



THE NEEDS OF NATIVE AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES

2007 NEEDS ASSESSMENT

NATIVE AMERICAN DISABILITY
LAW CENTER, INC.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Native American Disability Law Center's mission is to advocate so that the rights of Native Americans with disabilities in the Four Corners area are enforced, strengthened and brought into harmony with their communities.

Previously called the Native American Protection and Advocacy Project, an office of DNA – People's Legal Services, Inc., the Law Center has served Native Americans with disabilities for over ten years. In order to better serve the community, in 2005, the Law Center was established as a separate non-profit organization.

In November of 2006 the Law Center's Board of Directors approved a series of recommendations to improve the ability of the Law Center to reach its mission. We undertook this needs assessment to increase the effectiveness of the organization by better understanding:

- the specific needs of our community and constituents;
- how the agency has responded to these needs in the past; and
- what improvements in service delivery and changes in priorities are needed so that we can best meet our mission.

MAJOR FINDINGS

The Native American Disability Law Center has a unique role in the lives of Native Americans living with disabilities in the four corners area of New Mexico, Arizona, Colorado and Utah. It is the sole provider of civil legal services targeting people whose physical, developmental and psychiatric disabilities make living in one of the United State's most impoverished areas an even greater challenge.

This needs assessment found that the Law Center has a positive impact on the lives of its clients. Half of respondents say their problem was solved because of the Law Center and three quarters would use the agency again. Two thirds say they know more about their rights because of the Law Center and that the staff communicate effectively and with respect, gaining the trust of clients. These high levels of client satisfaction, the positive resolution of cases, and the long term impact of clients' interaction with the agency are all strengths.

The agency's target populations face almost insurmountable challenges. Poverty, isolation, discrimination and stigma combined with a lack of basic medical and social services in the community all serve to make the work of the Law Center both vital and difficult to provide. The communication most law firms use -- phone and internet -- are not easily accessed by these clients. Public transportation is scarce and often inaccessible, and 60% of the population surveyed could not afford gas for their cars. Civil rights issues may be less important when 43% of families face hunger, 35% are without a regular place to live, and 54% risk having their utilities cut off or cannot afford to warm and light their homes.

The Law Center is a lifeline for these families and individuals. More than 80% of those surveyed said there is no place else they can go for assistance. Clients call the Law Center because no one else can help them with their problem, and because the agency cares deeply about the community it serves.

Clients have tremendous needs that the Law Center is designed and funded to address. Limited housing, poor medical care, violations of federal special education law, abuse and neglect, limited local or community-based services, arcane and complex application systems for federal, veteran's, state and tribal benefits, physical barriers to public buildings, public stigma and the continued discrimination faced by people in employment and housing all cry for our attention.

People with disabilities in this region want the Law Center to be their personal advocate, to provide them in-depth, one-on-one services. They also want the agency to fight for their rights on a more systemic level, and to address the enormous challenges of rural transportation, to battle a poorly run Indian Health Service and housing program, to call attention to the mismanagement of the Veteran's departments, and force tribal leaders to see the inadequacies of their services for people with disabilities. They want the Law Center to train them to be better self-advocates in the school, and to train the providers and governmental leaders to be more responsive to their needs.

The Law Center faces its own challenges of course -- limited federal and private funds, a small staff, and the needs to focus efforts where they can have the greatest impact.

This needs assessment points to several core areas of work and possible priorities that, while not addressing every need identified, provide a framework for individual, systemic and community-based advocacy. Table 25 summarizes the most common issues identified in the survey and the focus groups, and the level of advocacy that could be applied to the issue.

Findings related to survey respondents

- This survey is most representative of persons with developmental disabilities and individuals who identify as Navajo, Hopi and Apache.
- While the majority of survey respondents are low income, people with psychiatric or physical disabilities are more likely to use public benefits for the very poor.
- Clients who feel they did not get the service they wanted are more likely to receive public benefits than those to whom the Law Center provided one-on-one services.

Findings related to levels of service received

- People with developmental disabilities are more likely than other groups to have received one-on-one services from the NALDC.
- People with physical disabilities are more likely to say they have never received help.
- People with psychiatric disabilities more likely to say they received education and training.

Findings related to client satisfaction

- The single most important factor in client satisfaction is whether or not the client feels that the service they received matched their expectations and desires, rather than the level or type of assistance provided.
- Level of service received does not in and of itself determine satisfaction; however, the more direct service a client received the more likely they are to say it met their needs.
- People with psychiatric disabilities are more likely than other populations to feel they did not get the kind of help they wanted.
- People who received education and training support were overall the most satisfied with Law Center services, but to a lower level of enthusiasm.
- Disability also plays a limited role in client satisfaction, although people with psychiatric disabilities are both more likely to be satisfied and more likely to be very dissatisfied.
- Perception of service received also impacts whether or not the client feels the Law Center played a role in resolving their problem.
- People who receive training services are more likely to feel the Law Center helped resolve their issue and more likely to say they are better able to advocate for themselves should a similar situation arise.
- The Law Center can improve its client customer service by more fully explaining what the Law Center will provide to the client, by providing this service and by explaining what actions were taken on the client's behalf.
- High levels of satisfaction with customer services were found in all groups of respondents – the only exception being those who did not receive the service they wanted.
- In written comments, clients expressed thanks and appreciation for the Law Center's services.
- Suggestions for improving services center on timeliness, access to Law Center services, and more timely communication.

Findings related to living with disabilities in the Four Corners region

- People with psychiatric and physical disabilities experience indicators of poverty at far greater levels than people with developmental disabilities. The one exception is that there are no jobs for people with developmental disabilities.
- People with psychiatric disabilities experience greater difficulty accessing health care.
- Law Center clients are often unable to access telephones or computers, increasing the importance of written communication.
- Fully one third of respondents have not had a place to spend the night in the previous year. Almost half of the people with physical disabilities were homeless at one point.
- People with psychiatric disabilities are far more likely than any other population to need assistance learning about, applying for, and accessing services.
- Discrimination is a common experience for all respondents.

- IHS and Veteran's Administration-provided health care services do not meet the needs of Native Americans with disabilities.
- Extensive problems experienced by children with disabilities in state and BIA-funded public schools confirm that the Law Center's advocacy and training in the area of special education is both highly valued and greatly needed.
- Consumers want direct and systemic advocacy assistance in the areas of housing, health care, SSI, Medicaid, and Veteran's and other public benefits.
- Native Americans with disabilities face discrimination and are often poorly understood by their communities, including tribal leaders.
- Public buildings, including those operated by tribal governments, remain inaccessible to many Native Americans with disabilities.
- A range of community-based services, including personal care attendants, mental health and treatment services, and those for individuals with developmental disabilities, are largely unavailable for many Native Americans with disabilities, especially those in remote areas.
- A lack of opportunity, discrimination and poor services from the state and tribal vocational rehabilitation offices make employment a distant dream for many Native Americans with disabilities.
- People with disabilities want the Law Center to spend more time reaching out to them, to tribal leaders, and the broader community either in person or through public service announcements.
- To increase community understanding and awareness and reduce stigmatization and discrimination, focus group participants want the Law Center to train local leaders about the rights of people with disabilities.
- Veterans are particularly interested in more collaboration with and service from the Law Center.
- The Law Center plays a unique and valued role as a law firm focused on the rights of Native Americans with disabilities. The Law Center can strengthen that role by increasing the range and amount of direct legal services it provides.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Advocacy Priorities

- Investigate allegations of abuse and neglect in institutions and group homes. Provide individual direct legal advocacy to individuals who have been abused or neglected while residing in institutions or group homes.
- Provide systemic advocacy to ensure that agencies charged with investigating complaints of abuse and neglect, including elder abuse, are providing sufficient services in a timely manner.
- Provide systemic advocacy to simplify and streamline the application process for tribal and other housing services.
- Provide direct legal advocacy to individuals as they submit applications for housing. Represent those who are being discriminated against or denied housing because of their disability.
- Provide direct legal advocacy to individuals who are being discriminated against or denied employment because of their disability.
- Conduct extensive surveys assessing Navajo and Hopi government buildings' accessibility. Take necessary legal action to ensure that tribal buildings are physically accessible to individuals with disabilities.
- Design and implement an accessibility campaign targeting public buildings in Gallup, Shiprock, and Counselor.
- Provide direct legal advocacy services to individuals who request assistive technology from Medicaid, the IHS and private insurance.
- Provide direct legal advocacy services to individuals denied community-based services, including waiver services, personal care attendant services, health care, and mental health services.
- Advocate on a systemic level to increase transportation options for rural Native Americans with disabilities in the Four Corners region.
- Advocate on a systemic level to increase community-based residential services and home-based services for rural Native Americans with disabilities in the Four Corners region.
- Provide direct legal advocacy services in the area of special education evaluations.
- Provide direct legal advocacy services to ensure that Native American children with disabilities receive a Free and Appropriate Public Education in the least restrictive environment.
- Provide direct legal advocacy services to ensure that students are not disciplined or expelled for behaviors that could be helped with proper services.
- Design and implement a pilot legal clinic to assist individuals with applications for and denials of public benefits, including Social Security benefits.

Client satisfaction priorities

- Review the Law Center's client intake systems, including information and referral, client agreement letters and initial client correspondence. Ensure that the Law Center clearly communicates to potential clients the services that the Law Center can provide.
- Review the Law Center's case closing systems, including closing letters, to ensure that the Law Center clearly communicates to clients the services they received.
- To measure client satisfaction, develop and implement an anonymous client satisfaction survey and send to all clients at all levels of service one month following case closing.
- Ensure that the Law Center's promotional materials, including brochures and web site, explain the agency's priorities and available services.

Outreach and training priorities

- Develop a bi-annual newsletter with information about specific disability topics, available Law Center services, and upcoming training events.
- Develop and implement a comprehensive outreach plan to increase hard-to-reach communities' awareness of the Law Center.
- Conduct legislative advocacy training.
- Provide employment rights education and training to people with disabilities, focusing on the vocational rehabilitation system.
- Design and implement a series of educational forums on available Law Center services and an overview of disability services available through state, federal, tribal and local governments, and community-based organizations. The goal of these trainings will be to help people understand what benefits and services might help them and how to obtain those benefits and services. Those most in need of this information are people with psychiatric disabilities.
- Provide specific, in-depth self-advocacy training to parents of children who receive or should receive special education services.
- Design and implement an outreach and training program to increase awareness of and sensitivity to the needs of Native Americans with disabilities. Target key stakeholders including elected officials and employees of the tribes, IHS and other service providers.
- Provide quarterly outreach to veteran's groups and increase contact with the Veteran's Administration.
- Provide systemic advocacy to improve transportation services to the VA hospital for veterans with disabilities living in rural areas.

SURVEY RESEARCH

This is the first comprehensive survey of the experiences and needs of Native Americans living with disabilities in the Four Corners¹ area undertaken by the Native American Disability Law Center, and one of the few such surveys ever conducted.² The instrument was designed to provide the staff and governance Board with accurate and impartial information about the needs of the community, and how well the agency is doing in meeting those needs.³

METHODOLOGY

The Law Center maintains a mailing list of 2,000 individuals. Many, but not all, of these individuals have received assistance from the Law Center, ranging from very limited contact to a full range of legal representation or training services. In June of 2007, these individuals received a survey by mail. An additional 70 surveys were also distributed at focus groups and through other providers and organizations.

Efforts were made to make the survey accessible to the target population. The survey was postage paid, so no costs were incurred to the individual when responding. It was also placed online so that those with access to the internet could answer, and a toll free number was available for those who wished to call in their responses. The survey was brief, at a low literacy level and anonymous.

Of the 2,070 surveys distributed, 147 were returned for a bad address. A total of 179 responses were received. We therefore estimate a response rate of 9%, or .3% of the estimated 67,400 Native Americans living with disabilities in the Four Corners area covered by the Law Center.

No effort was made to ensure geographic, ethnic, tribal, and racial or gender representation in the survey sample, so we are unable to infer if the resulting responses are fully representational of those

¹ The Four Corners includes southeastern Utah, southwestern Colorado, northwestern New Mexico, and northeastern Arizona. The Law Center's service area is essentially defined by the exterior boundaries of the Navajo Nation, the Hopi, Ute Mountain Ute and Southern Ute reservations, and the surrounding border communities.

² The American Indian Rehabilitation Research & Training Center conducted or participated in several studies covering similar issues, such as needs assessments focusing on Native Americans with disabilities living in the Houston and Dallas/Ft. Worth areas, independent living outcomes for Native Americans living in northwest New Mexico, and a study of the needs of Native Americans living on and off the reservations. The most recent update or version of these reports is 1997. Reportedly, the Navajo Nation Office of Special Education and Rehabilitation Services has also completed a needs assessment of Navajos with disabilities, but it is not readily available.

