

## Legal Services Corporation

## § 1606.2

(b) Give appropriate consideration to priorities in resource allocation adopted by the governing body, or required by the Act, or Regulations of the Corporation; but

(c) Shall not interfere with the professional responsibilities of an attorney to a client.

### PART 1606—TERMINATION, LIMITED REDUCTION OF FUNDING, AND DEBARMENT PROCEDURES; RE-COMPETITION

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AUTHORITY: 42 U.S.C. 2996e(b)(1), 2996f(a)(3), and 2996f(d); Pub. L. 105-119, Title V, Secs. 501(b) and (c), 502, 503, and 504, 111 Stat. 2440, 2510-12; Pub. L. 104-134, Title V, Sec. 503(f), 110 Stat. 1321, 1321-53.

SOURCE: 78 FR 10093, Feb. 13, 2013, unless otherwise noted.

#### § 1606.1 Purpose.

The purpose of this rule is to:

(a) Ensure that the Corporation is able to take timely action to deal with incidents of substantial noncompliance by recipients with a provision of the LSC Act, the Corporation's appropriations act or other law applicable to LSC funds, a Corporation rule, regulation, guideline or instruction, or the terms and conditions of the recipient's grant or contract with the Corporation;

(b) Provide timely and fair due process procedures, proportional to the pro-

posed action, when the Corporation has made a preliminary decision to terminate a recipient's LSC grant or contract, to debar a recipient from receiving future LSC awards of financial assistance, or to impose a limited reduction in funding; and

(c) Ensure that scarce funds are provided to recipients who can provide the most effective and economical legal assistance to eligible clients.

(d) None of the following actions are subject to the procedures or requirements of this part:

(1) A reduction of funding required by law, including but not limited to a reduction in, or rescission of, the Corporation's appropriation that is apportioned among all recipients of the same class in proportion to their current level of funding;

(2) A reduction or deduction of LSC support for a recipient under the Corporation's fund balance regulation at 45 CFR part 1628;

(3) A recovery of disallowed costs under the Corporation's regulation on costs standards and procedures at 45 CFR part 1630;

(4) A withholding of funds pursuant to the Corporation's Private Attorney Involvement rule at 45 CFR part 1614.

#### § 1606.2 Definitions.

For the purposes of this part:

*Corporation*, when used to refer to decisions by the Legal Services Corporation, means that those decisions are made by an individual acting with a seniority level at, or equivalent to, the level of an office director or higher.

*Days* shall mean the number of calendar days as determined by the rules for computing time in the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure, Rule 6, except that computation of *business days* shall exclude Saturdays, Sundays, and legal holidays (as defined in those rules).

*Debarment* means an action taken by the Corporation to exclude a recipient from receiving an additional award of financial assistance from the Corporation or from receiving additional LSC funds from another recipient of the Corporation pursuant to any other means, including a subgrant, subcontract or similar agreement, for the period of time stated in the final debarment decision.

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*Funding term* means the maximum time period for an award or awards of financial assistance under section 1006(a)(1)(A) of the LSC Act provided by the Corporation to a recipient selected pursuant to the competition requirements at 45 CFR part 1634. LSC may award grants or contracts for a period of the entire funding term or for shorter periods that may be renewed or extended up to the funding term.

*Knowing and willful* means that the recipient had actual knowledge that its action or lack thereof constituted a violation and despite such knowledge, undertook or failed to undertake the action, as the case may be.

*Limited reduction of funding* means a reduction of funding of less than five percent of a recipient's current level of financial assistance imposed by the Corporation in accordance with the procedures and requirements of this part. A limited reduction of funding will affect only the recipient's current year's funding.

*LSC requirements* means the same as that term is defined in 45 CFR Part 1618.

*Receipt* of materials shall mean that the materials were sent to the normal address for physical mail, email, or fax transmission, and there is reliable secondary confirmation of delivery. For physical delivery, confirmation may be provided through tracking information from the delivery service. For other forms of delivery, confirmation may be provided through a document such as a confirmation email or a fax sent from an authorized person at the recipient. Receipt of materials by the LSC recipient or the Corporation is sufficient for the running of applicable time periods. Proof of receipt by the Chair of the governing body is not necessary unless delivery to the recipient itself cannot be reasonably accomplished.

