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**The Asian Language Legal Intake Project  
(ALLIP)**

**Final Evaluation Report  
2002-03**

by

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# I. Introduction

The Asian Pacific American Legal Center (APALC) undertook an evaluation of its Asian Language Legal Intake Project (ALLIP) to answer two fundamental questions, namely:

- ! The extent to which the Project increases access to legal services for under-served communities, and
- ! How the Project can serve as a model for other service providers serving similarly linguistically diverse client populations

ALLIP engaged *The Resource for Great Programs* to perform an evaluation of the Project.<sup>1</sup> The evaluation design incorporates the perspectives of clients, Project leaders and staff, and partners and other stakeholders, in order to provide a well-rounded array of inputs from multiple viewpoints. Data collection methods included telephone interviews of ALLIP Project leaders and staff, ALLIP databases, telephone surveys of a randomized sample of clients, and telephone surveys of Project partners. This work was performed from March to June of 2003.

This report describes the evaluation design and summarizes the evaluation findings. In brief, the major findings of the evaluation were:

1. The Project has achieved significant outcomes for clients and a good degree of client satisfaction with its services.
2. Partners feel that the Project provides a valuable service for clients in addition to fostering collaboration among the legal aid providers in the greater Los Angeles area in addressing the challenges of serving this hard-to-reach population.
3. The Project has met its first-year milestones and appears to have strong momentum to carry forward successfully into its second year.

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<sup>1</sup>*The Resource for Great Programs* is a national corporation dedicated to providing strategic support to networks of community based organizations working in arenas having great impact on our society. For more information, refer to The Resource’s website, [www.GreatPrograms.org](http://www.GreatPrograms.org).

## II. ALLIP Goals and Delivery Strategy

The Asian Language Legal Intake Project was created in 2001 to improve access to legal services among traditionally underserved linguistically diverse populations, specifically, the low-income Chinese and Vietnamese communities. ALLIP was created by APALC in partnership with Neighborhood Legal Services (NLS), Legal Aid Foundation of Los Angeles (LAFLA), and Legal Aid Society of Orange County (LASOC), with primary funding provided by the Open Society Institute.<sup>2</sup>

ALLIP's delivery model is centered around a coordinated hotline system which delivers services wholly in the native languages of the client population, namely, Mandarin, Cantonese, and Vietnamese. Chinese was chosen as a pilot language because of the large size of the population, which comprised 26% of the API population in Los Angeles County. Vietnamese was selected because of the high poverty rate--27%--in this group. The Chinese community, with its more established community infrastructure, and the Vietnamese community, as a newer community with a growing community infrastructure, also provided the opportunity for ALLIP to strengthen and develop relationships with these communities, including tailoring different outreach methods to most effectively reach these groups.

Through the hotline, ALLIP staff provide a broad range of services to clients, including:

- ! Counsel and advice on legal matters, including family, immigration, public benefits, housing, employment, and consumer law
- ! Assistance in completing legal forms, documents, and letters
- ! Education on common legal issues and delivery of printed informational materials
- ! Brief intervention and advocacy on the client's behalf, where possible and appropriate (e.g., calling a landlord or governmental agency)
- ! Referrals to other agencies for in-depth assistance, where applicable and appropriate, including partner legal aid programs, specialized programs, pro bono attorneys, and community based organizations

In addition, ALLIP provides outreach and education, in collaboration with partner programs (including APALC, NLS, LAFLA, and LASOC) and community-based organizations, on matters related to the unique needs and issues of ALLIP's client population, with the goal of improving and enhancing service levels to this population and increasing awareness of the specific challenges facing linguistically diverse communities. ALLIP staff regularly collaborate with referral partners and other organizations serving the Asian population in the area. ALLIP also provides a substantial amount of technical support and training to a broad array of organizations throughout the country that are interested in employing hotline-type models for serving ethnically diverse populations.

ALLIP seeks to address several fundamental challenges facing its linguistically diverse client population, including:

- ! Language barriers and limited capacity among "traditional" legal services programs to provide services to Asian clients in their native languages
- ! Cultural differences in attitudes toward the legal system and approaches to obtaining assistance with legal issues

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<sup>2</sup>Additional funding was provided by the Community Technology Foundation of California, the California Consumer Protection Foundation, and The California Endowment.

- ! Limited understanding of the legal system among immigrant communities
- ! Limited coordination and communication (prior to ALLIP) between the various organizations – both in the legal services system and among CBOs serving Asian populations – seeking to serve low-income Asian communities

ALLIP was therefore created by the partner programs to provide intake, counsel and advice in Asian languages to the Asian communities in its service area, as well as referral to the partner agencies and/or other organizations for additional legal assistance where necessary and appropriate. To the degree that the Project is successful in improving service levels for its client population, it was also intended that the Project serve as a model and demonstration project for serving similar linguistically diverse communities in other areas.

