

# **Strategic Plan SFY 2014-2015**

Oklahoma Department of Human Services



## **Legal Services**



# GROWING in a NEW DIRECTION

## SFY 2014-2015 Strategy Map

### OUR MISSION

We improve the quality of life of vulnerable Oklahomans by increasing people's ability to lead safer, healthier, more independent and productive lives.

### OUR VISION

DHS provides help and offers hope to vulnerable Oklahomans through stronger practices, involved communities and a caring and engaged workforce.

### OUR VALUES

Compassion • Respect • Safety • Quality • Innovation



<p><b>Oklahomans lead safer, healthier, more independent and productive lives.</b></p> <p>We will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Reduce the incidence of abuse, neglect and exploitation in Oklahoma</li><li>• Reduce participation barriers for Oklahomans who are eligible to receive DHS services</li><li>• Improve the well-being of Oklahomans</li></ul>	<p><b>Our workforce is informed, supported and engaged.</b></p> <p>We will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Create and maintain a healthy work environment built on trust, respect and effective communication</li><li>• Increase our work-related skills and knowledge</li><li>• Provide opportunities to improve our physical, emotional and financial health</li></ul>	<p><b>We are engaged with communities to meet the needs of vulnerable Oklahomans.</b></p> <p>We will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Improve communications with community partners and key stakeholders</li><li>• Build and strengthen community partnerships to provide clients greater access to resources</li></ul>	<p><b>We have a culture of continuous improvement.</b></p> <p>We will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Increase the number of systematic process improvement projects, across the department, designed to improve and promote excellent service delivery and client satisfaction</li><li>• Maintain a culture of accountability, including fiscal integrity, at all levels of the department</li><li>• Increase the understanding and application of outcome-focused performance and evidence-based practices</li></ul>
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Figure 1. SFY 2014-2015 Strategy Map



## A Letter from the General Counsel

The unspoken expectation is DHS Legal Services will provide the Department of Human Services with consistent and competent representation at all times. Legal Services occupies a unique position within the Department as its team members are often called to the table to offer suggestions and solutions in matters ranging from individual welfare to topics of contract, finance and technology. This is a profound responsibility to shoulder. As a consequence, each member of the Legal Services team is expected to possess the knowledge, skills, thoroughness and preparation necessary to fulfill the role of advocate and advisor. By their very purpose, members of the Legal Services team must always demonstrate a willingness to improve at both an individual and office-wide level.

The Legal Services' Strategic Plan is a tool of self-improvement. It was developed to embody not only the office's expected function as legal advisor to the agency but also to recognize its concomitant role as advocate for the vulnerable citizens of this state. The Strategic Plan is a tool designed to focus our efforts and assist in creating an office that is consistently prompt, responsive and informative when offering advice and counsel both inside and outside the agency.

**Ron E. Baze**  
DHS  
General Counsel

The Oklahoma Rules of Professional Conduct, those principles that serve to guide Oklahoma's attorneys, call upon each and every lawyer within the Legal Services division to be competent, prompt and diligent in all professional functions. These ideals should be consistently embraced by every member of this office, and by adhering to these principles they will serve us well as we work to accomplish both our daily tasks and the objectives outlined in this Strategic Plan.

***OUTCOME 1: Oklahomans lead safer, healthier, more independent and productive lives.***

***Goal 1:*** We will reduce the incidence of abuse, neglect and exploitation in Oklahoma.

***Objective 1:*** Beginning July 2014, we will work to increase the knowledge of DHS personnel regarding available advice and counsel through Legal Services when staff learns that abuse, neglect or exploitation may be occurring.

**Action Plan:**

**Beginning July 2014,** we will help educate staff to recognize priority referrals.

**Beginning July 2014,** we will help educate staff to realize the legal obligations of reporting suspected abuse, neglect and exploitation.

**Beginning July 2014,** we will continually review online resource materials (e.g., frequently asked questions) for accuracy.

**Beginning July 2014,** we will identify and develop communication tools and processes.

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**Important Results:**

- The number of staff trained to recognize priority referrals
- The number of staff trained on the legal obligations of reporting suspected abuse, neglect and exploitation
- The number and percent of accurate online resource materials
- DHS staff report being more aware of the appropriate time to seek advice and counsel from Legal Services

## ***OUTCOME 1: Oklahomans lead safer, healthier, more independent and productive lives.***

***Goal 1:*** We will reduce the incidence of abuse, neglect and exploitation in Oklahoma.

***Objective 2:*** Beginning July 2014, we will facilitate efforts to conduct post-litigation, investigative analysis and use those findings to educate staff to recognize and address those initial circumstances that, if not addressed, may ultimately result in abuse, neglect or exploitation.

