

**Legal Services Corporation
Technology Initiative Grant Program
Renewal (Second) Web Site Grant Narrative Final Report**

Grantee Name: Pine Tree Legal Assistance

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I. Project Goals

The specific goals for Grant #04006 were to integrate the Volunteer Lawyers Project website into the platform that supported the HelpMeLaw and Pine Tree Legal Assistance sites (the Open Source Template), and provide more content for volunteers. A second goal was to continue to enhance the quantity and quality of content on both the public and private sides of the MegaSite. Much more than that has been accomplished.

II. Web Site Description

Maine's statewide website, which we refer to as the Maine MegaSite, is an integrated website with seven public faces: 1. Pine Tree Legal Assistance (PTLA - <http://www.ptla.org>) is Maine's statewide LSC grantee. 2. HelpMeLaw (HML - <http://www.helpmelaw.org>) is a client-oriented site that includes information from all of Maine's legal services providers, state agencies, federal agencies, and other sources of legal information useful to the low-income population of Maine. 3. The Volunteer Lawyers Project (VLP - <http://www.vlp.org>) is Maine's statewide pro bono agency. 4. KIDS Legal (KLA - <http://www.kidslegal.org>) is a project of Pine Tree, whose website focuses on children's issues. 5. Legal Services for the Elderly (LSE - <http://www.mainelse.org>) is Maine's statewide elder law provider. 6. Maine Equal Justice (MEJP - <http://www.mejp.org>) is a legislative and administrative advocacy organization. 7. The Campaign for Justice (CFJ - <http://www.campaignforjustice.org>) is a combined fundraising organization, raising funds from the legal community for all of Maine's legal services providers. These sites are all an integrated part of the MegaSite which sits on the Open Source Template.

Pine Tree Legal Assistance launched the PTLA website in 1996. In 2002 it was brought onto the OST platform. HelpMeLaw served as a prototype for the Open Source Template and was first launched in 2001. It was brought officially onto the template in 2005. Legal Services for the Elderly first launched their website in 1998 and was brought onto the template in November 2005. MEJP's website was launched in 1999 and brought onto the template in January 2006. KIDS Legal launched in March 2004 and the Campaign for Justice in March 2006.

The MegaSite has a very wide range of content available for clients, advocates and volunteer attorneys. Client topics include: Landlord/Tenant & Housing, Family Law, Education, Public Benefits, Employment Law, Health Care Issues, Consumer Law, Tax Issues, Court Procedures, Elder Law, Farmworker Issues, Kids Legal Issues, and a Legal Guide for Immigrants to Maine. There are more than 200 client education pieces available on the MegaSite, with links to many more that sit off site. The Advocate library contains documents in thirty major topics, with many more sub-topics. At last count there were 565 documents in the advocate library.

The site includes components for all three target audiences: the public, staff advocates and volunteer attorneys. Advocate materials are password protected. Advocates from Pine Tree Legal, Maine Equal Justice, and Legal Services for the Elderly, as well as the private attorneys volunteering with the Volunteer Lawyers Project, share a document library. At the same time, confidential documents are either cleansed of sensitive information before submission, or tagged for a limited audience (e.g. to be viewed only by advocates of the submitting agency).

The MegaSite uses text and “help” graphics – providing visual clues to low-level readers. (See, eg. www.ptla.org/ptlasite/PDF/tenants.pdf and www.ptla.org/ptlasite/cliented/cliented.htm.) We post links to video and audio files from our news boxes (which appear on each agency’s site.) The Campaign for Justice site www.campaignforjustice.org includes a fund-raising video, featuring clients served by each of our organizations. We have also produced a video with the courts, to help guide pro se clients through the pilot family law procedures in the Portland District Court. We are currently working on a similar pro se support video for Protection From Abuse plaintiffs – also a joint PTLA/Court project. We hope to post more audio and video in the future. We provide several client pages, including the 16-part Immigrant Guide, in Spanish and selected materials (such as fair housing information and Low Income Tax Clinic outreach) in additional languages. We post outreach information from the home page in 10 languages.

The primary document assembly system used by the MegaSite is interactive PDF files. There are ninety-two interactive forms available on the site covering family law, protection orders, small claims housing and consumer. 422,452 of our court forms were downloaded in 2007, most of them assembled online. Nearly all of these forms are used by both clients and advocates. There are a few (four or five) that are used only by advocates. We do utilize the HotDocs document assembly program for our Food Stamp Estimators. They were used 2,018 times in 2007.

The two principal standards utilized for the MegaSite are web accessibility and readability. The site strives to comply with the standards of section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act and the Web Accessibility Initiative (WAI) of the World Wide Web Consortium (WC3). We are pretty successful in that regard. We also strive, with respect to client oriented material to achieve a fifth grade literacy readability standard. In reality an eighth grade literacy level is all we can achieve for much of our material. Complex legal issues are often difficult to reduce to a lower literacy level.

