

4-1981

## Analysis of Legal Aid Society Survey

Murray Frost  
*University of Nebraska at Omaha*

Joan V. Holley  
*University of Nebraska at Omaha*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.unomaha.edu/cparpubarchives>

 Part of the [Demography, Population, and Ecology Commons](#), and the [Public Affairs Commons](#)

Please take our feedback survey at: [https://unomaha.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_8cchtFmpDyGfBLE](https://unomaha.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_8cchtFmpDyGfBLE)

---

### Recommended Citation

Frost, Murray and Holley, Joan V., "Analysis of Legal Aid Society Survey" (1981). *Publications Archives, 1963-2000*. 138.

<https://digitalcommons.unomaha.edu/cparpubarchives/138>

This Report is brought to you for free and open access by the Center for Public Affairs Research at DigitalCommons@UNO. It has been accepted for inclusion in Publications Archives, 1963-2000 by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@UNO. For more information, please contact [unodigitalcommons@unomaha.edu](mailto:unodigitalcommons@unomaha.edu).

ANALYSIS OF LEGAL AID SOCIETY SURVEY

by

Murray Frost

and

Joan Holley



Center for Applied Urban Research  
University of Nebraska at Omaha  
Omaha, Nebraska 68182



The University of Nebraska—An Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action Educational Institution

April, 1981

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This study was conducted by staff members of the Center for Applied Urban Research and the Legal Aid Society.

At CAUR the data were processed by Michael Eskey and Jason Chen. Paul S.T. Lee developed the sampling procedure, and Bob Greiner, a student assistant, identified the sample for the study. Jack Ruff and Peggy Hein served as consultants during the questionnaire development phase of the project. The copy was edited by Marian Meier and typed by Joyce Carson and Fern Himberger.

The field work was done by the following Legal Aid staff members: Glen Baity, Larry Spain, Jeanne Singles, Linda Minard, Mary Clarkson, Connie Sosinski, Alberta Epperson, Velma Russell, Debbie Brockman, Mary Green, Sharon Hawkins, Bill Monahan, Betty Dawson, Dorothy Eure, Gary Fischer, Vard Johnson, Ida Jones, Mike Kammerer, Timothy O'Roark, and Diane Metz. Connie Sosinski also assisted with the sample identification process.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	i
LIST OF TABLES.....	iii
INTRODUCTION.....	1
Purpose of the Study.....	1
Study Design and Execution.....	2
FINDINGS OF THE STUDY.....	3
General Neighborhood Problems.....	3
Problems of Persons in the Neighborhood.....	4
Personal Problems.....	4
City Services.....	6
Health Care.....	7
Employment Problems.....	8
Housing Problems.....	9
Consumer Problems.....	11
Family Problems.....	11
Problems with Social Security.....	13
AFDC Related Problems.....	13
Legal Problems.....	14
SUMMARY.....	17
APPENDIX.....	19

LIST OF TABLES

TABLE		PAGE
1	General Neighborhood Problems.....	3
2	Problems of Persons in the Neighborhood.....	4
3	Most Serious Personal Problems.....	5
4	Seriousness of the Listed Problems.....	6
5	Quality of City Services.....	7
6	Frequency of Illness and Use of Medical Services.....	7
7	Usual Method of Payment for Medical Services.....	8
8	Health Service Problems.....	8
9	Employment Problems.....	9
10	Problems of Renters.....	10
11	Problems of Homeowners.....	10
12	Consumer Problems.....	11
13	Problems Related to Divorce.....	12
14	School Related Problems.....	12
15	Social Security Related Problems.....	13
16	AFDC Related Problems.....	13
17	Legal Problems in the Last Year.....	14
18	Sources of Legal Advice.....	15
19	Use of Legal Aid.....	16
20	Suggested Legal Aid Improvements.....	16

## INTRODUCTION

### Purpose of the Study

The Center for Applied Urban Research at the University of Nebraska at Omaha (CAUR) was contacted in the summer of 1980 by the Legal Aid Society of Omaha about the possibilities of obtaining assistance with a research project. In an initial letter, the director of Legal Aid stated the purpose of the proposed project:

Our goal in conducting the survey is to obtain as much information as possible to determine the most pressing problems facing poor people in our community.

This information was needed by Legal Aid to make effective decisions about legal service offerings and resource allocations.

