

CALIFORNIA STATEWIDE GUIDELINES

FOR LEGAL ASSISTANCE

Prepared by

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I. PREFACE

The Older American Act (OAA) of 1965, as amended, designates legal assistance as a priority service funded under Title III-B [42 U.S.C. § 3026(a)(2)]. As such, the funding of legal assistance by each Area Agency on Aging is mandatory, and services must be accessible and available throughout each of the 33 Planning and Service Areas (PSAs) in California.

The Statewide Guidelines for Legal Assistance in California [hereinafter Guidelines] were originally developed by the Legal Services Developer within the California Department of Aging (CDA) in conjunction with representatives from the Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs), Legal Services Providers (LSPs), Ombudsmen, California Association of Area Agencies on Aging (C4A) and the California State Bar. The purpose of the Guidelines is to provide guidance and technical assistance to the AAAs and LSPs on the delivery of quality legal assistance to older individuals, pursuant to the Older Americans Act (OAA) of 1965, as amended. These Guidelines were designed to outline the elements of a quality legal services program and how to promote an effective legal assistance delivery system throughout the state.

On April 7 & 8, 2015, the Model Approaches Grant Partners – CDA, Legal Services of Northern California and the Legal Aid Association of California convened an in-person meeting of a Task Force in San Francisco for the purpose of updating the Guidelines. The Task Force consisted of representatives from CDA, AAAs, LSPs, C4A, Ombudsmen and the California State Bar. The task force was facilitated by Penelope Hommel, Co-Executive Director of The Center for Social Gerontology, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

The Guidelines were circulated to the members of the Task Force in draft form for comments. Following these revisions, the Task Force members, in turn, circulated a draft to their various members and obtained input. Most comments that were consistent with the consensus reached during the in-person meeting were incorporated into the Guidelines, where feasible. This document is now the final update of the Guidelines.

It is important to emphasize that the implementation of the updated Guidelines will not only help ensure compliance with the Older Americans Act and consistency with the Older Californians Act, but will also help to focus the delivery of legal assistance to at risk older individuals in California and promote effective advocacy.

On behalf of the California Department of Aging, I wish to thank my Grant Partners, each member of the Task Force and everyone who contributed or participated in this process.

July 31, 2015
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Legal Service Developer,

II. DEFINITIONS

For purpose of these Guidelines, the following definitions are applicable. Many of these definitions mirror those found in the Older Americans Act (OAA) to whatever extent possible and appropriate. Any term not otherwise defined will have its general meaning.

Abuse –the willful: (a) infliction of injury, unreasonable confinement, intimidation, or cruel punishment with resulting physical harm, pain, or mental anguish; or (b) deprivation by a person, including a caregiver, of goods or services that are necessary to avoid physical harm, mental anguish or mental illness. See 42 U.S.C. § 3002(1).

Accessible – the practical availability of legal services to the target population groups.

Adult Protective Services (APS) – those preventive and remedial activities performed on behalf of elders and dependent adults who are unable to protect their own interest, harmed or threatened with harm, caused physical or mental injury due to the action or inaction of another person or their own action as a result of ignorance, illiteracy, incompetence, mental limitation, substance abuse or poor health, lacking in adequate food, shelter or clothing, exploited of their income and resources, or deprived of entitlement due them. See Cal. Welf. & Inst. Code § 15610.10.

Advance Directive – a document executed under the California Health Care Decisions Act (Cal. Prob. Code §§ 4600-4805) designating an agent for making health care decisions in case of the principal’s incapacity and or expressing the principal’s health care and related choices.

Americans with Disabilities Act – a federal remedial statute designed to eliminate discrimination against individuals with disabilities and to integrate individuals with disabilities in all areas of society.

Area Agency on Aging – the agency on aging designated in a planning and service area to develop and administer the area plan for a comprehensive and coordinated system of services for older people. See 42 U.S.C. § 3025(b).