### **Action Plan:**

**Beginning July 2014,** we will actively engage attorneys and support staff in post-incident program related analysis to identify recurring themes.

**Beginning July 2014,** we will draft and adopt policies and practice tools to assist in post-incident analysis.

**By December 2014,** we will develop a plan to engage attorneys and support staff in problem solving to address recurring themes identified via post-incident analysis.

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### **Important Results:**

- Team members report active engagement in post-incident, program-related analysis
- The number of policies and practice tools drafted and adopted to assist in post-incident analysis
- Staff report improved identification of trends and opportunities for improvement regarding recognition of abuse, neglect or exploitation

***OUTCOME 1: Oklahomans lead safer, healthier, more independent and productive lives.***

***Goal 2:*** We will reduce participation barriers for Oklahomans who are eligible to receive DHS services.

***Objective 1:*** Beginning July 2014, we will strive to simplify, where possible, practices, procedures and documentation utilized in matters involving child support, benefits and benefit appeals, foster care, guardianships, protective services, child care, and permanency planning.

***Action Plan:***

**Beginning July 2014,** we will coordinate with appropriate DHS personnel to ensure online materials are compliant with applicable statutes, laws, rules and regulations.

**Beginning July 2014,** we will coordinate with appropriate DHS personnel to ensure pertinent documentation is presented to both DHS staff and the public in a readable and comprehensible format.

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***Important Results:***

- The number and percent of online materials found to be compliant with applicable statutes, laws, rules and regulations
- Team members report increased pertinent documentation presented in a readable and comprehensible format

***OUTCOME 1: Oklahomans lead safer, healthier, more independent and productive lives.***

***Goal 3:*** We will improve the well-being of Oklahomans.

***Objective 1:*** Beginning July 2014, we will strive to ensure procedures and practices pertaining to DHS systems and programs are readily available to members of the general public as a means of protecting the legal rights of Oklahomans as well as their health, welfare and safety.

***Action Plan:***

**Beginning July 2014,** we will coordinate with appropriate DHS personnel to ensure online materials are compliant with applicable statutes, laws, rules and regulations.

**Beginning July 2014,** we will assist in efforts to ensure online materials are kept current, readily available, and in easily understood format.

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***Important Results:***

- The number and percent of online materials found to be compliant with applicable statutes, laws, rules and regulations
- The number and percent of online materials reviewed and approved by Legal Services personnel

## ***OUTCOME 2: Our workforce is informed, supported and engaged.***

***Goal 1:*** We will create and maintain a healthy work environment built on trust, respect and effective communication.

***Objective 1:*** Beginning April 2014, we will be receptive to both concerns and suggestions from all Legal Services team members and encourage open communications among all co-workers.

### ***Action Plan:***

**Beginning April 2014,** we will adopt techniques intended to address an effective dialogue process among and between staff members in all contexts.

**Beginning April 2014,** through written materials, staff meetings, seminars and in-service training, staff will be educated on effective communication techniques.

**Beginning April 2014,** supervisors will work to recognize and celebrate personal and professional accomplishments of employees.

**Beginning August 2014,** the General Counsel will conduct quarterly in-person visits with Tulsa staff members.

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### ***Important Results:***

- The number of techniques adopted to address effective dialogue
- Staff report effective dialogue process in all contexts
- The number of staff trained on effective communication techniques
- The number of materials on effective communication techniques distributed to staff
- Staff report an increase in supervisors recognizing and celebrating employee personal and professional accomplishments



***OUTCOME 2: Our workforce is informed, supported and engaged.***

***Goal 1:*** We will create and maintain a healthy work environment built on trust, respect and effective communication.

***Objective 2:*** Beginning April 2014, every member of the Legal Services team will strive to be respectful and positive when providing feedback to, or receiving feedback from, a co-worker.

**Action Plan:**

**Beginning April 2014,** we will strive to recognize the importance of providing thoughtful, respectful and timely responses to co-worker inquiries and requests for input.