Following an extensive planning and implementation process, the hotline began serving clients in May 2002. By March of 2003, 1,148 client intakes had been completed and at least 2,000 clients had received services<sup>3</sup> – approximately 16 percent Cantonese-speakers, 43 percent Mandarin, and 40 percent Vietnamese (with other languages accounting for the remaining 1 percent). During this period, the Project’s toll-free telephone lines received approximately 6,500 calls. The Project had successfully met critical administrative milestones for its first year, including the following:

- ! Hiring required staff
- ! Creating training materials and conducting training sessions
- ! Creating scripts, checklists, and other requisite materials for the hotline operations
- ! Opening the hotline to callers
- ! Conducting community outreach to the Chinese and Vietnamese communities
- ! Recruiting volunteers
- ! Implementing and refining internal systems, including workflow, database, and phone systems
- ! Fostering collaboration among partner organizations and community-based programs through joint outreach and training

An additional milestone for the Project was to complete an evaluation of success against key objectives and priorities. The structure and outcome of this evaluation will be outlined below.

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<sup>3</sup>Data are for the period May 1, 2002 through March 31, 2003 (source: ALLIP intake database). Not all calls to the hotline result in a formal intake; more than 1000 callers were assisted in addition to the formal intake since some callers have very simple questions that do not lead to an intake; others will not provide demographic information. The approximately 4300 remaining calls received during this period constituted subsequent phone calls with existing clients who did not get their issue resolved in the first call.

### III. Evaluation design

Program-owned evaluation<sup>4</sup> was explicitly incorporated into the Project's goals and milestones as a key component of the Project's design. To that end, ALLIP's leadership engaged *The Resource for Great Programs* to conduct an evaluation to answer two fundamental questions about the Project, namely:

- ! The extent to which the Project increases access to legal services for underserved communities, and
- ! How the Project can serve as a model for other service providers serving similarly linguistically diverse client populations

To address these fundamental objectives and assess the Project's success to date in meeting them, ALLIP's leadership and *The Resource* laid out an agenda of specific questions that could be usefully addressed through evaluation. The first eight are addressed in this report:

1. Who is being served by the intake system;
2. How many calls are being handled by the intake line;
3. How many intakes are handled by advice, referral, brief service, or extended representation;
4. What types of services are being provided;
5. How effectively are clients served once they are referred to partners for extended representation;
6. What are the outcomes of these services for clients;
7. To what degree are clients satisfied with services and results;
8. What aspects of the collaboration have been successful (system of referrals, use of technology, were expectations met);
9. How can the ALLIP model be used by other programs?

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<sup>4</sup>“Program-owned” is a term used here to distinguish this type of evaluation from “funder-imposed.” Increasingly, funders are encouraging grantees to perform self-assessments against their own strategic goals, and to apply the information for improving the outcomes they can deliver to clients. The program, not the funder, directs the evaluation and applies its results for improving program management.

The evaluation assessed the results the Project has achieved from the perspective of clients, Project leaders and staff, and partners. To gather these diverse perspectives the evaluation used data from several sources:

- ! Telephone surveys of a sample of clients, one to nine months after service was completed (conducted by multilingual ALLIP staff, using tools and protocols developed by *The Resource*)
- ! Telephone interviews of ALLIP project leaders by staff of *The Resource*
- ! Analysis of intake data from the ALLIP database
- ! A telephone survey of Project partners (conducted by principals of *The Resource*)

The data collection process was conducted between March and June, 2003. The evaluation questions addressed by each data source are summarized in the following table:

<b>Evaluation Question</b>	<b>Project Leader Interviews</b>	<b>ALLIP Database</b>	<b>Client Follow-Up Survey</b>	<b>Partner Telephone Survey</b>
1. Who is being served?		/		
2. How many intakes are generated?		/		
3. How many intakes are handled by advice, brief service, etc.?		/		
4. What types of service are provided?		/		
5. How effectively are clients served once referred for extended representation?			/	
6. What are the outcomes for clients?			/	
7. Are clients satisfied with services and outcomes?			/	
8. What materials were created?	/			/
9. What are most successful CLE/outreach approaches?	/		/	/
10. What collaborations have been successful?	/			/
11. How can the ALLIP model be used by others?	/			/

**1. Client follow-up survey.** ALLIP staff and volunteers ultimately interviewed 41 clients in their own language.<sup>5</sup> The interviewees were randomly selected from those who had received service from ALLIP one to nine months previously, and were chosen to reflect a demographic distribution (by primary language) similar to that of the overall client/caller distribution. The demographics of the final pool of interviewees were comparable to the client population overall, as shown in Exhibit 1 below.

**Exhibit 1: Demographics of Survey Sample by Primary Language**

Primary Language	Interviewees		Overall Hotline Clients	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
<i>Mandarin</i>	15	37%	490	43%
<i>Cantonese</i>	9	22%	189	16%
<i>Vietnamese</i>	17	41%	461	40%
<i>Other</i>	0	0%	8	1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>1148</b>	<b>100%</b>

The interviewees were asked a series of questions about their experience with the Hotline’s services (as well as those of any partners to whom they were referred) using detailed interviewing tools and protocols developed by *The Resource*. (A copy of the interview protocol is attached as Appendix A.) Staff of *The Resource* compiled and analyzed the results of these interviews.