Community Legal Education – An essential system of outreach to inform elders, other service providers and concerned parties of the legal rights of older people in community education forums, which will vary based on the literacy, sophistication, predominant language, available resources, and geographic dispersion of clients. Community legal education is specifically discussed in Standard 3.6 of the “ABA Standards for the Provision of Civil Legal Aid,” where it is described as an important tool for providers and which is available from the State Legal Services Developer.

Conservatorship – a court proceeding to appoint a manager for the financial affairs and/or the personal care of an adult who is either physically or mentally unable to handle either or both.

Legal Assistance – (a) means legal advice and representation provided by an attorney to older individuals with economic or social needs; and (b) includes – (i) to the extent feasible, counseling or other appropriate assistance by a paralegal or law student under

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the direct supervision of an attorney; and (ii) counseling or representation by a nonlawyer where permitted by law. See 42 U.S.C. § 3002(33). Direct legal assistance may be provided face-to-face, by telephone, or by electronic communication and includes, but is not limited to, advice and consultation, litigation, administrative representation, brief services, preparing legal documents and pro se assistance.

Direct Supervision – oversight of the provision of services by a professional licensed to provide such services, so as to ensure appropriate quality and scope of services. Direct supervision necessarily includes, but is not limited to, a substantial degree of personal review of work product, and availability to respond to questions from the persons being supervised.

Exploitation – (a) the fraudulent or otherwise illegal, unauthorized, or improper act or process of an individual, including a caregiver or fiduciary, that uses the resources of an older individual for monetary or personal benefit, profit, or gain, or that results in depriving an older individual of rightful access to, or use of, benefits, resources, belongings, or assets; (b) In subparagraph (a), the term "caregiver" means an individual who has the responsibility for the care of an older individual, either voluntarily, by contract, by receipt of payment for care, or as a result of the operation of law and means a family member or other individual who provides (on behalf of such individual or of a public or private agency, organization, or institution) compensated or uncompensated care to an older individual. See 42 U.S.C. § 3002(18).

Greatest economic need – the need resulting from an income level at or below 125% of the current official Federal Poverty Guideline amounts, consistent with financial eligibility policies of the Legal Services Corporation and the Uniform Reporting System for California. See 45 C.F.R § 1611.3. This includes exceptions to the income ceiling for those at 200% or less of the Federal Poverty Guidelines amounts in certain circumstances as enumerated in the Legal Services Corporation regulations. *Id.* at § 1611.5. (Providers may also take the California Elder Economic Security Index into account, as Area Agencies do during their mandated planning process when identifying those in greatest economic need. See Cal. Welf. & Inst. Code § 9400.)

Greatest social need – the need caused by non-economic factors, which include:

- (A) physical and mental disabilities;
- (B) language barriers, and
- (C) cultural, social or geographical isolation, including isolation caused by race or ethnicity, sexual orientation or gender identity, or housing status or mobility issue that:
 - (i) restricts the ability of an individual to perform normal daily tasks;
 - (ii) or threatens the capacity of the individual to live independently.

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Legal Services Provider (LSP) – an entity that is funded to deliver legal services to older people pursuant to the OAA. Note that this definition shall include, and these Guidelines thus shall apply to any OAA Title IV funded hotline, should one exist.

Legal Services Corporation (LSC) – a private, non-membership nonprofit corporation, that provides financial support for legal assistance in non-criminal proceedings or matters to people financially unable to afford legal assistance. See 42 U.S.C. § 2996b(a).

Long Term Care Ombudsman Program – a program established by the OAA using State-certified paid and volunteer ombudsman representatives and volunteers who advocate on behalf of residents of long-term care facilities (and potentially individuals receiving long term services and supports in the community) to seek remedies for both individual and systemic issues, and investigate complaints of elder abuse within these facilities. See 42 U.S.C. § 3058g.

Medi-Cal – California's Medicaid, the federal and state program of medical assistance for needy and low-income people.