³ The survey instrument is included in the Appendices.

who are eligible for assistance. Please note that efforts were made to reach all regions and populations within the service area through the focus groups. Individuals on the Law Center's mailing list may not be representational of the population. In addition, due to a printing error 44 respondents did not answer several questions relating to the level of service they received.

KEY FINDINGS

DEMOGRAPHICS: WHO ANSWERED THE SURVEY?

The 179 individuals who completed the survey are fairly – but not completely – representative of Law Center clients. This section of the report highlights things the Law Center board and staff should keep in mind when making decisions based on the results of this survey.

Disability, age and tribal affiliation

Table 1 compares those that responded to the survey with individuals who are in the Center's case management system (the Disability Advocacy Database or DAD) for the time period October 1, 2006 through July 1, 2007. These individuals are referred to as "Clients YTD" throughout this report. The data was 'cleaned' to ensure that people who answered 'other' were placed in an appropriate category where possible.

Nearly half of respondents were either a person with a developmental disability or their family member, and those with physical disabilities accounted for an additional third. The Law Center allows clients to list more than one disability when receiving services, as did the survey. As a result, this data is over-representative of the total number of surveys received, but is representative of the range of disabilities of both clients and respondents.⁴

The comparison in Table 1 shows that the respondents are highly representative of the Law Center's client base, with the exception of people with physical disabilities.

⁴ Please note that the category 'developmental disability' includes learning disabilities. Psychiatric disability includes 'other emotional and behavioral issues', although many of these clients are children and may thus also be categorized as having a developmental disability.

TABLE 1: RESPONDENTS' DISABILITY		
Survey respondents	2007 clients YTD	Disability
44%	47%	Developmental disability
33%	19%	Physical disability
18%	19%	Blindness or deafness
12%	16%	Psychiatric disability
9%	-	Other (please specify)
8%	4%	TBI

The majority of those surveyed were over the age of 22. These data seem suspect in that while 44% of respondents said they were either a person with developmental disabilities or completing the survey on behalf of a ward or child, only 15% cited the age of the person as under 15. For this reason, disability is used as a basis for this analysis rather than age.

The vast majority of respondents were Navajo (88%). Hopi (14%) were also well represented. The survey cannot be seen as representative of the needs of the Southern Ute (1% of respondents), Apache (2%), Paiute (0%) or Ute Mountain (0%) tribes. This is why the focus groups targeting these populations are crucial to the agency's overall understanding of the needs of its constituents.

When comparing respondents to the clients served by the Law Center, however, the survey becomes more representational. For example, 87% of FY 07 clients and 88% of survey respondents are Navajo. Hopi are over-represented in the survey because 14% of respondents but only 3% of clients are members of this tribe. Well represented are the Apache – 2% of both clients and survey respondents. The survey does not have any Caucasian or Hispanic respondents, though a full 5% of Law Center clients are from these ethnic groups⁵. Table 2 provides these data.

⁵ While the Law Center focuses on meeting the needs of Native Americans with disabilities, we provide information and referral to others who request assistance. The 5% of clients who are Caucasian or Hispanic received information and referral to other available service providers.

TABLE 2: TRIBAL AFFILIATION AND ETHNICITY		
	Survey respondents	2007 clients YTD
Navajo	88%	89%
Southern Ute	1%	0%
Apache	2%	2%
Hopi	14%	3%
Paiute	0%	2%
Ute Mountain	0%	0%
White	0%	3%
Hispanic	0%	2%

Finding: This survey is most representative of persons with developmental disabilities and individuals who identify as Navajo, Hopi and Apache.

Living situation and public benefits received

The data presented in Table 3 illustrates that the vast majority of survey respondents are on some type of income or disability-based public assistance. Three quarters of all respondents, for example, receive Social Security, and nearly half (42%) are on Medicaid. These are strong indicators that the population surveyed is very low income.

The programs most associated with poverty are food stamps and general assistance. People who felt they did not get the help they wanted [for an explanation of this population, see the following section of the report] and people with psychiatric or physical disabilities were more likely to receive food stamps than those individuals who received one-on-one help (32% and 31% compared to only 9%). General Assistance and Medicaid were highest among people with psychiatric disabilities (7% and 67%).

TABLE 3: BENEFITS RECEIVED							
Benefits received	By service received				By disability		
	All	One-on-one services	Did not get help wanted	Training & ed	Mental Illness	DD	Physical
Social Security	78%	77%	74%	77%	73%	81%	74%
Food Stamps	24%	9%	32%	29%	40%	24%	31%
General Assistance	3%	5%	5%	0%	7%	4%	2%
Medicare	34%	23%	21%	29%	33%	28%	48%
Medicaid	42%	46%	37%	53%	67%	48%	33%
Commodities	6%	9%	0%	0%	0%	6%	12%
Other	3%	0%	0%	12%	13%	2%	5%

These data are important to keep in mind when looking at the level of services people receive described in the next section of this report.

The Law Center may wish to consider if clients with the lowest incomes (these data indicate that they are usually people with psychiatric disabilities) are receiving the level of service needed to meet their legal needs. Also surprising is the finding that only a third of the individuals with physical disabilities are on Medicaid.

Service level data, however, indicates that people with developmental disabilities are more likely to receive one-on-one assistance than those with psychiatric or physical disabilities.

Finding: While the majority of survey respondents are low income, people with psychiatric or physical disabilities are more likely to use public benefits for the very poor.

Finding: Clients who feel they did not get the service they wanted are more likely to receive public benefits than those to whom the Law Center provided one-on-one services.

Services received

Table 4 compares the services individuals who responded to the survey received compared to those who have received help from the Law Center this year.

The survey is most representative of people who received one-on-one help from the Law Center. In other words, about as many people who took the survey got this level of services (22%) as did clients of the Center in 2007 (26%).

The survey can also be used to gauge the opinions of those who received training and education (15% of respondents) and those who received what they feel was a short term service (5% of respondents compared to 1% of cases year to date).

More caution should be applied in the areas of information and referral and 'unsure'. Sixty- one percent (61%) of those helped by the Center thus far in 2007 were categorized in DAD as 'I&R', but only 6% of survey respondents say was the service they received. However, one can assume that a portion of those who said they tried to get help and did not (8% of respondents) and those who said they have not received any help (43% of respondents) received at a minimum some I&R, than for analysis sake these individuals' responses could be grouped into "people who got less than one-on- ones services"

TABLE 4: LAW CENTER SERVICES RECEIVED			
Level or type of service	Survey respondents	2007 clients YTD	Notes
One-on-one legal help	22%	26%	representative
Short Term Assistance	5%	1%	fewer
Information and Referral	6%	61%	Far fewer
Training and Education	15%	No data - cannot compare	
Tried but have not gotten help	8%		
Unsure	2%	12%	Hard to compare
Never received help (skip)	43%	0%	

HOW THE DATA WAS GROUPED FOR ANALYSIS

More comprehensive data were collected in regards to whether or not respondents felt they received the help they needed. While a measure of client satisfaction, this question was also indicative of service levels for the purpose of analysis and comparison. For purposes of this analysis, therefore, respondents were grouped into six categories:

- Those that received the highest level of assistance - one-on-one legal help (22% of respondents).
- Those that tried or did receive a variety of lesser services (20% of respondents).
- Those that received education and training assistance (15% of respondents).
- Those who say they never got any help (43% of respondents, though the number drops for some areas of the survey).
- Those that said they got the help they wanted (60% and those that did not (31%). [Note: the rest had no opinion].
- Additional analysis was completed comparing respondents' answers by disability.

Using this grouping, the survey found several trends in terms of services delivered.⁶ More than a quarter of the people who said they or their family member had a developmental disability received one-on-one legal assistance, compared to only 15% of those with psychiatric disabilities and 16% of those with physical disabilities. More than half (53%) of those with physical disabilities said they did not receive any help from the Law Center, compared to 31% with psychiatric disabilities and 25% with developmental disabilities. Finally, nearly a third (31%) of individuals with psychiatric disabilities said they received training and education, compared to only 16% of those with developmental disabilities and 18% of those with physical disabilities.

Finding: People with developmental disabilities are more likely than other groups to have received one-on-one services from the NALDC.

Finding: People with physical disabilities are more likely to say they have never received help.

Finding: People with psychiatric disabilities more likely to say they received education and training.

⁶ There is an important caveat to these findings, however. A significant number of surveys were delivered without this information completed due to a printing error. In the rest of the report, individuals are grouped differently.

CLIENT SATISFACTION:

HOW CAN THE LAW CENTER IMPROVE ITS CLIENT SERVICES?

This section of the report looks at how people perceive the services they received and identifies differences across tribal and disability groups. These findings can be used by the Law Center to modify elements of its service delivery to increase client satisfaction and to target services to those most in need.

Survey respondents have mixed feelings about the Law Center.

Half of all respondents are very satisfied with the services they received, and an additional 12% are somewhat satisfied. Three quarters say they would use the Law Center's services again.

On the other side of the coin, a third of all respondents did not get the help they wanted and more than a third said their problem was not solved after working with the Law Center. Twelve percent of respondents were either dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with the service, and a quarter had not yet made up their minds.

However, there are deep differences in satisfaction based on the level of service received, the perception if the service was what they needed or wanted, and by disability. This section of the report looks at these data in more detail.

Finding: The most important factor in client satisfaction is whether the client feels that the service they received matched their expectations and desires, rather than the level or type of assistance provided.

Perception of service received

One important finding of this survey is that people who received one-on-one services are twice as likely to believe that they got the kind of help they wanted than those who receive a lesser service. Only 7% of those who got the highest level of service feel they did not receive what they wanted compared to 15% of those who received information and referral, short-term assistance or were unsure about that kind of help they got. Individuals who received training and education appear to be clear about the service they were seeking and received.

People with psychiatric disabilities were most likely to say they did not get the kind of help they wanted (40%). Even those who received one-on-one help were more likely to say they did not get what they wanted compared to all others who received this level of assistance.

Table 5 shows the results of this question, comparing answers by the level or type of service received and by disability.

TABLE 5: "DID YOU GET THE KIND OF HELP YOU WANTED?"							
	By service received				By disability		
	All	One on one services	Less than one-on-one	Training & education	Mental illness	DD	Physical
Yes	69%	93%	85%	94%	60%	68%	76%
No	31%	7%	15%	6%	40%	33%	24%

Finding: Level of service received does not in and of itself determine satisfaction; however, the more direct service a client received the more likely they are to say it met their needs.

Finding: People with psychiatric disabilities are more likely than other populations to feel they did not get the kind of help they wanted.

Level of satisfaction

People were asked if they were satisfied with the service. Interestingly, Table 6 shows relatively little change in level of satisfaction based on level or type of service. Nearly three-quarters of people who received either one-on-one or a less direct service were very satisfied. Overall, those who received the most direct level of service were most satisfied, but even 77% those who received a lighter level of assistance were pleased.

The following are representative comments from those respondents most satisfied with the services to the question "Write your thoughts here about the services you got."

- *Service I got for my daughter helped me.*
- *They were very helpful! Re: the problem wasn't solved, but it was not the fault of Law Center - they did all they could to help my student.*
- *They were very good.*
- *I receive training to label a problem of my son's ADHD.*
- *Education very well.*
- *Yolanda was very helpful with information, help me with what to do & say when meeting with the school.*
- *Training at Shiprock was good - Self-Advocacy Training*

Highly satisfied respondents also had suggestions for how their services could have been improved. These included:

- *If they could have appt made in the morning like 8:00 am but understand the distance that your driving down to rough road.*
- *By just talking to me I understood what she said.*

- *If possible have newspaper articles about your activities.*
- *Not to settle for minimum settlement but request for maximum services.*

Most respondents, however, just took this opportunity to thank the Law Center for their services:

- *They've done a great job.*
- *They always tell me to help the assistance with me for have a done job.*
- *So far so good.*
- *Good communication & understanding of all issues.*
- *Thank you for the good job you have done to provide us social security benefits for all the disable person.*
- *They did a great job the first time.*

The greatest levels of dissatisfaction were among people with developmental disabilities or psychiatric disabilities. Looking more deeply at those who said they were either very or somewhat dissatisfied (noting that this is only 10 of the 179 respondents), 90% said their issue was not resolved after Law Center assistance and 68% feel the agency did not do "what they said they would do for me." Written comments from these respondents to the question "How could the Law Center have done a better job for you?" include:

- *Who are you? Make your services known. Please make your services available on KTNN, local chapters, newspapers, one on one workshops. How do we get to you?*
- *Why so much limitation on all topics.*
- *Be more sensitive to issues to be resolved for them in educational/housing due to transitional programs - referral need to be in place.*
- *Listen & respond rapidly with real concern for those of us in remote locations.*

Survey respondents were also asked to share their thoughts about the services they received. The responses from these most dissatisfied clients point to the need for more in depth communication with clients whose needs are likely to be unmet included:

- *They are not available in our area. They are not friendly. They need one on one training (workshop).*
- *Outcome of requested service unknown.*
- *A lot of red tape - I was transferred to different offices.*
- *It's been a long time when I asked for help & I don't remember for what, I know it concerned Leroy. 5 - Because I can't remember what happened.*
- *There was none given.*

People who attended education and training had the overall highest percentage of satisfaction. However, it should be noted that only 56% were very satisfied while 33% were somewhat satisfied. This may indicate a point of inflection for improvement. It should be noted as well that none of these respondents were dissatisfied with the service.