**2. Telephone interviews of ALLIP project leaders.** Principals of *The Resource* interviewed the supervising attorney in charge of ALLIP and other key Project leaders. These interviews explored the purpose, objectives and status of the Project, the goals of the evaluation and the results achieved to date. Several follow-up conference calls ensued to design the evaluation and coach project staff in collection of the client follow-up survey data.

**3. Analysis of ALLIP database statistics.** *The Resource* also conducted an analysis of intake and case data drawn from ALLIP’s database. The database captures such data items as client demographics, legal problem, household type, housing type, family status, primary language, source of referral, agency to whom referred by ALLIP and nature of service provided. A copy of the ALLIP intake sheet is attached as Appendix B.

**4. Partner Interviews.** Principals of *The Resource* conducted telephone interviews of six partner organization staff. The goal was to include the executive director or deputy director and primary ALLIP liaison person for each legal aid partner and the staff attorneys at APALC to whom ALLIP clients were referred for extended service.<sup>6</sup> A copy of the interview protocol used for these interviews is attached as Appendix C.

A detailed description of the evaluation design and the methodologies employed, as originally developed at the outset of the study, is attached as Appendix D. The findings of the evaluation are summarized in the following section.

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<sup>5</sup> Attempts were made to contact a total of 70 randomly-selected clients, of whom 41 were successfully interviewed for this evaluation. The remainder either could not be reached or chose not to participate.

<sup>6</sup> Scheduling difficulties precluded interviews with the NLS executive director and project liaison.

## IV. Summary of Findings

At the highest level, the evaluation found that:

1. The Project has achieved a good degree of client satisfaction with its services and outcomes and has had a significant, positive impact on the issues faced by a majority of its clients.
2. Partners feel that the Project serves a valuable service for clients in addition to fostering collaboration among the legal aid providers in the greater Los Angeles area in addressing the challenges of serving this hard-to-reach population.
3. The Project has met its first-year milestones and appears to have strong momentum to carry forward successfully into its second year.

### A. Client Perspective

#### **Summary: Clients' Perspective**

*The follow-up interviews with clients found that:*

- ! Most clients find the Hotline helpful. Those who found it least helpful were people with tough problems.
- ! Clients who got help directly from the Project were more satisfied than those referred elsewhere.
- ! A significant majority of clients followed the Hotline's advice.
- ! Roughly half achieved at least partial resolution.
- ! Most felt the Hotline improved their situation.
- ! The Hotline promoted better understanding, good decisions and fair outcomes.
- ! Most would use the Hotline again.
- ! Some useful suggestions for improving the Project came out of the survey.

**1. Most clients find the Hotline helpful.** In response to the question "How helpful was the Hotline generally?", 51 percent answered either "Greatly" or "Quite a bit". Only two respondents (5 percent) responded "Not at all."

#### **Exhibit 2: Helpfulness**

<b>Response</b>	<b>Number of Respondents</b>	<b>Percent of Respondents</b>
<i>Greatly</i>	14	34%
<i>Quite a Bit</i>	7	17%
<i>Somewhat</i>	18	44%
<i>Not At All</i>	<u>2</u>	<u>5%</u>
<b>Total</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>100%</b>

With this in mind, it should be emphasized that even within the legal/regulatory and scope-of-service constraints under which the Hotline operates, it was able to be at least “somewhat” helpful to fully 95 percent of the clients interviewed. This is a good result, particularly considering the fact that the Hotline is still in the early stages of its maturation path.

**Clients with tough problems were less likely to be satisfied.** Of the 20 respondents who answered that the Hotline had been only "somewhat" or "not at all" helpful, six (including one of those who responded "not at all") had legal issues that were clearly unresolvable within the limits of the law (i.e., legal or regulatory conditions precluded the client from achieving the results they desired). In addition, seven others (including the second "not at all" respondent) either had legal issues of a nature such that it is questionable to what degree a Hotline model alone could achieve the desired result (for instance, they needed extended representation from an attorney and were over assets and/or over-income), or chose not to pursue the remedies available to them.<sup>7</sup>

**3. Clients who got services directly from the Hotline were more satisfied than those referred elsewhere.** An important goal of the client questionnaire was to collect data on the degree to which clients found different methods of delivering service through the Hotline to be useful. Respondents were therefore asked to identify which types of service they received, and to reflect on the degree to which those services were useful in resolving the issues they confronted. The overall results are summarized in Exhibit 3 below.

**Exhibit 3: Usefulness by Type of Assistance Provided**

Types of Assistance	Number Percent		Q: How Useful Was This?		
			"Very"	"Somewhat"	"Not at All"
<i>Gave legal advice/explanations</i>	39	95%	46%	41%	13%
<i>Told where to get info</i>	18	44%	31%	38%	31%
<i>Sent information or materials</i>	2	5%	100%	0%	0%
<i>Prepared legal forms or wrote a letter</i>	4	10%	100%	0%	0%
<i>Told how to serve papers to another person</i>	3	7%	67%	33%	0%
<i>Referred to another agency</i>	10	24%	25%	38%	38%
<b>Total</b>	<b>76</b>		<b>44%</b>	<b>37%</b>	<b>19%</b>

(Note: totals will be higher than the number of respondents because many received more than one type of service.)

