

**HALLMARKS OF AN EFFECTIVE CIVIL LEGAL SERVICES  
DELIVERY SYSTEM:  
A SYNOPSIS OF THE CORE MISSION, VALUES AND  
EXPECTATIONS**

In July 1995, the Washington State Access to Justice Board adopted the *Hallmarks of an Effective Statewide Civil Legal Services Delivery System*. These *Hallmarks* formed the philosophical framework for the *Board's Plan for the Delivery of Civil Legal Services in Washington State* adopted later that year. The *Hallmarks* outline a detailed vision, define specific institutional values and core capacities central to Washington State's civil equal justice delivery system.

It is the general consensus of the Washington State Access to Justice Board's State Planning Group that the *Hallmarks* remain as relevant today as they were at the time of their initial adoption in 1995. The Group further believes that the *Hallmarks* should guide our state's equal justice community in evaluating progress under the 1995 State Plan and inform any changes to that Plan as a result of the current state planning review process. In order to do so, however, the State Planning Group has attempted to distill the detailed *Hallmarks* document into key themes and expectations that can be used to measure both current progress and future performance of Washington State's civil equal justice delivery system.

**MISSION**

The *Hallmarks* state that our civil equal justice delivery system must be "client focused and expansive,... [c]ontemplate lawyering in its broadest sense, [and acknowledge] that the interests of low income clients can only be served if the delivery system is dedicated to providing full and complete access to the civil justice system in a way that empowers this segment of the population to define, promote, and defend its legitimate interests." *Hallmarks* at 1. To these ends, the *Hallmarks* define the Mission of Washington State's Equal Justice Delivery System as follows:

- To protect the individual rights of low income clients;
- To oppose laws, regulations, policies and practices that operate unfairly against low income individuals and groups;
- To develop and implement laws, regulations, policies and practices that directly affect the quality of life of low income individuals and groups;
- To employ a broad range of legal advocacy approaches to expand the legal rights of low income individuals and groups where to do so is consistent with fundamental considerations of human dignity; and
- To assist low income individuals and groups in understanding and effectively asserting their legal rights and interests within the civil justice system, with or without the assistance of legal counsel.

## CORE VALUES AND CAPACITIES

Certain essential themes underlie the *Hallmarks* and inform their practical application in the context of the *Plan for the Delivery of Civil Legal Services*. These are set forth below:

- Washington State's civil equal justice delivery system must be *Client Centered*. (This means that it must work to secure meaningful access to the civil justice system for specific low-income clients and client groups. The essential characteristic of a client-centered system is meaningful and effective client engagement in the planning, design and delivery of civil equal justice services. Services and systems must be culturally relevant and practically accessible, and should reflect the informed needs and expectations of distinct and identifiable low-income populations.)
- Washington State's civil equal justice delivery system must promote and secure *Full and Meaningful Access* to justice for all low-income people throughout all geographic regions of the state. (This requires the development and maintenance of statewide institutional capacity for effective client representation in all appropriate forums – courts, administrative tribunals, alternative dispute resolution systems, and local, regional and statewide legislative bodies. In addition, this requires that state planners work to ensure that no group or subgroup of low-income clients is practically excluded from securing and enforcing their rights within Washington State's civil equal justice delivery system. This also means that the system must be designed to ensure that low-income clients in all geographic regions of the state are able to employ all legitimate legal tools appropriate to the dictates of their legal needs. Finally, this means that Washington State's civil equal justice delivery system must work to ensure that those who suffer disparate treatment or disproportionate access barriers are identified, and that relevant systems and services are developed and deployed to level the equal justice playing field.)
- Washington State's civil equal justice delivery system must work to ensure the *Highest and Best Use of All Resources and all Capacities* in coordinated service of the Mission.) This requires state planners and institutional partners (providers, funders, bar associations, etc.) to act with due regard for the relative capability of all resources to be coordinated and employed in service of the vision. No institution, provider, or funder acts in a vacuum. Each is an integral component of an *Integrated Delivery System*. Strategic coordination, planning and resource deployment must characterize the operation of the system and all its component parts at the local, regional and statewide level, if we are to ensure that all low income people in Washington State will enjoy meaningful and appropriate access to the civil justice system.)
- Washington State's civil equal justice delivery system must be *Accountable* to clients, funders and other stakeholders. (Our civil equal justice delivery system is a model public-private partnership that relies of federal, state, and local public funding, private in-kind *pro bono* services, and private charitable and entrepreneurial investment. The system and all its partners have a responsibility to ensure that scarce resources are appropriately marshaled, effectively and efficiently managed, and strategically deployed to the ends envisioned by the overall Mission, and that meaningful results are secured for clients in response to their most pressing legal needs.)