Individuals who received this level of service shared these thoughts about the education and training programs they attended:

- *Got good information.*
- *More oral information to think about and look into for my daughters disability needs; Yolanda gave me hope for a better school year.*

- *Rec'd resourceful materials to be enhance and utilized.*
- *They were very good.*
- *Training at Shiprock was good - Self-Advocacy Training.*
- *I got education about useful services & assistance through the presentations.*
- *Getting accurate information on Special Ed in the IEP.*
- *Excellent Training through Steps to Success Conferences! Limited help via phone/in person requests.*

And had these suggestions for improvement:

- *Help built more community like library, community center, stores, food stores, cafe, transport.*
- *More workshops on the new IDEA - 04 and more of a better understanding.*
- *Needed to actually listen and care about an emergency situation -- needed ability to respond to Crisis Situation AS AN EMERGENCY rather than just another bureaucratic process of paperwork to be started with action when and if. URGENTLY, they need immediate names of specific private attorneys or disability advocates which can be given to people needing help as ready, willing and able to take pro-active steps to prevent endangered folks with disabilities!*

TABLE 6: SATISFACTION LEVELS							
Level	By service received				By disability		
	All	1:1 services	Less than 1:1	Training & ed	MI	DD	Physical
Very satisfied	50%	71%	71%	56%	60%	53%	55%
Somewhat satisfied	12%	11%	6%	33%	0%	15%	14%
COMBINED satisfaction	62%	82%	77%	89%	60%	68%	69%
Somewhat dissatisfied	4%	4%	6%	0%	0%	8%	0%
Very dissatisfied	8%	0%	0%	0%	10%	8%	5%
COMBINED dissatisfaction	12%	4%	6%	0%	10%	16%	5%
I don't know yet	26%	14%	18%	11%	3%	18%	27%

Finding: People who received education and training support were overall the most satisfied with Law Center services, but to a lesser level of enthusiasm.

Finding: Disability also plays a limited role in satisfaction, although people with psychiatric disabilities are both more likely to satisfied and more likely to be very dissatisfied.

Meeting client expectations is the greatest marker for satisfaction.

As previously described, the real difference in satisfaction relates to client expectations. The least satisfied of all Law Center clients are those who say they did not get the level of service they wanted. Only 10% of the people who feel they did not get the help they needed are satisfied – and a full 41% are dissatisfied with their services.

Who are these people? Only seven people said they were very dissatisfied *and* did not get the help they wanted. The vast majority (67%) of these people feel the Law Center did not provide them what they wanted, and 85% say their issue was not resolved after contacting the Law Center. Fourteen percent say the Law Center is still helping them.

Issue Resolution

Respondents were asked if their problem was solved with help from the Law Center. While 15% of all respondents are still waiting for a final resolution, exactly 50% say the issue was, and fewer (37%) said it was not.

Again, those who got the help they wanted were more likely to say that their issue was resolved with the Law Center's help. Here, the level of service mattered less than this perception. There was no notable difference across service level – people who got one on one service were as likely as those with a lesser level of service to say the Law Center helped resolve their issue.

TABLE 7: ISSUE RESOLUTION AND SERVICE RECEIVED					
	All	Got help wanted	Did not get help wanted	1:1 services	Less than 1:1
Yes, definitely	29%	43%	5%	43%	50%
Yes, more or less	21%	28%	5%	32%	25%
No, not really	10%	7%	18%	4%	13%
No, definitely not	27%	7%	68%	4%	6%
They are still helping me	15%	19%	5%	18%	6%

The results of those who received education and training services are also of interest. Well more than half of those who received training say their issue was resolved with the support of the Law Center, although one might assume they did not receive any direct legal assistance. This group's responses to two other questions: "I understand my rights better now because of them" and "I could do more for myself if this problem came up again" indicate that the education and training provided had a profound impact.

Finding: Perception of service received also impacts whether or not the client feels the Law Center played a role in resolving their problem.

Finding: People who receive training services are more likely to feel the Law Center helped resolve their issue and more likely to say they are better able to advocate for themselves should a similar situation arise.

Finally, it is helpful to see if there is any difference in perception of resolution by disability group. There are subtle differences here – people with physical disabilities are most likely to say their issue was not resolved for example. However remember that people with physical disabilities were also most often those who feel they did not get the help they wanted.

TABLE 8: ISSUE RESOLUTION AND DISABILITY			
Was your problem solved with help from the Law Center?	Mental illness	DD	Physical
Yes, definitely	50%	33%	32%
Yes, more or less	0%	23%	18%
No, not really	30%	8%	5%
No, definitely not	10%	28%	27%
They are still helping me	10%	8%	18%

Client communication

Respondents were asked if they agreed or disagreed with a series of statements designed to measure the communication skills of the staff and their overall satisfaction with specific areas of customer service. Here the Law Center scored very well. Clients feel listened to, understand what staff said, and trust and feel comfortable with the advocates they interact with. The Law Center should be very pleased.

The only area needing improvement is creating a clear understanding of what the Law Center will do for a client. Only slightly more than half feel the agency did what it said it was going to do.

TABLE 9: AREAS OF CLIENT SATISFACTION – ALL RESPONDENTS	
77%	They listened to my concerns.
76%	I would use the Law Center services again.
72%	I felt comfortable with the person who helped me.
72%	They communicated with me enough so I knew what was going on.
70%	They explained what they could and could not do to help me.
66%	I trust the advice I got from them.
66%	I understood what they were saying to me.
66%	They responded to my concern(s) quickly.
65%	I understand my rights better now because of them.
65%	I could do more for myself if this problem came up again.
64%	There is no place else I could have called for help with my problem.
57%	They did what they said they would do for me.

These questions were analyzed by disability and service level as well. Of note:

- 100% of those who receive done one-on-one services would use the Law Center again.
- 81% of respondents say there is no other place they can go for help.
- 89% of those who attended training trust the advice they got from the agency.
- 89% of people with psychiatric disabilities said the staff explained what they could and could not do to help me.

Finding: The Law Center can improve its client customer service by more fully explaining what the Law Center will provide to the client, by providing this service and by explaining what actions were taken on the client's behalf.

Table 10 illustrates the variance across disability groups and level of service received. People with physical disabilities overall were less pleased, less comfortable and trusted their advocate less than others. The other group less satisfied with these areas of service delivery were – again – those who did not receive the service they wanted.

TABLE 10: AREAS OF CLIENT SATISFACTION BY RESPONDENT GROUP							
How do you feel about the Law Center's services?	Less than 1:1	1:1 services	Did not get help wanted	Training & ed	MI	DD	PD
They responded to my concerns quickly.	81%	93%	11%	78%	56%	68%	74%
They listened to my concerns.	88%	93%	39%	89%	78%	83%	77%
They explained what they could and could not do to help me.	81%	86%	33%	83%	89%	78%	70%
They did what they said they would do for me.	75%	79%	11%	61%	44%	59%	59%
They communicated with me enough so I knew what was going on.	94%	93%	17%	83%	78%	73%	67%
I understood what they were saying to me.	81%	78%	33%	78%	67%	71%	62%
I trust the advice I got from them.	88%	86%	17%	89%	79%	68%	64%
I felt comfortable with the person who helped me.	94%	86%	22%	89%	79%	71%	68%
I understand my rights better now because of them.	81%	82%	17%	78%	67%	66%	68%
I could do more for myself if this problem came up again.	81%	74%	22%	83%	67%	68%	62%
There is no place else I could have called for help with my problem.	81%	85%	28%	72%	67%	68%	57%
I would use the Law Center services again.	94%	100%	28%	94%	78%	80%	68%

Finding: High levels of satisfaction with customer services were found in all groups of respondents – the only exception being those who did not receive the service they wanted.

Open ended questions related to client services

Respondents were asked two questions related to the quality of service they received. The first, "Write your thoughts here about the services you got" received 54 responses, and the second "How could the Law Center have done a better job for you?" received 56 responses.

In previous sections of this report, responses were looked at for those least and most satisfied with the service, and for those who received education and training assistance. This section of the report looks at these answers collectively. A full transcript is included in the appendices.

The most common response by far was to share thanks and appreciation with the Law Center. Forty-six of the people who answered this question had positive responses, including the following:

- *They've done a great job.*
- *If a problem came up I would choose the Law Center cause I believe they would help me.*
- *Good Communication & understanding of all issues.*
- *Thank for the good job you have done to provide us social security benefits for all the disable person.*
- *They did a great job the first time.*
- *I was satisfied with their assistance.*
- *The service provided today is what we need, no changes are necessary.*
- *Service I got for my daughter helped me.*
- *Got good information.*
- *They were very good.*
- *Yolanda was very helpful with information, help me with what to do & say when meeting with the school.*
- *I feel that I've got the services that my son needed for his education. He is more excited & enjoying school.*
- *I was very happy that we even had services, legal issues, available for a disability person.*
- *Yolanda has been very helpful w/advocating.*
- *friendly, helpful, dependable*
- *My thought about services is thank you very much for all the assistances that your department give us.*
- *I got education about useful services & assistance through the presentations.*
- *It is good services.*
- *My child was able to get services through compensation for therapies & extended school year.*
- *Helped a lot, every question answered thanks.*
- *Getting accurate information on Special Ed in the IEP.*
- *The attorneys that helped me were very friendly & knowledgeable. They explained everything very thoroughly.*
- *Excellent Training through Steps to Success Conferences! Limited help via phone/in person requests.*
- *I am glad their offices are there for Native Americans with disabilities, if this was not the case, this would just be yet another barrier concerning their legal issues.*
- *Helpful. Questions asked that I would not have thought of.*
- *Friendly, they gave clear information.*
- *The presentation was excellent.*
- *When I attended the Navajo Nation Legislative Process in Tohatchi, I received the education on Navajo law. It broaden my walk into reality on how the law reflect around the disabilities act.*

- *Very helpful & they know what they're doing.*
- *There is great to bounce things off and when possible she helps out.*
- *They are always there when you need it.*
- *Training received directed us to which questions to ask of service providers.*

The next most common area of comment related to increasing access and/or awareness of services. Twenty-two responses focused on this area for improvement, including:

- *They are not available in our area*
- *This is the first time I heard about your organization.*
- *A lot of red tape - I was transferred to different offices.*
- *They said they can't help me.*
- *I would like help, I need help.*
- *There was none given.*
- *We did not get help and if this is the same office with Gallup.*
- *Did not know about all this program available.*
- *Go visit people (disabilities), ask them, see if they feel like work? Don't just sit [in] the office, and say you need help, check the people, the team works.*
- *Not to turn me down & telling me to find someone else. I'm out of the area & you said you cannot assist me. I'm injured. HELLO*
- *I have not got help so I don't know.*
- *We moved off the reservation and was told we could not receive services. It would be nice for those living off the reservation to be able to receive services.*
- *Listen & respond rapidly with real concern for those of us in remote locations.*
- *A office to someone near.*
- *Make people more aware of autism. More group meetings in Torreon.*
- *Advertisement or informational flyer throughout the Navajo Nation communities.*
- *If I had known about this I would have turned to you people but I didn't know. I've used one attorney but still didn't help that much. Just a little. Just didn't work.*
- *More information is needed on the Reservation - I have not heard about the Law Center - this is the front of this survey about this information all the Information/assistance is important to disabilities - never had to use these services.*
- *I never knew this type of service existed in the four corners area - never had the opportunity to use them.*
- *The Law Center has never helped me before. And I think that it would have been better if could help me.*
- *If possible have newspaper articles about your activities.*

Nine comments related specifically to improving communication with clients

- *If they could have appt made in the morning like 8:00 am but understand the distance that your driving down to rough road.*
- *Listen, respond, & advocate for families w/disabilities, especially in the area of insurance coverage.*
- *They are not friendly.*
- *I sure like to know what service they provide me with I think I need a lot of legal advice with my problem I'm having.*
- *The reason why I really didn't understand everything about the lawyer I had totally lost track of myself but whatever happen I'm ok with it.*

- *Be more sensitive to issues to be resolved for them in educational/housing due to transitional programs - referral need to be in place.*
- *Check on clients that are in institutions & facilities questions client/parents how they are being treated - not to the administrators - talk to clients themselves.*
- *They should have listen to me what I have to say about injured on the job on December 1998.*
- *If it pertain to their professional advisor, they have to come to each level of pain.*

Three individuals want the Law Center to advocate for their specific need in housing, accessibility and jobs. Three stated that the Law Center was taking too long to resolve their case and/or had lost track of what was being done. Five individuals want the Law Center to provide more education, training and written resources related to disability rights issues.