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<sup>7</sup>In interpreting these results, it should be noted that clients did not always clearly differentiate between the actual service the Hotline was able to provide and the results that they (the client) had hoped to achieve. Anticipating this problem, the data collection instruments used in the interview process were designed to differentiate between satisfaction with the Hotline's services and satisfaction with the results that were achievable under the law and within the scope of service available. Even among the minority who found the Hotline's services only somewhat or not at all helpful, to some degree satisfaction was correlated with the results that were achievable within legal and regulatory constraints, combined with the level of effort the clients were willing to expend.

The distinction between receiving direct service and being sent elsewhere for help is highlighted in Exhibit 4 below. Client perceptions of usefulness were highest in relation to services that are delivered directly by Hotline staff – such as advice and explanations, help in filling out forms, and information sent directly to the client by Hotline personnel. Clients generally found less useful those types of assistance that they had to get from somewhere else, such as being told where to look for further information or being referred to a partner agency for further service.

**Exhibit 4: Usefulness by Category of Help (Direct or Sent Elsewhere)**

Types of Assistance	Number	Percent	Q: How Useful Was This?		
			"Very"	"Somewhat"	"Not at All"
<b>1. Direct Help from ALLIP</b>					
<i>Got legal advice/explanations</i>	39	95%	46%	41%	13%
<i>Got information or materials</i>	2	5%	100%	0%	0%
<i>Help with legal forms or letter</i>	4	10%	100%	0%	0%
<i>Told how to serve papers to another person</i>	3	7%	67%	33%	0%
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>48</b>		<b>50%</b>	<b>35%</b>	<b>10%</b>
<b>2. Sent Elsewhere for Help</b>					
<i>Told where to get info</i>	18	44%	31%	38%	31%
<i>Referred to another agency</i>	10	24%	25%	38%	38%
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>28</b>		<b>25%</b>	<b>32%</b>	<b>29%</b>

**Ratings of referrals to partner programs were especially low.** As indicated in Exhibit 5, below, fully 38 percent of referred respondents considered the services they received from referral partners to be “not at all” useful to them (versus only 10 percent for assistance provided directly by Hotline staff -- see Exhibit 4). A caveat is that the number of respondents in this category was small -- only ten referral clients overall, only six of whom had been referred to the four partner organizations -- and that due to the relatively limited pool of interviewees, it was not feasible to ensure that a statistically significant pool of clients from each referral partner were included. While the result for referrals as a whole is useful, therefore, we would caution against placing too much weight on the result for any one partner organization.

**Exhibit 5: Usefulness by Agency to Which Client Was Referred**

Agency To Which Referred	Number	Percent	Q: How Useful Was This?		
			"Very"	"Somewhat"	"Not at All"
<i>To APALC</i>	4	10%	100%	0%	0%
<i>To NLS</i>	0	0%	N/A	N/A	N/A
<i>To LAFLA</i>	2	5%	0%	50%	50%
<i>To LASOC</i>	0	0%	N/A	N/A	N/A
<i>To Other</i>	4	10%	0%	50%	50%
<b>Subtotal - Referrals</b>	<b>10</b>		<b>25%</b>	<b>38%</b>	<b>38%</b>

The high percentage of referred clients who said the service was “not at all” useful is an important finding, for it suggests a potential area of improvement that Project leaders should explore further. Are referred clients falling through the cracks? Is the transfer of information from the Hotline to the referral partner working satisfactorily (see “Partners’ Perspectives,” below)? Are clients being adequately informed about what to expect from the program to which they are being referred? It is possible that answers to these questions would suggest simple changes that would make referrals work better for clients.

In raising this issue, however, it should be noted that referred clients are particularly likely to include those whose legal issues were highly complex and/or unresolvable within the limits of existing laws or regulations, and that some chose not to pursue the remedies that were suggested to them (see below). As noted previously, it would be worthwhile to conduct a follow-up analysis of clients’ experiences post-referral to identify potential issues and clarify how well their needs are addressed by the partner organizations to which they are referred.

**4. Most clients followed the Hotline’s advice.** An even more intriguing issue is the degree to which clients followed through on the recommendations they were given, and the degree to which this correlated with the results they achieved (see Exhibit 6). Overall, 61 percent of the respondents reported that they did what the staff suggested, and a further 5 percent tried to (but presumably were not successful).