In terms of quality control measures Pine Tree maintains a "Website Manual," in reality an electronic folder containing thirty-three protocols, instruction sheets and calendars. Perhaps most important of these is the Client Content Management calendar and spreadsheet. Kathleen Caldwell, Client Education Coordinator (among other things), each year after the legislative session, reviews the client content and makes or requests appropriate changes to reflect action by the legislature. Other regular updates include the poverty guidelines, generally updated in February or March each year (these affect eligibility for legal services and various health programs) and the food stamp regulations and eligibility requirements, usually updated in October each year. Our tax filing and EIC outreach information is updated every December. Our goal is to review and update and all other content within a two year cycle.

With respect to usability and usefulness, we incorporate some comments from site users from an earlier report. These were taken directly from the feedback form on the PTLA site, and include all of the misspellings and errors of grammar:

ss worker told me we won't put you in jail yet! I am badlyinjured from a stroke and elderly, I guess my humor is gone too. Thankyou

THIS WEB SITE HAS HELPED ME ALOT

although i was unable to contact ptl by phone, there were options which empowered me to help myself. i took all 411 i could get on unmarried parental rights.

What client education pages have you used?:
most of them...:) I have helped others with them and have used them before.
Wish this site was more publisized. But It is a great place for materials and information.

What materials would you like to see that aren't here?
You have all the materials needed.

I used the Renter's Rights section.
This site has been very informative. I thank everyone who put this site together.

I BELIEVE THAT I HAVE THE CONFIDENCE AND ABILITY TO REPRESENT MYSELF WITH GUIDLINES TO THE PROPER PROCEDURE & INFORMATION

It is a great site except you need to be able to contact the offices on line with a request to call you.

I found your website very helpful and was able to download all the forms I needed.
Thanks!

Thanks so much. I don't feel quite so alone!!!

In addition, here are some of the highlights from our ten HelpMELaw user surveys:

All of the clients who were interviewed responded yes to the questions: “Would you use the website again?” and “Would you recommend this site to someone else?”

All of the interviewees responded that they found some of the information they were looking for. One said that he found all of the information he was looking for.

Eight interviewees said that it was easy to find the information they were looking for. One said that it was “not easy or hard” and one responded that it was hard.

Six interviewees said that it was easy to find the information they were looking for, two said that it was very easy, and two said that it was “not easy or hard.”

Almost all interviewees stated that the information was easy to understand and useful. They also answered yes to these questions: “Did the website help you to understand your legal rights better?” and “Did it help you to understand what to do about your legal problem?” Interestingly, the two test users who said that the information was hard or very hard to understand and not useful also responded that they would use the website again and would recommend it to others. (The interviewer noted that one of these interviewees was visibly distraught during the interview, due to the emergency legal issues she had come to see an advocate about.)

The interviewees were split between whether they preferred browsing the library or using the search tool to find information. Several of the interviewees commented on the usefulness of the court forms and the usefulness of step-by-step instructions. Some offered some interesting suggestions about site organization, including an idea about providing forms and self-help instructions side-by-side.

III. Achievements to date

We believe the MegaSite to be one of the most effective of the statewide websites. Although we do not have comparable statistics, we believe the more than one million visits it draws each year exceed that of almost every other state, if not all states, and certainly many states with far greater population. We believe this to be a reflection of the quality of the site and the value and range of material found on the site. The two major areas drawing people to the website are our interactive forms which were downloaded 422,452 times in 2007 and our client education material. Pine Tree's client education material (including KIDS Legal, but not including that of MEJP and LSE) drew 787,223 page views in 2007.

The creation of the MegaSite is itself a major achievement. It allows all seven websites to be administered from one central site. It allows data to be shared, or not, among all seven sites. For example, much of the information on the PTLA and MEJP sites changes each year with changes in the poverty guidelines. On the MegaSite we have created one central place where poverty guideline data is entered and changes there are automatically effected in the very many documents that reference those guidelines no matter which site they appear on. In another example Pine Tree developed its Food Stamp Estimators using the HotDocs document assembly

program and the NPADO HotDocs server. Those are used on PTLA site and shared with the LSE, KIDS and VLP sites, as well. In a third example, the HelpMeLaw library exists both on its own and as part of the LSE Know Your Rights section. Materials added in one place are immediately available in both. News postings are also easily shared among the sites.

The PTLA, VLP, LSE and MEJP sites all have private, as well as public, sides. The private sides are for staff and volunteer attorney advocates. The most significant aspect of the private sides of these organizational sites is the shared advocate library. Documents placed into the shared library by any of the organizations can be tagged as available only for staff of that organization, available only for staff of any of the provider organizations, or as available for the providers and for volunteer attorneys as well. This system was instituted in response to concerns about sharing every single document beyond the borders of a particular organization because of client confidentiality issues and strategic issues.