*Recipient* means the same as the term is defined in 45 CFR Part 1600.

*Substantial noncompliance* means either a substantial violation, as defined in this part, or a substantial failure, as indicated at § 1606.3(a) of this part.

*Substantial violation* means a violation that merits action under this part based on consideration of the following criteria by the Corporation:

(1) The number of restrictions or requirements violated;

(2) Whether the violation represents an instance of noncompliance with a substantive statutory or regulatory restriction or requirement, rather than an instance of noncompliance with a non-substantive technical or procedural requirement;

(3) The extent to which the violation is part of a pattern of noncompliance with LSC requirements or restrictions;

(4) The extent to which the recipient failed to take action to cure the violation when it became aware of the violation; and

(5) Whether the violation was knowing and willful.

*Termination* means that a recipient's level of financial assistance under its grant or contract with the Corporation will be reduced in whole or in part in the amount of five percent or greater prior to the expiration of the funding term of a recipient's current grant or contract. A partial termination will affect only the level of funding for the current grant year, unless the Corporation provides otherwise in the final decision.

*Violation* means a violation by the recipient of the LSC requirements.

#### § 1606.3 Grounds for a termination or a limited reduction of funding.

(a) A grant or contract may be terminated in whole or in part when:

(1) There has been a substantial violation by the recipient, and the violation occurred less than 5 years prior to the date the recipient receives a preliminary determination pursuant to § 1606.6(a) of this part; or

(2) There has been a substantial failure by the recipient to provide high quality, economical, and effective legal assistance, as measured by generally accepted professional standards, the provisions of the LSC Act or LSC appropriations, or a rule, regulation, including 45 CFR 1634.9(a)(2), or guidelines or instructions issued by the Corporation.

(b) The Corporation may impose a limited reduction of funding when the Corporation determines that there has been a substantial violation by the recipient but that termination of the recipient's grant, in whole or in part, is

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not warranted, and the violation occurred less than 5 years prior to the date the recipient receives a preliminary determination pursuant to §1606.6(a) of this part.

(c) A determination of whether there has been a substantial violation for the purposes of this part, and the magnitude of any termination, in whole or in part, or any limited reduction in funding, shall be based on consideration of the criteria set forth in the definition of “substantial violation” in §1606.2 of this part.

### § 1606.4 Grounds for debarment.

(a) The Corporation may debar a recipient, on a showing of good cause, from receiving an additional award of financial assistance from the Corporation.

(b) As used in paragraph (a) of this section, “good cause” means:

(1) A termination of financial assistance to the recipient pursuant to part 1640 of this chapter;

(2) A termination of financial assistance in whole of the most recent grant or contract of financial assistance;

(3) The substantial violation by the recipient of the restrictions delineated in §1610.2(a) and (b) of this chapter, provided that the violation occurred within 5 years prior to the receipt of the debarment notice by the recipient;

(4) Knowing entry by the recipient into:

(i) Any agreement or arrangement, including, but not limited to, a subgrant, subcontract, or other similar agreement, with an entity debarred by the Corporation during the period of debarment if so precluded by the terms of the debarment; or

(ii) An agreement for professional services with an independent public accountant or other auditor debarred by the Corporation during the period of debarment if so precluded by the terms of the debarment; or

(5) The filing of a lawsuit by a recipient, provided that the lawsuit:

(i) Was filed on behalf of the recipient as plaintiff, rather than on behalf of a client of the recipient;

(ii) Named the Corporation, or any agency or employee of a Federal, State, or local government as a defendant;

(iii) Seeks judicial review of an action by the Corporation or such government agency that affects the recipient’s status as a recipient of Federal funding, except for a lawsuit that seeks review of whether the Corporation or agency acted outside of its statutory authority or violated the recipient’s constitutional rights; and

(iv) Was initiated after December 23, 1998.

### § 1606.5 Procedures.

(a) Before any final action is taken under this part, the recipient will be provided notice and an opportunity to be heard as set out in this part.