**Exhibit 6: Client Follow-Through By Type of Service**

Types of Assistance	Recipients		Followed Suggestions?			
	Number	Percent	Yes	Tried To	No	N/A - Info Only
<i>Advice/explanations</i>	39	95%	59%	6%	26%	9%
<i>Told where to get info</i>	18	44%	62%	0%	23%	15%
<i>Sent information</i>	2	5%	100%	0%	0%	0%
<i>Prepared forms/letters</i>	4	10%	100%	0%	0%	0%
<i>Told how to serve papers</i>	3	7%	50%	0%	50%	0%
<i>Referred to other agencies</i>	10	24%	57%	14%	14%	14%
<b>Total</b>	<b>76</b>		<b>61%</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>24%</b>	<b>10%</b>

On the other hand, the finding that 24 percent -- nearly one in four -- did not follow through on the recommendations they received is also significant. While this percentage is not dramatically outside the general range found in other studies of legal hotlines.<sup>8</sup> Further discussion of this issue among Project and partner staff could potentially lead to improvements that would make the Project's services even more useful to clients. A breakdown of this category is shown in Exhibit 7, below.

**Exhibit 7: Reasons for Not Following Through**

Types of Assistance	If No, Why Not?						
	Didn't Understand	Too Hard	Changed Mind	Situation Changed	Nothing Could Be Done	Couldn't Get Through	Other
<i>Advice/explanations</i>	0%	38%	23%	0%	0%	0%	38%
<i>Told where to get info</i>	0%	50%	0%	0%	0%	25%	25%
<i>Sent information</i>	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
<i>Prepared forms/letters</i>	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
<i>Told how to serve papers</i>	0%	0%	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
<i>Referred to other agencies</i>	50%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	50%
<b>Total</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>35%</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>35%</b>

The most common reason given was that the suggestions were “too hard,” a category that includes clients who were afraid, discouraged, or lacked the confidence to do what staff suggested. Others failed to follow through because they simply changed their minds and chose not to pursue the matter. This was particularly common in divorce/separation cases and other areas of family law. Within the “other” category, reasons cited included desire for actual representation by an attorney or otherwise seeking private or agency assistance with their issue, instead of following the recommendations of Hotline staff.

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<sup>8</sup> For example, a comparable statistic from a recently-completed study of legal hotlines serving senior citizens indicated that 15 percent did not take a follow-up action -- see “Statewide Senior Legal Hotlines Client Outcomes Survey, 2002; *Legal Hotline Quarterly*, Spring, 2003, page 1. A national study of hotlines serving the general low-income, English-speaking population found that 21 percent did not act on the help they received -- see, “Recommendations and Thoughts from the Managers of the Hotline Outcomes Assessment Study Project” in the same issue of *Legal Hotline Quarterly*, page 13.

**For those who followed through, results generally were highly positive** (see Exhibit 8). Sixty-one percent of all respondents who followed the suggestions reported that they worked “very well,” and a further 17 percent said they “sort of” worked.

**Exhibit 8: Results of Client Follow-Through By Type of Service**

Types of Assistance	If Yes, Did It Work?			
	Very Well	Sort Of	Not Really	Too Soon to Tell
<i>Advice/explanations</i>	74%	16%	5%	5%
<i>Told where to get info</i>	33%	33%	33%	0%
<i>Sent information</i>	100%	0%	0%	0%
<i>Prepared forms/letters</i>	100%	0%	0%	0%
<i>Told how to serve papers</i>	100%	0%	0%	0%
<i>Referred to other agencies</i>	25%	0%	25%	50%
<b>Total</b>	<b>61%</b>	<b>17%</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>8%</b>

**5. Outcomes: Nearly half the clients achieved at least partial resolution of their problem.** When asked “Has your legal problem been resolved,” 47 percent responding either “yes, completely” or “yes, somewhat” (see Exhibit 9). The remainder was evenly divided between those who said it was either too early to tell or that they had dropped the matter, on the one hand, and those who reported either “no, not really” or “not at all.”<sup>9</sup>

**Exhibit 9: Outcomes**

**Q: Did your legal problem get resolved?**

Response	Number of Respondents	Percent of Respondents
<i>Yes, completely</i>	15	37%
<i>Yes, somewhat</i>	4	10%
<i>Don't know, too soon to tell</i>	8	20%
<i>Situation changed/changed my mind/matter dropped</i>	3	7%
<i>No, not really</i>	6	15%
<i>Not at all</i>	5	12%
<b>Total</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>100%</b>

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<sup>9</sup>Again, it should be noted that a significant portion of this last group had legal issues that could not be addressed either within the scope of the services the Hotline provides or, in some cases, within the limits of the law and applicable regulations – this includes all five of those who responded “not at all.”

**6. Most felt the Hotline improved their situation.** Whether or not their specific legal problems had been resolved in their favor, a majority of respondents had seen some improvement in their overall situation (see Exhibit 10). When asked “Has your situation improved as a result of the way things turned out on this problem”, fully 42 percent replied either “greatly” or “quite a bit,” while an additional 44 percent reported at least “a little” improvement. Of the remainder, only one person had seen an actual worsening in the situation, while the rest said the situation was the same.