Advocates, particularly from PTLA and LSE are beginning to use the advocate library extensively. This has been a slow process, but perseverance has paid off. As indicated in Section II, there are 565 documents currently in the advocate library. We recently upgraded the search function in the advocate library, which has made some subtle, but significant, improvements in the quality of search returns. See Appendix B for staff users' comments on their use of the site.

As also indicated in Section II, our food stamp estimators are extensively used in Maine. These tools have served as a model for many other states that have developed or are developing similar systems.

Our interactive court forms have been a great boon to the organization. They are used not only by our staff and by pro se litigants, but are used substantially by the legal community throughout the state. We have developed an ongoing relationship with legal secretaries around the state to help discover bugs and improve the functioning of the forms. At least one law firm began making substantial financial contributions because of the service Pine Tree provided with the interactive forms. Anecdotal feedback from the judiciary suggests that perhaps a majority of family law practitioners utilize Pine Tree's forms.

The interactive forms gave rise to another project with the judiciary in which we created disks for all judges and family law magistrates that prepared all forms and performed all calculations necessary to complete a child support order with its associated documents. This package has been made available to participating volunteer attorneys in a password protected area of the VLP website. It is our hope that making this and other resources available to volunteer lawyers will eventually increase willingness to accept pro bono cases in the bar.

In addition to the password protected area for pro bono attorneys, the VLP site has private areas available for lay volunteers, the domestic violence panel, the advisory panel, and others, including our new foreclosure prevention project, MASH. MASH, Maine Attorneys Saving

Homes, is a joint project with the Attorney General's office. It has its own resource library, training section, resource links and a "Homeowners Foreclosure Prevention Toolkit."

The HelpMeLaw search engine is a major achievement, and one of the most sophisticated search engines available. We believe it to be even more sophisticated than major search engines like Google because it does far more than just word searches. The administrative side of the HelpMeLaw search engine allows us to review users' search returns and make adjustments to the functioning of the engine so that the most appropriate returns possible come back for any given search. We can even override word search returns to "hard wire" specific top level returns for any particular search before the word search returns are provided. In addition the HelpMeLaw search engine has five levels of return available to provide specific associated information and referrals based on the site user's particular demographics. For example, although a word search for "divorce" wouldn't necessarily return information on the IRS innocent spouse rule, we can adjust the HelpMeLaw search returns to provide that information, in addition to the usual information returned for a divorce search. The search engine also makes referrals to specific state and local agencies that might be able to help with the problem type queried by the user.

The KIDS Legal site, in part, reflects Pine Tree's partnership with the medical community. It provides lots of resources to medical and other professionals working with children. The resource "code card" is available both as a traditional code card in pdf format and as an electronic code card designed to assist Maine medical professionals identify environmental and social problems impacting children's health, and provide direct resource information to families regarding benefits and services. The website has been a big part of the success of that medical/legal collaboration project.

Maine Equal Justice (MEJP) and Legal Services for the Elderly (LSE) are independent organizations providing services to the same statewide client community as Pine Tree Legal Assistance. A major achievement of the MegaSite is the fact that they can have and maintain websites with their own identity and their own content while sharing the structure and resources of the MegaSite. Without their ability to maintain their own identity, their participation in the statewide website would be much less. This is a departure from the typical statewide website which discourages individual organization's sites in favor of a single statewide source of information. We think ours is the better model and a few other states are beginning to follow the MegaSite's lead.

The fact that we had a statewide website that was able to present individual faces for different organizations made it easy to respond to the request from the Campaign for Justice for its own website. The Campaign for Justice is the single unified fundraising effort to raise funds from the legal community for the various legal aid providers. Although we doubt the CFJ website has much value as a fundraising effort in itself, it is the vehicle by which a majority of the CFJ funds are gathered.

IV. Partnerships

Rather than just taking pride in the ways partnerships have increased the quality of the web site

(although this is certainly true) we take more pride in the ways in which the website (MegaSite) has increased the quality of the partnerships Pine Tree has with other legal aid oriented organizations in Maine. Even before the other organizations joined the OST template, because the individuals who did the website work for Pine Tree were part-time employees, they could spend time with the other organizations working on their websites. Since 1996 the website work has been the one thing on which all of the involved organizations have consistently worked together collaboratively.

The allocation of content development among partners (e.g., elder law issues to LSE, TANF and Parents as Scholars issues to MEJP, housing issues to PTLA, children's issues to KIDS Legal, consumer issues to the Attorney General) helps to ensure that there are no major gaps in legal information important to the low-income community and that materials are produced by those with the greatest expertise in any particular area. The system isn't perfect, but it seems to work pretty well. With interlinking and particularly with the HelpMeLaw search engine the appropriate materials are available to people where they are most likely to be looking for them and from many access points. Most of the sites' libraries refer both to documents on that specific site and to documents on the other sites. The HelpMeLaw search encompasses all of the sites.

