

DIALOGUE

Fall 2009
VOL. 13, NO. 4

News and Perspectives from the ABA Division for Legal Services

[Home](#)

[LRIS](#)

[Delivery](#)

[From the Chair](#)

[IOLTA](#)

[LAMP](#)

[Pro Bono](#)

[SCLAID](#)

[Download this issue in PDF](#)

[Download this article in PDF](#)



From the Chair...

By Richard Cassidy

Standing Committee on the Delivery of Legal Services

As I write this, there are signs we are pulling out of the economic recession and things are getting back to normal. However, "normal" for millions of Americans means they live from one paycheck to the next. Just as they do with health care, the working poor lack the discretionary income to pay for legal services when the need arises. We cannot answer these legal needs with government subsidies and pro bono. We spend hundreds of millions of dollars a year on legal needs for the poor and contribute tens of millions of hours of our time to pro bono for the poor. Yet, we still do not come close to meeting all of their legal needs.

The answer to improved access to legal services to those of moderate income, or the working poor, must be through innovations in the ways we delivery these services. We must change the paradigm from the traditional model of full legal services one-on-one across the desk. The ABA Standing Committee on the Delivery of Legal Services has been dedicated to this goal for more than 30 years. One of the ways that we highlight changes is through the Louis M. Brown Award for Legal Access.

Each year, the Committee recognizes a program, project or entity that has worked toward the improvement of the delivery of legal services to those of moderate income through the Brown Award. Last year, the Virtual Courthouse, an online dispute resolution service that rivals small claims courts, received the Award. The Committee has honored the work of Kent College of Law for its development of A2J, an online document preparation model; the Orange County (CA) Legal Aid Society, for its Legal Resolutions project that partners the technology available to legal aid with referrals to practitioners who assume representation at a fixed fee; the New Hampshire Bar Association, for its leadership in the amendment of rules of procedure and ethics in ways that enable lawyers to provide unbundled legal services; and Legal Grinds, a coffee house in Santa Monica that serves justice and java, enabling people with legal problems to have a low-cost consultation with a lawyer in a relaxed setting.

In and of themselves, none of these programs will change the world. But, each of them will improve the lives of thousands of people and over time, no doubt, tens of thousands and collectively hundreds of thousands and maybe even millions.

Whether it is a bar-sponsored program, a court project, a dot-com start-up or the creative work of a few practitioners, it is important for improvements in the delivery of legal services to be recognized. The time to submit a nomination for the Brown Award is now. The Award is presented each year at the ABA Midyear Meeting. The 2010 Award will be given on February 5, in Orlando. If you work with or know of an innovative program or project that improves access to legal services for those of moderate income, please take a moment to nominate the program. Self-nominations are encouraged. The process is done online and takes only a few minutes. Nominations for the Brown Award are due no later than December 17, 2009. For complete details, go to <http://www.abanet.org/legalservices/delivery/brownnomination.html>.

***Dialogue* is published by the ABA Division for Legal Services**

Copyright © 2009 American Bar Association

[ABA Privacy Statement](#) | [ABA Copyright Statement](#) | [ABA Reprint Permission](#)