The Legal Aid director listed specific questions that his group wanted answered about local low-income persons:

What do they perceive as the most important and/or pressing problems that they personally have or face?

What do they perceive as the most important or pressing problems of persons in the poverty community generally?

What do they perceive as the most important problems that they face in their daily lives in the following areas: utilities, employment, health, welfare, education, housing, youth, family problems, consumer problems, other areas that they deem important?

Have they ever been a Legal Aid client? Have they ever heard of Legal Aid, and, if so, what do they know about Legal Aid? Would they come to Legal Aid if they had a legal problem, and if no, why not?

CAUR agreed to assist Legal Aid in constructing the survey instrument, developing the research methodology, training the interviewers, tabulating and analyzing the data, and preparing a research report.

## Study Design and Execution

### The Survey Instrument

Legal Aid requested that a section of the questionnaire be devoted to each of the areas in which they wanted to obtain information (e.g., health, employment, welfare) and that an open-ended question be included in each of these sections. The survey instrument was constructed by the Center for Applied Urban Research and reviewed by the staff and the board of the Legal Aid Society. Recommended changes were made in preparing the final survey instrument.

### The Population and the Sample

The population of the study included households residing in those census tracts in which over half of all families had median household incomes below 80 percent of the citywide median household income. About 45 census tracts in Omaha fall into this category. These census tracts, shown on the map in Appendix A, comprised 23,067 families in 1978. A sample of 400 randomly selected families from these census tracts was needed to obtain the information with a 5 percent margin of error at the 95 percent level of confidence.

For sample selection, a two-stage probability sampling procedure was used. The primary sampling units were sample blocks. Sample blocks were selected proportional to the size of each block at the first stage. This procedure ensured that a larger block would have a better chance of being selected than a smaller one. At the second stage, a cluster of sample households or elementary units was selected randomly. Each cluster had three sample households.

### Interview Method

Staff members of the Legal Aid Society conducted personal door-to-door interviews during December, 1980. The Center for Applied Urban Research held a training session for the interviewers one week before the field work began. Due to absenteeism in the sample households and difficulty in obtaining interviews at the identified household, only 242 interviews were completed. The completed questionnaires were returned to the Center for Applied Urban Research for tabulation and analysis of the collected data.

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

General Neighborhood Problems

Crime was perceived as the most serious problem in the study area. When asked to list the three most serious problems in their neighborhood, respondents were more likely to name crime than any other. Two of every five responses (40 percent) referred to crime (e.g., burglary, vandalism, rape) or police problems (e.g., traffic/fast cars, police protection). See Table 1.

Complaints about other city services (e.g., garbage, street maintenance) were mentioned next in order of frequency. Approximately one-fourth (27 percent) of the problems cited referred to city services. The condition of the neighborhood was the third most frequently cited category; 23 percent gave such responses as neighborhood upkeep, deterioration of the neighborhood, lack of nearby services, dogs, noise, etc..

Approximately 5 percent of the problems were of an economic or personal nature, such as inflation, food or utility costs, employment, or money problems.

TABLE 1 - General Neighborhood Problems

Type of Problem <sup>a/</sup>	Number of Times Cited	Percent of Problems Cited (N=298)
Crime	120	40
City services	79	27
Neighborhood conditions	69	23
Economic conditions	14	5
Other	16	5

<sup>a/</sup> The categories included the following coded responses:

Crime: 3,6-8,16,28-29,32,36-7,42,44,54  
 City Services: 4,11-12,20,22,25,27,31,41,43,45,47,49,51  
 Neighborhood Conditions: 5,9,10,15,17,18,26,33,39  
 Economic Conditions: 19,21,24,30,38,52,53  
 Other: 13,14,34,40,46,48,50,55



### Problems of Persons in the Neighborhood

Respondents were asked to indicate the seriousness of 17 different possible problems for persons in the neighborhood. The most serious was the cost of food (55 percent considered it very serious and 33 percent somewhat serious for a total of 88 percent). Other problems rated as very or somewhat serious by 50 percent or more of the respondents were: housing (65 percent), crime and safety (60 percent), consumer problems (52 percent), employment (50 percent), and city services in the neighborhood (50 percent). See Table 2.