(b) Prior to a preliminary determination involving a limited reduction of funding, the Corporation shall designate either the President or another senior Corporation employee to conduct any final review that is requested pursuant to §1606.10 of this part. The Corporation shall ensure that the person so designated has had no prior involvement in the proceedings under this part so as to meet the criterion set out in §1606.10(d) of this part.

### § 1606.6 Preliminary determination and final decision.

(a) When the Corporation has made a preliminary determination of one or more of the following, the Corporation shall issue a written notice to the recipient and the Chair of the recipient’s governing body: that a recipient’s grant or contract should be terminated, that a limited reduction of funding shall be imposed, or that a recipient should be debarred. The notice shall:

(1) State the substantial noncompliance that constitutes the grounds for the proposed action;

(2) Identify, with reasonable specificity, any facts or documents relied upon as justification for the proposed action;

(3) Inform the recipient of the proposed amount and proposed effective date for the proposed action;

(4) Advise the recipient of its procedural rights for review of the proposed action under this part;

(5) Inform the recipient of its right to receive interim funding pursuant to §1606.13 of this part;

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(6) Specify what, if any, corrective action the recipient can take to avoid the proposed action; and

(7) Summarize prior attempts, if any, for resolution of the substantial non-compliance.

(b) If the recipient does not request review, as provided for in this part, before the relevant time limits have expired, then the Corporation may issue a final decision to the recipient. No further appeal or review will be available under this part.

### **§ 1606.7 Corrective action, informal conference, review of written materials, and final decision.**

(a) If the Corporation proposes a corrective action in the preliminary determination pursuant to §1606.6(a)(6) of this part, then the recipient may accept and implement the corrective action, in lieu of an informal conference or submission of written materials under this section, subject to the following requirements:

(1) Within 10 business days of receipt of the preliminary determination, the recipient may submit a draft compliance agreement to accept the terms of the proposed corrective action, which must include an implementation plan and timeline;

(2) If the Corporation approves the draft compliance agreement, including any modifications suggested by the recipient or the Corporation, then it shall be memorialized in a final compliance agreement signed by the Corporation and the recipient, which shall stay these proceedings;

(3) If the recipient completes the terms of the written compliance agreement in a time and manner that is satisfactory to the Corporation, then the Corporation shall withdraw the preliminary determination; and

(4) If the Corporation determines at any time that the recipient has not presented an acceptable draft compliance agreement, or has not fulfilled any terms of the final compliance agreement, then the Corporation shall notify the recipient in writing. Within 15 calendar days of that notice, the Corporation shall modify or affirm the preliminary determination as a draft final decision. The draft final decision shall summarize these attempts at res-

olution. The draft final decision need not engage in a detailed analysis of the failure to resolve the substantial non-compliance.

(b) A recipient may submit written materials in opposition to the preliminary determination, request an informal conference, or both, as follows:

(1) For terminations or debarments, within 30 calendar days of receipt of the preliminary determination; or

(2) For limited reductions in funding, within 10 business days of receipt of the preliminary determination.

(c) Within 5 business days of receipt of a request for a conference, the Corporation shall notify the recipient of the time and place the conference will be held. Some or all of the participants in the conference may attend via telephone, unless the recipient requests an in-person meeting between the Corporation and at least one representative of the recipient. If the recipient requests an in-person meeting, then other participants may attend via telephone. Alternative means of participation other than the telephone are permissible at the sole discretion of the Corporation.

(d) The informal conference shall be conducted by the Corporation employee who issued the preliminary determination or any other Corporation employee with a seniority level equivalent to the level of an office director or higher.

(e) At the informal conference, the Corporation and the recipient shall both have an opportunity to state their case, seek to narrow the issues, explore the possibilities of settlement or compromise including implementation of corrective actions, and submit written materials.