**Beginning April 2014,** we will always treat co-workers with respect and professionalism.

**Beginning April 2014,** we will actively seek out training opportunities focused on effective verbal and written communication techniques.

**By March 2015,** we will develop a staff feedback form or 360° assessment.

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**Important Results:**

- Team members report responses and requests for input are provided in a thoughtful, respectful and timely manner
- Team members report being treated with respect and professionalism
- The number of trainings conducted on effective verbal and written communication techniques

***OUTCOME 2: Our workforce is informed, supported and engaged.***

***Goal 2:*** We will increase our work-related skills and knowledge.

***Objective 1:*** Beginning June 2014, we will participate in cross-training to increase our knowledge of co-workers' duties, responsibilities and areas of practice.

***Action Plan:***

**Beginning June 2014,** we will encourage attorneys and support staff to volunteer for opportunities in cross-training.

**Beginning June 2014,** time will be set aside during every staff meeting for a staff member to conduct in-service training on a topic relevant to his or her area of practice.

**Beginning June 2014,** greater effort will be made to memorialize job tasks and responsibilities in writing.

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***Important Results:***

- Team members report increased participation in volunteer cross-training opportunities
- Team members report increased participation in cross-training opportunities
- The number of in-service trainings conducted at staff meetings
- The number of job tasks and responsibilities memorialized in writing
- Increased peer-to-peer sharing

***OUTCOME 2: Our workforce is informed, supported and engaged.***

***Goal 2:*** We will increase our work-related skills and knowledge.

***Objective 2:*** Beginning May 2014, we will increase staff knowledge of office operations.

***Action Plan:***

**Beginning May 2014,** we will utilize division-wide communications (e.g., emails, staff meetings) to disseminate practice tips expected to improve overall efficiency, tool proficiency (e.g., Microsoft Word, PowerPoint, Excel), and practice area knowledge.

**Beginning May 2014,** we will identify and disseminate best practices.

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***Important Results:***

- Team members report increased utilization of division-wide communication to improve overall efficiency, tool proficiency and practice area knowledge
- The number of best practices identified and disseminated
- The increased peer-to-peer sharing

## ***OUTCOME 2: Our workforce is informed, supported and engaged.***

***Goal 3:*** We will provide opportunities to improve our physical, emotional and financial health.

***Objective 1:*** Beginning May 2014, we will positively impact staff morale by improving cohesiveness at the division level and job satisfaction at the individual employee level.

### ***Action Plan:***

**Beginning April 2014,** Legal Services leadership will continue to advocate for salary increases for employees.

**Beginning April 2014,** we will encourage participation in the DHS Wellness Program and Employee Assistance Program (EAP).

**Beginning April 2014,** greater efforts will be undertaken to recognize the personal and professional accomplishments of co-workers.

**By December 2014,** we will implement an intern/extern program.

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### ***Important Results:***

- Team members report increased leadership advocacy for employee salary increases
- The number and percent of staff participation in DHS Wellness Program and Employee Assistance Program (EAP)
- Staff report increased employee recognition and celebration of co-workers' personal and professional accomplishments
- The number of interns or externs performing work on behalf of Legal Services

***OUTCOME 2: Our workforce is informed, supported and engaged.***

***Goal 3:*** We will provide opportunities to improve our physical, emotional and financial health.

***Objective 2:*** We will encourage and incentivize staff participation in exercise programs both during work breaks and outside the workplace beginning May 2014.

***Action Plan:***

**By June 2014,** we will establish an exercise committee to develop and implement an incentivized exercise program.

**By June 2014,** we will encourage individual employees to participate in daily physical and mental health improvement efforts.

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***Important Results:***

- Team members report increased exercise and participation in an exercise program
- Team members report feeling supported in wellness efforts

***OUTCOME 3: We are engaged with communities to meet the needs of vulnerable Oklahomans.***

***Goals 1 & 2:***

***1*** : We will improve communications with community partners and key stakeholders.

***2*** : We will build and strengthen community partnerships to provide clients with greater access to resources.

***Objective 1:*** Beginning July 2014, we will strive to increase public awareness of Legal Services' functions within DHS.

***Action Plan:***

**Beginning July 2014**, we will proactively seek inclusion in the DHS Speakers' Bureau in order to participate in external and internal speaking opportunities.

**Beginning September 2014**, we will partner with the Office of Communications to increase Legal Services' presence in the community.

