

Department of Mental Health
TRANSMITTAL LETTER

SUBJECT

Neighborhood Legal Services

POLICY NUMBER

DMH Policy 512.1

DATE

JAN 28 2005

TL#

64

Purpose. To announce the availability of certain legal services from the Neighborhood Legal Services Program of the District of Columbia (NLSP) to indigent Department of Mental Health (DMH) consumers.

Applicability. Applies to eligible hospitalized and community served DMH consumers who need legal services for a variety of civil cases only. If eligible, NLSP's services are free for D.C. residents and qualified legal immigrants.

Policy Clearance. Reviewed by affected responsible staff and cleared through appropriate MHA offices.

Implementation Plans. A plan of action to implement or adhere to this policy must be developed by designated responsible staff. If materials and/or training are required to implement this policy, these requirements must be part of the action plan. Specific staff should be designated to carry out the implementation and program managers are responsible for following through to ensure compliance. Action plans and completion dates should be sent to the appropriate authority. Contracting Officer Technical Representatives (COTRs) must also ensure that contractors are informed of this policy if it is applicable or pertinent to their scope of work. *Implementation of all DMH policies shall begin as soon as possible. Full implementation of this policy shall be completed within sixty (60) days after the date of this policy.*

Policy Dissemination and Filing Instructions. Managers/supervisors of DMH and DMH contractors must ensure that staff are informed of this policy. Each staff person who maintains policy manuals must ensure that this policy is filed in the DMH Policy and Procedures Manual, and contractors must ensure that this policy is maintained in accordance with their internal procedures.

*If any CMHS or DMH policies are referenced in this policy, copies may be obtained from the DMH Policy Support Division by calling (202) 673-7757.

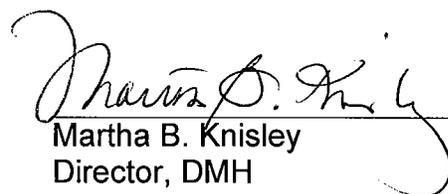
ACTION

REMOVE AND DESTROY

**CMHS Policy 50000.512.1, same title,
dated July 1, 1988**

INSERT

DMH Policy 512.1


Martha B. Knisley
Director, DMH

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA  DEPARTMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH	Policy No. 512.1	Date JAN 28 2005	Page 1
	Supersedes CMHS Policy 50000.512.1, same title, dated July 1, 1988		

Subject: Neighborhood Legal Services Program

1. **Purpose.** To announce the availability of certain legal services from the Neighborhood Legal Services Program of the District of Columbia (NLSP) to indigent Department of Mental Health (DMH) consumers.
2. **Applicability.** Applies to eligible hospitalized and community served DMH consumers who need legal services for a variety of civil cases only. If eligible, NLSP's services are free for D.C. residents and qualified legal immigrants.
3. **Authority.** Mental Health Service Delivery Reform Act of 2001.
4. **General Guidelines.**
 - 4a. The NLSP staff, upon the request of a consumer (or the consumer's physician, or other employee such as a case manager who is acting at his/her request) and after determining eligibility will provide free legal services in civil matters only. NLSP is the sole determinant of eligibility for its free legal services.
 - 4b. A member of the consumer's treatment team will assist a consumer in contacting the NLSP staff to assist with certain types of legal problems (See Section 5 below).
 - 4c. The consumer should be encouraged to make the contact with NLSP. A member of the consumer's treatment team will provide the consumer with the location and place of the local NLSP office. In the event that the consumer is unable to do so, a member of the treatment team may make the contact for the consumer if the consumer so authorizes in writing (See Section 4d. below). The treatment team member will make a progress note in the consumer's clinical record about what transpired.
 - 4d. The member of the treatment team who makes an initial contact for a consumer for legal services will assume no other role in the situation after a meeting has been arranged. Social workers, clinical managers, physicians, and other employees may be called upon for additional assistance, such as furnishing certain objective social and/or medical information to authorized and appropriate persons and agencies. Any disclosure of information must be made pursuant to written consent of the consumer. No DMH employee (or employee of a DMH mental health provider), however, should become personally involved in the case. The employee concerned should furnish the assisting attorney with (1) his/her name, telephone number, and location; (2) the consumer's name, identification number, exact location, and telephone number; and (3) other pertinent facts regarding the consumer, which the consumer has authorized.
 - 4e. Every endeavor should be made by DMH employees (or employees of a DMH mental health provider) to assist a consumer and NLSP in arranging a mutually agreeable meeting time and place. Consumers should be informed that the NLSP has a limited staff. Therefore, it may not be possible to set up a meeting as soon as a consumer requests it or at the time most convenient for the consumer. In some instances, a consumer's case may have to be initially turned down due to a full caseload.

