

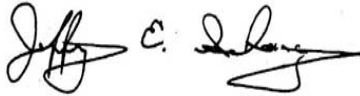


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Legal Services Corporation

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FRAUD CORNER

TO: LSC Grantee Executive Directors, Board Chairs and Chief Fiscal Officers

FROM: Jeffrey E. Schanz
Inspector General 

DATE: June 14, 2021

SUBJECT: Retainer Fee Fraud Scheme

The Office of Inspector General (OIG) for the Legal Services Corporation (LSC) is informing you of a recent scam, attempting to obtain \$3500 from a grantee client as a “retainer fee.”

The client received a letter in the mail, purportedly from the grantee. The letter contained the grantee’s logo at the top and instructed the client to remit payment to the grantee at a P.O. Box that is not affiliated with the organization. The client’s name, address, and case number were included within the letter. The grantee believes the client information was gained through media exposure for the case, as well as through information that is publicly available.

The client contacted the program attorney assigned to her case, who informed her that the program does not charge for legal services. The attorney immediately informed the program Executive Director, the state’s Attorney General’s Office, and the local police department. The grantee informed the LSC OIG in accordance with LSC grant condition #16.

The OIG believes that the LSC community is at risk of being targeted by similar schemes. We ask that LSC grantees consider placing a warning on the landing page of their websites. The warning should clearly state that the grantee provides free civil legal assistance to low-income individuals and does not charge their clients for legal services.

The OIG asks that this information be shared with all program staff. We encourage anyone who is made aware of a letter or other communication purporting to be from your program seeking a retainer fee or other payment for legal services to contact the OIG, your grantee office, and your state Attorney General’s Office.

If you have any questions or would like additional information about this scheme, please contact Daniel O'Rourke, Assistant Inspector General for Investigations for the LSC OIG, at (202) 295-1651 or by email at dorourke@oig.lsc.gov.