Each of the partner participating sites has its own identity, its own design, its own organization and its own content. Each of them was designed by the partner organization in consultation with the MegaSite managers.

PTLA's ongoing work with the courts to develop a user-friendly forms-based family law system has not been focused primarily on the website, but it is reflected strongly in the website. The courts regularly supply the "official" court forms and any changes to those forms so that Pine Tree can make them available in interactive format. The most complex of the interactive court forms, the child support worksheet, was produced by a joint effort of Pine Tree and the courts. Likewise the special project to create an interactive system to produce child support orders and all of the associated forms (mentioned above) was a joint project funded by the courts.

Pine Tree's partnership with the Attorney General's office produced M.A.S.H. (Maine Attorneys Saving Homes) and its associated website, part of the VLP site. Significantly, this effort is largely funded by the Attorney General.

The partnership with the medical community, in particular the Barbara Bush Children's Hospital, was largely responsible for the development of KIDS Legal and its website.

A partnership with the Immigrants Legal Advocacy Project and the Coalition for Maine Law & Civics Education of the University of Maine School of Law produced the Legal Guide for Immigrants to Maine and funding from the Maine Bar Foundation enabled it to be converted into its present bilingual web-based format on the PTLA website.

A partnership with the Violence Intervention Partnership of Cumberland County enabled the Pine Tree website to provide ten Protection from Abuse court forms, along with the twenty-four page "Courts Guide to PFA and PFH Cases" in six different languages - Spanish, Arabic, French,

Khmer, Somali and Vietnamese. Although the forms cannot be filed with the courts in those languages, these forms and guides make the process much more understandable to native speakers of those languages.

Because of the heavy use and wide acceptance of the MegaSite and the PTLA and HelpMeLaw sites in particular, we are not as fixated on marketing and outreach as are many of the statewide websites. However, our relationship with the Maine Bar Foundation has produced some substantial marketing efforts by the Bar foundation on behalf of the HelpMeLaw site and the various sub-sites of the MegaSite. This was particularly true in the early days of the site development, but continues today.

V. Factors affecting ability to implement the SWWS and accomplish project goals, and the strategies to address these challenges

The primary factor both enhancing and limiting the accomplishments of the MegaSite has been resources. Pine Tree's leadership early recognized the value of the website as a means of delivering information and resources to our client population and committed substantial resources to the effort. Virtually all the goals for a statewide website from the LSC perspective have long been accomplished. However, had the website been accorded more resources, much more could have been accomplished.

Because of the structure of the MegaSite, its success is in part dependent on the efforts of the individual participating organizations. Fortunately, for most of its history all of the participating organizations have been enthusiastically involved. However, at times interest has flagged for one organization or another. The VLP pro bono part of the MegaSite was ambitiously designed and built yet has not yet been fully utilized because of changes in leadership and staffing issues. The LSE site has from time to time languished because the organization lacked resources to keep content updated. It is unlikely that a different structure or less concession to individual organization identity would have resulted in a different result, and in the context of the MegaSite these issues are barely noticeable.

Although it might be impacted by the current major economic downturn, the recent planning effort by the Justice Action Group (Maine's statewide planning agency) resulted in a recommendation that the MegaSite efforts be separately funded and maintained at a level not dependent on the individual organizations. This recommendation has been well received by the Maine Bar Foundation, Maine's IOLTA funder. However, it is unclear what impact the economic downturn will have on the Bar Foundation's ability to fund the recommendations of the JAG.

VI. Financial and in-kind support for the Web site

Pine Tree Legal Assistance has always devoted far more resources to the statewide website than it has received from TIG website grants. Roughly \$125,000 per year in salary and benefits has been devoted to development and ongoing implementation of the site. This is the salaries for two part time attorney employees, each working twenty-one hours per week. Although not 100% of

their time was devoted to website work, contributions from other staff more than compensated for their non-website time. Much of the (current) website director's time was devoted generally to content development, and while that content was also distributed by other means almost all of it was used on the website.

Pine Tree paid \$5,000 - 6,000 yearly for a technical support contract with Kaivo (the developer of the Open Source Template) and another \$1,800 (approximately) in hosting fees. In addition to that the other partner organizations (MEJP, LSE, VLP) paid separate, although considerably less, hosting fees. Each of the separate partner organizations (MEJP, LSE) also paid separate development and implementation costs to the site managers. These were roughly \$3,000 per year plus an additional \$5,000 for the year in which they joined the MegaSite. These amounts do not include content development by partner organizations like MEJP and LSE.