TABLE 2 - Problems of Persons in the Neighborhood

Problem	Percent Rating Not Serious	Percent Rating Somewhat Serious	Percent Rating Very Serious
Housing	35	41	24
Language	83	11	6
Welfare services	68	24	8
Discrimination	74	16	10
Crime/safety	40	36	24
Law enforcement	58	25	17
Employment	50	27	23
Health care	71	21	8
Family problems	72	19	9
Consumer problems	48	28	24
City services	50	27	24
Alcohol or drug overuse	63	21	16
Recreation	53	23	25
Education	75	17	8
Transportation	80	14	6
Youth	69	22	9
Cost of food	12	33	55

### Personal Problems

Respondents were asked to list their three most serious problems and then rate the seriousness for themselves of the 17 possible listed problems.

#### Most Serious Personal Problems

When asked to name their own three most serious problems, personal finance problems were listed more often than any other category. Approximately 45 percent of those cited could be categorized as financial. Examples included: money, employment, inflation, and the costs of food, housing, and transportation.

Other personal problems (e.g., health, family problems, old age,

and loneliness) were cited 17 percent of the time. City services problems--excluding crime and police related problems--were also cited 17 percent of the time.

In sharp contrast to the questions on neighborhood problems, crime was not frequently mentioned as a serious problem for the respondent. Only 12 percent of the responses--in contrast to 40 percent of neighborhood problems--related to crime.

Neighborhood problems were cited in approximately 5 percent of the cases. See Table 3.

TABLE 3 - Most Serious Personal Problems

Type of Problem <sup>a/</sup>	Number	Percent of Problems Cited (N=259)
Economic problems	117	45
Other personal problems	44	17
City services	44	17
Crime/police	30	12
Neighborhood problems	12	5
Other	12	5

<sup>a/</sup> The categories included the following coded responses:

Economic problems: 3-4,10,14-15,19-20,24,41,44,46,52  
 Other personal problems: 6-7,9,13,27,34-5,39,47,55-7  
 City services: 11,16-7,21,29,31-3,37,40,50-1,54  
 Crime/police: 5,8,12,36,38,42,48,53  
 Neighborhood problems: 22,25-6,43,45  
 Other: 18,23,38,30,32,49

#### Seriousness of the Listed Problems

When asked to rate the seriousness for themselves of the problems in the 17 areas, the most serious was the cost of food (rated as very or as somewhat serious by a majority of those answering the question). This was seen as a very or somewhat serious problem by 57 percent. See Table 4.

The top seven problems (based on the proportion of very serious ratings) for the individual were the same as those ascribed to others in the neighborhood.

TABLE 4 - Seriousness of the Listed Problems

Problem	Percent Rating Not Serious	Percent Rating Somewhat Serious	Percent Rating Very Serious
Housing	43	30	27
Language	91	6	3
Welfare services	82	11	6
Discrimination	80	15	5
Crime/safety	58	24	18
Law enforcement	68	19	13
Employment	69	13	18
Health care	78	16	6
Family problems	86	11	3
Consumer problems	63	18	19
City services	61	19	20
Alcohol or drug overuse	87	6	7
Recreation	67	19	14
Education	83	14	3
Transportation	80	14	6
Youth	81	15	3
Cost of food	19	33	48

City Services

The lowest rated service (based on the proportion rating a service as poor) was weed control (47 percent rated it as poor). The service with the second highest proportion of poor ratings was recreational facilities and programs (37 percent). Next in order of lowest rated services was street maintenance (27 percent poor rating), and the fourth lowest rating was given for housing code enforcement (20 percent poor rating). Using an average score, assigning 1 point for excellent, 2 for good, 3 for fair, and 4 for poor gave an identical ranking for the four lowest rated services. Using this method, fire protection was given the best rating, followed by rescue squad service, street lighting, and public transportation. See Table 5.

TABLE 5 - Quality of City Services

	Percent Excellent	Percent Good	Percent Fair	Percent Poor	Average <sup>a/</sup> Score
Street maintenance	7	35	31	27	2.79
Garbage pick-up	14	56	21	9	2.25
Street lighting	12	68	16	4	2.11
Police service	11	54	19	16	2.40
Fire protection	16	69	13	2	2.01
Traffic control	8	59	24	9	2.34
Rescue squad service	18	61	16	4	2.06
Recreational facilities & programs	6	37	20	37	2.87
Water supply/sewers	7	59	21	13	2.40
Public transportation	18	55	20	7	2.17
Weed control	4	26	23	47	3.12
Housing code enforcement	2	48	30	20	2.68

<sup>a/</sup> The average score is based on: excellent = 1, good = 2, fair = 3, poor = 4. A lower score, therefore, is a better rating.

