

Community Legal Services of East Palo Alto
1395 Bay Road (moving March 1st to 2117 University Ave, Suite B)
East Palo Alto, CA 94303
(650) 326-6440

Community Legal Services of East Palo Alto (CLS EPA) was formed in the summer of 2002 when Stanford withdrew from the East Palo Alto Community Law Project and that organization collapsed.

Target Population -- CLS EPA targets services to individuals and families living and/or working in East Palo Alto and the surrounding community who need legal assistance, particularly in the areas of housing, immigration, and juvenile justice but also on a wide range of topics

Key Activities – We provide weekly sessions alternately for individuals with housing problems and with immigration difficulties to explain their rights and assist them as necessary. We have just introduced a third specialty in the area of juvenile justice. In addition, we provide clinics weekly in which Stanford law school students and local volunteer attorneys assist clients with a range of legal problems. From time to time we also offer workshops on legal rights in areas of particular need as determined by our staff. Our staff consists of two paid lawyers and one paralegal as well as four lawyers who provide part time services to the agency pro bono. In addition, volunteer student attorneys from Stanford and volunteer attorneys from local firms work with clients two evenings each week.

Key Outputs – Our agency has provided services or referrals to over 350 individual clients since mid-September, when we began operation. To date, we have offered six workshops reaching more than 600 people on the subject of immigration. We have scheduled our first juvenile justice workshop for March as well as another immigration workshop.

Key Outcomes – Our agency seeks to assure that no one in East Palo Alto or the surrounding community in need of legal help should be without assistance. Everyone who comes to us for aid should receive free service or – if the area of law is beyond our scope – referral to an appropriate agency or attorney. We also believe that we should increase support in areas of demonstrated need. (For example, we have added a focus on juvenile justice and are currently considering additional workshops in the areas of bankruptcy and representing oneself in small claims court.)

Organizational Challenge – Our greatest challenge as a new agency with a large number of clients is to establish a sustainable pattern of funding to assure our continued operation and allow for long term planning.

low-income community residents to ensure that all may have access to justice in a society that purports to be based on the rule of law rather than the arbitrary rule of men.

Background of Community Legal Services in East Palo Alto, Inc.

Community Legal Services in East Palo Alto, Inc., was formed by community residents with the assistance of concerned friends from outside East Palo Alto following the closure of the East Palo Alto Community Law Project to ensure the continuity of legal services to low-income residents of East Palo Alto and eastern Menlo Park and possibly to low-income residents in other surrounding communities.

The East Palo Alto Community Law Project sought to fulfil a double mission of providing a clinical context for the education of Stanford law students in public interest law and of providing legal services in several practice areas (housing, immigration, education, family) for eighteen years. Now the Law Project is no more. The Stanford Law School is in the process of creating the aforementioned student clinic that will provide quality legal training to Stanford law students. Only a handful of local residents will benefit from the limited opportunities that will arise incidental to the law clinic and the primary focus on quality legal education for the students.

Community Legal Services in East Palo Alto, Inc., has arisen out of the spontaneous response of many residents of East Palo Alto who have appreciated the importance of the quality, but also the quantity, of the legal services provided by the defunct Law Project. To reiterate, in every statement Kathleen Sullivan, Dean of the Stanford Law School, has made, in private and public (e.g., before the East Palo Alto City Council this past summer), she has emphasized that the proposed Stanford Community Law Center will provide quality training to Stanford students, but will not have the capacity to address even remotely the quantity of cases the Law Project handled (over 900 in its last year of operation as it was downsizing and an average of 1500 in previous years).

Community Legal Services in East Palo Alto is already currently serving clients. Since we opened to provide legal services in late September, we have seen over 350 clients. We have on staff two attorneys and a paralegal. Besides providing services in-house, we are serving as a referral where necessary to other legal service providers such as Legal Aid Society of San Mateo County, La Raza Centro Legal, and Bay Area Legal Aid. We have revived the Volunteer Attorney Program of the former Law Project and are

already connecting Stanford law students with clients from East Palo Alto and eastern Menlo Park under the supervision of qualified local attorneys.

