



NEWS RELEASE

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March 1, 2004

For Immediate Release

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5 County Centralized Phone System to Help Low Income Residents

Bay Area Legal Services, Inc., is proud to announce the implementation of its five-county centralized telephone screening and intake services for low-income residents of Hillsborough, Pasco, Pinellas, Manatee and Sarasota Counties. As part of a regionalization effort involving four other nonprofit providers of free civil legal services, Bay Area staffs a Legal Aid Line for eligible residents of the five-county area. After assessing their clients' problems and providing legal advice, Bay Area legal advocates refer clients who qualify for extended services within their organization, and to the other regional providers: Gulfcoast Legal Services (Pinellas, Manatee and Sarasota Counties); Legal Aid of Manasota (Manatee and Sarasota Counties); and the Community Law Program (South Pinellas County). Since the implementation of this system the waiting time for applicants screened through the Legal Aid Line Call Center has been reduced from 4-7 days, to 24 hours. Additionally, the Call Center has direct two-way access for Hillsborough County residents into the Hillsborough County 2-1-1 program, operated by the Crisis Center of Tampa Bay.

Bay Area Legal Services, Inc., is dedicated to providing quality civil legal services to individuals and nonprofit groups whose circumstances limit their access to legal assistance.