Finding: In written comments, clients expressed thanks and appreciation for Law Center's services.

Finding: Suggestions for improving services center on awareness, timeliness, access and communication.

COMMUNITY NEEDS:

WHAT IS IT LIKE TO LIVE WITH DISABILITIES THE FOUR CORNERS?

The survey asked a series of questions designed to gain an understanding of the environmental issues facing Law Center clients. These questions focused on material needs, access to health care, living conditions, access to disability and social services, and experiences of isolation and discrimination.

Respondents were asked if they had experienced a particular condition on the previous six months, during the previous year, or if they had never experienced this situation.

Poverty

Perhaps not surprisingly, the most common marker of poverty is the inability to pay for gas. More than half of the Law Center's clients could 'not make ends meet' at some time in the prior year or could not afford to pay for the basic needs to keep their household warm and lit. As the focus groups confirm, transportation is a major concern. Three quarters of all respondents did not have enough to eat on a regular basis, and the options for employment were extremely limited.

TABLE 11: INDICATORS OF POVERTY		
All	Issue	Most commonly experienced by
60%	Could not get where I needed to go because I didn't have gas money.	MI (76%) and PD (74%)
56%	Could not make ends meet.	PD (69%) and MI (67%)
54%	Could not pay for propane or utilities.	PD and MI (65%)
47%	Could not get transportation.	PD (65%) and MI (63%)
43%	Did not have enough food.	MI (59%)
39%	Could not get a job because no jobs were available.	DD (44%)

Finding: People with psychiatric and physical disabilities experience indicators of poverty far greater levels than people with developmental disabilities. The one exception is that there are no jobs for people with developmental disabilities.

Health care

Focus group participants spoke about the difficulty of getting adequate health care. The IHS and veterans systems were often described as difficult to access and not of high quality.

These survey results reinforce this perspective. Nearly half of the people surveyed said that they were unable to receive the amount of health care they needed, and more than a third could not get the specific service they needed. Almost three quarters felt the service were of low quality. Access to doctors was an issue, especially for the 29% who had no health insurance.

TABLE 12: HEALTH CARE		
All	Issue	Most commonly experienced by
49%	Received medical services, but not enough.	MI (56%) and PD (53%)
42%	Received low quality medical services.	MI (47%) and PD (46%)
35%	Could not see a doctor because one wasn't available.	MI (53%)
34%	Could not get the medical services I needed.	MI (53%)
29%	Could not see a doctor because I don't have health insurance.	MI (44%)

Finding: People with psychiatric disabilities experienced greater difficulty accessing health care.

Living conditions

The vast majority of respondents lived in their own homes (52%) or with family (32%). A few respondents were in jail or institutional settings. These homes are frequently without regular phone service and access to the internet. A full third of clients have also experienced homelessness in the past year. The lack of public transportation in the region and high gas prices are only compounded by the fact that nearly one-half of the time people could not get where they wanted to go because the road conditions were so poor.

TABLE 13: LIVING CONDITIONS		
All	Issue	Most commonly experienced by
48%	Could not get where I needed to go because the roads were bad.	PD (60%) and MI (57%)
47%	Did not have access to a computer or the internet.	MI (60%)
45%	Did not have a telephone to use when I needed one.	MI (53%) and PD (50%)
35%	Did not have a place to spend the night.	PD (48%)

Finding: Law Center clients are often unable to access telephones or computers, increasing the importance of written communication.

Finding: Fully one third of respondents have not had a place to spend the night in the previous year. Almost half of the people with physical disabilities were homeless at one point.

Finding: Nearly half of the people surveyed said they could not get where they needed to go because of poor road conditions.

Access to services

The focus groups found that many people would like the Law Center to spend more time in their community, helping them learn about and access needed services. The survey data confirm this. Respondents feel they get the run around, do not know what is available, and face a great deal of red tape when trying to access services. The myriad and complex applications frustrated three fourths of respondents. Housing applications were a common source of frustration with focus group members, for example. Many respondents indicated they had difficulty accessing needed services.

People with psychiatric disabilities face far greater barriers accessing services than any other population. Especially difficult is red tape, the run around, understanding applications and even knowing what is available. People with physical and psychiatric disabilities both feel a sense of distrust with the service providers.

TABLE 14: SERVICES		
All	Issue	Most commonly experienced by
58%	Got the run around from lots of different agencies.	MI (76%)
54%	Did not know about services that could help people with disabilities.	MI (76%)
50%	Went through a lot of red tape trying to get help.	MI (67%)
46%	Did not understand applications or how to get the help I needed.	MI (76%)
41%	Needed disability services but there were none where I lived.	MI (56%)
38%	Got turned down for disability services.	MI (53%)
37%	Needed disability services but did not trust the place I was told to go to.	MI (50%) and PD (48%)

Finding: People with psychiatric disabilities are far more likely than any other population to need assistance learning about, applying for, and accessing services.

Education

Forty-four percent of respondents were individuals with or the parent of a person with developmental disabilities, and 15% of respondents related to individuals under the age of 15.

One can assume that special education services are a concern to this population. Indeed, 41% of people with developmental disabilities say they could not get the services they need in school; but 47% of the respondents with mental illness – or their child with mental illness – could not receive needed services, either.

TABLE 15: EDUCATIONAL SERVICES		
All	Issue	Most commonly experienced by
32%	Could not get the disability services my child needs in school	MI (47%) and DD (41%)
27%	My child was disciplined in school for behavior related to a disability	MI (38%) and PD (36%)

Finding: Special education issues are prevalent for both student with psychiatric illness and those with developmental disabilities.

Discrimination

Focus group participants spoke frequently of the difficult accessing public buildings, including tribal offices. While this was an issue for nearly a third of all respondents, nearly half of those respondents with physical disabilities say this has been an issue in the past year. Discrimination, described a 'being treated unfairly', was a more common experience especially for people with psychiatric disabilities.

TABLE 16: DISCRIMINATION		
All	Issue	Most commonly experienced by
45%	Was treated unfairly because of my disability.	MI (60%)

31%	Could not get into a building because it wasn't accessible to me.	PD (47%)
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Finding: Discrimination is a common experience for all respondents.

LAW CENTER SERVICES:

WHAT ARE THE COMMUNITY'S LEGAL ADVOCACY NEEDS?

Although the Law Center works under a series of federal mandates, protection and advocacy agencies are encouraged to prioritize their legal services to meet needs identified by the potential consumers of their services. Therefore, this final area of the survey was designed to help the Board and staff of the Law Center prioritize among the many needs and activities the agency could address under these federal guidelines and funding restrictions.

It should be noted that the Law Center could not possibly address all of the issues listed. Therefore, the results from this part of the survey were tallied in a number of different ways to cull the core issues of importance to the community. These are the issues addressed in the survey:

Core areas of work

One way to look at these data is to see which of the core areas of work are most important to respondents. The Law Center listed 32 specific issues it could address, grouped in these core areas of work.

Abuse and Neglect – 3 areas of work

- Investigate abuse and neglect in places that serve people with disabilities.
- Make sure the agencies that are supposed to investigate complaints of abuse and neglect are doing their jobs.
- Help people who have been abused or neglected in the above places or in group homes.

Civil Rights - 7 areas of work

- Work for better laws to protect the rights of people whose government or families want to force them to get mental health treatment or place them in institutions.
- Work to make public buildings more accessible.
- Help people so they do not have to have a guardian if they don't want one or need one.
- Help people who are being discriminated against or denied housing because of their disability.
- Help people who are being discriminated against or denied jobs because of their disability.
- Help Native Americans with disabilities who are being discriminated against or denied services because of their race.

- Help make voting in elections easier for people with disabilities.

Disability Services – 5 areas of work

- Help people get Assistive Technology like wheelchairs paid for by Medicaid and health insurance programs.
- Work for more public transportation for people with disabilities.
- Help people get the disability services they need.
- Work for more local services for people with disabilities.
- Help people who live in institutions, but want to move into the community.

Education Issues – 6 areas of work

- Advocate for children to get good evaluations for special education services.
- Advocate so students get the special education services they need.
- Advocate so that students are not disciplined or expelled for behaviors that could be helped with proper services.
- Advocate so that students are not put in jail or detention centers for behaviors that could be helped with proper services.
- Advocate so students get the services they need to transition into the community after they finish high school.

Social Security – 3 areas of work

- Help people with disabilities get Social Security benefits.
- Help people who get Social Security return to work.
- Help people who get Social Security get vocational rehabilitation services.

Training – 9 areas of work

- Train parents so they can be better advocates for their children in special education.
- Train service providers about the needs of Native Americans with disabilities.
- Help people understand their job opportunities and rights.
- Help people understand their housing rights.
- Help people understand their voting rights.
- Help people understand what benefits and services might help them and how to get those benefits and services.
- Help people understand their rights if they live in institutions.
- More information about the help I can get from the Law Center.
- Help people understand how they can help to get better laws.

Top issues for all groups

People were asked if these issues were “not important to me”, “somewhat important to me”, “very important to me”, or if they had “no opinion”.

As a start, the responses were analyzed looking at the answers from all respondents. The data was examined in three ways – what were the top issues ranked by the group, what percentage thought the issue was very important to them, and the overall ranking of the core area of work based on the number of important issues in that area.

The following table shows the top ten issues by these three areas of ranking. This analysis reveals that there is quite a degree of synergy across variables.

Abuse and Neglect issues are of paramount importance. All three specific activities suggested by the survey were ranked among the top ten by both the percentage of people who said the issue was “very important” to them and by the overall ranking received when looking at rating the issues across levels of importance.

The next most important core areas of work were Disability Services and Education Issues. Five of the 6 specific activities in the area of Education were among the top ten overall; similarly, 4 of the 5 specific activities in the area of Disability Services made the top ten.

Training is also highly ranked; 7 of the 9 Training areas listed were in the top ten overall for the rating.

Specific issues in the area of Civil Rights, with the exception of discrimination activities, were less important. Three of the seven listed were in the top ten, and several of the options were among the least important of issues surveyed. Only one of the three options for Social Security was selected among the top ten, but it is a huge area of work: “Help people with disabilities get Social Security benefits.”

TABLE 17: PRIORITIES FOR ADVOCACY SERVICES

Overall rating		'Very important'		Area of work	
Rank	Avg	Rank	%	Core issue	Specific activity
1	2.96	1	94%	Abuse/Neglect	Make sure the agencies that are supposed to investigate complaints of abuse and neglect are doing their jobs.
2	2.93	2	92%	Disability Svcs	Help people get the disability services they need.
3	2.92	4	89%	Training	Help people understand what benefits and services might help them and how to get those benefits and services.
4	2.91	3	91%	Abuse/Neglect	Investigate abuse and neglect in places that serve people with disabilities.
4	2.91	5	88%	Civil Rights	Help people who are being discriminated against or denied jobs because of their disability.
5	2.9	4	89%	Social Security	Help people with disabilities get Social Security benefits.
5	2.9	4	89%	Training	Train service providers about the needs of Native Americans with disabilities.
6	2.89	5	88%	Abuse/Neglect	Help people who have been abused or neglected in the above places or in group homes.
6	2.89	6	87%	Civil Rights	Help people who are being discriminated against or denied housing because of their disability.
6	2.89	7	86%	Education	Advocate so that students are not disciplined or expelled for behaviors that could be helped with proper services.
7	2.88	6	87%	Disability Svcs	Work for more local services for people with disabilities.
7	2.88	6	87%	Training	Help people understand their job opportunities and rights.
8	2.87	6	87%	Education	Advocate so students get the special education services they need.
8	2.87	6	87%	Training	Train parents so they can be better advocates for their children in special education.
9	2.85	9	83%	Disability Svcs	Help people get Assistive Technology like wheelchairs paid for by Medicaid and health insurance programs.
9	2.85	8	85%	Education	Advocate for children to get good evaluations for special education services.
9	2.85	9	83%	Education	Advocate so students get the services they need to transition into the community after they finish high school.
9	2.85	10	82%	Training	More information about the help I can get from the Law Center.
9	2.85	Not ranked	82%	Training	Help people understand how they can help to get better laws.
9	2.85		81%	Training	Help people understand their rights if they live in institutions.
10	2.84	9	83%	Disability Svcs	Work for more public transportation for people with disabilities.
10	2.84	9	83%	Education	Advocate so that students are not put in jail or detention centers for behaviors that could be helped with proper services.

	2.83	9	83%	Civil Rights	Help Native Americans with disabilities who are being discriminated against or denied services because of their race.
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Top issues by disability group

People with Psychiatric Disabilities

People with psychiatric disabilities said that more things were very important to them than any other group. This means more issues (six in all) received a total rating of 3 (the highest possible) than any other population.