Pine Tree has attempted to include the MegaSite in as many grants and other funding sources as possible. The website is an integrated part of our service delivery. This has included roughly \$10,000 per year as part of an "earmark" grant from the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) for 2004 - 2006 for development of the KIDS Legal portion of the MegaSite. The KIDS Legal site was allocated an additional \$2,500 in a grant from the Maine Health Access Foundation for the development of the "code card." Pine Tree's Low Income Taxpayer Clinic grants allocated roughly \$2,000 per year to the website work. Fair Housing grants for 2005 and 2006 allocated another approximate \$4,500 per year. Our IOLTA grant from the Maine Bar Foundation contributed another amount ranging from about \$5,000 in 2004 to \$10,000 in 2006 for development and implementation of the VLP site. The Legal Guide for Immigrants to Maine was developed for the website with a \$5,000 grant from the Maine Bar Foundation. The remainder of the funds devoted to the MegaSite were from the Maine Civil Legal Services Fund (funded by a filing fee surcharge).

Total funding for the MegaSite has varied slightly from year to year, but has been fairly constant at approximately \$150,000 per year, including TIG funding and partner contributions.

For chart summarizing costs per year, see Appendix A

VII. Major lessons and recommendations

It has become our view that the single most important factor in the success of a statewide website, overshadowing all other factors by far, is content. High quality, accessible, useful, reliable up-to-date content is what these websites should all be about, on both the advocate and public sides. If we provide that, the websites will market themselves. The websites will become integrated parts of the legal aid delivery system. The websites will become a meaningful part of the state justice system. Most importantly the websites will provide a service to our client populations, enabling them to be better informed participants in the legal and governmental systems that affect them and to take some significant steps toward accessing justice.

Pine Tree has devoted an experienced attorney - largely self-trained (but well-trained) in the art of developing content for our low-literacy client population - to the production of client education materials, both for the web and otherwise. It is significant that this is a position filled by a senior attorney, a fact which helps ensure the quality of the work and the status of the position. The Pine Tree staff know that this work is valued by the organization. It is also significant that, although this is a part-time position, the only duties are web work and content development. This is far different from a full-time attorney being given part-time responsibilities for web work and / or content development. In the latter case the web work and content development would always take second place to the strict deadlines and demands of an active case load.

We believe that Pine Tree's insistence on preserving the organizational identity of the participating groups has helped make Maine's statewide website particularly successful. Our client population does not look to some vaguely defined amalgam of organizations for help. They know and look to the specific organizations that provide them help in their offices - Pine Tree Legal Assistance, Legal Services for the Elderly, Maine Equal Justice, etc. - not the Maine coalition of web-based legal information providers. Likewise the organizations themselves are more likely to take pride in, and want to support, a website bearing the organization's name and logo.

There is a difficult balance to be maintained between forging ahead with the websites and web features ("If you build it they will come") versus building staff and community consensus before undertaking an effort. We seem to be unable to define that balance, but proffer a few examples.

In the beginning the advocate library on the private side of the MegaSite met with widespread staff indifference and some skepticism. Staff were not contributing their significant pleadings and documents to the library. The web managers built it anyway, and enlisted an attorney returning from sick leave who had a significantly reduced case load to populate the library. She went to each staff attorney and effectively required them to identify documents which she then indexed and put into the library. It was much more difficult for the staff not to cooperate with a sympathetic co-worker sitting next to them than fail to respond to repeated email requests for the submission of documents. Maintenance of the library requires a constant effort and we have learned that we cannot rely on the staff to do it themselves. However, staff now realize its value and so have become more forthcoming with contributions. So gradually, over time, we have built the library to a size where it is now viewed as a valuable asset to the staff. (See Appendix B: Narrative response to staff survey.) Having only a few documents in the library is not enough to make it useful or something worth sustaining. It is only after the outside imposition of a vision of what it could accomplish and persistent effort that the tipping point is finally achieved.

Similarly, most of the significant features of the website have been the idea and product of one or two people which they pushed forward in the hope that "if they built it they would come," and by and large they did.

On the other hand, the VLP section of the MegaSite is significantly overbuilt. Those parts of the site that are used provide great service to the public and to volunteer lawyers; however, much of the built-in capacity is simply not used. The then director of the VLP, working with one of the web managers, designed a complex, feature-filled site. When she left there was not the staff energy or desire to take advantage of many of these features. However, we hope that with a new director now in place (after a lengthy hiatus), new energy will return to that site.

