ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT/REFERRAL COUNSELOR

Under the supervision of the Legal Services Director and the LRIS coordinator, the Legal Services Administrative Assistants (Referral Counselors) are responsible for the day-to-day operation of the LRIS. Responsibilities include answering phone calls and determining the appropriate manner to handle each call as well as coordinating special projects of the Lawyer Referral and Information Service. Assistants are responsible for the following specific responsibilities:

- Handle phone inquiries from the public; help callers determine whether their concerns are a legal matter or whether a referral to another agency is more appropriate.
- Refer appropriate cases to panel attorneys on rotation/geographical/availability basis.
- Maintain up-to-date information on legal service providers, governmental agencies and social service agencies for use in referring callers.
- Maintain accurate referral records, financial records, statistics, and other files. Assist in the upkeep of departmental files.
- Handle attorney and client correspondence as necessary.

The LRIS is financially dependent upon the good will of the public and the member attorneys. The top priority of the department is handling the phone inquiries appropriately. Assistants are expected to:

- use a pleasant and helpful phone manner,
- screen callers to determine appropriate resource,
- avoid giving ANY legal advice to callers,
- monitor client satisfaction,
- mitigate complaints of clients where possible, and
- respond promptly to inquiries from attorneys.

A ‘team’ attitude is essential to the smooth operation of the referral services. Assistants are expected to:

- handle an equitable share of phone calls, currently about 1,000 each month,
- keep absenteeism to an absolute minimum,
- be cooperative and courteous to co-workers, and
- respond promptly to requests from the director or other co-workers.

Administrative Assistants/Referral Counselors work as part of a team that oversees not only the LRIS, but also the day-to-day operation of some direct legal service projects of the association. Each counselor is assigned responsibilities with one or more of the projects, currently (1) the Low Fee Family Law Project, (2) the Misdemeanor Defense Project and In-custody Project, and (3) Legal Access Point. Some of those responsibilities are described in the attached project description sheet.

In addition to these duties, all members of the HCBA support staff may be called upon at any time to assist with duties or responsibilities as assigned by members of the management staff. The LRIS staff particularly will be called upon to assist other departments with the preparation of mailings. Such assistance is not intended to take counselors from their primary responsibility of handling phone inquiries except as assigned by the director.
HCBA Direct Legal Service Projects:
The following are currently direct legal service projects of the HCBA and are administered by the legal services/LRIS staff.

Low-Fee Family Law Project
This project seeks to match low income family law clients with attorney volunteers who have agreed to provide their services at significantly discounted rates. All staff will

- Respond to inquiries and do phone screening of potential clients for this project
- Determine if clients meet Low-Fee Family Law Project qualification requirements
- Schedule appointments for qualifying clients to meet with Low-Fee Family Law Project attorneys

Misdemeanor Defense Project (MDP)
This project provides attorneys in each court location each day to provide information and brief advice without charge to the public. Panel members provide a service to the public and the courts, while having the opportunity to be retained for legal representation. Assigned staff will

- Create MDP court calendar from signup meetings
- Mail attorney report forms to MDP attorneys prior to scheduled dates
- Find replacement attorneys when necessary
- Enter referral data from attorney report forms into the computer system
- Assist in organizing and running signup meetings
- Visit courts to monitor attorney attendance and procedures, maintain contact with court administrators, and provide marketing materials

Legal Access Point (LAP) Project
This project provides volunteer attorneys daily at the Self Help Center at Hennepin County District Court to provide brief advice to the public. Volunteers serve a two-hour shift, responding to inquiries on a first-come first-served basis. Assigned staff will

- Recruit and schedule LRIS attorneys for volunteer times with the LAP project
- Send reminder notices prior to LAP dates for LRIS attorneys
- Visit Self Help Center regularly to monitor program and encourage volunteers
- Maintain LAP client intake database
- Maintain calendar so other counselors are aware of the practice areas of the attorneys who will be serving at LAP each day, thus allowing referrals to be made to the LAP program in an effective manner.

Volunteer Opportunities
The HCBA occasionally uses volunteers from law schools or the community. Those volunteers are most often assigned duties with regard to one or more of the direct legal services projects. LRIS staff are most often the direct supervisors for volunteers.

- Coordinate with staff of HCBA to find meaningful volunteer experiences for volunteers
- Act as a liaison to community agencies, colleges and law schools, and supervise volunteers to ensure satisfaction of individual and program goals

LRIS AA/RC -- rev Mar2010