Medicare – a federal health insurance program administered by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) in the Department of Health and Human Services. that is available regardless of income. Most people 65 years of age or older and certain disabled or blind people, regardless of age, are covered.

Monitoring Tool – instrument used to provide specific information about legal services, including staffing, targeting, intake and outreach. Monitoring tools should include components that enable AAAs and providers to assess contractual compliance, ensure consistency with these Guidelines, evaluate the quality and impact of programs, and review program goals and outcomes.

Older Americans Act of 1965 (OAA) – a federal Act to provide assistance in the development of new or improved programs to help older people, through grants to states for community planning and services and for training, through research, development, or training project grants, and to establish within the Department of Health and Human Services an operating agency to be designated as the Administration on Aging (Note that the Administration on Aging is now a part of the Administration for Community Living, established in April 2012 by bringing together the Administration on Aging, the Office on Disability and the Administration on Developmental Disabilities and is part of the Department of Health and Human Services). See 42 U.S.C. § 3001 *et seq.*

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Outreach – the process of informing potential clients regarding legal information, legal issues, available services and how to access those services. This may include specific information about available services or general education on legal and other relevant issues. Outreach is the key to implementing the targeting and priority setting goals in the OAA. Outreach may also include communication with other organizations or agencies that serve elders targeted under the OAA, such as APS, law enforcement, and community organizations.

Paralegal – a person who is qualified by education, training, or work experience, who either contracts with, or is employed by, an attorney, law firm, corporation, governmental agency, or other entity, and who performs substantial legal work under the direction and supervision of an active member of the State Bar of California.

Planning and Service Area – a geographic area that is designated for purposes of planning, development, delivery, and overall administration of services under an area plan. See 42 U.S.C. § 3025.

Program Staff – includes attorneys, law students, paralegals or unlicensed attorneys, lay advocates, and legal secretaries acting under the supervision of a licensed attorney or as provided by California law, who are employed by a legal services provider and whose primary job duties concern providing legal services to target populations pursuant to the OAA.

State Legal Service Developer – a person whose position is mandated by the OAA and whose mission providing state leadership in a) developing legal assistance programs for older people (42 U.S.C. § 3027(a)(13)), and b) securing and maintaining legal rights of older persons (42 U.S.C. § 3058).

State Unit on Aging – the California Department of Aging, which administers programs that serve older adults, including legal services programs, administers funds allocated under the federal OAA and the Older Californians Act; referred to throughout this document as “the State.”

Targeting – the requirement in the OAA that services reach older people with greatest economic and social need, with particular attention to low-income individuals, low-income minority individuals, older individuals residing in rural areas, with limited English proficiency, with severe disabilities (physical and/or mental), isolated because of sexual orientation or gender identity, at risk for institutional placement, or other isolated older individuals.

III. MISSION STATEMENT

Ensure justice, dignity, health, security, maximum autonomy and independence to older Californians, particularly those in greatest need, by protecting and enforcing the legal rights of individuals and by promoting social change through broad elder rights advocacy.

IV. PROGRAM PURPOSE

The purpose of the Legal Services Program is to deliver high quality, high-impact, cost-effective services designed to address the unmet legal needs of vulnerable older people throughout the State of California.

In the development and implementation of local legal services programs, OAA Title III-B legal services providers (“LSPs”), along with their partners, AAAs, Ombudsman programs and the State are to be guided as follows:

- All partners should recognize that LSPs are a part of the continuum of aging services and coordinate with other Older American Act programs to economize costs and develop systems for greatest impact.
- All partners should communicate to each other and to outside interested parties the important impacts of legal services.
- LSPs and AAAs should work together to identify target population – those in greatest social or economic need, or otherwise vulnerable older adults.
- LSPs and AAAs should work together to identify priority legal issues, using this document and the OAA as a guide, but more specifically delineating priorities for each service area in a given time period.
- LSPs and AAAs should work together with a mutual understanding that, where possible, efforts should be made to focus on priority legal issues as designated in this document and further delineated in each service area.
- LSPs and AAAs should work together to make a positive impact on the lives and well being of disadvantaged or vulnerable older persons by balancing serving many individuals with targeting services to specific populations and focusing on their most critical legal issues.
- LSPs should address all OAA legal services needs

