October 15, 2001

Mr. Bob Gross
Legal Services Corporation
Washington, D.C. 20002-4250

Dear Bob:

Re: State Planning Evaluation Report

Enclosed is Mississippi§s response to LSC Program Letter 2000-7 which calls for a self-evaluation of the State Planning process. This process was helpful in clarifying our objectives in the next phase of planning.

Early in the planning process, participants understood the importance of shared values and a shared vision. The vision underlying the planning process was: o to assume the continuation of an effective, efficient and comprehensive delivery system that meets the most pressing needs of low income Mississippians; access to justice without regard to economic status; and stronger partnerships with those who believe every person is entitled to the full range of legal services without regard to income." Equally important was an understanding of the needs of those of limited means within our state. While we were sometimes able to look to the experience of others states, often our economic and political realities were unique to the state and to the region. This factor is important because it reminded planners that our approach must be fashioned consistent with these realities. That is not to say that planners are unwilling to be innovative and creative but such innovation and creativity must be tempered by the what can be reasonably accomplished .

Important issues facing low income Mississippians are many and diverse. Some are capable of resolution through legal means. Others are not. According to the most recent Census data, more than 18% of the total population lives in poverty. Even more staggering is the nearly 25% of children who live below the poverty level. The younger the child, the greater the likelihood he or she lives in poverty. Mississippi ranks first in infant mortality; first in births to teenage mothers; and 49th in number of doctors per 100,000 residents. Only three states have a higher percent of its population living below the poverty level. Only 58% of percent of the civilian population is employed. Public schools are facing a funding crisis exacerbating pitifully low teacher salaries and per pupil expenditures. The vast majority of the population lives outside metropolitan areas with only 35% living in or near cities. The state§s boundaries encompass more than 45,000 square miles averaging only 60 persons per square miles.

It is against this backdrop that the Mississippi planners have undertaken the task of developing an integrated, statewide, client-centered legal services delivery system. This report tracks our progress on this effort.

To what extent has a comprehensive, integrated and client-centered legal services delivery system been achieved in Mississippi?

1. What are the important issues that impact upon low-income people within your state? How is your state responding to these issues?

   Limited availability of user-friendly information pertaining to their rights and

responsibilities

Strategies: Develop written materials that will be disseminated through social service providers, courts, retail establishments, faith-based organizations and civic groups;

Include pertinent information on the web site; and

Submit articles on relevant issues to local newspapers and other media outlets.

Access to decent and affordable housing

Strategies: Represent individuals in evictions and fair housing complaints and provide counseling services for problems pertaining to ownership and public housing rentals;

Collaborate with organizations working to increase affordable housing stock;

Obtain funds for a coordinated, community-based project that promotes awareness of fair housing laws and remedies; and

Develop outreach programs to rural communities and emerging Vietnamese communities in the state.

Income maintenance and economic opportunities

Strategies: Provide individual representation to TANF recipients and other eligible clients to remove barriers to continued employment;

Provide individual representation to the full range of consumer issues, unemployment, and bankruptcy;

Collaborate with community development groups to promote job creation through entrepreneurship; and

Encourage appropriate groups to advocate for low-income persons when negotiating incentives for businesses locating in the state.

Family protection and stability

Strategies: Continue to provide individual representation in divorces, child support, child custody and abuse and neglect;

In collaboration with other providers, provide full range of services needed by victims of domestic violence and their families; and

Expand cooperative efforts between domestic violence providers and legal assistance providers through a Department of Justice Domestic Violence

grant.

Access to equal educational opportunities

Strategies: Continue to provide individual representation in due process disciplinary proceedings, and rights of students with special needs and improper classification;

Communicate regularly with other education advocates to identify emerging patterns; and

Educate low-income persons about equal education issues and opportunities.

Access to health care

Strategies: In collaboration with other agencies, work to ensure that those eligible for government subsidized health benefits are aware of and apply for such benefits;

Monitor administration of state-sponsored health care programs;

Participate in initiatives to promote expanded rural health care; and

Build coalitions with health care providers.

Inadequate system of public transportation

Strategies: Coordinate and collaborate with state and local agencies which provide transportation services.

A statewide needs assessment is being conducted by the University of Southern Mississippi. It is funded by all providers.

2. What are the components of the delivery system?

The operational components of the delivery system include advocacy; community legal education; intake; technology; pro bono and training.

1. Has this system created mechanisms to assess its performance in relationship to commonly-accepted external guides such as the ABA Standards for Providers of Civil Legal Services to the Poor, the LSC Performance Criteria or some other set of objective criteria? What is the protocol for undertaking system performance review and when was a review last undertaken?