(f) If an informal conference is conducted or written materials are submitted in opposition to the proposed determination by the recipient, or both, the Corporation shall consider any written materials and any oral presentation or written materials submitted by the recipient at an informal conference. Based on any of these materials or the informal conference, or both, the Corporation shall modify, withdraw, or affirm the preliminary determination through a draft final decision in writing, which shall be provided

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to the recipient within the later of 15 calendar days after the conclusion of the informal conference or after the recipient of written materials in opposition to the proposed determination (when no informal conference is requested). Except for decisions to withdraw the preliminary determination, the draft final decision shall include a summary of the issues raised in the informal conference and presented in any written materials. The draft final decision need not engage in a detailed analysis of all issues raised.

(g) If the recipient does not request further process, as provided for in this part, then, after the relevant time limits have expired, the Corporation shall notify the recipient that no further appeal or review will be available under this part and may proceed to issue the final decision.

### **§ 1606.8 Hearing for a termination or debarment.**

(a) For terminations or debarments only, the recipient may make a written request for a hearing within the later of: 30 calendar days of its receipt of the preliminary determination, or 15 calendar days of receipt of the draft final decision issued under §1606.7 of this part, as the case may be.

(b) Within 10 business days after receipt of a request for a hearing, the Corporation shall notify the recipient in writing of the date, time, and place of the hearing and the names of the hearing officer and of the attorney who will represent the Corporation. The time, date, and location of the hearing may be changed upon agreement of the Corporation and the recipient.

(c) A hearing officer shall be appointed by the President or designee and may be an employee of the Corporation. The hearing officer shall not have been involved in the current termination or debarment action, and the President or designee shall determine that the person is qualified to preside over the hearing as an impartial decision maker. An impartial decision maker is a person who has not formed a prejudgment on the case and does not have a pecuniary interest or personal bias in the outcome of the proceeding.

(d) The hearing shall be scheduled to commence at the earliest appropriate

date, ordinarily not later than 30 calendar days after the Corporation receives the notice required by paragraph (b) of this section.

(e) The hearing officer shall preside over and conduct a full and fair hearing, avoid delay, maintain order, and insure that a record sufficient for full disclosure of the facts and issues is maintained.

(f) The hearing shall be open to the public unless, for good cause and the interests of justice, the hearing officer determines otherwise.

(g) The Corporation and the recipient shall be entitled to be represented by counsel or by another person.

(h) At the hearing, the Corporation and the recipient each may present its case by oral or documentary evidence, conduct examination and cross-examination of witnesses, examine any documents submitted, and submit rebuttal evidence.

(i) The hearing officer shall not be bound by the technical rules of evidence and may make any procedural or evidentiary ruling that may help to insure full disclosure of the facts, to maintain order, or to avoid delay. Irrelevant, immaterial, repetitious or unduly prejudicial matter may be excluded.

(j) Official notice may be taken of published policies, rules, regulations, guidelines, and instructions of the Corporation, of any matter of which judicial notice may be taken in a Federal court, or of any other matter whose existence, authenticity, or accuracy is not open to serious question.

(k) A stenographic or electronic record shall be made in a manner determined by the hearing officer, and a copy shall be made available to the recipient at no cost.

(l) The Corporation shall have the initial burden to show grounds for a termination or debarment. The burden of persuasion shall then shift to the recipient to show by a preponderance of evidence on the record that its funds should not be terminated or that it should not be debarred.

### **§ 1606.9 Recommended decision for a termination or debarment.**

(a) For termination or debarment hearings under §1606.8 of this part,

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within 20 calendar days after the conclusion of the hearing, the hearing officer shall issue a written recommended decision to the recipient and the Corporation, which may:

(1) Terminate financial assistance to the recipient commencing as of a specific date;

(2) Impose a limited reduction of funding commencing as of a specific date;

(3) Continue the recipient's current level of financial assistance under the grant or contract, subject to any modification or condition that may be deemed necessary on the basis of information adduced at the hearing; or

(4) Debar the recipient from receiving an additional award of financial assistance from the Corporation.

(b) The recommended decision shall contain findings of the significant and relevant facts and shall state the reasons for the decision. Findings of fact shall be based solely on the record of, and the evidence adduced at the hearing or on matters of which official notice was taken.