Health Care

Frequency of Illness and Use of Medical Services

Approximately half (47 percent) of the respondents reported they were not ill in the previous year. A lower proportion (29 percent), however, reported they did not seek medical services (including dental) in the previous year. See Table 6.

TABLE 6 - Frequency of Illness and Use of Medical Services

	Percent Reporting None
Times ill in last year	47
Times sought medical services in last year	29
Times used dentist	58
Times used private doctor	42
Times used medical clinic	76
Times used medical school	95
Times used hospital	67

Methods of Payment

Direct payment (i.e., use of cash) was the most frequently cited method of payment for medical services; 57 percent reported they usually paid for medical services, with cash. Less than half (44 percent) of the respondents reported use of health insurance. Smaller proportions reported they relied on Medicare and Medicaid. See Table 7.

TABLE 7 - Usual Method of Payment for Medical Services

	Percent Using	Percent Not Using
Cash	57	43
Health insurance	44	56
Medicare	27	73
Medicaid	16	84

Health Service Problems

Approximately 12 percent of the respondents reported a problem with health care services. The most frequent was inadequate health care from a doctor or member of a health care staff with 6 percent of all respondents (52 percent of those who said they had a health service problem) indicating this problem. The second most frequently cited difficulty was the refusal of a medical insurance company to pay a medical or drug bill (3 percent of all respondents and 24 percent of those who said they had a health service problem). See Table 8.

TABLE 8 - Health Service Problems

	Percent of Total Population (N=242)	Percent of Those with Health Service Problem (N=29)
Had health service problem	12	-
Denied admission	1	7
Inadequate care	6	52
Refused service because		
on Medicaid/Medicare	2	14
Medical insurance refused bill	3	24

Employment Problems

Approximately one-fourth (25 percent) of the respondents reported that they or a member of their household had problems related to employment. More than three-fourths of them (77 percent) said that this difficulty related to finding or keeping a job or being denied a promotion; this proportion constituted 20 percent of all respondents. Age discrimination was listed more often than any other factor, with race also likely to be mentioned. See Table 9.

TABLE 9 - Employment Problems

	Percent of Total Population (N=242)	Percent of Those with Employment Problems (N=61)	Percent of Those with Problem Related to Finding/Keeping Job (N=48)
Problems in last year	25	-	-
Finding/keeping job or promotion	20	77	-
Problem caused by			
Race	6	23	29
Sex	2	10	13
Age	8	31	40
Criminal record	<u>a/</u>	2	2
Handicap	2	8	10
Unsafe or unsanitary work conditions	4	16	-
Collecting wages on time	3	13	-
Collecting unemployment benefits	4	16	-
Collecting workmen's compensation	2	7	-
Collecting pension benefits	0	0	-
<u>a/</u> Less than .5 percent			

### Housing Problems

#### Problems of Renters

Approximately 10 percent of all respondents reported problems related to renting an apartment or house. This constituted 22 percent of all renters. The most frequently mentioned problem was getting the landlord to make needed repairs, reported by 14 percent of all renters (and 63 percent of the group saying they had rental-related problems). The next most frequent related to being denied a rental due to having children (8 percent of all renters) and to problems with security of their homes or apartments (8 percent of all renters). See Table 10.

TABLE 10 - Problems of Renters

	Percent of Total Population (N=242)	Percent of all Renters (N=110)	Percent of Renters with Housing Problems (N=24)
Problems related to rentals	10	22	-
Denied rental due to			
Race	1	2	8
Sex	1	2	8
Children	4	8	38
Age	2	4	17
Income	3	6	29
Being a welfare recipient	2	5	21
Marital Status	2	4	17
Problems related to			
Repairs	6	14	63
Landlord entry	2	5	25
Security	4	8	38
Eviction	a/	1	4
Landlords' lock-out	1	2	8
Landlords' seizure of possessions	1	2	8
Return of deposit	2	5	25

a/ Less than .5 percent

Problems of Homeowners

Approximately 11 percent of the homeowners reported problems related to owning a home. Making mortgage payments was the most frequently cited specific problem; this was cited by 27 percent of owners with a problem (but this was only 3 percent of all owners). See Table 11.

