

Legal Aid Announces Program to Address Foreclosure Crisis

Portland, OR--- In response to the foreclosure crisis, Legal Aid Services of Oregon announces the Oregon Foreclosure Legal Assistance Project (“OFLAP”). OFLAP primarily helps low income Oregonians save their homes from foreclosures. According to an October 6, 2009, study by the Brennan Center for Justice, a substantial number of American homeowners live below the poverty level and do not have the benefit of legal counsel.¹

Under a contract with the State of Oregon Housing and Community Services Department, legal aid will be able to help clients navigate the complicated landscape of laws relating to mortgages and foreclosure.

Tom Matsuda, Executive Director of LASO, states, “Housing issues have always been a high priority for legal aid. Because of the mortgage crisis, we know there are more indigent individuals and families fighting to keep their homes and their families intact. Legal aid’s resources are stretched thin and we are struggling to keep up with the growing number of income-eligible clients. We are happy to partner with the State to help address the needs of low-income homeowners.”

According to Leslie Kay, Director of the Multnomah County Office of Legal Aid Services of Oregon, which houses OFLAP: “we hope to help clients save their home or at least understand their options when facing foreclosure.” David Koen, legal aid staff attorney whose practice focuses on foreclosure prevention, notes “Facing foreclosure is difficult for anyone. Low-income homeowners, who generally cannot afford legal representation, are at a tremendous disadvantage, and this partnership will provide access to legal assistance.”

At least through December 31, 2009, OFLAP can help homeowners only if they are first referred to legal aid by a qualified HUD certified housing counseling agency. The qualified agencies in Multnomah County are African American Alliance for Homeownership and Hacienda CDC. Hacienda CDC holds free foreclosure prevention information sessions every Wednesday, from 5:30 pm to 6:30 pm at Baltazar Ortiz Center, 6736 NE Killingsworth St. The program is offered in both Spanish and English. To register, call Luke Bonham, 503-961-6413.

Background information. Oregon’s legal aid programs provide free assistance to low-income Oregonians statewide. Legal aid representation is limited to high-priority needs: food, shelter, medical care, income maintenance and physical safety. About 40 percent of the cases are family law cases, usually helping victims of domestic violence. Oregon’s legal aid programs provide free legal assistance to over 20,000 clients each year. Thousands more are helped through legal aid’s pro se materials, self help programs and volunteer lawyer programs. With current funding, legal aid meets less than 20% of the civil legal needs of the poor and we count on help from the legal community.

For further information contact Sandra Hansberger, 503.295.8442

¹ Clark and Barron, *Foreclosures: A Crisis In Legal Representation*, Brennan Center for Justice at New York University School of Law (October 6, 2009) www.brennancenter.org