Appendix A – Maine Megasite Cost Estimates

	2004	2005 TIG #04006	2006-2007 TIG #05005
TIG funding	\$50,000	27,900	\$27,037
PTLA contributions in excess of TIG funding	\$86,800	\$104,900	\$236,800
Contributions from other grants toward the PTLA contribution. (OJJDP, LITC, MHAF, Fair Housing, MBF - See the written narrative)	\$17,000	\$31,500	\$28,000
Contributions from the Maine Legal Services Fund toward the PTLA contribution (See the written narrative.)	\$69,800	\$83,400	\$208,800
Estimated contributions from other organizations for web hosting and development (MEJP, LSE) not paid to or through PTLA.	\$6,480	\$11,480	\$15,960
Estimated contributions from other organizations for content development not paid to or through PTLA (MEJP, LSE, CFJ)	\$30,000	\$30,000	\$70,000
Totals (Includes TIG funding, PTLA contributions, other organization contributions (other grants and MLSF, rows 3 and 4, are included in PTLA contributions))	\$167,448	\$174,280	\$349,797

NOTE: MEJP and LSE may have received, and, in fact, almost certainly received, funding for content development from other funding sources. However, they have no obligation to report to LSC; therefore, that information is not being provided here. Although they paid substantial hosting fees and ongoing web development fees, the major contribution for each of those organizations to the Maine MegaSite was content development. Neither of those organizations, nor Pine Tree Legal Assistance, nor the Volunteer Lawyers Project, nor KIDS Legal have a budget line item for web content development. Almost all content is developed for publication in both paper format and for the web. This work is primarily performed by existing staff in each organization. The very expensive video that is on the home page of the Campaign for Justice site was produced for another purpose entirely and only placed on the website as an afterthought. These figures, then, are both estimates and somewhat arbitrary allocations of expenditures.

Appendix B: Staff website use survey – narrative responses

The forms section of ptla.org literally saves hours of work for family law attorneys. The forms are easy to access, always up to date, and a tidy way to put together filings. I frequently use the "Legal Help" section when I need a quick reference for legal issues outside my normal practice area.

I refer all of my PFA clients whom PTLA is not going to represent in a family matter to both helpmelaw.org and vlp.org.

From conversations with members of the private bar and from pleadings filed by opposing pro se parties, it is clear that the community also makes great use of the PTLA website.

I use the following websites on a weekly basis to assist me: www.ptla.org; www.mainelse.org. I use both the public websites and the password-protected staff only areas, including the document library on the LSE website. I use the public websites to locate resources, interactive court forms, and to keep up on poverty law and elder law news issues. I use the password-protected staff only part of the LSE website (especially the document library) to find sample pleadings, case law, and administrative decisions. I feel that these websites are vital to my effectiveness as an advocate for the elderly. The training provided in August of 2007 was essential to my effective, efficient use of the document library.

Both the public and private PTLA sites have been critical. I use it every day. I use it for research and investigation on the private side and for community outreach and education on the public side. VLP is important for the launch of MASH and volunteer effort and use for information sharing.

There are several aspects of these web pages that have been very helpful to me, including: finding client education material very quickly (on PTLA and other web sites); finding PTLA policies and protocols on the "Policy Manual" staff pages; finding research links quickly; and finding pleadings and briefs (although we have a ways to go to make this really useful).

I use our document library for housing issues frequently--both for examples of pleadings for both format and content when I'm working on a type of case that is new for me--ie 80C, 80B-- and to research issues in section 8 terminations and other subsidy terminations and evictions.

I use ptla.org on a regular, probably at least daily basis for forms, policies and procedures, and the brief bank. I do not really use the others, although I use LSE client ed on occasion.

“I frequently refer people to the Pine Tree Legal site, especially for information about family law - what are the options, where to get the paperwork, how to fill it out, how to file it, etc.

At tax time it's been very helpful for our local head start advocates to use your website when working with low income families who have questions about EITC, where to get help preparing their taxes, and this year, for information about the stimulus payments.

Your Food Stamp Estimator is also an excellent tool that I use with clients on the phone or to send to clients via email.

As for our own website, I often get website contacts from people who stumble across us looking for information or help with questions about healthcare, TANF, ASPIRE, and Parents as Scholars. We are able to respond to email requests for help and find it a very efficient way to provide concrete information to people with a very quick turnaround.

In other cases, advocates or clients may call and need in depth information about a topic and rather than taking a few days and the expense to mail them a document, I am able to refer them to our website, or the website of another legal services provider that answers their questions.

Barely a day goes by that I don't access one of the Maine legal services websites for information!”

I use the ptla site daily. Kids legal here and there, probably at least monthly for basic research on kids issues. The others I have used randomly for work - I don't think I've ever used the VLP website.

I have used the PTLA site extensively for issues regarding FED and PFA/PFH and also for the court forms (that is great). I use our site - LSE - for the "private web" side of it to get court

forms and sample filings. I am not familiar with the other sites. I admit to now being very curious re: MEJP site as they are learned folks over there.