TABLE 11 - Problems of Homeowners

	Percent of Total Population (N=242)	Percent of Homeowners (N=133)	Percent of Owners with Housing Problems (N=15)
Problems related to owning a home	6	11	-
Construction loans	1	2	20
Mortgage payments	2	3	27
Bank foreclosure	a/	1	7
Home improvement loans	1	2	20

a/ Less than .5 percent

### Consumer Problems

Almost one-third (31 percent) of the respondents said they had consumer problems within the past year. The most frequently reported stemmed from increased utility bills. Almost one-fourth of all respondents (24 percent)--which constituted 79 percent of those reporting a consumer problem--named paying utility bills. Obtaining credit was also a problem for many, with 13 percent of all respondents (43 percent of those with consumer problems) listing this. The same proportion reported problems involving calls or letters demanding payment. Approximately 5 percent of all respondents reported being sued for payments, 4 percent reported harassment at work, 2 percent had wages garnisheed, and 1 percent were subjected to repossession of property. See Table 12.

TABLE 12 - Consumer Problems

Problem	Percent of Total Population (N=242)	Percent of Those with Consumer Problems (N=75)	Percent of Those with Credit Problems (N=32)
Consumer problem in last year	31	-	-
Obtaining credit	13	43	-
Paying utility bills	24	79	-
Door-to-door salespersons	5	17	-
Repairmen	5	17	-
Car warranty	3	11	-
Complex contracts	9	29	-
Credit problems	13	43	-
Payment demanded	13	41	97
Sued for payment	5	15	34
Harassment at work	4	12	28
Wages garnisheed	2	5	13
Property repossessed	1	4	9

### Family Problems

#### Problems Related to Divorce

Approximately 3 percent of the respondents had a divorce-related problem last year; this represented 13 percent of the divorced respondents. The problem mentioned most often dealt with child visitation. See Table 13.



TABLE 13 - Problems Related to Divorce

	Percent of Total Population (N=242)	Percent of Divorced Population (N=52)	Percent of Those Reporting Divorce Problem (N=7)
Had divorce problem in last year	3	13	-
Finding attorney	1	4	29
Enforcing restraining order	0	0	0
Child visitation	2	8	57
Child support/ alimony	1	4	29

School Related Problems

Approximately one-fifth (19 percent) of respondents with school-age children reported a school related problem; this represented 6 percent of all respondents. The one mentioned most often was the student's suspension or expulsion. Also frequently mentioned was injury by other students. See Table 14.

TABLE 14 - School Related Problems

	Percent of Total Population (N=242)	Percent of Those with School-age Children (N=81)	Percent of Those with School-related Problems (N=15)
Had school-related problem-- child was:	6	19	-
Suspended/expelled	3	10	53
Unable to return after suspension	1	2	13
Unable to pay for books/supplies	a/	5	7
Physically punished	2	5	27
Injured by other student	2	7	40
Denied admission for handicap or lack of vaccination	1	2	13

a/ less than .5 percent

Problems with Social Security

Approximately 7 percent of all respondents reported a problem related to the Social Security Administration. The difficulties mentioned most frequently were understanding requirements or completing forms (44 percent of those reporting a problem or 3 percent of all respondents), and delays on decisions (39 percent of those reporting a problem or 3 percent of all respondents). See Table 15.

TABLE 15 - Social Security Related Problems

	Percent of Total Population (N=242)	Percent of Those Reporting Problem (N=18)
Had problem related to Social Security Administration	7	-
Understanding requirements or completing forms	3	44
Delays on decisions	3	39
No explanation for denial of benefits	2	22
Delays on checks or decisions on Medicare	3	39
Obtaining legal representation at administrative levels	0	0

AFDC Related Problems

The most frequently mentioned problem related to Aid to Families with Dependent Children was not being informed of the right of appeal of any decisions. This was mentioned by more than half (57 percent) of those receiving AFDC, represented 7 percent of all respondents. See Table 16.