### **§ 1606.10 Final decision for a termination, debarment, or limited reduction of funding.**

(a) If neither the Corporation nor the recipient requests review by the President of a draft final decision pursuant to § 1606.7 of this part or a recommended decision pursuant to § 1606.9, as provided for in this part, within 10 business days after receipt by the recipient, then the Corporation shall issue to the recipient a final decision containing either the draft final decision or the recommended decision, as the case may be. No further appeal or review will be available under this part.

(b) The recipient or the Corporation may seek review by the President of a draft final decision or a recommended decision. A request shall be made in writing within 10 business days after receipt of the draft final decision or recommended decision by the party seeking review and shall state in detail the reasons for seeking review.

(c) The President's review shall be based solely on the administrative record of the proceedings, including the appeal to the President, and any addi-

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tional submissions, either oral or in writing, that the President may request. A recipient shall be given a copy of, and an opportunity to respond to, any additional submissions made to the President. All submissions and responses made to the President shall become part of the administrative record. Upon request, the Corporation shall provide a copy of the administrative record to the recipient.

(d) For an appeal of a draft final decision involving a limited reduction of funding pursuant to § 1606.7 of this part (for which there is no right to a hearing under § 1606.8 of this part) the President may not review the appeal if the President has had prior involvement in the proceedings under this part. If the President cannot review the appeal, or the President chooses not to do so, then the appeal shall be reviewed by either the individual designated to do so pursuant to § 1606.5(b) of this part, or by another senior Corporation employee designated by the President who has not had prior involvement in the proceedings under this part.

(e) As soon as practicable after receipt of the request for review of a draft final decision or a recommended decision, but not later than 30 calendar days thereafter, the President or designee shall adopt, modify, or reverse the draft final decision or the recommended decision, or direct further consideration of the matter. In the event of modification or reversal of a recommended decision pursuant to § 1606.9 of this part, this decision shall conform to the requirements of § 1606.9(b) of this part.

(f) The decision of the President or designee under this section shall become final upon receipt by the recipient.

### **§ 1606.11 Qualifications on hearing procedures.**

(a) Except as modified by paragraph (c) of this section, the hearing rights set out in §§ 1606.6 through 1606.10 of this part shall apply to any action to debar a recipient or to terminate a recipient's funding.

(b) The Corporation may simultaneously take action to debar and terminate a recipient within the same

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hearing procedure that is set out in §§1606.6 through 1606.10 of this part. In such a case, the same hearing officer shall oversee both the termination and debarment actions in the same hearing.

(c) If the Corporation does not simultaneously take action to debar and terminate a recipient under paragraph (b) of this section and initiates a debarment action based on a prior termination under §1606.4(b)(1) or (2), the hearing procedures set out in §1606.6 through 1606.10 of this part shall not apply. Instead:

(1) The President shall appoint a hearing officer, as described in §1606.8(c), to review the matter and make a written recommended decision on debarment.

(2) The hearing officer's recommended decision shall be based solely on the information in the administrative record of the termination proceedings providing grounds for the debarment and any additional submissions, either oral or in writing, that the hearing officer may request. The recipient shall be given a copy of and an opportunity to respond to any additional submissions made to the hearing officer. All submissions and responses made to the hearing officer shall become part of the administrative record.

(3) If neither party appeals the hearing officer's recommended decision within 10 business days of receipt of the recommended decision, the decision shall become final and the final decision shall be issued by the Corporation to the recipient within 5 business days.

(4) Either party may appeal the recommended decision to the President who shall review the matter and issue a final written decision pursuant to §1606.9(b).

(d) All final debarment decisions shall state the effective date of the debarment and the period of debarment, which shall be commensurate with the seriousness of the cause for debarment but shall not be for longer than 6 years.

(e) The Corporation may reverse a debarment decision upon request for the following reasons:

(1) Newly discovered material evidence;

(2) Reversal of the conviction or civil judgment upon which the debarment was based;

(3) Bona fide change in ownership or management of a recipient;

(4) Elimination of other causes for which the debarment was imposed; or

(5) Other reasons the Corporation deems appropriate.