I can't give you exact figures, but I do refer some calls to our website, look up info on it, and print off materials on it as I prefer the format to the CLE's in Word.

I use ptla.org and mejp.org on a regular basis. I use our site every Friday to access family law docs. I use MEJP's site to access information on TANF and PAS for clients.

I've used the PTLA site to get court forms for myself and to print off for pro se clients who are going through the family law process. I also use the site to check LSC regs (usually regarding eligibility issues). I use the document library to look for all kinds of pleadings including TROs, complaints, and decisions on various issues- usually housing.

I've used the MEJP web site to download information on ASPIRE and PaS programs both for clients and for myself when I'm trying to figure out if a client has a case or to get a clearer picture of some of the complicated DHHS regs.

I've used the KIDS website to get information on emancipation.

I am on the ptla.org site daily. I help a lot of pro se family matter clients and use the forms files constantly. I get on mejp.org when I want to find out specific information, say, MaineCare related information. I use the mainelse.org site for their Power of Attorney forms. I don't ever get on the vlp.org site. I use the kidslegal.org site for information on school related issue, mostly and I've never been to the helpmelaw.org site.

I use these websites when I give presentations on Pine Tree, KIDS LEGAL, and the VLP. I frequently hear about how our offices are so busy that no one can get through to ask quick questions. People are thrilled to hear about how easy to search the websites are. Particularly www.helpmelaw.org. Also PTLA's private site is a great resource when I am looking for forms and policies.

The ptla.org website helps me to quickly and efficiently calculate child support worksheets and orders, which helps my clients best weigh their options as to how to proceed in family law cases.

I know that the family law bar shares my appreciation of the interactive, easily accessible forms on the website, and I am sure that pro-se clients must find them useful as well.

As a relatively new staff attorney with Legal services for the elderly, I was cast from 16 plus years of criminal prosecution into the "civil " world of law. I use these sites extensively , especially the private websites to look for caselaw, forms, admin. decisions ... you name it. I'd venture to say I use the sites about three to four days a week. The web site has been invaluable to me.

I use the ptla.org site on a regular basis (3x per month or more) for substantive information and/or forms in the areas of housing, small claims, PFAs and PFHs. I will also direct clients there when appropriate for information. Really, an invaluable tool.

The PTLA website is invaluable for providing access to commonly used court forms. The internal brief bank is a wonderful tool to increase my productivity as an advocate.

Just last week I had to give someone advice on doing a motion for contempt and my supervisor wasn't around...I called a family law attorney in the Augusta office for advice and she and I looked up all the information I needed under the post judgment section of the website...it was a life saver! [from tax clinic lawyer]

PTLA.ORG – I go here for client ed, the packets for the various family law matters and the court forms. It is really a huge help to the clients who don't have access to the internet to send them the packets to do a divorce, etc. and, where necessary, direct them to the courthouse to get the family law summons and preliminary injunction. It enables me to give them a helpline date during my supervision instead of having them go to the court, try to get back in touch with me and then giving them a helpline date. It really speeds up the process and gets them the help they need much quicker.

Helpmelaw.org – I use this a lot as well – researching issues and trying to find the different resources for folks to use.

VLP.ORG – I go here occasionally, but really use the PTLA website more.

Mainelse.org – I use this a tiny bit – mostly around adult guardianship and advanced directives.

I use the ptla site all the time for research into the brief bank, standards of practice, union contract and downloading forms. I rarely use the others, which has nothing to do with their content but every thing to do with my not being that computer savvy.

The Staff Page has a lot of information in one place and saves me a lot of time when I have to check a restriction or an eligibility issue.

I use ptla.org and helpmelaw.org. fairly frequently; the others I use quite infrequently. The ptla site is very helpful for landlord/tenant matters.

These sites have helped me do my work by being a resource for me, and at other times, being a resource for a potential client.

Ptla.org: I use this site daily. Since I always need pro se forms for clients, this site is invaluable. I also use it for quick reference on numerous issues - consumer, especially, but also tax, etc. I recommend our site to clients ON A DAILY BASIS. Finally, I use this site to link to other places, e.g. statutes, court rules, etc.

Mejp.org. I use this site weekly at least, for answering public benefits questions, e.g. new identity requirements, and printing DHHS applications.

Lse: I use this site a few times a year for advance directive info, etc.

Vlp: I use this only for online intake really. (I put in a lot last week, but have not uploaded them, so that's why I didn't respond to you e-mail about how it's working.)

Kids: a couple time per year for emancipation, etc.

HelpmeLaw; I don't use this as much as I could because I usually think that I know where to find the information I want.

I have a lot of calls from people just looking for basic information, usually from people not within our client age group. I often send them to LSE or helpmelaw for basic information, being sure to tell them that every case is unique and this is for basic information only. The majority of

these are tenant/landlord & auto/home repair issues or people wanting to know about the rights and responsibilities of POA. Also a lot of people tell me that they found us through one of these sites.

