To: Self Represented Litigation Network

From: Richard Zorza

Re: Planning for Changes in the Working Groups

Date: April 17, 2007

I.   Introduction

The Working Groups of SRLN have been meeting for slightly under a year. During that time the groups have notched up some very significant achievements, from the Self Help Services *Directory* to the *Case For* Documents, from a wide variety of conference presentations, including at the Conference of Chief Justices, to the *Best Practices* Document, and from the establishment of the Mentoring Network to the planning for the National Conference and the National Judicial Conference.

All these activities have taught us a lot about the need for the work we do, the value of our collaborative approach, and also about the challenges of working with few resources to push a very broad envelope indeed.

At the Network Day at the Denver Equal Justice Conference, attended by about twenty of the most active members of the Network, we tentatively agreed that it was time to review the Working Group structure and refocus our energy in those areas where it was most likely the impact of our work would be greatest. Some changes are becoming necessary as we approach the moment when SJI funding for the core operations of the Network will no longer be available, and when both Richard and Madelynn's time will be more limited.

Below is an analysis and proposal.

II.   Analysis of Current Groups

Information and Outreach Group

This group has become the core engine of the Working Groups, and the focus on our conferences, our general training, and outreach materials. It is a large group, and its meetings have been well attended. The meetings are chaired and minutes written by Richard. There is a Librarians Subgroup and plans to create a Legal Services Subgroup.

This group should continue to play this role. It may well need to take on certain additional coordination roles, such as dealing with Funding and with System Change. It should be opened to members of the other groups, to ensure broader communication, and will therefore assume the role of the all-groups calls that occur periodically. Notices of this meeting should go to all Network members.

Research and Evaluation

This important group has been the coordination and information group for current research and for planning for future research. It has two subgroups that are planning research on compliance and on service of process. The main issue with this group is that there is significant variation in who attends which meeting, resulting in most of the lng term design being done in the small groups. The meetings are chaired, and the minutes written by John Greacen.

The current structure seems to be working well, with the larger group functioning as a news and outreach group on research issues, and the detailed work being done in the small groups.

Best Practices – Self Help Centers

This group coordinates the mentoring project and supports resources for Centers, including Best Practices and Case for materials. It is currently working on networking among attendees at the various conferences, on training and train the trainer programs for clerks, and on developing new insights into ethical issues for the staffs of self-help centers. The group is chaired and the minutes are written by Wayne Moore and Christina Llop.

This group should keep its current role, with Problem Assessment and Triage added to its agenda, since such work is basically done in the Centers.

Best Practices – Judicial Education

This group plays a major national role, both in supporting language in judicial ethics codes on SRL issues, an in judicial education on the topic. It has expanded to a larger group now planning the National Conference planned for the fall. It is chaired, and the minutes are written by Richard.

This group should keep its current role, with possible smaller groups working on specific training and outreach efforts.

Best Practices – Bar Role and Discrete Task Representation

This group now plays the national leadership role in training and information materials development and distribution on discrete task representation. It is chaired and the minutes written by Sue Talia.

This group should keep its current role.

Best Practices – Courtroom Services

This group has served as an information sharing and idea development group focused on services provided in the courtroom, or associated with actual appearances. The meetings are chaired and the minutes written by Deborah Chase.

This group should keep its current role.

Best Practices – Forms and Document Assembly

This group has been developing comprehensive materials on forms and document assembly, and planning a national train-the-trainer event on the subject. The meetings are chaired, and the minutes written by Glenn Rawdon.

This group should keep its current role.

Problem Assessment and Triage Group

This group has developed some significant materials on problem assessment and triage, an increased understanding in the access to justice community of the importance of the topic. However, it has been difficult to sustain energy around what remains for most a relatively abstract topic.

At the Denver SRLN Day, it was decided that our focus in this area should be on the use of technology to provide for consistent use of criteria in intake and assignment processes, ideally in cooperation between courts and legal aid. At least two TIG grant applications have been filed on this topic. There will need, therefore to be continued focus from the network on this area.

This group should therefore be merged into the Self Help Centers group, since the problem assessment and triage activities will actually occur at self help centers.

Compliance and Enforcement Group

The Compliance and Enforcement Group has never met. At the Denver SRLN day, it was agreed that in this area we should focus on the development of Best Practices. (There are some listed in the current Best Practices document, but the list needs to be expanded and fleshed out significantly.) There has also been significant discussion in the Research Group on this topic

It would be great if this activity could be coordinated from a new group, and potential members have been identified at the Denver meeting.

Funding Group

The Funding Group has conducted a survey of state resources being expended on SRL services, and has prepared a near final draft of a report on available federal funding resources. The group has also provided the environment for useful discussions of

strategic approaches to long term funding increases. The meeting has been chaired, and the minutes written by, Richard.

However, the group calls have not been a highly effective use of time, and it would appear that the group's responsibilities should be merged into those of the information and outreach group.

System Change Group

This group has met sporadically, and has moved forward with a number of projects to document collaboration and system delivery innovation, particularly in California, and in cooperation with Harvard Law School. In addition, many of the public presentations on SRL issues now include significant attention to system change.

However, these activities have developed a life of their own, and are independently managed. This group should be merged into the Information and Outreach Group.

III.   Proposed Group Configuration

This is a possible configuration, reducing the Network down to eight primary groups, with the chair of each group also listed.

- Information and Outreach Group (Including Funding and System Change and open to all for communication purposes) (Richard Zorza)

- Research Group (and subgroups) (John Greacen)

- Best Practices – Self Help Centers (Including Problem Assessment/Triage) (Wayne Moore)

- Best Practices – Judicial Education (Richard Zorza)

- Best Practices – Bar and Discrete Task Representation (Sue Talia)

- Best Practices – Forms and Document Assembly (Glenn Rawdon)

- Best Practices – Courtroom Services (Deborah Chase)

- Best Practices – Compliance and Enforcement (Chair To be Found)