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***Important Results:***

- The number of external and internal speaking opportunities completed

## ***OUTCOME 4: We have a culture of continuous improvement.***

***Goal 1:*** We will increase the number of systematic process improvement projects, across the department, designed to improve and promote excellent service delivery and client satisfaction.

***Objective 1:*** Beginning June 2014, we will improve inter-divisional communications with the intent of ensuring a sufficient understanding of the underlying facts, establishment of a reasonable timeframe in which to provide a response, and appropriate follow-up when necessary.

### **Action Plan:**

**Beginning June 2014,** we will strive to educate DHS personnel about the benefits of seeking pre-emptive legal advice and counsel.

**By November 2015,** through surveys and other feedback tools, we will actively seek input from stakeholders served.

**By November 2015,** we will establish a practice tool to ensure inquiries and requests for advice are provided with prompt and complete responses as well as an opportunity for follow-up dialogue.

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### **Important Results:**

- The number of surveys completed by stakeholders
- DHS staff report prompt and complete responses and follow-up to inquiries and requests
- The number of staff seeking pre-emptive legal advice and counsel

## ***OUTCOME 4: We have a culture of continuous improvement.***

***Goal 1:*** We will increase the number of systematic process improvement projects, across the department, designed to improve and promote excellent service delivery and client satisfaction.

***Objective 2:*** Beginning May 2014, we will improve office efficiency by identifying internal systems and processes which can be standardized and streamlined.

### **Action Plan:**

**Beginning May 2014,** we will conduct an informal, internal audit to identify systems and processes capable of improved efficiencies.

**Beginning September 2014,** we will partner with the Office of Business Quality to obtain process-improvement assistance.

**By December 2014,** we will establish a comprehensive docketing and document retention system to improve efficiency and accountability.

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### **Important Results:**

- The number of identified systems and processes capable of improved efficiencies
- The increased accountability of staff
- The number of staff trained at white belt and yellow belt Six Sigma training levels



***OUTCOME 4: We have a culture of continuous improvement.***

***Goal 2:*** We will maintain a culture of accountability, including fiscal integrity at all levels of the organization by July 2015.

***Objective 1:*** Beginning May 2014, we will maintain a cost-conscious approach to operations and strive to maintain a division-wide awareness of fiscal restraints that can impact the operations of a state agency.

**Action Plan:**

**Beginning May 2014,** we will keep staff better informed of fiscal and budgetary matters.

**Beginning May 2014,** we will strive to identify inefficiencies within legal services systems and bring them to the attention of supervisory personnel.

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**Important Results:**

- The number of fiscal and budgetary meetings attended
- The number of inefficiencies brought to the attention of supervisory personnel
- The percentage of time that the division and budget categories operate within budget
- Cost savings realized via process-improvement projects

## ***OUTCOME 4: We have a culture of continuous improvement.***

***Goal 3:*** We will increase the understanding and application of outcome-focused performance and evidence-based practices at all levels of the department.

***Objective 1:*** Beginning May 2014, we will improve internal monitoring of Legal Services performance and responsibilities.

### **Action Plan:**

**Beginning May 2014,** staff attorneys will draft weekly case reviews for review by the General Counsel.

**Beginning September 2014,** we will engage in post-incident analysis to identify better practices.

**Beginning September 2014,** we will more readily engage in peer reviews.

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### **Important Results:**

- The number of completed weekly case reviews
- The number of practices identified through post-incident analysis
- The number of post-incident analyses conducted
- The number of peer reviews conducted

## ***OUTCOME 4: We have a culture of continuous improvement.***

***Goal 3:*** We will increase the understanding and application of outcome-focused performance and evidence-based practices at all levels of the department.

***Objective 2:*** Beginning May 2014, we will embrace a willingness to consider and, when appropriate, adopt case management and office management improvement initiatives.

### ***Action Plan:***

**Beginning May 2014,** we will focus on identifying opportunities to streamline and/or improve legal services operations.

**Beginning September 2014,** we will document and memorialize legal services practices.

**By January 2015,** we will adopt an internal performance-auditing tool.

**By November 2015,** we will adopt an incentive program to reward those individuals who identify and implement performance improvement opportunities.

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### ***Important Results:***

- The number of opportunities to streamline legal services operations identified
- The number of incentives/rewards given for identifying and implementing performance-improvement opportunities
- The number of legal services practices documented and memorialized
- The number of performance audits completed



# Legal Services