V. TARGET POPULATIONS

The OAA, as amended, specifies that services be targeted to those people in greatest social or economic need, including but not limited to low-income individuals, minorities, rural elders, and those with limited English proficiency. Recognizing that the resources of the OAA are inadequate to meet the legal needs of all older adults, legal assistance services must be targeted to specific populations of older adults.

The target populations shall be determined after consideration of the personal and issue-specific risk factors outlined herein. LSPs and AAAs should collaborate to the greatest extent possible and appropriate to identify what populations are in the greatest social or economic need in their service area. Identified populations will vary from program to program to reflect the needs of the particular geographic locale served by each program. This identification can be achieved through formal or informal legal needs assessments, interviews with other service providers, and input from the targeted client groups.

After identifying appropriate target groups, AAAs and LSPs should again collaborate to the extent possible and appropriate to jointly develop a plan to ensure that legal services are targeted to those populations. In developing plans for targeting of legal services to specific groups of older persons, consideration is to be given to ways the legal assistance program can assist such groups to achieve their desired outcome.

Both identification of target groups and plans for targeting and outreach should be reassessed on a regular basis.

Examples of groups, within the broad categories of those with greatest economic or social need are listed below. This list is not exhaustive, mandatory or in priority order; rather it represents a range of possibilities.

- Homebound or limited mobility
- Residing in long-term care facility
- Without access to transportation
- Living alone with no support or otherwise socially or geographically isolated
- Experiencing chronic health problems
- Abused
- Homeless or at risk of homelessness
- Deaf/Hearing Impaired
- Immigrants
- LGBT
- Limited English Proficiency
- People with physical disabilities
- People with dementia or other mental capacity issues
- Grandparents caring for grandchildren
- Formerly incarcerated

VI. PRIORITY LEGAL ISSUES

AAAs and LSPs shall consider the issue areas listed below in preparing their Area Plans and Requests for Proposals (RFP). However, AAAs and LSPs should work collaboratively to establish specific local priorities. In setting local priorities for legal services, LSPs should work together with AAAs as well as other local stakeholders to identify issues of greatest concern to the service area's identified target population(s). Consumer input, formal or informal needs assessments, review of program data and consideration of other available resources to meet the need are just a few of the methods that can be used to identify local priorities.

Below is a list of substantive legal issues that affect target populations in California and that conform to the requirements of the OAA. Each larger issue is an established priority under the OAA and each sub-issue has been identified as commonly arising in California in the given category. These are not listed in order of priority and the list is not exhaustive.

- Income/Nutrition
 - SSI
 - Social Security
 - Pensions/Retirement
 - CalFresh/Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)
 - Unemployment
- Housing/Utilities
 - Tenant Rights
 - Real Property
 - Utilities
- Long-term Care
 - SNF
 - Facility issues
 - Community-based, long-term care services
- Healthcare
 - MediCal
 - Medicare
 - Managed care
 - Provider/services access
 - Private/Insurance
- Protective Services/Elder Abuse/Defense against Conservatorship
 - Conservatorship issues (focus on defending older persons against guardianship as called for in the OAA § 321(a)(6))
 - Restraining Orders
 - Abuse/neglect
 - Exploitation
 - Advanced Planning/Autonomy/advance directives

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Beyond the OAA priority issues listed above, consideration should be given to these issues identified as priorities in California:

- Consumer
 - Bankruptcy/debt
 - Contracts/warranties
 - Scams/identity theft

- Civil Rights
 - LEP Rights
 - Discrimination
 - Immigration

While all of the issues identified above have been identified as common issues throughout California, each service area's priority legal issues will be unique and need not include all of the issues listed. *AAAs and LSPs will jointly establish priorities issues for their service area.* Nothing in these Guidelines shall be construed to require that the LSP provide services in all of these issue areas. LSPs have the discretion to accept special compelling cases in other substantive issue areas not identified above. Also, regardless of the priority issues established by the AAA and LSPs for their area, LSPs can and should consider other factors when deciding whether or not each individual case is appropriate for acceptance. These factors include a client's individual circumstances, the merits of each case, the expertise of the LSP's staff in the type of case, the availability of assistance from complementary service providers and the impact the case might have on the community.

VII. MECHANISMS FOR REACHING TARGETED GROUPS AND ADDRESSING PRIORITY ISSUES

After having jointly identified target populations and priority legal issues, AAAs and LSPs should consider what mechanisms they will use to reach those populations and provide services on those issues. Outreach may involve efforts aimed at targeted seniors or efforts aimed indirectly at seniors via other organizations that serve them. Outreach may also involve education or training. Collaboration between AAAs and LSPs is strongly encouraged in identifying targeting mechanisms and developing strategies. Consultation with other local stakeholders and service providers is also encouraged.

Strategic outreach is the key to implementing the targeting and priority setting goals. Outreach in its broadest sense involves a variety of strategies. A "first-come-first-served" program is the result of unfocused outreach and does not effectively reach targeted client populations. Almost by definition, the most at-risk vulnerable older adults are the most difficult to reach and serve. Only focused outreach will achieve the goal of reaching and serving those groups.

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Successful outreach efforts may include: distribution of information about services to community members, community legal education, developing referral sources among providers and community based organizations who work directly with target groups; including representatives of target groups on advisory boards; participating in groups or organizations for vulnerable adults; using culturally appropriate outreach materials; expanding intake hours and sites; developing additional ways to access services; utilizing media directed to target populations; utilizing bilingual staff; and other strategies to promote access. While outreach efforts, such as community legal education, are aimed at potential legal services clients, outreach may also occur to other organizations and providers. AAAs and LSPs should consider many factors in developing an outreach strategy including time and resources required for different types of outreach, availability of other community resources, both in terms of quantity of resources available and types of services, willingness of other organizations to collaborate, and importance of the target issue or population addressed. For example, some outreach efforts require establishment of relationships and partnerships with other organizations and communities that may be heavily time and resource consuming but will ultimately lead to more appropriately targeted services. Other outreach efforts, while more easily accomplished or perhaps resulting in more clients served, may not succeed in targeting the identified populations or issues. These factors should be considered by AAAs and LSPs in development of outreach strategies.

State and Area Plans are required to include plans for outreach to special target populations. A RFP for Legal Assistance must include a requirement for an outreach plan to such groups. This plan is an important factor to be considered by the AAA in contracting decisions and the contract negotiation process. Outreach plans addressed during the contract negotiation process should not be purely quantitative but rather should consider broader, qualitative impact and effective use of resources based on the specific target populations and issues.

No matter how well suited to a community, for a program to be successful, people must know of its existence, it must be easily accessible, and older people in the community must become aware of the value of legal assistance in protecting their interests and improving their lives.

VIII. PROVIDER ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

A. General Expectations

Legal services providers (LSPs) are expected to deliver high quality, high-impact, cost-effective services designed to address the unmet legal needs of vulnerable older people throughout the relevant PSA. The primary focus of the LSP is to deliver direct legal assistance services.