TABLE 16 - AFDC Related Problems

	Percent of Total Population (N=242)	Percent of Those Receiving AFDC (N=30)
Lack of knowledge about where to apply	a/	3
Denial of chance to apply	1	7
No explanation for adverse decision	2	13
Lack of legal representation to appeal ruling	1	10
Lack of information about appeal rights	7	57

a/ Less than .5 percent

Legal Problems

Approximately one-third (36 percent of the respondents indicated they had one or more legal questions or problems in the past year. Approximately 42 percent were related to consumer and/or business matters. Almost one-third (31 percent) related to the individual (e.g., divorce or wills). See Table 17.

TABLE 17 - Legal Problems in the Last Year

Number of legal questions or problems in the last year	Number	Percent
0	156	64
1	34	14
2	31	13
3 or more	21	9

Types of legal questions/problems <sup>a/</sup>	Number	Percent of all Problems
Consumer/business related	35	42
Personal	26	31
Governmental agency	12	14
Criminal	11	13

a/ Categories included the following coded responses:

Consumer/business: 1,3,4,7-9,11,12,20,23,24,27,29,30,36-8,40,42,44

Personal: 6,10,13,17,22,25,26,31,32,35,39,41,45

Governmental Agency: 2,14-6,18,33,43

Criminal: 5,19,21,28,34

Sources of Advice

Of the respondents who had legal questions or problems last year, more asked their caseworkers about their legal problems than consulted any other single source including a private lawyer or Legal Aid. Almost half (45 percent) of those with a legal question or problem said they consulted their caseworkers, while 36 percent said they saw private lawyers, 17 percent Legal Aid, and 16 percent family members.

Of respondents who did not have a problem, more than half (55 percent) said they would consult a private lawyer compared to 21 percent who said they would turn to Legal Aid for advice. See Table 18.

TABLE 18 - Sources of Legal Advice

Source	Did Consult		Would Consult <sup>a/</sup>	
	Percent or Total Population (N=242)	Percent of Those with Legal Problem (N=86)	Percent of Total Population (N=242)	Percent of Those Without Legal Problem (N=156)
Private lawyer	13	36	36	55
Legal Aid	6	17	14	21
Family	6	16	NA	NA
Priest/minister	1	3	NA	NA
Doctor	<u>b/</u>	1	NA	NA
Caseworker <sup>c/</sup>	16	45	NA	NA
Other	5	15	NA	NA

<sup>a/</sup> Responses listing lawyer or Legal Aid only coded

<sup>b/</sup> Less than .5 percent

<sup>c/</sup> Offered as open-ended response

NA Not ascertained

#### Awareness of Legal Aid

Legal Aid is well-known in the community. Almost nine of ten respondents (86 percent) had heard of Legal Aid, and two-thirds (67 percent) of these knew that Legal Aid provides free legal representation in most civil cases and that it provides services to the poor. Fewer respondents knew that Legal Aid does not represent anyone in criminal cases (only 25 percent of those who had heard of Legal Aid said they were aware of this). Approximately one-third (35 percent) of the respondents who had heard of Legal Aid said they knew its address.

Approximately 17 percent of all respondents had been Legal Aid clients, and three-fourths of those (76 percent) were satisfied with the service they received. See Table 19.

TABLE 19 - Use of Legal Aid

	Percent of Total Population (N=242)	Percent of Those who Heard of Legal Aid (N=209)
Former Legal Aid client--satisfied	13	-
Former Legal Aid client--dissatisfied	4	-
Not a Legal Aid client	83	-
	<u>100</u>	
Heard of Legal Aid	86	-
Had not heard of Legal Aid	11	-
Not ascertained	2	-
	<u>99</u>	
Awareness that Legal Aid provides:		
Free legal representation in most civil cases	58	67
Service to the poor	58	67
Awareness that Legal Aid not involved		
in criminal cases	22	25
Awareness of Legal Aid's address	30	35

Suggested Improvements

The most frequently mentioned suggestion to improve Legal Aid service was to improve publicity about the group (14 percent). A wider variety of cases and involvement in non-law related activities were mentioned frequently. See Table 20.

TABLE 20 - Suggested Legal Aid Improvements

Suggested Improvement	Percent of Total Population (N=242)
Better publicity	14
Wider variety of cases/involvement in non-law related activities	10
Faster or better service	7
Guidelines changed	5
More people helped	3
Better-known guidelines	3
More neighborhood involvement	2
Other	2

## SUMMARY

Crime was most often mentioned as a serious neighborhood problem. Two of every five problems mentioned were categorized as crime or police problems, but when the question was asked differently, economic problems such as the cost of food and housing were mentioned more frequently than crime.