**Exhibit 10: Outcomes, Continued**

**Q: Has your situation improved as a result of the way things turned out on this problem?**

<b>Response</b>	<b>Number of Respondents</b>	<b>Percent of Respondents</b>
<i>Greatly</i>	8	20%
<i>Quite a bit</i>	9	22%
<i>A little</i>	18	44%
<i>Situation neither better nor worse*</i>	5	12%
<i>Got worse</i>	1	2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>100%</b>

*\*This was not an explicit choice in the questionnaire, but several respondents chose it nevertheless.*

Respondents appeared to believe that the help they received from the Hotline was at least partially responsible for the results they had achieved. A majority (55 percent) credited the Hotline with these results either “greatly” or “quite a bit,” while only two respondents (5 percent) said the Hotline was not at all responsible for the results they obtained (see Exhibit 11). None said the situation was actually worse as a result of the Hotline’s suggestions.

**Exhibit 11: Outcomes, Continued**

**Q: In your own words, how much did the Hotline contribute to the result you just described?**

<b>Response</b>	<b>Number of Respondents</b>	<b>Percent of Respondents</b>
<i>Greatly</i>	10	25%
<i>Quite a bit</i>	12	30%
<i>A little</i>	15	38%
<i>Too early to tell*</i>	1	3%
<i>No result*</i>	2	5%
<i>Made it worse</i>	0	0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100%</b>

*\*This was not an explicit choice in the questionnaire, but several respondents chose it nevertheless.*

**7. The Hotline promoted greater understanding, better decisions and fair outcomes.** Clients were asked to what degree the Hotline had been successful in helping them achieve desirable outcomes, such as the results they wanted, a better understanding of the legal system, ability to make better decisions, etc. (See Exhibit 12 below.) A sizeable majority (69 percent) of the respondents replied that they were able to get at least some of the results that they wanted (question “a”) and 68 percent were at least “somewhat” satisfied

with the fairness of the results (question “d”).

**Exhibit 12: Outcomes, Continued**

**Q: As a result of the help you received from the Hotline...**

Question	Greatly	Quite a bit	Somewhat	Not at all
<i>a. Were you able to get what you wanted?</i>	43%	3%	23%	33%
<i>b. Were you able to understand the legal system better?</i>	17%	24%	51%	7%
<i>c. Were you able to make better decisions?</i>	13%	40%	38%	10%
<i>d. Were you satisfied with the fairness of the result?</i>	29%	13%	26%	32%
<i>e. Did you feel listened to?</i>	41%	29%	24%	5%
<i>f. Were you able to do more than you could have done on your own?</i>	35%	23%	28%	15%
<b>All Questions</b>	<b>30%</b>	<b>22%</b>	<b>32%</b>	<b>17%</b>

However, a sizeable minority (approximately one-third) replied “not at all” to the questions about getting what they wanted and the fairness of the result. It should be noted, though, that the bulk of these were people whose legal issues could not be resolved within the constraints of the legal system or existing regulations, or who had expectations (particularly for direct representation by an attorney) that were outside the scope of the services that the Hotline provides.

The overwhelming majority of respondents felt they understood the legal system at least somewhat better, that they were able to make better decisions, and that they were able to do more than they could have accomplished on their own. The Hotline was perhaps most successful in helping clients feel that they had been listened to and that their concerns had been heard (question “e”) -- fully 70 percent replied “greatly” or “quite a bit” to this question.

**8. Most would use the Hotline again.** Finally, respondents were asked whether they would call the Hotline again. Seventy-six percent said “yes” – interestingly, including several of those who appeared to be most dissatisfied with the help they received and/or whose problems could not be resolved (due to legal constraints and/or the scope of services the Hotline provides) – while 20 percent said “maybe.” Only two respondents said they would definitely not call the Hotline again – both of them clients whose issues could not be resolved in the way they wanted.

**Exhibit 13: Outcomes, Continued**

**Q: Would you call the Hotline again?**

Response	Number of Respondents	Percent of Respondents
Yes	31	76%
Maybe	8	20%
No	2	5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>100%</b>

**9. Some useful suggestions for improving the Project came out of the survey.** Of those clients interviewed who had suggestions for ways in which the Hotline could be more helpful to them, a significant number (31 percent) mentioned wait time as their biggest issue (see Exhibit 14). A smaller number (15 percent) requested that staff take more time just to talk to them.

<b>Response</b>	<b>Number of Respondents</b>	<b>Percent of Respondents</b>
<i>Clearer and simpler directions</i>	1	4%
<i>Explain the process better</i>	2	8%
<i>Take more time just talking to me</i>	4	15%
<i>Make it clearer that I could return if things changed</i>	0	0%
<i>Make it so I didn't have to wait so long to get served</i>	8	31%
<i>Other</i>	11	42%
<b>Total</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Exhibit 14: Clients' Suggestions for Improving the Project**

Of the remainder, the most common requests were for actual direct representation by an attorney (perhaps suggesting that some potential referrals to legal aid programs are being missed, although it is also likely that in many cases these clients could not be referred because they did not meet the programs' eligibility criteria), for face-to-face (versus telephonic) assistance, and for help filling out forms.

**Summary.** Overall, from the client's perspective, it appears that ALLIP has achieved a high degree of client satisfaction among a population that does not always clearly differentiate between what results are possible within the law and the services that ALLIP is able to provide, and that the Project generally has a significant, positive impact on its clients' situations and ability to navigate the legal system successfully.