B. Staff Expectations

1. Each program is expected to provide access, at no cost, to legal assistance by attorneys licensed and in good standing to practice law in the State of California. Law students, paralegals, paralegal interns, attorneys not licensed in California, and lay advocates may provide legal assistance under the direct supervision of a licensed attorney or as otherwise permitted by California law. Each program is required to carry adequate malpractice insurance in accordance with CDA requirements.
2. Program staff are expected to have experience and training or propose a plan for obtaining the necessary training in the priority subject areas of law in which they are providing services.
3. Program advocates are encouraged each year to attend training being provided or sponsored by the State relevant to the subject areas of legal assistance.

C. Other Provider Expectations

The LSPs are expected to:

1. Operate according to the Guidelines as set forth in this document and any amendments thereto.
2. Work collaboratively to reach concurrence with the AAA, on an annual basis (or alternatively just in the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th years of the LSP's contract, i.e., not during the competitive RFP process), on the local legal services needs, issue area priorities and identification of target populations.
3. Assist the State and the AAA in developing and amending a model monitoring tool to ensure consistency in the delivery of legal services and that LSPs are providing priority legal services to meet the local needs of the targeted population groups.
4. Refer clients, as necessary, to other appropriate agencies or organizations for services.

5. Comply with specific requirements of the OAA by doing the following:
 - a. Utilize funds received from the AAA to maintain existing levels of legal services to eligible individuals and, to the extent practicable, assure that legal services furnished will be in addition to any legal services being furnished with funds from other sources. See 42 U.S.C. § 3027(a)(11)(D). Additionally, any voluntary contributions shall be used to expand services and to supplement (not supplant) OAA funds. See 42 U.S.C. § 3030c-2(b)(4)(D).
 - b. Not condition access to the provision of Title III-B funded legal assistance to any person 60 years of age or older solely on his/her level of income. See 42 U.S.C. § 3030c-2(b)(3). However, a LSP may question the client about financial circumstances as part of the process of providing legal advice, counsel and representation, and also for the purpose of identifying additional financial resources to which the client may be entitled, and to assist in targeting its resources to provide services to clients with greatest social or economic needs. See 45 C.F.R. § 1321.71(e).
 - c. Not deny services to any individual who does not contribute to the cost of the service. See 42 U.S.C. § 3030c-2(b)(3). Clients shall be given an opportunity to voluntarily contribute to the cost of the services they receive. Such opportunity shall be provided in a manner that ensures privacy with respect to contributions. LSPs shall clearly inform each recipient that there is no obligation to contribute and that the contribution is purely voluntary. The method of announcing the opportunity to contribute must not discourage the utilization of the service by the contributor or other potentially eligible individuals.
 - d. Demonstrate the ability to provide legal assistance in the primary language(s) spoken by clients. See 45 C.F.R. § 1321.71(c)(5).
 - e. Coordinate with the local Legal Services Corporation (LSC) program, if the provider is not an LSC-funded program. See 42 U.S.C. § 3027(a)(11)(B).
 - f. Coordinate legal assistance activities with the private Bar including groups within the private Bar furnishing services to older individuals on a pro bono or reduced fee basis. See 42 U.S.C. § 3027(a)(11)(A)(iii).

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6. Establish a written grievance process for disposition of complaints made by or on behalf of older individuals. See 22 C.C.R. § 7400(a)(2).
7. Have ready access to relevant legal authorities for all appropriate staff, including relevant federal, state, and local laws, manuals for relevant government programs, and relevant support center manuals.
8. Have in place written procedures for case intake, acceptance and rejection.
9. Develop and follow a protocol and a program policy for referral of fee generating cases consistent with the OAA Regulations. See 45 C.F.R. § 1321.71(g).

D. Coordination with the Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program

The ombudsman program is responsible for advocating and investigating complaints on behalf of the residents of long-term care facilities (LTCFs). In addition, the ombudsman program maintains an ongoing presence at LTCFs, monitors care conditions, and serves as a voice for LTCF residents unable to speak for themselves. Other ombudsman responsibilities include representing the interest of the residents wherever possible, witnessing advanced directives, and educating consumers about residents' rights and good care practices. The ombudsman should maintain strict confidentiality unless resident consent is granted.