### § 1606.12 Time and waiver.

(a) Except for the 6-year time limit for debarments in §1606.11(d) of this part, any period of time provided in these rules may, upon good cause shown and determined, be extended in writing:

(1) By the Corporation, unless a hearing officer has been appointed;

(2) By the hearing officer, until the recommended decision has been issued; or

(3) By the President at any time.

(b) Failure by the Corporation to meet a time requirement of this part does not preclude the Corporation from terminating a recipient's grant or contract with the Corporation or imposing a limited reduction of funding.

### § 1606.13 Interim and other funding, reprogramming, implementation.

(a) Pending the completion of termination or limited reduction of funding proceedings under this part, the Corporation shall provide the recipient with the level of financial assistance provided for under its current grant or contract for financial assistance with the Corporation.

(b) After a final decision has been made to terminate a recipient's grant or contract or to impose a limited reduction of funding, the recipient loses all rights to the terminated or reduced funds.

(c) After a final decision has been made to terminate a recipient's grant or contract, the Corporation may authorize closeout or transition funding, or both, if necessary to enable the recipient to close or transfer current matters in a manner consistent with the recipient's professional responsibilities to its present clients.

(d) The Corporation has sole discretion to determine the manner in which the final decision is implemented. The Corporation's discretion includes, but

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is not limited to the decision to prorate the amount of funds reduced over the remaining disbursements in the funding term or deduct the sum in a single disbursement, or any other method the Corporation deems appropriate.

(e) Funds recovered by the Corporation pursuant to a termination or limited reduction of funding shall be reallocated by the Corporation for basic field purposes at its sole discretion.

**§ 1606.14 Recompensation.**

After a final decision has been issued by the Corporation terminating financial assistance to a recipient in whole for any service area, the Corporation shall implement a new competitive bidding process for the affected service area. Until a new recipient has been awarded a grant pursuant to such process, the Corporation shall take all practical steps to ensure the continued provision of legal assistance in the service area pursuant to § 1634.11 of this part.

**PART 1607—GOVERNING BODIES**

Sec.

- 1607.1 Purpose.
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AUTHORITY: 42 U.S.C. 2996g(e).

SOURCE: 59 FR 65254, Dec. 19, 1994, unless otherwise noted.

**§ 1607.1 Purpose.**

This part is designed to insure that the governing body of a recipient will be well qualified to guide a recipient in its efforts to provide high-quality legal assistance to those who otherwise would be unable to obtain adequate legal counsel and to insure that the recipient is accountable to its clients.

**§ 1607.2 Definitions.**

As used in this part,

(a) *Attorney member* means a board member who is an attorney admitted to practice in a State within the recipient's service area.

(b) *Board member* means a member of a recipient's governing body or policy body.

(c) *Eligible client member* means a board member who is financially eligible to receive legal assistance under the Act and part 1611 of this chapter, without regard to whether the person actually has received or is receiving legal assistance at that time. Eligibility of client members must be determined by the recipient or, if the recipient so chooses, by the nominating organization(s) or group(s) in accordance with written policies adopted by the recipient.

(d) *Governing body* means the board of directors or other body with authority to govern the activities of a recipient receiving funds under § 1006(a)(1)(A) of the Act.

(e) *Policy body* means a policy board or other body established by a recipient to formulate and enforce policy with respect to the services provided under a grant or contract made under the Act.

(f) *Recipient* means any grantee or contractor receiving financial assistance from the Corporation under § 1006(a)(1)(A) of the Act.

[59 FR 65254, Dec. 19, 1994, as amended at 84 FR 1407, Feb. 4, 2019]

**§ 1607.3 Composition.**

(a) A recipient shall be incorporated in a State in which it provides legal assistance and shall have a governing body which reasonably reflects the interests of the eligible clients in the area served and which consists of members, each of whom is supportive of the purposes of the Act and has an interest in, and knowledge of, the delivery of quality legal services to the poor.

(b) At least sixty percent (60%) of a governing body shall be attorney members.

(1) A majority of the members of the governing body shall be attorney members appointed by the governing body(ies) of one or more State, county or municipal bar associations, the membership of which represents a majority of attorneys practicing law in the localities in which the recipient provides legal assistance.

(i) Appointments may be made either by the bar association which represents