We are currently handling cases in the areas of housing and immigration. As we grow as an organization, we anticipate providing legal services in other areas as well. We have opened as of 8 January 2003 a walk-in clinic to address issues in the area of juvenile justice in direct response to community needs. The second of two meetings conducted by the County of San Mateo Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Commission was held on Wednesday, 30 October 2002, to discuss the treatment of youth of color in San Mateo County. Many community residents turned out to testify to the inadequacy of that treatment. In response we as a community-based legal services provider carrying on the mission of the Community Law Project to serve the community have begun to offer free legal advice to youth in trouble with the law and their parents or guardian via a walk-in clinic once a month that started on 8 January 2003. Staffing by qualified attorneys experienced in juvenile justice has been spearheaded by Michael W. Armstrong, of the Palo Alto law firm of Nolan, Armstrong and Barton, LLP, one of a handful of the mostly highly esteemed criminal defense attorneys in Silicon Valley, and Shirley Hochhausen, a specialist in predatory lending cases and formerly a staff attorney with the East Palo Alto Community Law Project. This is a practice area that will only be offered by Community Legal Services in East Palo Alto, Inc. The proposed Stanford Community Law Center is not expected to contemplate offering assistance in the area of juvenile justice.

Just as the former Community Law Project had a long relationship with the Stanford Law School by enabling law students to have practical clinical experience under expert supervision by qualified attorneys in the area of public interest law, we look forward to working with the Stanford Law School to continue the tradition of the Law Project of enabling Stanford law students to hone their practical legal skills by working with clients from the communities surrounding Stanford through the Volunteer Attorney Program under the guidance of Community Legal Services board members who are practicing attorneys such as Martin Myers of Gray Carey of Palo Alto.

Target Population

The target population of Community Legal Services in East Palo Alto, Inc., is the 29,500 residents of East Palo Alto and the several

thousand residents of adjacent eastern Menlo Park who are in essence part of the same community in terms of demographics and income though divided by political boundaries. Whereas the defunct East Palo Alto Community Law Project only served qualifying low-income residents from these two communities, it is our expectation that our doors will be open as capacity permits to low-income residents of all races and ethnicities from other surrounding communities such as North Fair Oaks and Redwood City.

The housing law practice would serve residents of all ethnicities, especially in matters relating to habitability and evictions.

The immigration law practice, by its nature, focuses particularly on the needs of the Latino residents of East Palo Alto and eastern Menlo Park. According to the 2000 US Census 58% of the population of East Palo Alto is Latino. There are in addition some 12% of the population who are Pacific Islanders, many of whom are not citizens and who also have a strong need for counseling in the area of immigration law.

The juvenile justice program is geared to serving the needs of juveniles under the age of 18 who have been accused of a crime who with their parents or guardians need experienced, competent legal advice. East Palo Alto has long had a dubious reputation throughout the Bay Area for a high incidence of criminal behavior and even achieved international notoriety in 1992 as the Per Capita Homicide Capital of America. The perception of the high incidence of crime in the community underscores the importance of our juvenile justice program when one considers that 81% of crimes in East Palo Alto are committed by people, mostly males, under the age of 21.

Key Activities

Please consult our December 2002 brochure enclosed for an extensive overview of our activities in the areas of housing, immigration, and juvenile justice with the support of the Volunteer Attorney Program (VAP) and the Volunteer Law Student Program (VLSP).

Key Outputs

Based on the number of clients served since we opened our offices on the site of the former East Palo Alto Community Law Project at 1395 Bay Road (Start Up is the current tenant from whom we have been subletting our two offices) at the end of September for the first

three months, we anticipate in the current year serving at least 200 families with housing issues and 500 clients with immigration issues. One must consider that these clients have come through our doors for assistance despite the fact we have only recently launched our programs, and most residents of East Palo Alto and eastern Menlo Park are not yet aware of our existence! Since the juvenile justice program has just begun, it is too early to project what the annual number of clients will be, but given the well-known need for the service in the community we anticipate the need to increase the number of free clinic sessions from the initial number of one a month to two and possibly more.