Mississippi planners continue to wrestle with outcome-based evaluations of the delivery system. The need to include quality, evaluation and outcome measurements within our processes is strongly recognized. The Steering Committee will draw from the experience of other states who are farther along in developing methods by which to evaluate a statewide delivery system. The delivery system and its evaluation will be developed in tandem. Significant progress toward this goal should be made within the

next 12 months.

A meaningful evaluation of the statewide delivery system could be reasonably accomplished within the next 24 months. However, the expansion of access and services through coordination with providers throughout the state is a priority for this planning year. December 2001 is the target date for implementation of statewide standards. As the statewide advocacy system is developed further, these external standards will be introduced as measures to be used throughout the system.

1. Does your statewide system work to ensure the availability of equitable legal assistance capacities to clients – regardless of who the clients are, where they reside or the languages they speak? How does your system ensure that clients have equitable access to necessary assistance including self-help, legal education, advice, brief service, and representation in all relevant forums? Please describe what steps you anticipate taking to ensure equitable access in the coming years.

Although it may be premature nominally to designate the Mississippi delivery system as statewide, it is statewide functionally. That being said, planners continue to coordinate and collaborate wherever possible until the statewide system is achieved. Social agencies, courthouses and law enforcement offices disseminate legal education materials. Other forms of legal assistance are provided by legal services providers through strategic location of 11 full-time offices, PAI attorneys, pro bono lawyers and contract attorneys. Many other entities provide legal services to this client population. They are discussed elsewhere in this response.

2. How does the legal service delivery system employ technology to provide increased access and enhanced services to clients throughout the state? What technological initiatives are currently underway and how will they support the integrated statewide delivery system?

Technological capacity has been enhanced by a recently awarded $150,000 technology grant from the Legal Services Corporation. A Statewide web site has been fully operational since September, 2001. It is user friendly and contains information under four general topics, namely: (1) For advocates – provides useful links to legal research , poverty law news, etc. It is particularly useful for legal services staff, private lawyers in general and PAI/Pro Bono attorneys;(2) For clients- provides Client referral and client legal information;(3) LSC programs- contains information about each of the four federally funded programs, including program priorities, counties served, office locations, telephone numbers and staff; and (4) General information-includes a guest book and feedback capability.

An additional technology grant has been awarded for content development for the web site. It will provide legal resources for attorneys representing low-income clients in certain substantive areas. A client information section consisting of a legal problem prevention section; case specific checklists to be taken to the attorney§s office at the initial visit; and pro se materials for clients who proceed without representation will be made available. The attorney section of the web site will provide practical information on legal protocol for new attorneys. Case questionnaires, sample letters, pleading and briefs will be available. Ideally, the availability of these resources will promote greater pro bono participation. Lawyers who desire to participate but lack experience in the pertinent areas of law should find these tools useful. Increased numbers of pro bono attorneys should result.

Telephone intake, document fax capability from remote locations and toll-free numbers provide increased access to clients across the state. Each Legal Services provider operates its own system as described above so duplication does exist. As the Statewide delivery system evolves, it is anticipated

that toll-free numbers will access a central intake system thereby eliminating duplicative services.

The Legal Services Corporation has awarded a technology grant which will enable programs to network within program regions. This will promote greater efficiency particularly in rural areas. Networking will enhance intraregional communication and provide quicker access to conflicts information. The regional network brings programs closer the goal of statewide network capability. A special task force– the Technology Enhancement Committee–composed of Legal Services staff, the Bar, the Judiciary and Clients regularly monitors and makes recommendations regarding ongoing technology needs of the delivery system. The committee will establish standards for hardware and software, and related policies for legal services providers to develop an integrated technology system and ensure effective statewide linkages. An in-house training program will be expanded to ensure that all advocates and support staff obtain technology training. Research and evaluation regarding the continued use of contract labor for technology concerns is ongoing.

6) How has the legal service delivery system expanded its resources to provide critical legal services to low-income clients including hard to reach groups such as migrant farm workers, Native Americans, the elderly, those with physical or mental disabilities, those confined to institutions, immigrants and the rural poor?

In April, 1999 the Mississippi Center for Justice was established by a group which included members of the private bar, the legal education community and nonprofit advocacy groups interested in equal justice issues. Its purpose is to provide legal advocacy on issues of statewide importance on behalf of low-income Mississippians, including representation in courts, in agency administrative proceedings, and before policymaking and legislative bodies. The Center intends to respond to critical issues facing poor families, including welfare reform and other prohibited work. It expects to establish an office, staffed by an attorney and administrative person. A formal plan to obtain operational funds has been developed. As of this writing, the Center has not begun to provide representation. Efforts to reach some of the groups named are described elsewhere in this response.