Economic problems were cited more frequently than any other single category when the question focused on problems for the respondent.

Weed control received the poorest ratings in the respondents' evaluations of city services, followed by street maintenance, recreational programs and services, and housing code enforcement. Police services received the fifth lowest rating of the 12 services evaluated.

A series of questions focused on problems related to health, employment, housing, consumer affairs, family, social security, AFDC, and the law. More than one-third (36 percent) of all respondents indicated they had had legal questions or problems in the past year. Consumer/business problems predominated (42 percent), but personal problems related to divorce or wills were also frequently mentioned.

Almost one-third (31 percent) said they had had a consumer problem (including buying products or services, borrowing money, or paying bills). Problems related to credit--either obtaining it or related to creditors' actions--were also frequently mentioned.

One fourth (25 percent) of the respondents reported a problem related to employment. Problems related to finding or keeping a job or to promotion were most frequently mentioned, with difficulties related to age or race mentioned more frequently than others.

Approximately 16 percent of the respondents reported problems related to their housing. The proportion for renters was twice as high as for home owners--22 percent and 11 percent, respectively. Renters' problems were predominantly related to repairs while home-owners' problems dealt with the finances of owning a house.

Approximately one of eight respondents (12 percent) reported a health care problem. Inadequate care was the difficulty cited by most.

Approximately 7 percent of all respondents had problems related to the Social Security Administration, with understanding or completing forms and with delays or decisions predominating.

Approximately 6 percent of all respondents (but 19 percent of respondents with school-age children) reported problems related to school. Problems related to suspension/expulsion were mentioned most frequently, and injuries caused by other students were mentioned second most frequently.

Only 3 percent of the respondents reported problems related to divorce (but this constituted 13 percent of all divorced respondents). Problems with child visitation predominated.

Legal Aid was favorably perceived. Almost nine of every ten respondents (86 percent) reported they had heard of Legal Aid. Approximately 17 percent had been clients of Legal Aid, and three-fourths of these persons (76 percent) said they were satisfied with the services they had received. Of those who did not have a legal question or problem last year, approximately one-fifth (21 percent) said they would consult Legal Aid. This proportion, however, was much lower than the proportion indicating they would consult a private attorney (55 percent). Similarly, more than twice as many respondents with legal questions or problems sought advice from private lawyers than consulted Legal Aid (36 percent and 17 percent, respectively). Even more said they spoke to their caseworkers.

According to the data, many respondents did not know that Legal Aid is not involved in criminal cases. Suggestions for better services from Legal Aid included more publicity (14 percent of all respondents offered the suggestion) and involvement in a wider variety of cases and non-law related problems (approximately 10 percent offered suggestions coded in that category).

APPENDIX



Code for Open Ended Questions

Neighborhood Problems

(Part A)

- 01 (00) Blank (no answer given)
- 02 Don't know, none, OK
- 03 Drugs
- 04 Trash
- 05 (15) Neighborhood upkeep/housing (yards)
- 06 Theft, shoplifting
- 07 Vandalism, break-in, getting robbed, burglary
- 08 Traffic, fast cars
- 09 Neighbors (getting along)
- 10 Dogs
- 11 Garbage
- 12 Sewage, dumps
- 13 Rental limits
- 14 Miscellaneous
  - 1. Salvation Army
  - 2. Outsiders
  - 3. Drug store - Central Park Pharmacy
- 16 Loitering
- 17 Deterioration of neighborhood
- 18 Noise, noise at night
- 19 Utilities
- 20 Snow removal
- 21 Inflation
- 22 Street maintenance and sidewalks, city services
- 24 Consumer
- 25 Transportation
- 26 No services close (grocery stores, laundromat, etc.)
- 27 Housing for elderly
- 28 Safety (children, adults)
- 29 Police protection
- 30 Food
- 31 Adequate housing
- 32 Youths (kids fighting)
- 33 Lack of community involvement