All of these sites (except the VLP site which I can't remember accessing) have helped me to do my work in various ways. When I make presentations to high school students, community groups etc. I often use materials from the websites as handouts and I always refer the audience to the relevant sites. Sometimes I use the sites as a refresher on substantive topics that I haven't handled for a while and if I am handling a topic for the first time the sites are very helpful for an introduction to a topic so that I can do more effective intake and follow-up. The mejp site is particularly useful for up to date information on specialized topics such as health care eligibility and I feel very confident about the information at that site. The links at all the sites have been very helpful. In effect the sites are a good starting point to find both alternative legal services and non-legal services for people who contact our office on a wide range of issues, some of which we can handle directly and some of which are outside our priorities or expertise. The sites also provide or lead me to contact information for networking and collaborations such as I have done with LSE, DRC, MCLU, MITSC and various other organizations. I would say that I access one of these sites at least once every day. Without these sites my job would be much more difficult.

This seems a huge question, as I know our staff regularly use the PTLA site, and that our consumers use the helpmelaw site. I have also used the VLP site to pull info for potential volunteer attorneys. All in all, I can't imagine not having these resources.

One last note, that the private side of the LSE website is also something now used quite a bit , since we beefed up the document library.

Ptla, mainelse, vlp have all helped me. I use them to research in order to answer client's questions.

www.ptla.org - Have referred clients and presentation attendees to the website, particularly for 1) fair housing; 2) tenants rights; 3) divorce modification 4) child support; 5) unemployment 6) tax information. Have used it myself for advice to clients re: consumer related issues.

www.helpmelaw.org - Have referred clients and agency staff to this website for information, and reviewed it for education loan and consumer issues prior to giving advice to clients.

www.mejp.org - Have used their website and referred clients to it, particularly regarding ASPIRE and Parents as Scholars issues.

www.ptla.org

I've used ptla.org many, many times during my 10 months with Pine Tree. As a new attorney it is extremely helpful to me to see examples of various motions, answers, defenses, and other such documents in the staff-only document library. When you are first starting out as an attorney you often have no reference point at all for creating the documents you are filing with the court. I can't tell you how many times I've had to write something for one of my cases and used the document library to find an example to use as a basis for my own work. It must happen at least 2-3 times a week. If you've never written a Rule 52(a) motion before how would you even know where to begin without being able to see a real example of one? The documents in the document library show me not only how a particular filing should look, but also show me how I need to present my facts and my law in order to provide the court with all the information it needs. Another way in which the document library helps me is by laying out arguments that advocates have used in the past that I may not have thought about for my cases. When you work alone you may see several possible solutions to a problem. But sharing your client's situation with others, like at a staff meeting, can produce other possible solutions you hadn't thought of. But what do you do if there isn't a staff meeting that day, or if no one is around your office to discuss the case with you? I use the document library. I search the general areas my case touches on and see if previous advocates have encountered the same problem and what kinds of answers, defenses, motions, etc. they used to get solutions for their clients.

I've also found ptla.org very helpful for getting legal information in an area I'm unfamiliar with. When you're just starting out as an attorney there are a great deal of legal topics you know little or nothing about. For example, I know very little about Medicare/Mainecare. However, the information available in the "legal help" section of the ptla.org site gives me a general overview on numerous topics. It's someplace for me to begin my research. I can take the facts given to me by my client and compare that with the information in our legal help section to help me begin to flesh out some of the legal issues in a case. It helps me narrow down the facts and information I need from my client and helps me figure out what further information I'm going to need- statutes, regulations, case law, etc. Perhaps that section of the website is designed for the general public and people without legal training. But being a new attorney, I've found that section to be incredibly helpful to me when I'm faced with an area of law I haven't dealt with before or have had little experience with.

I also refer some of my clients to the "legal help" section of the website. For clients with internet access, I've found the legal help section of the website to be a great way for clients to get a basic understanding of their rights and responsibilities in different areas of the law. When a

client comes to me with a legal question that isn't related to the legal issue I'm helping with (for example, a client I'm helping with an eviction that asks me about bankruptcy) I can refer them to the website if I can't answer their question myself. It may not answer every single one of their questions, but at the very least it helps them narrow down what they're asking me. The website also directs people where they can go for further information or further assistance. When a client asks me where he can go for help with preparing his taxes I can refer him to the website or look at the website myself, and I can direct him somewhere. It saves me a great deal of time. I don't have to make 5 phone calls to locate a resource, it's already there.

Having documents available at your fingertips is quite helpful, when drafting documents for cases (ptla and mainelse). Also, they are good referrals points for people we are unable to assist directly or who want more information.