7) What steps have been implemented within the legal services delivery system and among client communities to identify and nurture new leaders? Do the existing leaders reflect the diversity within the state and within client communities that your delivery system serves? Do your state§s equal justice leaders reflect the gender, race, ethnic and economic concerns of important but sometimes overlooked groups within your state? Does the leadership provide opportunities for innovation and experimentation; does it support creative solutions to meet changing needs; are new ideas welcomed; are clients nurtured as leaders? Has the leadership been given sufficient authority and resources to implement needed changes?

In its first meeting to begin its self-evaluation process the Steering Committee examined the issue of who was missing from the table, i.e., who was essential to the success of the planning effort who had not yet been included. The state§s equal justice leaders largely reflect the gender and racial diversity within the state. Representation from ethnic communities, specifically Native American and Latino will be included.. Although agencies serving these population are included, there is no client representation. The number of clients and the role of clients in will be expanded. Economic concerns of those living in poverty are adequately represented. Absent, however, is the viewpoint of the state§s business community. Young lawyers have been involved but efforts will be made to attract even more during the next phase. The Committee felt young lawyers might be able to commit more time to this process. Their contributions would be complemented by the stature and history the older bar members bring to the Committee. The leadership has sufficient authority to implement needed changes but lacks

adequate resources.

8) What do you envision will be your next steps to achieve a client-centered integrated and comprehensive delivery system within your state or territory? How will clients be actively involved in the determination of these next steps?

The next steps will be determined by the Steering Committee whose membership will be expanded to include more diverse client representation, young lawyers, other legal service providers, PAI attorneys, members of legislative bodies, business representatives, other bar-related organizations and community-based economic development enterprises. Preliminarily, the Steering Committee agreed on the following next steps:

- Identify new stakeholders and expand leadership
- Adopt statewide performance standards
- Develop uniform case acceptance policies and eligibility guidelines
- Build in an intermittent self-evaluation timetable
- Develop coordinated resource development strategy
- Identify long term and short term goals, assign responsibility and projected completion date
- Work with the Mississippi Bar Access to Justice Committee to establish the State Justice Commission
- Maintain current funding sources and identify new resources
- Obtain staffing for the planning effort
- Evaluate ability to respond to changing client needs

9) What has been the greatest obstacle to achieving a statewide, integrated, client-centered delivery system and how was that obstacle overcome or, alternatively, how do you plan to overcome that obstacle?

The greatest obstacle to achieving a statewide, integrated, client-centered delivery system has been lack of time, followed closely by inadequate resources. Because this process had no staff, the day to day implementation fell to already overburdened Legal Services lawyers, all of whom maintain caseloads. One project director was managing a merger, and another was negotiating the terms of a merger as well as managing their existing programs. Volunteers attended meetings but relied on program staff and VLP staff for follow through. While LSC-FUNDED programs made yeoman efforts, it was unrealistic to believe this task could be accomplished without concentrated and directed effort by designated staff. Mississippi IOLTA has committed funds to help establish the State Justice Commission. The Steering Committee will explore whether those funds may be used to assist in this planning effort. A full-time development professional has been hired to seek additional financial resources needed to implement strategies to achieve a statewide, integrated, client-centered delivery system.

10) Has any benefit-to-cost analysis been made in terms of creating a comprehensive, integrated and client-centered legal services delivery system in your state? If yes, what does your analysis show?

No cost benefit analysis has been performed. However, programs which have experienced mergers realized no savings as a result. Since staff levels , space needs and other expenses remained constant, there was no significant reduction in overhead. In fact, some programs incurred additional expenses when equalizing salaries and integrating new experience for purposes of insurance coverage and worker§s compensation rates. It is too early to forecast post-merger fiscal consequences.

11) What resources, technical assistance and support would help you meet your goals?

The greatest need is financial resources. Mississippi planners understand well what is needed to develop an effective and efficient statewide delivery system. The wheels of change grind slowly due to a lack of adequate staff to implement the plan. As mentioned elsewhere in this response, the bulk of the work in this process has fallen to the Directors, all of whom maintain client caseloads. Additional financial resources could be used to employ staff to facilitate the planning process and its resulting objectives. Technical assistance in the areas of technology and qualitative assessment of legal work would also be helpful.

To what extent have intended outcomes of a comprehensive, integrated and client-centered legal services delivery system been achieved including but not limited to service effectiveness/quality; efficiency; equity in terms of client access; greater involvement by members of the private bar in the legal lives of clients; and client-community empowerment?

1) In terms of the issues impacting upon low-income persons within your state, what strategies have you designed to address these issues and how do you plan to measure your future success in addressing your objectives?