We project that the number of legal advice and intake sessions annually based on our current practice will be at least 12 in the area of juvenile justice, 20 in the area of immigration, 20 in the area of housing, 44 Volunteer Attorney Program student-volunteer intakes and 40 Volunteer Attorney Program sessions conducted by attorneys from established law firms. We anticipate 10 community education/outreach sessions in the area of immigration annually and have applied for a CDBG grant to do 10 community education/outreach sessions in housing education as well.

Key Outcomes

Community Legal Services addresses the very foundation of a just society, namely, the ability to deliver legal services to make a just society possible. The alternative to a legal service provider is a society dominated by a master-slave relationship in which only those with money and power have access to justice and all others do not. East Palo Alto was founded by an interracial coalition spearheaded by African Americans primarily to achieve a just society. There is no just society where a majority of the residents has no practical access to justice. They need to have a community-based and community-responsive legal services provider where there is accountability to the stakeholders, those who benefit from the services that enable them to receive justice when there is a need for redress and equity. The ability to find justice depends on practical access to legal services. In this sense, Community Legal Services addresses the very roots of American society as it wishes to view itself and wishes the world would view it, namely, as a society where the humble and downtrodden, the "huddling masses yearning to breathe free" of Emma Lazarus's poem *The New Colossus* inscribed on the base of the Statue of Liberty, can realistically seek and find justice. East Palo Alto is like a little Ellis Island where strangers find themselves as they seek to create new lives. Many of our

residents are indeed immigrants seeking new lives, seeking not only prosperity and the means to feed and clothe and educate and instill hope in their families, but justice as well, for they mostly come from lands steeped in pandemic corruption and injustice. The promise of America lies in the hope for freedom and fairness, in the words of the Pledge of Allegiance "with liberty and justice for all," not merely those who can pay what the traffic will bear.

All of the other nonprofits in East Palo Alto are worthy, but some are more essential than others. Most essential of all are the institutions that educate and that facilitate justice, our schools, our policemen and fire departments, and our institutions of justice. Community Legal Services has already in its short life spelled the difference between residents of our community having access to justice because it right now exists and is operational and being denied, deprived of justice.

Access to justice is requisite to a community at risk, and if there is no practical access to justice, this community will be violated and displaced by those who follow who do have access to agencies or individuals responsive to them most likely because they have the money to pay for legal services most of our residents do not have.

Access to legal services is much more fundamental to the well-being of our community than are most of the other nonprofits, for this is as a republic a society based on law, but only meaningfully a republic for those who have access to the law.

To summarize the numbers, the survival of Community Legal Services in East Palo Alto, Inc., is what principally stands between most of the 29,500 residents of East Palo Alto and thousands of other residents of eastern Menlo Park having access to legal services or not have access, since the ability to pay for legal services is beyond the means of even most middle-income residents. The need for pro bono legal services is widespread regardless of ethnicity and race.

Concluding Remarks

Our annual budget is \$240,000. We ask that the Board of Directors of One East Palo Alto whose very name affirms a commitment to the well-being of all our residents, set an example for other organizations and firms to help provide the legal services desperately needed by the local communities to which we are uniquely attuned as a community-based organization with several highly regarded practicing attorneys on our Board of Directors, but also with strong

community representation (at least 51% according to our bylaws) to ensure responsiveness on the part of Community Legal Services in East Palo Alto, Inc., to the real needs of the communities we serve.

In addition to the brief summary above on our programs, target population, key activities, key outputs, and key outcomes, we are enclosing with this letter of intent several addenda that address all these points in much greater detail.

Your positive response to our solicitation is deeply appreciated.

Very sincerely yours,

Elizabeth Jackson
Co-Chair
Board of Directors
Community Legal Services
in East Palo Alto, Inc.

Ricardo Ortiz
Co-Chair
Board of Directors
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