The LSP and ombudsman operating within the PSA are expected to develop a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) which will outline their respective roles and responsibilities, mechanisms for appropriate referral to the LSP and other coordination issues. Sample MOUs can be provided by the State upon request.

1. LSPs will coordinate with state-designated providers of Long-Term Care Ombudsman services by developing and executing a memorandum of understanding which will address conflict of interest, provision of legal advice, procedures for referral and other technical assistance.
2. LSPs may provide direct legal assistance to residents of the long-term care facilities where the clients are otherwise eligible and services are appropriate.
3. Where both legal and ombudsman services are provided by the same agency, LSPs must develop and follow policies and procedures to protect the integrity, resources, and confidentiality of both programs.
4. LSPs may provide legal consultation to the ombudsman program only in instances where there is a civil suit or other legal action involving a LTCF resident and an ombudsman or the program is called as a witness or has been subpoenaed. LSPs shall not provide legal representation to the

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ombudsman program. Representation of the ombudsman program is the responsibility of the State as described below in Section . X.B.4.

E. Other Coordination Expectations

1. LSPs are to coordinate with the network of other service providers, including but not limited to other LSPs, HICAP, senior information and assistance, APS, law enforcement, and case management services, within the limits of confidentiality.
2. LSPs and the State are to emphasize improved communication and sharing of knowledge and resources as part of the statewide LSP community for the benefit of all California seniors. This may include regular communication among LSPs via listserv, on phone calls, and at periodic in-person meetings.
5. LSPs and a statewide or regional senior legal hotline, if available, will coordinate services with each other to maximize benefits to clients in keeping with local needs and conditions.

F. Ethical Guidelines for Providers

1. LSPs must maintain confidentiality in accordance with relevant law and professional codes.
2. LSPs must abide by the California Rules of Professional Conduct, the State Bar Act (Cal. Bus. & Prof. Code § 6000, *et seq.*) and any other statutes or canons governing the practice of law or the treatment of confidential information in California.
3. LSPs shall develop and make available to the AAAs and the State Legal Services Developer a program policy on conflicts of interest related to outside employment and client representation.
4. The LSPs that are agencies of a county government are required to provide or refer to an alternate resource for legal assistance where conflict exists between the client and any agency of the county government.
5. LSPs are to exercise all reasonable efforts to avoid conflicts of interest among clients in accordance with the California Rules of Professional Responsibility, and identify alternate sources of legal assistance for clients who cannot be assisted by the provider.
6. LSPs are to make the best effort to clearly identify who is the prospective client and to educate the client or prospective client and other interested parties presenting the client's concerns and aging services communities about the potential conflict.

IX. AREA AGENCY ON AGING ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

A. General Area Agency on Aging Expectations

AAAs are expected to work with the LSPs to provide leadership on all aging issues in their respective planning and service areas. This leadership will extend to overall planning, advocacy, coordination of services, interagency linkages, information sharing, monitoring, evaluation and support. The AAA will ensure that legal assistance services are incorporated into the area's aging network and ensure that the focus of legal assistance services is consistent with agency identified local goals under the approved area plan.

B. Specific Area Agency on Aging Expectations

With respect to legal assistance, the AAAs are expected to:

1. Work collaboratively, on an annual basis (or alternatively just in the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th years of the LSP's contract), to reach concurrence with the LSP on the local legal services needs, issue area priorities and identification of target populations.
2. Assure that LSPs are funded as a priority service and that legal assistance services are available throughout the planning and service area, as resources allow, in accordance with the OAA.
3. Select through a competitive process the LSP(s) best able to demonstrate the experience and capacity to meet the requirements of federal and state laws and regulations, address local concerns, and fulfill these Guidelines.
4. Assure that the primary focus of the LSP is to deliver high quality, high-impact, cost-effective services designed to address the unmet legal needs of vulnerable older people throughout the relevant planning and service area.
5. Develop and maintain, in partnership with the State and LSPs, a model monitoring tool for legal assistance services.
6. Monitor the program annually to assess compliance with Federal and State laws and regulations and contractual requirements, and to ensure consistency with the Guidelines.
7. Ensure that LSPs have a system in place to allow clients to file complaints or grievances about the operation of the legal assistance program, consistent with Section VIII(C)(6) of these Guidelines.