Strategies and anticipated outcomes for each area are set out below. Mississippi planners continue to work to develop measurable outcomes. Planners are educating themselves about outcomes and outcome indicators, which are the specifications of data that must be tracked to measure how an outcome is achieved. The apparatus has not been developed but is an integral component of the phase of the state§s planning efforts.

Limited availability of user-friendly information pertaining to their rights and responsibilities

Strategies: Develop written materials that will be disseminated through social service providers, courts, retail establishments, faith-based organizations and civic groups;

Include pertinent information on the web site; and

Submit articles on relevant issues to local newspapers and other media outlets.

Outcome: Clients will seek legal assistance earlier and, in some instances, advocate for themselves.

Access to decent and affordable housing

Strategies: Represent individuals in evictions and fair housing complaints and provide counseling services for problems pertaining to ownership and public housing rentals;

Collaborate with organizations working to increase affordable housing stock;

Obtain funds for a coordinated, community-based project that promotes awareness of fair housing laws and remedies; and

Develop outreach programs to rural communities and emerging Vietnamese communities in the state.

Outcome: Fewer low-income persons in the state will reside in unsafe, substandard housing.

Income maintenance and economic opportunities

Strategies: Provide individual representation to TANF recipients and other eligible clients to remove barriers to continued employment;

Provide individual representation to the full range of consumer issues, unemployment, and bankruptcy;

Collaborate with community development groups to promote job creation through entrepreneurship; and

Encourage appropriate groups to advocate for low-income persons when negotiating incentives for businesses locating in the state.

Outcome: Low-income persons can provide for themselves and their families basic needs such as food, clothing, shelter and reliable transportation.

Family protection and stability

Strategies: Continue to provide individual representation in divorces, child support, child custody and abuse and neglect;

In collaboration with other providers, provide full range of services needed by victims of domestic violence and their families; and

Expand cooperative efforts between domestic violence providers and legal assistance providers through a Department of Justice Domestic Violence grant.

Outcome: Low-income families will live free from abuse and obtain necessary services to affect a smooth transition and promote healing.

Access to equal educational opportunities

Strategies: Continue to provide individual representation in due process disciplinary proceedings, and rights of students with special needs and improper classification;

Communicate regularly with other education advocates to identify emerging patterns; and

Educate low-income persons about equal education issues and opportunities.

Outcome: Low-income persons will be aware of and able to take advantage of available educational opportunities. Parents will understand how to advocate on behalf of their children. Literacy rates among low-income persons will increase.

Access to health care

Strategies: In collaboration with other agencies, work to ensure that those eligible for government subsidized health benefits are aware of and apply for such benefits;

Monitor administration of state-sponsored health care programs;

Participate in initiatives to promote expanded rural health care; and

Build coalitions with health care providers.

Outcome: Low-income persons will have access to quality, affordable health care services.

Inadequate system of public transportation

Strategies: Coordinate and collaborate with state and local agencies which provide transportation services.

Outcome: Low-income persons will have access to affordable transportation to work, health care facilities, schools and other necessary locations.

2) Has the legal services delivery system expanded access and services through coordination with providers throughout the state? Can this be quantified?

A vital element of the planning process is the integration of other providers into the delivery system. Preliminary efforts have been made in that regard; however, in the next phase highest priority will be given to developing new relationships and nurturing existing relationship among other providers within the state. A listing of those entities, including staffing and areas of representation is provided below.

MS Protection and Advocacy
5330 Executive Place, Suite A
Jackson, MS 39206
Rebecca Floyd, Director
(601) 981-8207

Two (2) attorneys, full-time and 2 caseworkers, full-time. No fee and no maximum income. Several hundred cases per year. Disabled only are represented in adult accommodations, housing discrimination, employment and credit discrimination, no criminal cases, divorces, etc. child school placement problems based on disability.

Northcutt Clinic
1317 B 24th Ave.
Gulfport, MS 39501
(228) 868-9345

Three (3) attorneys & 2 paralegals; financial guidelines must be met; only low-income clients are accepted. Several dozen cases per year from Harrison and Hancock Counties in Southern Mississippi. All clients must be victims of domestic violence but they will do divorce and custody actions for them as well as protective orders. Only residents of the Gulf Coast Women§s Shelter qualify, which limits the scope of representation to a few cases each month.

Catholic Social and Community Services
P. O. Box 1457
Biloxi, MS 39530
(228) 374-8316

Provides legal assistance to indigent families for adoptions. They use private attorneys with a case by case referral service. Ten cases per year in South Mississippi, on average. Also provides referral services to a panel of attorneys in immigration and naturalization problems. These cases are not reimbursed and the panel operates pro bono unless attorney§s fees are awarded for successful litigation. Maintains several offices throughout the state. Makes referral to MVLP and LSC providers.