5. Type of Assistance Available.

5a. NLSP provides legal assistance to eligible consumers in the following civil areas: housing, filing petitions for divorce, consumer protection, public benefits, special education and community empowerment and outreach. Eligible clients may receive legal advice, in court representation, and administrative representation before the local and federal courts and governmental agencies. NLSP may also refer cases, as appropriate, to other qualified legal service providers in the District of Columbia. If the consumer is the recipient of the court-ordered child support and is not receiving it, they will receive representation from the Child Support Enforcement Division of the Office of the Attorney General, 441 4th Street, N.W., Suite 550N, Washington, D.C. 20001. The telephone number is (202) 724-2131. If the consumer has been court-ordered to pay support and has failed to do so, they should seek the services of NLSP.

5b. As previously stated, NLSP does not undertake criminal matters. Its aggressive, client-centered high quality representation ensures, however, that the needs of the client and the community are met.

6. **Local Office Information.** NLSP has two locations. Consumers are encouraged to call the office that handles cases in the section of the city where the consumer lives.

- Applicants who live in Northeast or Northwest, D.C., or who only speak Spanish should contact: NLSP – Headquarters at 701 Fourth Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20001, (202) 682-2700, 9:00-5:30 weekdays only.
- Consumers who live in Southeast or Southwest, D.C. should contact NLSP #5 at 1213 Good Hope Road, S.E., Washington, D.C. 20020, (202) 678-2000, 9:00-5:30 weekdays only.

7. Arranging Initial Interview.

7a. Any consumer may call NLSP to determine eligibility for its free legal services.

7b. Employees should not interfere with or impede consumers' requests for legal services.

7c. A consumer should be impressed with the importance of calling NLSP and being screened, if appropriate, each time the consumer wishes to see an attorney. The consumer should also be encouraged to go to the local office, if he/she has city privileges. However, subject to the approval of the Executive Director of NLSP, the attorney will see the consumer at a DMH facility when necessary.

8. DMH Coordinator.

8a. The responsible Chief Executive Officer (CEO)/designee will serve as the DMH liaison with NLSP in any situation where there is a need for a meeting between attorneys and DMH staff or staff of a DMH mental health provider. Also, the CEO/designee will provide attorneys, upon request, with such information as the location of buildings, or the names of staff members and other general public information. Employees must not become involved in privileged communications between a consumer and his/her attorney.

8b. Later, the CEO/designee will serve as the point of contact with an attorney upon the request of the consumer or the attorney.

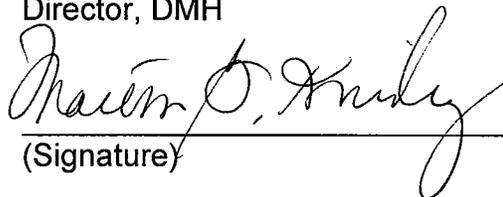
9. **Program Evaluation.** As necessary, the CEO/designee and the Executive Director from the headquarters NLSP office will review the service rendered to consumers. In addition, managers are encouraged to call the Executive Director directly whenever they feel the Executive Director can be of specific assistance.

10. **Related References.**

DMH Policy 645.1, DMH Privacy Policies and Procedures

Approved by:

Martha B. Knisley
Director, DMH

 1/28/05
(Signature) (Date)