Of interest, people with psychiatric disabilities placed access to disability services higher overall than other groups. Their top issues are related to services, abuse and neglect, and training. These individuals also were interested in more information about Law Center services and training to become advocates in the legislative arena.

TABLE 18: PRIORITIES FOR ADVOCACY SERVICES AMONG PEOPLE WITH PSYCHIATRIC DISABILITIES			
Rating		Area of work	
Avg	Rank	Core Issue	Specific Activity
3	1	Disability Svs	Help people get the disability services they need.
3	2	Training	Help people understand what benefits and services might help them and how to get those benefits and services.
3	3	Abuse/Neglect	Investigate abuse and neglect in places that serve people with disabilities.
3	4	Disability Svs	Work for more local services for people with disabilities.
3	5	Disability Svs	Help people get Assistive Technology like wheelchairs paid for by Medicaid and health insurance programs.
3	6	Disability Svs	Work for more public transportation for people with disabilities.
2.94	7	Abuse/Neglect	Make sure the agencies that are supposed to investigate complaints of abuse and neglect are doing their jobs.
2.94	8	Abuse/Neglect	Help people who have been abused or neglected in the above places or in group homes.
2.93	9	Training	More information about the help I can get from the Law Center.
2.93	10	Training	Help people understand how they can help to get better laws.

People with Developmental Disabilities

Differences also arose when examining top priorities among people with developmental disabilities and their surrogates. While the reader might expect that education issues would rank highest with this population, instead abuse and neglect, issues surrounding discrimination in housing and employment, and access to and training about disability services were most important.

TABLE 19: PRIORITIES FOR ADVOCACY SERVICES AMONG PEOPLE WITH DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES			
Rating		Area of work	
Avg	Rank	Core Issue	Specific Activity
2.99	1	Abuse/Neglect	Make sure the agencies that are supposed to investigate complaints of abuse and neglect are doing their jobs.
2.97	2	Abuse/Neglect	Investigate abuse and neglect in places that serve people with disabilities.
2.96	3	Disability Svs	Help people get the disability services they need.
2.96	4	Disability Svs	Work for more local services for people with disabilities.
2.96	5	Civil Rights	Help people who are being discriminated against or denied jobs because of their disability.
2.96	6	Education	Advocate so that students are not disciplined or expelled for behaviors that could be helped with proper services.
2.96	7	Civil Rights	Help people who are being discriminated against or denied housing because of their disability.
2.94	8	Training	Help people understand what benefits and services might help them and how to get those benefits and services.
2.94	9	Training	Train service providers about the needs of Native Americans with disabilities.
2.93	10	Abuse/Neglect	Help people who have been abused or neglected in the above places or in group homes.

People with physical disabilities

The issues for this group were strikingly different than for others, or for respondents as a whole. Civil rights issues – including racial discrimination, housing and employment discrimination – ranked highly with this group. Specific disability related services, such as Assistive Technology, were important. This group would also like the Law Center to assist with Social Security applications.

TABLE 20: PRIORITIES FOR ADVOCACY SERVICES AMONG PEOPLE WITH PHYSICAL DISABILITIES			
Rating		Area of work	
Avg	Rank	Core Issue	Specific Activity
2.97	1	Disability Svs	Help people get the disability services they need.
2.96	2	Abuse/Neglect	Make sure the agencies that are supposed to investigate complaints of abuse and neglect are doing their jobs.
2.94	3	Civil Rights	Help people who are being discriminated against or denied jobs because of their disability.
2.94	4	Civil Rights	Help people who are being discriminated against or denied housing because of their disability.
2.94	5	Training	Train service providers about the needs of Native Americans with disabilities.
2.94	6	Disability Svs	Work for more public transportation for people with disabilities.
2.94	7	Disability Svs	Help people get Assistive Technology like wheelchairs paid for by Medicaid and health insurance programs.
2.92	8	Social Security	Help people with disabilities get Social Security benefits.
2.91	9	Training	Help people understand their job opportunities and rights.
2.91	10	Civil Rights	Help Native Americans with disabilities who are being discriminated against or denied services because of their race.

Issues common across disability groups

Because these are complex analyses, Table 21 summarizes the data by disability group. Those issues that were in each group's top ten are shaded. The most common issues are monitoring agencies that investigate complaints of abuse and neglect and advocating for disability services.

This table is also helpful for seeing commonalities across two disability groups. In addition to the to priorities shared by all groups, people with psychiatric and developmental disabilities share an interest in 4 priorities, people with developmental and physical disabilities share 3 priorities, and people with psychiatric and physical disabilities share only one. Transportation, information about the Law Center and legislative advocacy training are priority issues for people with psychiatric disabilities only. People with developmental disabilities are the only group to rank expulsion issues highly, and people with physical disabilities are the only group who prioritized Social Security benefits, racial discrimination claims, or training about job opportunities and rights

TABLE 21: PRIORITIES FOR ADVOCACY SERVICES BY DISABILITY

Area of work		Disability Group		
		MI	DD	PD
Core Issue	Specific Activity	Rated within top 10		
Abuse Neglect	Make sure the agencies that are supposed to investigate complaints of abuse and neglect are doing their jobs.			
Disability Svs	Help people get the disability services they need.			
Abuse/ neglect	Investigate abuse and neglect in places that serve people with disabilities.			
Abuse/ Neglect	Help people who have been abused or neglected in the above places or in group homes.			
Training	Help people understand what benefits and services might help them and how to get those benefits and services.			
Disability Svs	Work for more local services for people with disabilities.			
Civil Rights	Help people who are being discriminated against or denied jobs because of their disability.			
Civil Rights	Help people who are being discriminated against or denied housing because of their disability.			
Training	Train service providers about the needs of Native Americans with disabilities.			
Disability Svs	Help people get Assistive Technology like wheelchairs paid for by Medicaid and health insurance programs.			
Disability Svs	Work for more public transportation for people with disabilities.			
Training	More information about the help I can get from the Law Center.			
Training	Help people understand how they can help to get better laws.			
Education	Advocate so that students are not disciplined or expelled for behaviors that could be helped with proper services.			
Social Security	Help people with disabilities get Social Security benefits.			
Civil Rights	Help Native Americans with disabilities being discriminated against or denied services because of their race.			
Training	Help people understand their job opportunities and rights.			

Top issues by level and perception of service

A similar analysis was completed to see if there were marked difference in priorities based on the level of service people received. Here the analysis looked at respondents who received one-on-one service, those who received Training and Education, and those who feel they did not get the help they wanted.

Because this is a confusing chart, those issues that were in the top ten only are included and rather than giving a specific ranking, those groups that placed them in the top ten have shading in their box. All groups were limited to 15 issues.

The most common top priorities by service received are in the area of Education. People who received one-on-one services ranked Training highest with 5 priority areas, followed by Education (3), Abuse and Neglect, Disability Services and Civil Rights issues (2) and Social Security (1).

People who received Training and Education services like respondents with psychiatric disabilities, gave '3's' to a large number of issues. Again, Training ranked highest with 6 priority areas, followed by Education (5), Civil Rights and Abuse and Neglect issues (3) and Disability Services (2). Voting issues were also important to those who received training, in contrast to any other group.

People who did not receive the help they wanted ranked Civil Rights, Education and Training issues highly (3), followed by Abuse and Neglect, Disability Services and Social Security (2). This group's concerns were also more spread across core issue areas than any other.

TABLE 22: PRIORITIES FOR ADVOCACY SERVICES BY SERVICE LEVEL

Area of work		Service level		
		1:1 Svs	Train / Ed	Not help wanted
Core Issue	Specific Activity	Rated within top ten		
Abuse/Neglect	Make sure the agencies that are supposed to investigate complaints of abuse and neglect are doing their jobs.			
Disability Svs	Help people get the disability services they need.			
Education	Advocate so that students are not disciplined or expelled for behaviors that could be helped with proper services.			
Training	Help people understand what benefits and services might help them and how to get (them).			
Education	Advocate so students get the special education services they need.			
Education	Advocate for children to get good evaluations for special education services.			
Training	Train parents so they can be better advocates for their children in special education.			
Training	Train service providers about the needs of Native Americans with disabilities.			
Abuse/Neglect	Help people who have been abused or neglected in the above places or in group homes.			
Training	Help people understand their job opportunities and rights.			
Civil Rights	Help people who are being discriminated against or denied housing because of their disability.			
Disability Svs	Work for more local services for people with disabilities.			
Civil Rights	Help people who are being discriminated against or denied jobs because of their disability.			
Social Security	Help people with disabilities get Social Security benefits.			

TABLE 22: PRIORITIES FOR ADVOCACY SERVICES BY SERVICE LEVEL
(CONT.)

Area of work		Service level		
Training	Help people understand how they can help to get better laws.			
		1:1 Svs	Train / Ed	Not help wanted
Core Issue	Specific Activity	Rated within top ten		
Civil Rights	Work to make public buildings more accessible.			
Abuse/Neglect	Investigate abuse and neglect in places that serve people with disabilities.			
Education	Advocate so students get the services they need to transition into the community after they finish high school.			
Education	Advocate so that students are not put in jail or detention centers for behaviors that could be helped with proper services.			
Training	Help people understand their voting rights.			
Disability Svs	Help people get Assistive Technology like wheelchairs paid for by Medicaid and health insurance programs.			
Training	Help people understand their housing rights.			
Civil Rights	Help make voting in elections easier for people with disabilities.			
Civil Rights	Help people so they do not have to have a guardian if they don't want one or need one.			
Social Security	Help people who get Social Security get vocational rehabilitation services.			
Training	More information about the help I can get from the Law Center.			

Possible top priorities

The Law Center board and staff face a difficult set of choices. They must decide which advocacy issues the agency should address based on the needs assessment, the capacity and strengths of the agency, federal funds and their requirements, and the relative impact that the advocacy will have on the overall lives of Native Americans with disabilities.

The following 18 issues rise to the top. They were in the top ten of at least two of the groups analyzed (disability and service received), and therefore, are representative of the agency's clients – including the important group of people who do not think they received the service they wanted.

These priorities also represent a good mix of core areas, and are reflective of the issues identified in the next section of the report, the focus groups.

TABLE 23: MOST COMMON PRIORITIES FOR ADVOCACY SERVICES		
1	Abuse/Neglect	Help people who have been abused or neglected in the above places or in group homes.
2	Abuse/Neglect	Investigate abuse and neglect in places that serve people with disabilities.
3	Abuse/Neglect	Make sure the agencies that are supposed to investigate complaints of abuse and neglect are doing their jobs.
4	Civil Rights	Help people who are being discriminated against or denied housing because of their disability.
5	Civil Rights	Help people who are being discriminated against or denied jobs because of their disability.
6	Civil Rights	Work to make public buildings more accessible.
7	Disability Svs	Help people get Assistive Technology like wheelchairs paid for by Medicaid and health insurance programs.
8	Disability Svs	Help people get the disability services they need.
9	Disability Svs	Work for more local services for people with disabilities.
10	Education	Advocate for children to get good evaluations for special education services.
11	Education	Advocate so students get the special education services they need.
12	Education	Advocate so that students are not disciplined or expelled for behaviors that could be helped with proper services.

TABLE 23: MOST COMMON PRIORITIES FOR ADVOCACY SERVICES (CONT.)		
13	Social Security	Help people with disabilities get Social Security benefits.
14	Training	Help people understand how they can help to get better laws.
15	Training	Help people understand their job opportunities and rights.
16	Training	Help people understand what benefits and services might help them and how to get those benefits and services.
17	Training	Train parents so they can be better advocates for their children in special education.
18	Training	Train service providers about the needs of Native Americans with disabilities.

FOCUS GROUPS

To compliment the survey research, and to ensure that certain populations were sampled in the needs assessment, the Law Center conducted a series of focus groups in the spring and early summer of 2007.

METHODOLOGY

The Law Center staff received training on how to conduct a focus group, and two pilot groups were held to validate and then revise both the process and the questions. The input from staff and the two pilot groups (held in English and Navajo) were crucial to the success of the subsequent meetings.

The groups were held using a traditional Sha Bik'e'go Hani' (Talking Circle) format, leaving the one space open to enter the circle, facing East. People were seated according to local customs reflecting their stature within the community. Introductions were lengthy, allowing people to share their stories as well as their place within the community. The facilitators were deeply familiar with the cultural norms in each of the tribal groups who participated.

Staff quickly drafted the notes from each group, which were then compiled in this report.

Sampling

175 individuals were invited to participate, primarily through phone calls to either sponsoring organizations, such as the Veterans Administration, or to individuals familiar to the Law Center. The Appendix details this process. A total of 71 individuals, 40% of those invited, participated in the nine focus groups, which were in the following locations:

1. Second Mesa, Arizona: this group targeted the Hopi community, which has been underserved by the Law Center in the past.
2. Shiprock, New Mexico: One group targeted Navajo language speakers and was conducted in the Navajo language using a traditional Sha Bik'e'go Hani' (Talking Circle) format.
3. Shiprock, New Mexico: A second group targeted English language speakers in the Shiprock area.
4. Ignacio, Colorado: This group targeted Southern Ute tribal members living in a small community about 30 miles from Durango, CO and an hour's drive from Farmington, NM.