Child Advocacy Program
Mississippi College of Law
Jackson, MS
Shirley Kennedy, Esq.
(601) 925-7156

New program will provide clinic representation under the supervision of two instructors. Clinic classes are limited to 12 students in their sixth semester. They will represent clients under the MSB limited practice rule and cases are accepted upon referral from Hinds and Rankin Counties. CLE will be provided on child advocacy at least twice each year. Clients must be unable to afford an attorney. Referrals are also made by the Mississippi Volunteer Lawyers Project.

ACLU
P. O. Box 2242
765 N. Congress
Jackson, MS 39225
Gail Chadwick, Interim Director
(601) 355-8070

One (1) attorney on staff reviews applications from thru out the state. Board of Directors decides on which cases to take. Legal referral panel is being reorganized. The office provides support and shares fees. There is no financial need requirement prior to taking cases. Most cases involve the first amendment or some other constitutional denial of civil rights.

Southern Disability Law Center
Bay St. Louis, MS 39520
Jim Constock-Galleger, Director
(228) 467-0092

Non-profit law firm with three attorneys, who will conduct major class action litigation against state and local agencies primarily in areas of disability rights, mental health, school system deficiencies, nursing home reform. There will be no financial aid need requirement and no fees will be charged. Referrals from legal services offices will be encouraged. A NAPIL fellowship is also being sought. Some funding is obtained for major litigation thru the Southern Poverty Law Center.

Mississippi Low-Income Childcare Initiative
111 Rue Magnolia, Suite 204
Post Office Box 204
Biloxi, MS 39533
Carol Burnett, Director
(228) 374-2218

This is a state-wide organization of parents, providers, and community leaders who are working together to: enhance the quality of child development experiences for all poor

children living in Mississippi; advocate improved child-care policies and greater public investment in child-care subsidy programs for poor families; and build a strong, grassroots constituency for poor children and families in Mississippi. The project will add an attorney if possible thru a NAPIL Fellowship.

Community Law Offices
Post Office Box 277
Mendenhall, MS 39114
Angelique Arinder, Director
(601) 847-4321

Mission is to help low-income clients with family legal problems such as family law, land cases, estates, divorce and custody. One attorney on staff. Part of Mendenhall Ministries. NAPIL Christian fellowship for two years.

Mississippi Children§s Advocacy Center, Inc.
753 North President Street
Jackson, MS 39202
Catherine Dixon, Clinical Director
(601) 969-7111

This is a non-profit agency founded in 1990 to meet the needs of abused children. Located in a refurbished two story house in downtown Jackson, the center provides a child-friendly setting where children who are suspected to have been abused can be interviewed and assessed. The center is staffed by trained therapists who specialize in child abuse cases. The forensic interviews are performed by the therapists with the goal of obtaining accurate information which is then shared with professionals on the multi-disciplinary team including law enforcement, child protection, and prosecution. The ultimate goal is to protect the child and hold offenders accountable. Children who are assessed at the center may also receive counseling by one of the staff clinicians.

Center for Constitutional Rights
213 Main Street
Greenville, MS 38701
(662) 334-1122

Currently not accepting new cases except for the following: employment discrimination, termination cases & school equity cases. One attorney on staff. Clients must send a letter of explanation of the problem with a request for assistance. Referral list of cooperating attorneys. Non-profit corporation with limited funds has most of its cases in the delta but will consider applications from anywhere in Mississippi.

Sean Courtney, Director
MS Consumer Assistance Program
350 W. Woodrow Wilson Dr.
Jackson, MS 39213
(601) 987-8222

An advocacy group composed of lawyers, health care advocates and other volunteers interested in preserving the health of Mississippians and promoting social justice. The agency serves the entire state assisting Medicaid and CHIP enrollees in addressing their individual concerns and patterns or problems where necessary.

Ronald Welch
P. O. Box 4589
Jackson, MS 39296
(601) 352-6420

One attorney acting as a sole practitioner is handling five class action lawsuits involving 20,000 state prison inmates and also handling a variety of service related problems for prisoners who write for assistance.

Southern Christian Services for Children & Youth
1900 North West St., Suite B
Jackson, MS 39202
(601) 354-0983 (Jackson-State Office)
(601) 583-8611 (Hattiesburg)
(228) 896-1228 (Gulfport)

Counseling group homes for children but no legal staff or advocacy activities. Provides Guardian ad litem services and community legal education. MVLP and Legal Services are used for all legal problems.

