

Arkansas Legal Aid Task Force

The Arkansas Legal Aid Task Force is a collaborative effort to examine the structure and impact of Arkansas' legal aid system and determine whether any changes are recommended to increase the breadth and impact of client services. While the Legal Services Corporation, the primary funder of the two legal aid organizations in Arkansas, has encouraged this examination and planning process, LSC has been clear that this will be an Arkansas-led process with an outcome to be determined by leaders and stakeholders in Arkansas.

Purposes:

- (1) To examine the current statewide structure of the legal aid system in Arkansas to assess organizational effectiveness and impact on clients and communities. This will include assessing the strengths and weaknesses of the two current legal aid organizations funded by the Legal Services Corporation: Center for Arkansas Legal Services and Legal Aid of Arkansas. The Task Force also will identify other organizations providing legal services to low-income individuals and communities in the state.
- (2) To identify where collaboration by the two legal aid organizations is occurring, and where there may be opportunities to increase collaboration through joint planning, sharing of resources, and shared staff positions.
- (3) To review legal aid structures in other southern and/or rural states.
- (4) To identify current major gaps in legal aid service to eligible clients (client groups, geographic regions, and types of legal matters)
- (5) To determine whether a different structure of existing or new organizations would expand the delivery of legal services to clients eligible under Legal Services Corporation funding restrictions, as well as broaden access to clients and communities who cannot be served by organizations funded by the Legal Services Corporation.
- (6) To discuss the possibility of creating a new legal aid organization in Arkansas that is not subject to Legal Service Corporation contract requirements and restrictions. This will include discussing revenue sources to sustain the new entity over time.

Task Force Composition:

Executive Director, one client-facing attorney, and two Board members from the Center for Arkansas Legal Services

Executive Director, one client-facing attorney, and two Board members from Legal Aid of Arkansas

Executive Director and two appointees of the Arkansas Access to Justice Commission and two appointees of the Arkansas Access to Justice Foundation

Two representatives from community-based organizations that collaborate with legal aid and provide services to low-income individuals and communities

Authority of Task Force:

The Task Force's role and authority is to discuss and recommend initiatives and possible structural changes consistent with the purposes stated above. Any recommendations impacting the two current legal aid organizations, the Foundation, and the Commission will be subject to approval by their respective boards of directors.

Timeline:

Task Force members will be named by June 15, 2024. The Task Force's work will be supported by an outside Consultant who will facilitate Task Force meetings, conduct interviews, and otherwise gather relevant information.

The Consultant will be selected by July 1, 2024 and commence work with the Task Force by August 1. The Task Force will meet periodically as needed between August and December 2024. The Consultant will present a report of findings and recommendations to the Task Force no later than January 15, 2025. Any recommended changes issued by the Task Force will be subject to the authority and approval of the boards of directors of the two legal aid organizations, the Foundation, and the Commission no later than March 1, 2025.