5. Gallup, New Mexico: One group targeted Veterans living in rural communities around Gallup.
6. Gallup, New Mexico: A second group targeted rural and suburban parents of children with disabilities that attend public schools and local bureau of Indian affairs schools on the Navajo Reservation.
7. Counselor, New Mexico: This group targeted small settlements isolated from larger communities, government agencies, commercial outlets, or other services.
8. Toyeyi, Arizona: This group targeted adults with psychiatric disabilities living in an institution
9. Window Rock, Arizona: This group targeted veterans in the region.

One additional group was planned in Tuba City, Arizona, on the western side of the Law Center's service area, but no one attended.

Demographics of those attending

These focus groups were designed to reach specific populations: Veterans, individuals living in an institution, parents of children receiving special education services and supports, and individuals from the Navajo, Hopi, and Southern Ute tribes. Two focus groups contained a mix of individuals from extremely remote areas of the state.

Because the agency serves a large, multi-state area, focus groups were also held in three states: Arizona, New Mexico and Colorado. The Law Center also serves members of the Navajo Nation living in the southeastern portion of Utah, although a focus group was not held there in this effort.⁷

More women than men attended (59% and 41% respectfully). Those who participated included adults with disabilities (39%), parents and caregivers (38%), and service providers and others (22%). It should be pointed out that no one was asked to disclose their disability and thus these estimates are inferred from self-disclosure or the stories told.

Although the Law Center largely invited people to the groups, the majority (60%) of this attendance had never heard of the Law Center. This may underscore that people who receive Law Center services or are supported in some way by the agency are unaware of this relationship.

⁷ Focus groups in the Utah Navajo area were held in 2004 in cooperation with Disability Law Center in Salt Lake City Utah. The Law Center also works closely with the Utah Developmental Disabilities Council in this region and worked with self-advocacy groups to identify the major issues facing people with disabilities in this region.

KEY FINDINGS

MAJOR PROBLEMS AND BARRIERS FACING PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

Results from the focus groups were tallied in a spreadsheet to look for common themes. The following table shows the top ten issues raised. The majority of these were discussed by at least 50% of the groups. Each of these is described more fully following.

TABLE 24: TOP ISSUES RAISED IN FOCUS GROUPS	
Issue	% Of Groups Reporting Need
Housing	78%
Medical care	67%
Special Education	67%
Discrimination/Stigma	67%
Social Security / Benefits	56%
Transportation	56%
Employment	56%
Community services	44%
Accessibility	33%
VR services	33%

Housing is scare and the application process far too complex

Housing is the most prevalent serious and pervasive issue raised across nearly all focus groups.

In the Navajo Nation housing is a huge barrier – regardless of ethnic background or even disability. One person described a paraplegic client who needed assistance and was placed # 60 on the list. Three months ago the person passed away – without ever receiving the needed housing. All agreed that the application process is too complex and hard to understand.

A second Navajo participant stated that when they were homeless the Navajo Housing Authority's application was too complex and hard to understand. " We were homeless for a while. This is the truth. The housing application was too hard." The NHA's policies and regulations were a real barrier. The eligibility process is absurd; they request all your entire family income information and they wanted to know who will be staying or living with you.

Housing is a distinct difficulty for Veterans in rural areas around Gallup. The information and forms required for the application process are overwhelming. Many are denied housing services on the basis of a complex eligibility process that is difficult to understand. When they experience these barriers they tend to give up and never ask for any type of assistance through the VA programs again. The program for housing self-help and home improvement is also a problem among the veterans. The application process is too complex and has a limited amount of funding. The local chapters do not want to get involved and many times the chapter officials refer them to the wrong people. One veteran stated, "I have tried to ask my chapter for help with a residential lease form, but I was told to discuss my request with the agency land office; I gave up and never bothered to go forth with it again."

The situation is not different for Vets in Window Rock and others in rural areas. Many try to obtain a house through the NAHASDA program, but the process takes too long. The eligibility criteria are another barrier. The collateral assessment on home-site and residential leases for obtaining a house through the Navajo Housing Authority is too cumbersome and complex. Many wait years and years for a house. Maintenance from the housing services or the Navajo Housing Authority (NHA) is also a problem. Many Vets are forced to pay for their homes by their income and entire family income. Other veterans who reside in a very isolated area are denied housing because of a lack of utility lines. Many also encounter rejection from landowners for right-of-way access for extension service lines. When these veterans experience these barriers they sometimes give up or live in clustered housing units at different locations.

English speaking people in Shiprock agree that Housing is also very scarce. The application is complex and there is simply not enough housing in the area.

One exception is Ignacio. There is a Senior Citizen Center in Ignacio but most of the Southern Ute seniors do not wish to move into this housing that is open to all who need a low income rental unit. Housing is not a big issue since the tribe is able to make housing available for those who need housing and the per capita payments covers most of the needs in this area. Services to make homes accessible for individuals with disabilities are under department of aging and most in need of home modification do receive these services from this office.

In Counselor, many had trouble accessing housing and again the application process is the number one issue. For both homesite leases and Navajo Housing Authority units, the application process and paperwork are too cumbersome and complex – people wait years for housing. The paperwork involved with maintenance of existing homes also has a complex application

processes and little funding. There appears to be an unequal or biased distribution of the region's limited resources because the Chapters are involved with determining who receives services. One participant said that he felt like their community was never a priority and that the tribe "brushes them off."

Finding: Finding and applying for public housing programs presents a deep challenge for many and an opportunity for Law Center systemic and individual advocacy.

Most respondents lack access to medical services

Medical services were the second most common issue raised in the focus groups, raised by two thirds of participants.

Many in the Hopi community of Second Mesa, Arizona had complaints about medical services, specifically the area's IHS clinic. There are long waits for -- or a total lack of -- medication, and people have to wait long times for an appointment, and lack support, accommodations, and equipment. One participant said, "It seems like we're not being paid attention to." These issues are even more acute for people with disabilities, and the impression is that staff don't care and/or are unaware of their needs. "They make people with diabetes wait without food; they don't enforce the handicapped parking when someone without a placard parks there; they don't have wheelchairs available for those with mobility impairments." Medical services for diabetics were another issue among the Navajo in Shiprock.

These issues also exist for those in Shiprock who use English. It is difficult for some to receive necessary and appropriate medical services from the IHS. There are also few private or university doctors who will listen and provide services.

Many Veterans in Window Rock had complaints about the VA hospital and the lack of services. There are long waits for services and a "total lack" of medication. People travel to the VA hospital 200 miles away only to be told to return the following day. Many deal with lack of support from family members, community, and service providers.

Finding: IHS and Veteran's Administration provided health care services do not meet the needs of Native Americans with disabilities.

Special education laws are not followed

Education is a primary concern for two thirds of those people who participated in focus groups, regardless of where they live or the type of school their children attended.

This Navajo speaker from Shiprock is typical. She is deeply concerned that teachers are not certified appropriately for teaching children with disabilities. She wants her grandson to improve in his communication skills and had specific concerns regarding the quality of services for students with hearing impairments: "We need special education teachers who are able to serve in sign language and communication skills." She feels the teachers become defensive and the school is irresponsive when she asks for services. "Something needs to be done! They are not teaching the things we ask for, the things we need." Her grandson needs a sign language teacher – there are none. He needs a communication board – but the district has not priced it. She is concerned that the teachers are not certified appropriately, and asks, "What happened to all the special education money?"

Another Shiprock Navajo participant described a high level of bullying in the schools and how one bully had abused her child, who is non-verbal and has a hearing impairment. The child came home with broken glasses and the school system did not investigate. "He tells me things after school. He doesn't lie even though he doesn't speak. When things like this happen, where do you go to complain?" She asked "What do you do for your child if the school does not listen to you?"

All of the schools in the Hopi community are BIA funded, but many function independently, without any central authority or oversight by the tribe, state, or BIA. Several participants stated that school staff are not aware of or sensitive to the needs of students with disabilities. The staff of these schools are "angry and hostile," even abusive toward students with disabilities. One Hopi parent reported taking her daughter into her classroom and observing an educational aide roughly handling a girl with a mobility impairment lying on a mat on the floor. The parent intervened and asked the staff person what she was doing. As she knelt by the girl and tried to sooth her, telling her she was alright, the girl looked up at her and said, "why?" Another reported that a student's misbehavior resulted in the teacher putting a staple through the child's ear.

A Southern Ute parent said the local school asked the parents to have their child attend another school in Durango, Colorado, some 30 miles away. The parents agreed, but had to pay for the child's transportation services and often transport the child back and forth on their own.

Parents in Gallup feel behavioral issues are particularly important in both the public or BIA funded systems. Schools are not developing appropriate behavioral intervention plans (BIP); nor are they completing functional behavior assessments for students. A second prevalent issue is the lack of transition services. Graduation plans for student with disabilities are not being tracked, so most are not graduating or transition plans are not being implemented. Other agencies are not asked to be apart of the student transition plan. The impact of this lack of transition planning was illustrated by one participant, who said: "job discrimination is very big when I was looking for a job. Private business gives students with disabilities the run around." He ended his remarks by saying that "I wonder how many other students who have just graduated from high school get the same treatment when searching for a job."

Special education was a large focus of the English speaking Shiprock group. Areas of concerns included implementing the IEP, the lack of appropriate service providers and trained staff in the schools and an overall lack of communication between school and staff. Discipline issues were also raised. One participant spoke of mistreatment by teachers. "Some students have behavior plans but teachers don't know about them or how to implement them." There is not

enough parent training on how to understand IEP services and the schools take advantage of that. One parent said the services outlined in the IEP simply were not provided. Another area of concern is evaluation, identification and eligibility. There is very little parent input on decisions made about the needs of the student.

Two of the three parents of children with disabilities in Counselor raised issues about Special Education services; specifically those at BIA funded schools. These parents agreed that appropriate services in the least restrictive environment are the major issues facing these schools. One parent's child had been sent off the reservation for treatment. When he returned, she tried to enroll him in their local community school. The school administrator asked her why she was enrolling him in their school; she replied, "Because this is where we live, this is where we are from." Initially, the school administrator refused to enroll him because of his disability, the parent was told the school did not have the services he needed. She said, "I told him I was going to call [the Law Center] and they had a meeting and decided to take him." Another parent has difficulty getting services for her 7 year old with autism. Her son is frequently segregated from his classmates and doesn't want to go back to school because he thinks the kids are mean. She feels the school is not providing the behavioral services and supports he needs. She has asked for a 1 on 1 aide, but the school has refused. The third parent feels, "there is an ongoing need for services, but the Law Center always has an answer for him when he calls with a question or a problem. It makes you feel good when they help."

Finding: Extensive problems in public and BIA schools for children with disabilities confirm that Law Center advocacy and training in the area of special education is both highly valued and highly needed.

Assistance obtaining Public and Veteran's benefits is needed

Navajo in Shiprock feel the local SSI office does not take disability seriously. SSI Eligibility was a source of great frustration among members of the Shiprock group. One person was told their family was over income even though they were struggling and had no benefits or Medicaid for their disabled child. They submitted multiple applications and finally got help from a private attorney.

Applying for and getting public benefits was a major issue in Counselor. Participants were frustrated by both the application and eligibility processes. Specific programs of concern are Social Security, Medicaid/Medicare, especially with Assistive Technology, and Veterans Benefits. Many of the participants didn't understand the application process, thought it took too long, and either did not receive a response to the application or did not understand the eligibility requirements.

SSI is also an issue for the participants in the Toyey institution. Some have been unable to receive SSI for reasons unknown them, and for those that do, relatives receive the check and only a little amount is given to the individuals. The situation is the same here at the institution. One group member states that he has not received any SSI due to no transportation to his SSA appointments. There is no one available to transport him there. One person was denied because of no visible disability.

Veteran's and other public benefits and services were a major issue for the all Vets who participated in the groups.

In Gallup, veterans had problems with Medicaid/Medicare, the VA Hospital, and VA funds for Community Chapter Veteran Organizations. The majority of participants did not know or were unaware of the existing VA programs. There is an impression that receiving any type of services through the VA takes too long. The eligibility process, and the type of case you had was a concern. Many veterans seek assistance from the local Indian Health Services and other services because there are no VA hospitals on the reservation and border towns. In fact, financial and other assistance for transportation to the nearest VA hospitals was seen as the major problem affecting veterans. Many times when requesting for assistance through the VA programs they would be asked for income verification. Two veterans commented. "I was denied service at the VA hospital in Albuquerque, New Mexico because they told me that I was not injured in combat", said one. The other veteran stated "I was turned down because they told me I did not have the proper papers and documents to get service from the VA hospital."