MS Justice Center Civil Legal Clinic
University of MS School of Law
P.O. Box 1790
Oxford, MS 38655
(662) 513-3901
David Calder, Director

The Mississippi Justice Center is a non-profit organization that provides legal advice and representation to individuals and families at no charge, or at reduced rates based on their ability to pay. The MJC participates in a clinical legal education program at the University of Mississippi School of Law that operates through the Legal Problems of Indigence class taught by Professor Deborah H. Bell. The clinical program is currently funded entirely through a grant provided by John and Renee Grisham. That grant allowed the program to hire attorney David L. Calder on a part-time basis to supervise litigation undertaken by the MJC in which the law students actively participate in the case under Mississippi§s oLimited Practice for Law Students Act." The students receive training and experience in interviewing clients, identifying legal issues and case management, as well as training in the actual representation of clients in the cases that are accepted for litigation. The MJC currently focuses on three primary areas: (1) Housing Law, including landlord/tenant and housing discrimination; (2) Family Law, with a special emphasis on child advocacy and issues relating to child abuse and neglect, and elder abuse; and (3) Consumer Law, including especially those issues related to consumer lending practices, consumer protection, and health care.

J. James Frazier, III, Director
Choctaw Legal Defense
#2 Tribal Annex
P. O. Box 6255
Philadelphia, MS 39350
(601) 650-7449

Choctaw Legal Defense originated in 1996 and is funded by the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians. It provides a range of free legal assistance including civil and criminal, to persons residing on the Native American reservation consisting of eight communities in southeast MS.

Integration of these providers into the statewide delivery system is an integral next step in its development. Seminal relationships have been forged. The Steering Committee is being expanded to include representatives from these agencies. Planners thought it important to include them at the early stages of the next phase of work.

3) Has the quality of services provided by the legal services delivery system improved. How?

The quality of service has been improved but in unanticipated and, as yet, unquantifiable ways. This planning process began as an LSC mandate. Project directors were given yet another labor intensive task to add to their already overloaded schedules. Programs were forced to step back and evaluate what was being done and how well. The routine demands of running a law office left little time for contemplation. Directors forged greater collaboration as a direct result of this initiative.

Communication among programs was enhanced. Program leadership realized their strength in leveraging resources when they act as a unit. These outcomes inure to the benefit of clients.

4) Since 1998, has there been improvement in the relative equity of client access throughout the state for all low-income clients regardless of who they are, where in the state they reside, what languages they speak, their race/gender/national origin, or the existence of other access barriers? How is this equity achieved?

There has been no significant change in the relative equity of client access since 1998. Mississippi is relatively homogenous, demographically and geographically. In the most recent census, less than three percent of those reporting identified as a race or ethnic group other African-American or White. Notwithstanding, programs now either maintain in-house bilingual staff or have access to such services when needed. Latinos comprise the largest language minority followed closely languages of Southeast Asia. The programs have applied for a grant that will fund education and outreach on housing issues in the areas where these populations are concentrated. A grant from the Internal Revenue Service enables programs to provide counseling service to eligible clients for other legal matters. Social service agencies that provide services to these populations also provide language assistance when requested. Typically, an English-speaking relative accompanies the client to the office. Programs have seen no evidence of cultural barriers that may impact the attorney-client relationship.

5) Since 1998, has there been improvement in the relative equity in terms of the availability of the full range of civil equal justice delivery capacities throughout the state? What mechanisms have been developed to ensure such relative equity is achieved and maintained? Since 1998, has there been improvement in the relative equity in the development and distribution of civil equal justice resources throughout the state? Are there areas of the state that suffer from a disproportionate lack of resources (funding as well as in-kind/pro bono)? If so, is there a strategy to overcome such inequities?

In terms of relative equity with regard to availability of the full range of civil equal justice delivery capacities throughout the state, planners are exploring the degree to which relative equity will be improved as a statewide delivery system is developed and other providers are included in the delivery system. Because resources issues plague all providers, planners have focused strategies on maximizing funding for the overall delivery system from all available sources. The funding base of most providers is similar. There are no well-funded providers in Mississippi.

There are areas of the state where there are no lawyers. Some other areas have lawyers but the economic conditions under which they practice limit their ability to participate in the formal pro bono programs. Many of these lawyers provide the service but are not counted among the official volunteer ranks. The Volunteer Lawyers Project operates Legal Line, a program of the MS Bar. Many of those calls come from communities where there are no lawyers. They are referred to the office nearest their homes.

6) Does this legal services delivery system operate efficiently? Are there areas of duplication?

