Civil Asset Forfeiture Reform Act

Title 42*

*Additions made to the amendment cycle appear in boldface type, deletions appear in strike out type.

Title 42

Effective August 23, 2000:

42 U.S.C. § 2996f. Grants and contracts

(a) Requisites

With respect to grants or contracts in connection with the provision of legal assistance to eligible clients under this subchapter, the Corporation shall—

(1) insure the maintenance of the highest quality of service and professional standards, the preservation of attorney-client relationships, and the protection of the integrity of the adversary process from any impairment in furnishing legal assistance to eligible clients;

(2)(A) establish, in consultation with the Director of the Office of Management and Budget and with the Governors of the several States, maximum income levels (taking into account family size, urban and rural differences, and substantial cost-of-living variations) for individuals eligible for legal assistance under this subchapter;

(B) establish guidelines to insure that eligibility of clients will be determined by recipients on the basis of factors which include—

(i) the liquid assets and income level of the client,

(ii) the fixed debts, medical expenses, and other factors which affect the client's ability to pay,

(iii) the cost of living in the locality, and

(iv) such other factors as relate to financial inability to afford legal assistance, which may include evidence of a prior determination that such individual's lack of income results from refusal or unwillingness, without good cause, to seek or accept an employment situation; and

(C) insure that (i) recipients, consistent with goals established by the Corporation, adopt procedures for determining and implementing priorities for the provision of such assistance, taking into account the relative needs of eligible clients for such assistance (including such outreach, training, and support services as may be necessary), including particularly the needs for service on the part of significant segments of the population of eligible clients with special difficulties of access to legal services or special legal problems (including elderly and handicapped individuals); and (ii) appropriate training and support services are provided in order to provide such assistance to such significant segments of the population of eligible clients;

(3) insure that grants and contracts are made so as to provide the most economical and effective delivery of legal assistance to persons in both urban and rural areas;

(4) insure that attorneys employed full time in legal assistance activities supported in major part by the Corporation refrain from (A) any compensated outside practice of law, and (B) any uncompensated outside practice of law except as authorized in guidelines promulgated by the Corporation;

(5) insure that no funds made available to recipients by the Corporation shall be used at any time, directly or indirectly, to influence the issuance, amendment, or revocation of any executive order or similar promulgation by any Federal, State, or local agency, or to undertake to influence the passage or defeat of any legislation by the Congress of the United States, or by any State or local legislative bodies, or State proposals by initiative petition, except where—

(A) representation by an employee of a recipient for any eligible client is necessary to the provision of legal advice and representation with respect to such client's legal rights and responsibilities (which shall not be construed to permit an attorney or a recipient employee to solicit a client, in violation of professional responsibilities, for the purpose of making such representation possible); or

(B) a governmental agency, legislative body, a committee, or a member thereof—

(i) requests personnel of the recipient to testify, draft, or review measures or to make representations to such agency, body, committee, or member, or

(ii) is considering a measure directly affecting the activities under this subchapter of the recipient or the Corporation.

(6) insure that all attorneys engaged in legal assistance activities supported in whole or in part by the Corporation refrain, while so engaged, from—

(A) any political activity, or

(B) any activity to provide voters or prospective voters with transportation to the polls or provide similar assistance in connection with an election (other than legal advice and representation), or

(C) any voter registration activity (other than legal advice and representation);

(7) require recipients to establish guidelines, consistent with regulations promulgated by the Corporation, for a system for review of appeals to insure the efficient utilization of resources and to avoid frivolous appeals (except that such guidelines or regulations shall in no way interfere with attorneys' professional responsibilities);

(8) insure that recipients solicit the recommendations of the organized bar in the community being served before filling staff attorney positions in any project funded pursuant to this subchapter and give preference in filling such positions to qualified persons who reside in the community to be served;

(9) insure that every grantee, contractor, or person or entity receiving financial assistance under this subchapter or predecessor authority under this chapter which files with the Corporation a timely application for refunding is provided interim funding necessary to maintain its current level of activities until (A) the application for refunding has been approved and funds pursuant thereto received, or (B) the application for refunding has been finally denied in accordance with section 2996j of this title; [~~and~~]

(10) insure that all attorneys, while engaged in legal assistance activities supported in whole or in part by the Corporation, refrain from the persistent incitement of litigation and any other activity prohibited by the Canons of Ethics and Code of Professional Responsibility of the American Bar Association, and insure that such attorneys refrain from personal representation for a private fee in any cases in which they were involved while engaged in such legal assistance activities[~~.~~]; **and**

(11) ensure that an indigent individual whose primary residence is subject to civil forfeiture is represented by an attorney for the Corporation in such civil action.