### **Protected from Domestic Violence**

A monolingual Chinese immigrant from Taiwan, Ms. C had been married to her husband for more than 13 years, and had endured her husband's physical and emotional abuse throughout the entire marriage. Her husband controlled her physically, mentally and financially. Knowing limited English, and with little formal education, Ms. C did not know of any alternatives except to stay in the abusive relationship. Ms. C learned of the ALLIP project at a battered women's shelter in San Gabriel Valley area of Los Angeles County, which has a large and growing Asian population. Ms. C contacted ALLIP and was pleased to find out that she could receive free legal services in her own language.

After receiving initial intake and counsel and advice from ALLIP, Ms. C's case was referred to one of ALLIP's partners, Neighborhood Legal Services. NLS accepted the referral and a Mandarin-speaking attorney was assigned to represent Ms. C in her legal problems. With the assistance from NLS, Ms. C and her two children left the abusive relationship and are staying in a safe place, free of domestic violence. She was also introduced to various resources available for battered immigrant women and domestic violence victims. NLS provided assistance with her CalWORKS benefits, and also represented her in the child support hearing, which her batterer fought vigorously to no avail. Currently, NLS is providing representation to Ms. C in her dissolution to ensure that she receives holistic free legal services that are free from language and cultural barriers.

## B. Partners' Perspective

Six staff members of the four partner organizations that represent clients referred by ALLIP were interviewed to explore their experience with the Project. These included the executive or deputy director and liaison person with ALLIP in two of the three legal aid programs -- Legal Aid Foundation of Los Angeles and Legal Aid Society of Orange County -- as well as staff attorneys at Asian Pacific American Legal Center, in whose office ALLIP is housed. The interviews were designed to explore both the positive features of ALLIP and potential improvements in its operation, as well the effectiveness of specific elements of the project such as referrals, training, outreach and collaboration.

### **Summary: Partners' Perspective**

*The follow-up interviews with partners found that:*

- ! The ALLIP project serves a valuable function.
- ! It is one piece of an expanding array of legal services for the Asian-language population in the greater Los Angeles area.
- ! ALLIP frees up partner attorneys to do more in-depth work.
- ! ALLIP fosters collaboration on the issues of serving this target population.
- ! Referrals from ALLIP are of high quality.
- ! Modest improvements in the project would make it even stronger.

**1. The ALLIP project serves a valuable function.** All the individuals interviewed agreed that ALLIP had met their expectations and had contributed significantly and positively to the capacity of the legal services system to serve Asian clients. Having a widely advertised, culturally and linguistically accessible telephone number that anyone in the targeted population can call and through which they can get into the legal services system was identified as a significantly important feature of the project. Another valuable function is that clients can call one central number without having to first figure out whose service area they are in. ALLIP had also served as a focal point for significant coordination of services to the Asian population by all the partner organizations.

It was also noted that ALLIP's outreach efforts reached portions of the targeted Chinese communities that might otherwise not have been served, for instance its effective engagement in Chinatown through which members of the Chinese community from throughout the Los Angeles metropolitan area seek services.

**2. It is one piece of a growing array of legal services for Asian clients.** The initial planning for ALLIP envisioned it serving as the central outreach and intake mechanism for the targeted populations from throughout Los Angeles and Orange Counties. In fact, the partner organizations have undertaken or expanded their own outreach efforts and two have significantly increased their bi-lingual capacity in the languages of the targeted populations. The result is that the project has been a part of a general increase in cultural and language capacity among the partner legal services providers as a whole. All the partner programs have developed their own outreach efforts and have established processes that offer intake and services in the language of the communities served. The Legal Aid Foundation of Los Angeles, for instance, has continued its own dedicated telephone intake to serve client clients in Mandarin, Cantonese, Korean, Tagalog and Khmer, and may soon add Japanese capacity.

While the resulting increase in the means through which members of the Chinese and Vietnamese communities can seek and obtain services differs from the original conception of ALLIP, the result appears to be a salutary one. ALLIP has been a part of and has contributed significantly to a heightened awareness among key providers of the needs of Asian communities for linguistically and culturally accessible legal services. The planning phase of the project, during which staff members from the partner agencies met regularly to discuss their services and how to coordinate them, was cited by the interviewees as an invaluable feature of the project that continues to bear fruit.

Because there are a number of means by which Asian clients can gain access to services from the partner agencies, the number of referrals from ALLIP to them for full legal representation has been somewhat limited. The number of referrals for the first ten months of the Project was 157 (or 14 percent of 1,148 intakes). Most of the clients from the targeted communities, as well as other Asian communities, come into the partner programs through their own outreach and intake.

A question which the partners will need to resolve in the future is the degree to which ALLIP should grow to be the principal avenue for access to the system as opposed to one of many. It is already clear, however, that ALLIP has been a part of, and has contributed significantly to, a general increase in culturally and linguistically sensitive capacity among legal services providers in the Los Angeles area.

