**GUIDELINES, OBJECTIVES AND TRAINING**

**INTRODUCTION**

There are eight general guidelines recommended by the Christian Legal Society in order to provide a foundation for successful Christian legal aid ministry clinics which are sponsored by local Christian churches or Christian organizations and are conducted with the assistance of volunteer Christian lawyers, law students and paralegals (“the Christian Legal Community”). Although they have been developed primarily in connection with basic legal advice and limited assistance services, they are also generally applicable to more complete or service intensive types of clinics as well. A fuller explanation of these guidelines, the reasons for them and the nature of Christian legal aid ministry clinics is contained at the end of the guidelines.

**THE GUIDELINES**

The Biblical commands to lovingly help those afflicted by poverty also provides us with a great privilege to share in His compassion for them by assisting in various legal and other ways.

It is suggested that a basic Christian legal aid clinic should include:

* 1. A joint commitment by both the local sponsoring churches or Christian organizations and of the Christian Legal Community faithfully and prayerfully to attempt to carry out the biblical commands and opportunities to serve legal and certain spiritual needs of the poor, including evangelizing them, in a Christ honoring way;
  2. A commitment to arrange for professional services meeting the standards of the legal profession;
  3. A specific service plan and an understanding between the governing body of the local church, or Christian organization and the oversight committee of the Christian Legal Community which should be reflected in a letter or memorandum of intent or understanding of the type, scope, amount and priorities of the services to be offered and of client eligibility standards. These should be appropriate to the needs of the indigent and to the calling, skills, capabilities, desires and experience of the volunteers from the Christian Legal Community and of the sponsoring church or Christian organization;
  4. The role of the sponsoring church or local Christian organization to promote and support the clinic generally and to endeavor to carry out its part including helping to recruit volunteers from the Christian Legal Community, supplying an adequate office and facilities as a site for providing professional services during a few hours each week, arranging appointments for clients and prescreening of obvious non legal or ineligible matters;
  5. The oversight by the Christian Legal Community of efforts to arrange for the rendering of professional services including endeavoring to discharge its primary role in motivating, recruiting, training, equipping and nurturing of Christian lawyers, law students and paralegals, scheduling and otherwise coordinating their services with the activities of the church, and helping to train church or local Christian organization screening personnel;
  6. Coordinators appointed by both the church or local Christian organization and the Christian Legal Community to direct and oversee the development and operation of the clinic, the performance of their respective responsibilities and to maintain regular communication and good relations between their two groups;
  7. Periodic but at least annual meetings between representatives of the church or local Christian organization and of the Christian Legal Community to evaluate and assess progress, to make recommendations for improving the clinic and to prepare a joint, brief written annual report of their conclusions and recommendations; and
  8. Arrangements for (a) written waivers, releases or disclaimers signed by clients acknowledging the non-liability of the sponsoring church, or local Christian organization or of any of their national affiliated organizations, of CLS and of the CLS chapter or the Christian Legal Community concerning the services provided; and (b) adequate low cost malpractice insurance for the uninsured members of the Christian Legal Community rendering the services.

**PARTICIPATING LOCAL CHURCHES AND CHRISTIAN ORGANIZATIONS**

The local Christian sponsoring organization will sometimes consist of a number of church or group of churches banding together, or of a Gospel/Rescue Mission, Salvation Army, or Catholic Charities facility. They may also include other organizations such as Christian inner city ministries, crisis pregnancy or battered women’s shelters, retirement or senior citizens’ homes or centers, children’s group homes or shelters, rehabilitation, substance abuse or other organizations serving the homeless or the poor.