The Vets in Gallup would like an investigation into VA funding. They feel they are being short changed and they believe they are only being used for funding and election. Tribal leader candidates would state how they would help the veterans, but when they get elected they ignore the needs of veterans.

Finding: There is a need for advocacy in the areas of SSI, Medicaid, and Veterans and other public benefits.

A lack of public awareness and understanding increases difficulties

The lack of awareness in the community of the needs of people with disabilities was a recurring issue and an underlying component to many of the other issues in the Hopi community. People without disabilities get frustrated because people with disabilities move more slowly or need help. As one family member put it, "it is frustrating to see how people look at my mom." There appears to be a pervasive lack of awareness and sensitivity in the community; this issue was specifically raised with regard to IHS, the schools, tribal offices, and the public at large.

Two veterans in Gallup feel there is a lack of sensitivity and understanding toward veterans with disabilities. One veteran explained, "people do not understand what we went through -- the U. S. Government, the VA, Tribal Government, and Navajo Nation VA Program have been giving us promises but it is only sweet talk." There are many veterans who are going through rough times -- homelessness, medical needs, alcoholism, drugs addictions, and suicides. "Politicians, tribal leaders, and the U.S. Government themselves don't seem to care."

One individual with a hearing impairment in Shiprock spoke of the lack of accommodations and sensitivity toward people with disabilities in the area.

A parent in Gallup put it this way: “It’s very difficult to be out in the communities and even to advocate for services because many times I have felt that I wanted to give up.”

People in Counselor feel isolated and stigmatized because of their disability. One participant observed that community and tribal leaders don’t listen to or communicate with people with disabilities. “So many issues – in my own community, people are suffering.” Another commented, “there are so many people out there” There is an overall problem with communicating, connecting, and reaching people and people without disabilities don’t know what is happening.” Another person feels there is a lack of sensitivity and understanding in the Magistrate Courts and with the Police Department. He reported that the Police stop him for no reason and in the past have refused to take him to the Mental Health unit when he asked for help. He said, “They treat us like we’re bad people”

One Window Rock area veteran observed that the veteran organization and the tribal leaders don’t seem to listen to or communicate with the veterans with disabilities. “There are many issues, problems, and barriers in our community and our disabled veterans are being neglected.” The problem is with communication, and no support from the local level to the tribal government. One suggestion is that veterans increase their self-sufficiency and decrease reliance on service providers “They need to ask questions, find other resources, and utilize some of the available resources.”

Finding: Native Americans with disabilities face discrimination and are poorly understood by the communities, including tribal leaders.

Inaccessible public buildings create barriers to service

The Hopi IHS facility in Second Mesa is inaccessible, as are many other public places. There are no handicapped parking spaces and few ramps. The village of Polacca was identified as “improving,” but most of the other villages and tribal offices lack basic physical access. The tribe does not comply with or enforce access or accommodations for people with disabilities.

In Shiprock, both groups said that many if not most public buildings on the reservations are inaccessible. “The issue is the Navajo Nation itself. Every time we meet the Nation it is back to square one.” He suggests linking elder issues with those of people with disabilities. Emotional and other supports are also key. “A lot of people become so frustrated with the system that they give up. It is good to hear from people that are fighting for change, but it is easy to say nothing will make the difference that is needed.”

One Counselor participant finds that public building didn’t have doorways that were wide enough.

Finding: Public buildings, including those operated by tribal governments remain inaccessible to many Native Americans with disabilities.

Few community-based services are available

Ignacio and other communities lack community-based services, especially personal care attendants for home-based care, and other services such as treatment centers. A diabetic with an amputee had a housing issue that illustrates the types of concerns in this area. The owner of his rental unit requested that he move into tribal housing because of changes in his income. When he received money from the tribe on a quarterly basis, it was not considered 'income' – but when the tribe started to disburse the payments on a monthly base, his landlord considered this steady inflow of funds an income. Because of the amount he was receiving, his rent was increased and he decided to move into a tribal housing. While at the tribal housing he was unable to manage his personal affairs, such as his laundry, cooking and the accessibility was inadequate. He states: "it was like being in a prison." He requested personal care assistance but there was no one to offer the care nor were such services available. He could not be independent in a tribal housing. He moved back to his previous rental unit and now resides there. The income status was taken to the tribal counsel and the rent issue was resolved with a limitation put on the rental fee. Regardless of income, the rental fee remains the same for all whom are disabled.

Overall, services are available in Ignacio, but the feeling is that the minimum is done to meet their needs. A horse therapy program is offered by one of the local citizens, but it is limited because of a lack of financial resources; nevertheless both the Alcohol Treatment Center and the Vocational Rehabilitation program utilize it. The service provider would like to find the finances to continue this therapy. It has worked well and has been a good program for people in need. This area would also like an independent living center or office.

A Gallup parent wants to see local treatment programs. Families are broken up because children are transferred to treatment programs in cities.

Participants in the Shiprock group voiced frustration with the D&E Waiver. It is difficult to know how to maintain eligibility and receive services and a general lack of information about the program and maintaining services. The DD Waiver eligibility process is also difficult, and there is a lack of services when you are approved. "I applied for the DD waiver for my child three times." There is a real lack of community services in Shiprock, and little information about the scope and level of services an individual might be eligible for. The Native American Advisory Council does not follow up on requests for information.

Services are also scarce in the Counselor region; forcing individuals go off the reservation for treatment and services. Participants feel the Eastern Agency doesn't receive a fair share of the resources. A specific issue facing people in this community is the Individual Indian Monies (IIM) or the royalties that individuals receive from mineral rights. Frequently, these payments make the individual or the entire family ineligible for many social services and benefits. Many understood that other tribes that have IIM or other per capita payments still receive benefits; they don't understand why they are ineligible. Personal Care and Home Health Services are needed in order to keep people independent in their homes, but sometimes they are not considered eligible because of the IIM. One CHR commented, "A lot of our disabled clients don't want to go to the nursing homes, but they have to."

The focus group held in an institutional setting in Tseyi illustrates the need for more community-based services in the region. Some of the residents had applied for community services – but the application process drags on and on and on. As a result, many of the individuals living in this institution are here because they have no other place to go and no one to help them. These individuals want to live on their own but they are told that there is no one to care for their needs. None of the residents have heard of the Personal Care Option. These individuals feel there is a lack of community services to individuals with psychiatric disabilities, generally. One stated that there is no recourse for denial of services for individuals with a disability.

Finding: A range of community-based services, including personal care attendants, mental health and treatment services and those for individual with developmental disabilities, are largely unavailable for many Native Americans with disabilities, especially those in remote areas.

There is no public transportation

The fifth most common issues raised in the focus groups was transportation.

There is no transit system in Ignacio for the Southern Ute, nor is there any such thing as Safe Ride. Many elderly and individuals with disabilities are unable to attend their medical appointments or other appointments. There simply is no public transportation.

For the veterans in rural Gallup, transportation is extremely difficult. The need is compounded by high gas prices, costly breakdowns, and the fact that it is very hard to make making monthly car payments on a very limited income. These veterans were living on SSI, minimum wage, retirement, and one was self-employed as a silversmith. One veteran described a situation where he traveled to VA hospital in Albuquerque, New Mexico and was told to come back the following day to be seen. It has a great impact on veterans who have to travel all the way to big cities to get services from the VA hospitals. Many veterans receive services from Indian Health Services near their area, because traveling to VA hospital in larger cities are costly. One veteran stated, “When you want to be seen at a regular in-patient VA clinic in Albuquerque or Phoenix you have to use up all your money for gas and food.”

Shiprock has very poor transportation. The area needs “transportation -- and a place to go”

Transportation is very hard to find and to get in Counselor, where there is no public Navajo Transit service. While Medicaid provided SafeRide is available, participants feel it is unsafe and unreliable. One community health representative described a situation where one of her clients was taken to his appointment at the Crownpoint IHS facility, but he was not picked up and as a result stayed in the reception area of the hospital for over 24 hours. In this rural community, the lack of transportation prevents people from accessing other services. As one participant put it, “you have to go quite a distance for services.” If an individual does not have access to private transportation, s/he is frequently stuck. The CHR stated, “You make a referral but people don’t have transportation to get to them.”

The Window Rock Veterans were especially upset by the many times agencies requested transportation for Vets to the VA hospital. The council has rejected their request and the proposals are sometimes tabled due to lack of funding. There was a perception that the process takes too long and different agencies do not receive a fair share of funding. Many veterans seek medical assistance from their local Indian Health Service because of travel limitations.

Finding: Public transportation is virtually nonexistent in this region of the nation, impacting Native Americans with disabilities ability to work, get health care, or receive services.

Few options for employment and limited Vocational Rehabilitation services

One veteran in Gallup mentioned while he was in the military he injured his pelvis bone. Presently he has pain and it's difficult for him to find a job. He felt the military had betrayed him because they would not recognize him as disabled and he was not compensated for his injury.

Two of the young adults that attended the focus group in Gallup stated that job training is very difficult in the rural communities and high school does not really prepare them for looking for a job. A young lady who had recently graduated from a public high school located on the reservation was having a difficult time finding a job in her local community. She said "local business in her community did not want to hire me when I told them that I had a learning disability." Another young man agreed, saying it was difficult for him to find a job "because most employers may not hire someone with a disability."

An individual in Shiprock thinks services from the New Mexico Division of Rehabilitation Services are lacking, because the agency did not explain the process or scope of services. Discrimination was also an issue. Another person in Shiprock spoke of employers forcing people with disabilities out of jobs by failing to provide accommodations, changing jobs or testing the person in different jobs.

Again, the impact of the Southern Ute tribal allowance makes this community unique. According to one of the service providers, jobs are not a big issue but the people to do the work is the issue. There are not many people looking for work or they don't want to work. Although the casino is the source behind employment, the monthly stipend from the casino creates a lack of enthusiasm for employment and this is one of issue facing Southern Ute. There is an office for employment which local citizens utilize. One individual does feel that the Vocational Rehabilitation program should increase their services to the Southern Ute.

Employment and VR services are also an issue in the Counselor area. One adult with a spinal cord injury reported going to the state VR program soon after her injury about 20 years ago; she was told she was "too disabled" to work. She always wanted to go to school but the distance is too far and she didn't have any support. She didn't go to the tribal VR program and was largely unaware of those services, but also said, "I don't feel like the tribe is there for you – I never go to the tribe." An adult with a mobility impairment received assistance from the tribal VR

program, but was having difficulty finding a job. She felt she was being discriminated against and was considering returning to school if she couldn't find work.

Most of the Vets who participated in the Window Rock group believe that unemployment is one of the main reasons why many veterans turn to alcohol and drugs, sometimes resulting in addiction and homelessness. State, federal, and tribal employment services are a great distance from their communities. Employment for veterans in the rural areas is limited by a lack of employment information, education and training opportunities, job counseling, job search workshops, and resume preparation assistance. The closest employment service does not have a specialist to help disabled veterans find employment.

Many veterans who return to their reservation do not immediately begin civilian employment. After they leave the military, they do not receive unemployment compensation and it's difficult on them and their families. One participant said, "I feel like we're not doing much for these honorable discharged veterans who return home, it is like we don't seem to care."

One individual in the institution went to the VR agency but was denied services because "I was told I could not perform at a level to be productive and that I wasn't able to perform any meaningful employment. " Vocational Rehabilitation tells them they are not eligible for services because their disability is not severe enough to be eligible for VR services. They feel employers think that individuals with mental illness are not capable of holding down a steady job and so once the employer finds out of the disability, the result is negative.

Finding: A lack of opportunity and discrimination and poor services from the state and tribal vocational rehabilitation offices make employment a distant dream for many Native Americans with disabilities.

Other specific concerns

Hopi participants are frustrated with the Turtle Nation Self-Advocacy Group, the self-advocacy group funded through the Arizona Disability Planning Council and facilitated by Law Center. While deeply committed to the ideals and purpose of this group, participants say it lacks responsiveness, progress, structure, and as a result is ineffectual. They believe the group is losing members because of its lack of structure, not a lack of commitment.

Another Navajo participant in Shiprock is fearful that elders and disabled Navajo people are being financially exploited. "They are only recognized or being cared for during the first of the month when they receive their monthly checks. Many times the disabled elders are home alone and risk being neglected. "

A participant in the English speaking group in Shiprock agrees there needs to be an Adult Protection Act. People feel there is a lack of follow up by service providers in the area of elder abuse.

The unique per capita allowance paid monthly to Southern Utes in Ignacio from tribal oil and gas royalties creates complex needs and issues. For example, those in the group felt “there are really no major problems or barriers facing the community at this time.” The few that do exist relate to finding a resource in other cities. However, while the tribal allowance alleviates many barriers, it has created one major problem: alcohol abuse. According to one of the service providers, there are few ways to earn money or other activities, which in turn creates “idleness.” They believe that many people receive their per capita money each month and spend it on alcohol. The alcohol abuse is becoming a major problem in the area.