The legal services delivery system operates efficiently. While there are necessarily duplications because there are four distinct program, Mississippi Directors explore every opportunity to minimize duplication. Reference is made throughout this response to their efforts to avoid duplication administratively and in the delivery of substantive legal services. The Directors meet regularly as a management team for Mississippi programs. The programs maintain separate legal identities but act and

plan as a single entity with a shared vision.

7) Has the system expanded the way it involves private lawyers in the delivery of essential services to low-income persons? Does the system effectively and efficiently use the private bar to deliver essential services to low-income people?

As part of their private attorney involvement activities, the programs contribute funds to the Mississippi Volunteer Lawyers Project which is housed in the Mississippi Bar Center in Jackson. More than 1500 volunteer lawyers provide pro bono service through MVLP. An innovative initiative sponsored by MVLP is MSCORP, a joint venture with the Business law Section of the Bar and the Mississippi Center for Nonprofits. Under this program, business lawyers provide representation to nonprofit organizations. Volunteer attorneys are recognized by the State Bar, local bar associations and Inns of Court. Members of the Judiciary actively recruit pro bono lawyers. A campaign called ○Each one-Reach one○ enlisted volunteer attorneys as peer recruiters. Responsibility for developing plans to enhance provate bar involvement in the delivery of legal services lies with the Engagement of Pro Bono Attorneys Committee. Its membership includes Bar leaders, the judiciary, law school faculty, private attorneys and legal services providers. The pro se clinic held monthly in Hinds County offers another opportunity for private bar participation. They also participate in a twice-weekly clinic held at a facility for the homeless and those in transition. Technology initiatives discussed elsewhere in this response will also expand the use of private lawyers in the delivery system.

Are the best organizational and human resource management configurations and approaches being used?

1. For calendar year 2001, what is the current configuration of programs (LSC and non-LSC) that deliver services to low-income clients – i.e., what are the components (size, areas of responsibility, governance) of the delivery system? What are the funding sources and levels for each of these components of the delivery system?

Non-LSC providers are described in the response to Question 2 subpart 2. Listed below are funding levels for the Mississippi Volunteer Lawyer Project and the four LSC-funded providers.

Mississippi Volunteer Lawyers Project

Central Mississippi Legal Services	$29,717
North Mississippi Rural Legal Services	58,516
South Mississippi Legal Services	18,579
South East Mississippi Legal Services	37,000
IOLTA	69,791
Voluntary Contributions	13,700
TOTAL (for 2001)	$227,303

(IOLTA GRANT YEAR 8/01/01-7/31/02)

Central Southwest Mississippi Legal Services

Legal Services Corporation	$1,484,669
Interest on Lawyer Trust Accounts	59,443
Central MS Planning & Development District	26,941
City of Jackson	27,840
HUD Housing Counseling	23,300
Department of Justice Domestic Violence	86,797
Department of Human Services (10/01-9/02)(TANF)	18,750
TOTAL Funding (2001)	$1,727,739

Southeast Mississippi Legal Services Corporation

LSC-Basic Field	$1,059,629
LSC-Native American	75,113
IOLTA (8/1/2001-7/31/2002)	57,700
AAA(Elderly) (10/01/2000 - 9/01/2001)	19,395
IRS (depending on expenditures)	40,000
Department of Human Services TANF grant (starting 10/01/2001)	75,000
HUD Housing Counseling-----Cost reimbursement (10/1/00-9/30/01)	14,397
TOTAL	$1,341,234

North MS Rural Legal Services

Legal Services Corporation (10/1/00 - 9/30/01)	$2,359,308
LSC Technology Grant (10/1/00 - 9/30/01)	10,000
Council on Aging (10/1/00 - 9/30/01)	75,203
HUD Housing Counseling (10/1/00 - (9/30/01)	25,000
IOLTA (8/1/00 - 7/31/01)	114,644
Low-Income Tax Clinic (IRS)	25,000
TANF Grant (MS DHS) (10/1/01 - 9/30/02)	150,000
LSC Technology Grant - Web (10/1/01 - 9/30/02)	50,000*
LSC Technology Grant -Intake (10/1/01 - 9/30/02)	100,000*

TOTAL	$2,909,155

*denotes funding for a statewide project

South MS Legal Services

Legal Services Corporation	$615,312
I.O.L.T.A.	33,201
Southern MS Planning and Development District Legal Assistance to the Elderly	10,350
Elderly Hotline	4,150
TANF (State of MS)	75,000
Department of Housing & Urban Development	12,000
TOTAL FUNDING FOR FISCAL YEAR 2001	$750,013

2. Since October 1998, what other configurations and/or approaches have been seriously explored? Were any adopted? Were any rejected? Are any changes contemplated in the coming year?