8. Develop a model Request for Proposals, in partnership with the State Legal Services Developer, consistent with these Guidelines and adapted to each PSA.
9. Consider the quality and not just the quantity of legal services when monitoring and evaluating LSPs and, understand that in certain instances, greater impact can be achieved by serving fewer clients or in fewer hours.

C. Coordination, Training and Support Responsibilities

AAAs will, through the procurement and monitoring processes, ensure that LSPs demonstrate:

1. That staff have sufficient professional skills and receive training each year relevant to the subject areas of legal assistance being provided.
2. That a method exists to ensure coordination with other legal and non-legal service providers, including but not limited to Ombudsman, HICAP, senior information and assistance, APS, law enforcement, and case management services, within the limits of confidentiality.
3. That an outreach plan is developed and implemented.
4. That all relevant staff have reviewed and are apprised of agreed upon priority issue areas, target populations, and targeting mechanisms.

D. Ethics and Confidentiality

AAAs are to recognize and respect that LSPs must abide by the California Rules of Professional Conduct, the State Bar Act (Cal. Bus. & Prof. Code, § 6000, *et seq.*) and any other statutes or canons governing the practice of law or the treatment of confidential information in California. AAAs are to observe and respect attorney-client privilege held by LSPs and their clients. The OAA mandates observation of attorney-client privilege, but it also includes provisions concerning a lawyer's ethical obligations to protect client confidentiality. The legislative history of the act makes clear that this includes any client identifying information. Therefore, AAAs are to respect not just attorney-client privilege but that LSPs have a general ethical duty of confidentiality and may be legally justified in protecting client information.

X. STATE UNIT ON AGING ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

A. General State Expectations

With respect to legal assistance, the State is expected to:

1. Develop an Elder Rights Plan, as a part of the State Plan, which will include and delineate a program to provide leadership for expanding the quality and quantity of legal and advocacy assistance in accordance with the program purposes outlined in Section IV. This function should be done in partnership with the AAAs, LSPs, consumers and other elder rights advocates. The State is to provide for a periodic assessment of the legal and advocacy needs of older individuals with respect to elder rights and unmet needs.
2. Provide a full-time Legal Services Developer and other personnel sufficient to ensure:
 - a. State leadership in securing and maintaining legal rights of older individuals.
 - b. Capacity for coordination of the provision of legal assistance funded under Title III-B and other funding sources.
 - c. Technical assistance, training, and supportive functions to AAAs, LSPs, ombudsman, and other appropriate individuals or organizations.
 - d. Regularly convene meetings with AAAs and LSPs.
3. Develop a system for monitoring the quality of legal assistance services, in partnership with the AAAs and LSPs. The monitoring system shall be designed in such a way as to protect the confidentiality of clients. Any monitoring shall take both quantity and quality of service into consideration with an understanding that in certain instances, greater impact can be achieved by serving fewer clients.

B. Other Expectations

1. The State will work with AAAs to develop a model Request for Proposals for adaptation to each area.
2. The State, in conjunction with AAAs and LSPs, will review and update these Guidelines for Legal Services as appropriate and will provide training as needed on the application and implementation of the Guidelines to the AAAs and LSPs.
3. The State will sponsor or provide training annually for LSPs.
4. The State will ensure that legal representation is provided to any representative of the ombudsman program against whom suit or other legal action is brought or threatened to be brought in connection with the performance of the official duties of the ombudsman. See 42 U.S.C. 3058g(g).