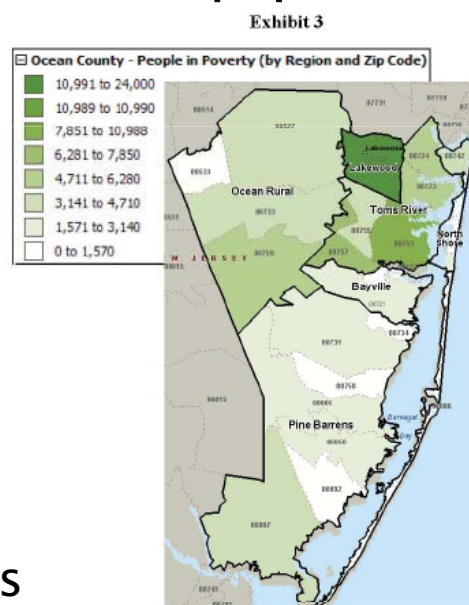
- ▶ 1) Demographic Analyses
- ▶ 2) Client Surveys
- ▶ 3) Focus Groups
- ▶ 4) Structured Interviews



# Legal Needs Assessment – Four Methods

## 1) Demographic Analyses

- ▶ Describe the service area’s low-income population
  - How many folks?
  - Who are they?
  - Where are they?
  - How are they changing?
- ▶ Data sources:
  - U.S. Census
  - Courts
  - Program data: “rejected” cases



# Legal Needs Assessment – Four Methods

## 2) Client Surveys

- ▶ Ask the customer:
  - By mail
  - By telephone
  - In person (at partner agencies, malls, laundromats, etc.)



# Legal Needs Assessment – Four Methods

## 3) Focus Groups

- ▶ Sharpen the picture. Do a reality check. Test the solutions with:
  - Current clients
  - Other low-income people
  - Other service providers
  - Current and potential partners
  - Bench and bar
  - Others





# Legal Needs Assessment – Four Methods

## 4) Structured Interviews

▶ Get stakeholders' perspectives. Strengthen relationships. Generate interest. Invite collaboration from:

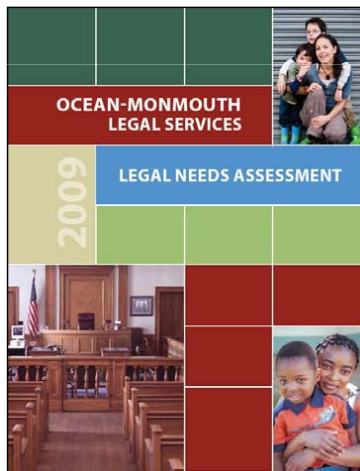
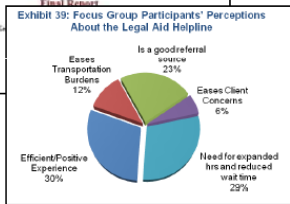
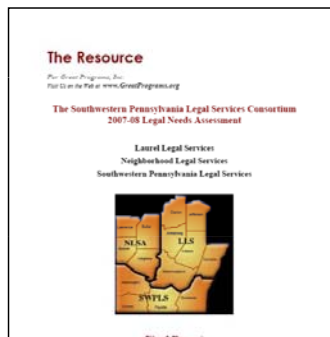
- Advocates
- Court
- Community leaders
- Others



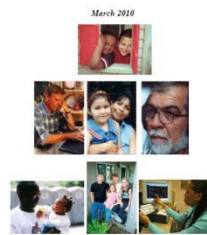
# Legal Needs Assessment – The Results

## Analyze & Publish:

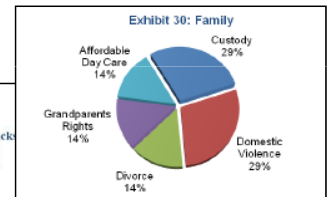
- ▶ Analyze & share your results with all who participated, funders, and beyond.



**Perspectives on Poverty & Civil Legal Need in Bucks, Chester, Delaware, & Montgomery Counties**  
*A 2009-10 Assessment for Legal Aid of Southeastern Pennsylvania*



March 2010  
 Assessment prepared by the staff of the  
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# Legal Needs Assessment – The Vital Ingredient

## Strategic Action to Address Needs:

- ▶ **Self assessment:**
  - Are our services aligned with needs?
  - Are we delivering equal access?
  - Are we using effective methods?
  
- ▶ **Program development:**
  - Strategic planning. Reallocation of resources.
  - New projects and programs. Best practices.
  
- ▶ **Resource development:**
  - Telling a compelling story.
  - Linking with investors and partners.
  - Marketing your track record of success.



# Legal Needs Assessment – Resource List

## See handout:

- ▶ The ABA Standards for the Provision of Civil Legal Aid.
- ▶ Access-to-Justice Support Library.
- ▶ LSC Performance Criteria (April 2006).
- ▶ LSC Resource Library.
- ▶ National Legal Aid & Defender Assoc.
- ▶ U.S. Census & American Factfinder.
- ▶ The Resource for Great Programs.

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