

LiveHelp Pilot Project

Chat Services for Access to Justice Web Site Users

Final Evaluation Report Executive Summary

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Executive Summary

This evaluation of LiveHelp, an experimental addition to the LawHelp network of access to justice websites, funded by the Legal Services Corporation and others, concludes that LiveHelp is a highly valuable addition to the access to justice delivery system.

LiveHelp is a tool that helps those not fully familiar with legal information on the web find that information. LiveHelp does this by using trained specialists and a commercial per user on-line software service integrated with LawHelp websites. The specialists “chat” with website users and help them find the information they need on the access to justice website or beyond on the web. No attorney-client relationship is developed and the specialist does not need to be a lawyer. There is no promise of confidentiality.

The comprehensive evaluation of the experiment included online surveys of both LiveHelp chat users and regular website users, observation of test LiveHelp users, phone interviews with LiveHelp users, review of chat texts, surveys of operator-specialists, and interviews with program managers.

The evaluation found that the new service is growing rapidly, has high satisfaction levels, seems to more effectively provide useful information about the law and legal rights to users, and reaches effectively into the legal aid target community.

It is particularly significant that, compared to users who use just the website, LiveHelp users have very significantly higher satisfaction levels. They understand and accept the limitations upon the assistance that can be given.

It is also significant that website users and LiveHelp users have approximately the same user demographics – in other words the service is reaching the people that need to be reached.

The only notes of caution are that, while volume of use is growing rapidly, at the current volume it is hard to estimate what costs will be at high volume. At this point in the experiment, specialist services are being provided by staff and AmeriCorps*VISTA members. It is hoped that this will change as the experiment matures.

It thus appears that LiveHelp has every potential to add an important new component into the continuum of service – that a nationally deployed LiveHelp capacity will mean that a significant number of people who would otherwise not get the service they need will be achieving access to justice.

If ways can be found to provide ever-expanding specialist services without using paid staff, this will be done at far lower cost – and therefore with far more potential to transform the entire delivery system into a 100% access to justice system.

The experiment is an important success for its partners and for the Legal Service Corporation’s TIG program. It has potentially transformative importance for access to justice.