It would be very beneficial if there were an increase in community activities and recreational resources for the Southern Ute, including activities for the youth. There is a recreational facility but that service is limited to a few activities. There is a new casino building under construction at the moment, this new facility will bring in new activities such as bowling, an arcade center etc.

One parent in Gallup mentioned that insurance companies have a hard time accepting a new policy for children with disability.

There was a complaint that DNA does not provide a timely response to requests for legal services by a member of the Shiprock focus group.

WHAT THE LAW CENTER SHOULD DO TO ADDRESS THESE ISSUES

The majority of groups had areas of suggestions: increase the Law Center's presence and contact in their community, work to increase awareness and understanding of the needs and rights of people with disabilities, and provide more advocacy and legal services.

Spend more time in the community

Nearly every group said that the Law Center needs to spend more time or otherwise getting the word out in their community,

Suggestions from the Gallup parents included radio presentations and public service announcements, meeting with community representatives from the different local chapters and presentations in the communities. Participants also suggest the Law Center place brochures in hospitals so families and doctors can have access this information.

Gallup's Veterans were virtually unanimous in recommending that the Law Center increase its contact with the veteran organizations and increase the community's understanding of the issues facing Vets with disabilities. There was a strong emphasis on VA hospitals, transportation, housing, and community-based information. These activities need to be local and meet the needs of the veterans in the community. Another veteran commented that Law Center should be more involved in the local areas at the chapter level.

The Hopi were also unanimous in recommending that Law Center increase contact with the community, and thereby, increase the community's understanding of the issues facing people with disabilities. One of the group looked at the facilitator and simply said, "You need to be more involved" – that was her only comment about our activities. Their primary recommendation is that the Center make itself more visible so that more individuals can use the services offered. Suggestions included awareness presentations and increased work in the local schools and communities.

Participants in Shiprock feel the Law Center can do more to correspond regularly though letters with clients. Parents like the support groups the Center provides. The importance of providing information in plain language was also stressed.

Counselor also suggests that the Law Center needs to increase the awareness of our program. One person commented that in contrast to the Law Center "most people know about DNA." We should go to Chapter Meetings to introduce ourselves to the community and insure that they know about our services, and provide services at the Chapter Houses.

Vets in Window Rock want the agency to provide workshops, presentations at conferences, trainings, and attend veteran staff meetings in the community, because transportation makes it difficult to attend outside the community. They suggest more involvement with the Council Delegates and tribal leaders at their seasonal sessions in order to make leaders more aware of the problems facing veterans with disabilities. The Law Center should attend Chapter Meetings to introduce themselves to the community and insure that they know the Law Center's services.

Finding: Focus group participants want the Law Center to spend more time reaching out to people with disabilities, tribal leaders, veteran's groups and in the communities it serves, either in person or through public service announcements.

Rights education

The Southern Ute in Ignacio would like the Law Center to provide training for parents and local community members about their rights as disabled individuals. They would also like the Law Center to educate tribal lawmakers on disability laws.

The Hopi want the Law Center to give a voice to the issues facing people with disabilities. They want the agency to increase the awareness of tribal officials and other service providers, especially at IHS. One participant said, "You need to apply pressure, ask questions, raise issues." Another said, "There are a lot of people with disabilities who are not on the reservation because there is no access, no services." This group felt that the Law Center needs to increase awareness of its services and collaboration with other groups in the community. The group was also unanimous in recommending that the Law Center needs to be more involved with the Turtle Nation Self-Advocacy Group and that by doing so the agency could help address all the issues raised.

Training for people with disabilities is also high priority in the Shiprock area, especially on rehabilitation services and the Navajo Nation Office of Special Education and Rehabilitation Services. One individual suggested holding a joint training on special education rights for parents and teachers together on school grounds. This group would like the Law Center to train service providers, especially special education teachers, disability service providers, IHS and law enforcement. Topics should include rights and sensitivity. The Law Center should “Speak up for disability community” and raise issues. Staff need to do more community outreach, and then represent that community to the public.

The Counselor group unanimously recommended that the Law Center increase its contact with the community and increase the community’s understanding of the issues facing people with disabilities. These activities need to be local, meeting the needs of the community in the community. The Law Center needs to provide local workshops in the community because transportation makes it so difficult to attend sessions outside the community. We need to have more contact with Council Delegates and make community leaders more aware of the problems facing individuals with disabilities. Rights education was important to this group. The Law Center needs to provide information about available resources, educate people about their rights and about different disabilities and their impact, and increase the awareness of community leaders about the needs of individuals with disabilities. This group had a very strong emphasis on education and awareness.

Finding: Focus group participants want the Law Center to train local leaders about the rights of people with disabilities to increase community understanding and awareness and reduce stigmatization and discrimination.

Increase contact with Veterans organizations

Both groups targeting Veterans feel the Law Center could do more in this area. They recommend increasing contact with the Department of Veterans Affairs, Veteran Organizations at the Chapter, and the Communities. The Law Center should increase the community’s understanding of the issues facing veterans with disabilities. The Vets in Gallup also want the Center to reach leaders in their area. They want local chapter, council delegates, and tribal leaders to know that local veterans are being treated unfairly. They want the Law Center to provide workshops, legal training on rights and discrimination.

Finding: Veterans are particularly interested in more collaboration with and services from the Law Center.

Provide direct legal assistance

Gallup’s veterans would like the Law Center to provide legal advice for the disabled veterans. One veteran stated that the Law Center program would be an excellent asset for disabled veterans who were refused their request for medical assistance.

One Hopi participant very clearly stated that rather than meeting with tribal officials, the Law Center needs to provide more legal assistance and representation to people with disabilities to address the lack of services. This individual said, "So you are going to meet with them. What if nothing changes, then what – when are you going to sue them?"

A Gallup parent would like the Law Center to represent children in treatment programs so they stay on the reservation rather than transfer off reservation.

The Shiprock Navajo speaking group stated the Law Center should provide more legal assistance and representation to people with disabilities. The Law Center should help with accessibility for disabled personnel into public areas and facility rooms.

English speakers in Shiprock feel that the important role the Law Center plays in the courts needs more emphasis. They want the Law Center to hire more legal representatives. These advocates and attorneys should "get laws changed to protect rights of people with disabilities" Issues needing more legal attention include the lack of mental health services discrimination and slow response times by law enforcement, and basic accessibility. They also want to be sure that staff follow through on the cases appropriately and when they say they are going to help do so, and in a timely manner. The agency should provide a range of services from advice to direct representation.

One participant in Counselor very clearly stated that rather than education, the Law Center needs to provide more legal assistance and representation to people with disabilities.

One Veteran Service Officer in Window Rock feels the Law Center needs to provide legal assistance and representation to veterans with disabilities.

Finding: The Law Center plays a unique and valued role as a law firm focused on the rights of Native Americans with disabilities and can strengthen that role by increasing the range and amount of direct legal services it provides.

Provide training related to special education

Parents in Shiprock feel that children will succeed if only they are being given the appropriate materials for disabilities in the schools. The Law Center should provide legal presentations in the school system targeting employees about the rights of children with disabilities. The agency should also increase its outreach to parents in the school system to strengthen awareness of the Law Center program. Parents in Gallup also want special education training. They feel unsure of the procedural safeguards under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

Address specific advocacy needs

Navajo speakers in Shiprock want Law Center to assist individuals seeking housing, and advocate for a simplified application process as the current housing application is too complex and hard to understand. The Law Center should be able to assist disabled people who are placed last on the listing for housing by advocating to ensure that people with disabilities are prioritized and thus go up the list more quickly.

Participants in Shiprock suggested that the Law Center develop a system to allow the reporting of anonymous complaints or help people understand current systems to report abuse. Additional training about the right to report anonymously abuse may also be helpful.

SUMMARY

The Native American Disability Law Center has a unique role in the lives of Native Americans living with disabilities in the four corners area of New Mexico, Arizona, Colorado and Utah. It is the sole provider of civil legal services targeting people whose physical, developmental and psychiatric disabilities make living in the United State's most impoverished area an even greater challenge.

This needs assessment found that the Law Center has a positive impact on the lives of its clients. Half of respondents say their problem solved because of the Law Center and three quarters would use the agency again, Two thirds know more about their rights because of the Law Center, and the staff communicates effectively and with respect, gaining the trust of clients. These high levels of client satisfaction, the positive resolution of cases, and the long-term impact of clients' interaction with the agency are all strengths.

The agency's target populations face almost insurmountable challenges. Poverty, isolation, discrimination and stigma, and a lack of basic medical and social services in the community, all serve to make the work of the Law Center both vital and difficult to provide. The communication most law firms use -- phone and internet -- are not easily accessed by these clients, There is inadequate and inaccessible public transportation, and 60 % of the population surveyed could not afford gas for their cars. Civil rights issues such may be less important to 43% of families facing hunger, the 35% without a regular place to live, or the 54% who risk having their utilities cut off each month or who cannot afford the propane to light their homes without electricity.

The Law Center is a lifeline for these families and individuals. More than 80% of those surveyed said there is no place else they can go for assistance. Clients call the Law Center because no one else can help them with their problem, and because the agency cares deeply about the community it serves.

Clients have tremendous needs that the protection and advocacy system is designed and funded to address. Limited housing, poor medical care, violations of federal special education law, abuse and neglect, limited local or community-based services, arcane and complex application systems for federal, veteran's, state and tribal benefits, physical barriers to public buildings, public stigma and the continued discrimination faced by people in employment and housing all cry for out attention.

People with disabilities in this region want the Law Center to be their personal advocate, to provide them in-depth, one-on-one services. They also want their protection and advocacy agency to fight for their rights on a more systemic level, and to address the enormous challenges of rural transportation, to battle a poorly run Indian Health Service and housing program, to call attention to the mismanagement of the Veteran's departments, and force tribal leaders to see the inadequacies of their services for people with disabilities. They want the Law Center to train them to be better self-advocates in the school, and to train the providers and governmental leaders to be more responsive to their needs.

The Law Center faces its own challenges of course -- limited federal and private funds, a small staff, and the needs to focus efforts where they can have the greatest impact. This needs assessment points to several core areas of work and possible priorities that, while not addressing every need identified, provide a framework for individual, systemic and community-based advocacy. Table xx summarizes the most common issues identified in the survey and the focus groups, and the level of advocacy that could be applied to the issue.

TABLE 25: MOST COMMON PRIORITIES FOR ADVOCACY SERVICES AND LEVEL OF ADVOCACY POSSIBLE			
Core area	Advocacy level	Focus group	Survey
Abuse/ Neglect	Individual		Help people who have been abused or neglected in institutions group homes
Abuse/ Neglect	Individual		Investigate abuse and neglect in places that serve people with disabilities
Abuse/ Neglect	Systemic	Elder abuse	Make sure the agencies that are supposed to investigate complaints of abuse and neglect are doing their jobs
Civil Rights	Individual and Systemic	Direct assistance with paperwork	Help people who are being discriminated against or denied housing because of their disability
Civil Rights	Individual and Systemic	Discrimination, lack of options and poor VR services	Help people who are being discriminated against or denied jobs because of their disability
Civil Rights	Individual and Systemic	Accessibility, especially of tribal buildings	Work to make public buildings more accessible
Disability Svs	Individual and Systemic		Help people get Assistive Technology like wheelchairs paid for by Medicaid and health insurance programs
Disability Svs	Individual	Housing, Medical care	Help people get the disability services they need
Disability Svs	Individual and Systemic	Transportation, local treatment and community services	Work for more local services for people with disabilities
Education	Individual	Special education	Advocate for children to get good evaluations for special education services

TABLE 25: MOST COMMON PRIORITIES FOR ADVOCACY SERVICES AND LEVEL OF ADVOCACY POSSIBLE (CONT.)			
Core area	Core area	Core area	Core area
Education	Individual	Special education	Advocate so students get the special education services they need
Education	Individual		Advocate so that students are not disciplined or expelled for behaviors that could be helped with proper services
Social Security	Individual	Help people with disabilities get Social Security benefits. Veterans benefits also a high need.	Help people with disabilities get Social Security benefits
Training	Community	Rights education	Help people understand how they can help to get better laws
Training	Community	Rights education	Help people understand their job opportunities and rights
Training	Community	Outreach and communication from NALDC	Help people understand what benefits and services might help them and how to get those benefits and services
Training	Community	Special education parent training	Train parents so they can be better advocates for their children in special education
Training	Community	Rights education	Train service providers about the needs of Native Americans with disabilities

This needs assessment is only the first step to determining the future activities of the agency. The staff should develop a realistic staffing and resource plan to determine the cost of addressing each of the proposed priorities. A decision about which to undertake remains with the Board.