(b) Limitations on uses

No funds made available by the Corporation under this subchapter, either by grant or contract, may be used—

(1) to provide legal assistance (except in accordance with guidelines promulgated by the Corporation) with respect to any fee-generating case (which guidelines shall not preclude the provision of legal assistance in cases in which a client seeks only statutory benefits and appropriate private representation is not available);

(2) to provide legal assistance with respect to any criminal proceeding, except to provide assistance to a person charged with a misdemeanor or lesser offense or its equivalent in an Indian tribal court;

(3) to provide legal assistance in civil actions to persons who have been convicted of a criminal charge where the civil action arises out of alleged acts or failures to act and the action is brought against an officer of the court or against a law enforcement official for the purpose of challenging the validity of the criminal conviction;

(4) for any of the political activities prohibited in paragraph (6) of subsection (a) of this section;

(5) to make grants to or enter into contracts with any private law firm which expends 50 percent or more of its resources and time litigating issues in the broad interests of a majority of the public;

(6) to support or conduct training programs for the purpose of advocating particular public policies or encouraging political activities, labor or antilabor activities, boycotts, picketing, strikes, and demonstrations, as distinguished from the dissemination of information about such policies or activities, except that this provision shall not be construed to prohibit the training of attorneys or paralegal personnel necessary to prepare them to provide adequate legal assistance to eligible clients;

(7) to initiate the formation, or act as an organizer, of any association, federation, or similar entity, except that this paragraph shall not be construed to prohibit the provision of legal assistance to eligible clients;

(8) to provide legal assistance with respect to any proceeding or litigation which seeks to procure a nontherapeutic abortion or to compel any individual or institution to perform an abortion, or assist in the performance of an abortion, or provide facilities for the performance of an abortion, contrary to the religious beliefs or moral convictions of such individual or institution;

(9) to provide legal assistance with respect to any proceeding or litigation relating to the desegregation of any elementary or secondary school or school system, except that nothing in this paragraph shall prohibit the provision of legal advice to an eligible client with respect to such client's legal rights and responsibilities;

(10) to provide legal assistance with respect to any proceeding or litigation arising out of a violation of the Military Selective Service Act [50 App. U.S.C.A. S 451 et seq.] or of desertion from the Armed Forces of the United States, except that legal assistance may be provided to an eligible client in a civil action in which such client alleges that he was improperly classified prior to July 1, 1973, under the Military Selective Service Act or prior corresponding law; or

(11) to provide legal assistance in a manner inconsistent with the Assisted Suicide Funding Restriction Act of 1997 [§ 42 U.S.C.A. S 14401 et seq.].

(c) Recipient organizations

In making grants or entering into contracts for legal assistance, the Corporation shall insure that any recipient organized solely for the purpose of providing legal assistance to eligible clients is governed by a body at least 60 percent of which consists of attorneys who are members of the bar of a State in which the legal assistance is to be provided (except that the Corporation (1) shall, upon application, grant waivers to permit a legal services program, supported under section 2809(a)(3) of this title, which on July 25, 1974, has a majority of persons who are not attorneys on its policy-making board to continue such a non-attorney majority under the provisions of this subchapter, and (2) may grant, pursuant to regulations issued by the Corporation, such a waiver for recipients which, because of the nature of the population they serve, are unable to comply with such requirement) and at least one-third of which consists of persons who are, when selected, eligible clients who may also be representatives of associations or organizations of eligible clients. Any such attorney, while serving on such board, shall not receive compensation from a recipient.

(d) Program evaluation

The Corporation shall monitor and evaluate and provide for independent evaluations of programs supported in whole or in part under this subchapter to insure that the provisions of this subchapter and the bylaws of the Corporation and applicable rules, regulations, and guidelines promulgated pursuant to this subchapter are carried out.

(e) Corporation president authorized to make grants and enter into contracts

The president of the Corporation is authorized to make grants and enter into contracts under this subchapter.

(f) Public notification

At least thirty days prior to the approval of any grant application or prior to entering into a contract or prior to the initiation of any other project, the Corporation shall announce publicly, and shall notify the Governor, the State bar association of any State, and the principal local bar associations (if there be any) of any community, where legal assistance will thereby be initiated, of such grant, contract, or project. Notification shall include a reasonable description of the grant application or proposed contract or project and request comments and recommendations.

(g) Staff-attorney program study

The Corporation shall provide for comprehensive, independent study of the existing staff-attorney program under this chapter and, through the use of appropriate demonstration projects, of alternative and supplemental methods of delivery of legal services to eligible clients, including judicare, vouchers, prepaid legal insurance, and contracts with law firms; and, based upon the results of such study, shall make recommendations to the President and the Congress, not later than two years after the first meeting of the Board, concerning improvements, changes, or alternative methods for the economical and effective

delivery of such services.

(h) Study and report to Congress on special needs of eligible clients

The Corporation shall conduct a study on whether eligible clients who are—

(1) veterans,

(2) native Americans,

(3) migrants or seasonal farm workers,

(4) persons with limited English-speaking abilities, and

(5) persons in sparsely populated areas where a harsh climate and an inadequate transportation system are significant impediments to receipt of legal services have special difficulties of access to legal services or special legal problems which are not being met. The Corporation shall report to Congress not later than January 1, 1979, on the extent and nature of any such problems and difficulties and shall include in the report and implement appropriate recommendations.