Since October 1998, Mississippi has been reconfigured twice. In 1999, Southeast Mississippi LSC merged with East Mississippi increasing the funding level of SEMLSC from $618,436 to $1,201,116. In 2001, Central MS Legal Services Corporation merged with Southwest MS LSC thereby increasing the funding level of Central from $1,198,116 to $1,727,739. There are no other changes contemplated in the coming year.

3. Is there any identifiable duplication in capacities or services in the state? How many duplicative systems – accounting systems, human resources management systems, case management systems, etc. – currently exist? Does the service delivery system now in use minimize or eliminate duplications that existed prior to October 1, 1998?

Although all four LSC-FUNDED programs maintain their own accounting, human resources and case management systems, they are actively working to eliminate duplication by utilizing one health care provider and a single deferred compensation carrier. This has proved challenging because current salary and benefit levels vary. Programs are also exploring bulk purchases of supplies, etc. to obtain maximum savings.

4. Since October 1998, what innovative service delivery systems/mechanisms/initiatives been adopted in the state? Have any been explored and then rejected?

The technology initiatives referenced in a previous response were adopted since 1998 but resources did not become available until 2001. The web site and the regional intake system are the most innovative delivery system mechanisms developed during that period. The idea of a statewide program was considered and rejected. However, the programs plan to have a centralized intake system and will standardize case management systems, case acceptance policies, eligibility guidelines, performance

standards and priorities.

Genuine concern about statewide delivery and equality of access has led to the development of joint efforts in the priority area of housing, domestic violence, consumer rights and rights of the elderly, each of which is more fully described below. Efforts to fund and conduct special projects have never before had such a concentrated focus on statewide coverage. Each project complements existing staff activities and strengthens advocate networks and expertise.

Housing Law

Comprehensive efforts are underway in three state-wide initiatives in the area of housing. First, a grant from HUD was obtained in 2000 for the calendar year of 2001 for each legal services program to conduct housing counseling services. The project was funded as a regional collaboration with West Tennessee Legal Services, and each of the Mississippi programs has had advocates trained by HUD§s legal staff to conduct counseling. The housing issues covered by the grant include all areas of concern to Mississippi§s low-income residents. Both homes purchasing and rented problems are fully covered in extensive materials prepared to respond to the demands of the grand. These same materials are of obvious importance to legal services clients not covered by the grant.

A second statewide effort in housing would fund a fair housing enforcement center which for one year would function as a partnership with West Tennessee Legal services and then would then operate independently for an additional two years. The center would be housed at South Mississippi Legal Services in the region where HUD has determined the greatest need is presently located because of the rapid influx of new residents seeking housing. An enforcement staff with advocates in each Mississippi program would operate as a statewide resource for testing, preparing complaints to HUD and enforcing violations through litigation when necessary. The proposal for the center is now under review by HUD.

Finally, a statewide proposal for an education and outreach fair housing initiative is also under consideration by HUD. This effort would concentrate on educational efforts in the large Vietnamese community in one county in South Mississippi, and on rural communities in eleven addition counties across the state. The rural counties were chosen by their relatively close proximity to one of the eleven permanently staffed legal services offices and existing staff in each of those offices will receive training to conduct the planned outreach activities.

The HUD proposal would be complemented by a NAPIL fellowship sought for September 2002. That advocate would coordinate and train the education and outreach initiative.

Domestic Violence

A pilot project funded by the U.S. Dept. of Justice has been operating for the past year in Warren County under the supervision of Central Mississippi Legal Services. Preliminary approval has been given to extend the project to four new sites, one in each service area, for the next calendar year. The Warren County partnership between the legal services office and the local domestic violence shelter has operated successfully and serves as an excellent model for the additional locations which will be in Oxford, Jackson, Laurel and Pascagoula. The approved grant amount is $300,000 for four sites, one in each service area.

Consumer Education

A pilot project funded by the Mississippi Department of Human Services has served low-income residents of the South Mississippi service area for the past year. It has been expanded to all four LSC programs for the coming year. As originally designed, the project provided civil legal assistance in consumer matters to recipients of Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF). The expanded project design submitted through the statewide resource development specialist, will provide a variety of employment related to training programs, in addition to civil legal assistance in consumer housing employment, domestic and public benefit area. The awards announced September 30, 2001, are $75,000 for each of five regions, two which are in the NMRLS service area.

Elder Law Center

North Mississippi Rural and South Mississippi each operate elderly hotlines to provide telephone assistance to senior citizens on legal matters. These efforts receive funding through Area Agencies on Aging (AAA) in their respective regions. A concerted effort by the resource development specialist will attempt to draw new funds from AAA§s and other sources to create a statewide elder hotline and resource center. In addition to the Elder Law Center, the project would include at least one elder law specialist in each region.