**3. ALLIP can free up partner attorneys to do more in-depth work.** A staff attorney at the Asian Pacific American Legal Center (APALC), the program that houses ALLIP, indicated that the project has had the positive effect of relieving advocates of the need to provide advice and brief services, thereby freeing up their time for full representation. The Project was described by one staff attorney as "wonderful," and as having helped the lawyer "to flourish" as an advocate, by opening up much more time to represent clients in court.

**4. ALLIP fosters collaboration on the issues of serving this target population.** ALLIP was credited by its partners as having fostered significant collaboration among them. The process of meeting to plan the project, to coordinate services and develop "scripts" for interacting with clients was identified by one interviewee as a singular positive outcome of the project. Consistent with the grant's work plan, the Project jointly developed a training with its partners for the new staff of each organization. Project staff also participated in joint outreach efforts with each partner. The joint outreach efforts were deemed positive by the partners, although as noted they generally supplemented outreach efforts in which the partners engaged on their own.

The staff, and in particular the Project Director, was described as being flexible and responsive in working out differences and responding to needs that have arisen in working with the project's partners.

**5. Referrals from ALLIP are of high quality.** Although the number of referrals to partner agencies has not been large, those that were made were generally rated as being well prepared. The partner agencies report that they had to interview the client thoroughly again, but that the information reported by ALLIP provided an appropriate start to the representation.

Partners did report that, in spite of carefully scripted efforts to explain the nature of the referral to referred clients, some were unclear regarding the role of ALLIP and the partner organizations in their representation. Clients would sometimes follow up with ALLIP, rather than the program representing them, either because the client had not yet been contacted or actually reached by the referred partner or because the client had trouble reaching the partner and requested ALLIP's assistance.

**6. There is a need for continued collaboration among the partner organizations and ALLIP.** The ongoing interaction among the project's partners and the ongoing education of each other regarding their services to the targeted populations is a significant strength of the project. The partners agreed that, as each organization expands its capacity to serve all Asian populations, it will be important to continue to interact regularly to coordinate their services and convey a consistent message to the targeted communities.

## V. Recommendations

- 1. Reassessment and fine-tuning by the partners.** With project startup completed and a year of operation under its belt, ALLIP is in a good position to carry out a review with its partners regarding what the experience to date and the information produced in this evaluation reveal about how to best serve the low-income Asian community given the current capacity of the participating programs. Among questions that might be explored are:
  - a. Referrals.** What steps can be taken that might improve the perceived usefulness of referrals from the client's perspective? Are there specific points along the way from a client being told she is being referred to her intake by the second organization that could be made more user-friendly and/or effective? ALLIP and its partners potentially could seek the advice of other referral programs on this question.<sup>10</sup>
  - b. Follow-through by clients.** Are there things that can be done to reduce the percentage of clients who fail to follow through on the advice or information they are given? For example, are there ways of identifying clients who lack the self-confidence needed to proceed effectively on their own and providing those with additional brief services?<sup>11</sup>
  - c. Centralized versus multi-point outreach and intake.** What are the strengths and weaknesses of the multiple-point-of-intake system that has evolved for serving Asian-speaking people in the LA area, with each partner having its own community outreach? From perspectives of efficient and effective services to clients, does this work better than having ALLIP serve as the principal point of intake and advice and brief services, supported by the outreach of its Legal Aid partners?<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> For example, *Inland Counties Legal Services*, in Riverside California, improved the referral process of its Family Law Access Partnership Project, a court-based *pro per* project, by applying the results of a problem-solving session of the project partners after a self-evaluation indicated that client satisfaction with referrals was low.

<sup>11</sup> This issue is addressed in the report, cited earlier, of a recent evaluation of legal hotlines serving the elderly. See "Next Steps: Developing a Client Follow-up System," in "Statewide Senior Hotlines: Client Outcomes Survey 2002," *Legal Hotline Quarterly*, Spring 2003, page 5.

<sup>12</sup> By raising this question we are not implying we know what the answer should be. ALLIP and its partners are in the best position to review the pros and cons of the feasible approaches. One method of seeking client perspectives on this issue would be to carry out a client focus group process using the self-evaluation "Toolkit" being developed by the authors for the Equal Access Fund and the Legal Services Trust Fund Program.

2. **Continuation of client follow-up interviewing as an ongoing quality control and feedback system.**  
The 2002 evaluation provides baseline data on measures of client satisfaction and success in resolving clients' legal problems. Periodic client follow-up interviews, carried out on small, randomly-selected samples on a quarterly or semi-annual basis, could provide a valuable measure of whether or not adjustments such as those suggested above were effective for improving the Project's performance on these measures.

## **VI. Conclusion**

In its first year of operation, the Asian Language Legal Intake Project has achieved significant outcomes for clients and a good degree of client satisfaction with its services. It provides a valuable service for clients in addition to fostering collaboration among the legal aid providers in the greater Los Angeles area in addressing the challenges of serving this hard-to-reach population. The baseline data from this evaluation can serve as a set of benchmarks for taking the project's performance to even higher levels in the immediate future.