- 34 Alcoholism
- 36 Rape, violence to women
- 37 Other forms of violence and crime
- 38 Difficult to get loans
- 39 Parking
- 40 Supervision of children, children problems
- 41 Zoning laws
- 42 Fear after dark, scared to go out at night
- 43 Rats
- 44 Transients
- 45 Fire
- 46 Construction
- 47 Weed control and vacant property upkeep
- 48 Privacy
- 49 Lack of services in neighborhood and recreation
- 50 Harassment
- 51 Inadequate lighting and street signs
- 52 Employment
- 53 Money
- 54 Police discrimination
- 55 Mail

Personal Problems  
(Part B)

- 01 (00) Blank (no answer given)
- 02 Don't know, none, OK
- 03 Food costs
- 04 Utilities (costs)
- 05 Theft
- 06 Difficulties within apartment (miscellaneous)
- 07 Health
- 08 Traffic
- 09 Difficulties within family, tenants
- 10 Employment, unemployment
- 11 Transportation
- 12 Vandalism, break-ins, keep door locked--kids walk in
- 13 Living alone
- 14 Money, financial
- 15 Consumer
- 16 Unable to find assistance
- 17 Snow removal
- 18 Housing, don't own my own home
- 19 Interest rates
- 20 Inflation
- 21 Garbage, neighborhood deterioration
- 22 Dogs
- 23 Insurance
- 24 Cost of transportation
- 25 Lack of services in area
- 26 Racial
- 27 Loneliness
- 28 Alcoholism
- 29 Adequate housing
- 30 Repair service
- 31 School busing
- 32 Education
- 33 Welfare services

- 34 Personal relationships
- 35 Language
- 36 Police related
- 37 Street and sidewalk maintenance, city services
- 38 Fighting
- 39 Elderly problems (misc.), old age
- 40 Social service (misc.)
- 41 Housing costs and maintenance
- 42 Drugs
- 43 Neighbor problems
- 44 Taxes
- 45 Parking
- 46 Gas (cost)
- 47 Parents
- 48 Fear after dark
- 49 Harassment
- 50 Rats
- 51 Recreational facilities
- 52 Credit
- 53 Police discrimination
- 54 Sewers
- 55 Shortage of time
- 56 Have to watch kids outside--can't play
- 57 Divorced and have own boy

Legal Questions/Problems

(Part J)

- 01 Both had to deal with contractor for siding on house/  
siding problem
- 02 Social security
- 03 Mortgage foreclosure
- 04 Business related (self-employed)
- 05 Auto accident, traffic ticket
- 06 Problems relating to others with job at center
- 07 Contracts, legal documents, power of attorney,  
purchase agreement, mortgage contract
- 08 Insurance (auto accident, surgery and doctor's fee)
- 09 Dealing with businesses
- 10 Will
- 11 Asking for loans, borrowing money related, loan payments
- 12 Towards sale of home
- 13 Disclosure of personal information
- 14 Whether her or her husband should get deduction for child
- 15 Personal injury/workmen's compensation
- 16 Legal questions in regard to Douglas County
- 17 Getting child support
- 18 Attorney helped getting income tax statement filled out
- 19 Criminal defense/arrested (two times) misdemeanor arrest
- 20 Small claims suit
- 21 Incest
- 22 Divorce/visitation problems
- 23 Housing/property buying, house/plumbing inspection on new  
home/rights as property owner
- 24 Thinking of buying business
- 25 Wife's mental problem
- 26 Was sued for phone harassment/harassing phone calls
- 27 Collection of bills
- 28 Doesn't like probation regulation
- 29 Sued by a company that hadn't previously sent bills
- 30 Landlord doesn't pay water bills
- 31 Job discrimination (rumor she used drugs when she only injects  
insulin for diabetes)

- 32 Husband died so had to change property
- 33 AFDC or ADC terminated - never got denial letter
- 34 Juvenile theft and juvenile assault
- 35 What you can do to protect self and house from vandals
- 36 Land in another state
- 37 Lease
- 38 Garnishment on check
- 39 Get my affairs in order
- 40 Bankruptcy
- 41 Adoption
- 42 Bank mistakes
- 43 Street maintenance
- 44 T. V. repair dispute
- 45 Probate

Interview for Legal Aid

Hello, I'm \_\_\_\_\_, conducting a survey for the Legal Aid Society. I'd like to ask you a few questions that would help them to improve their service to persons in the Omaha area.

Part A -- Problem Areas: Neighborhood

What are the three most serious problems in your neighborhood?

- 1. \_\_\_\_\_
- 2. \_\_\_\_\_
- 3. \_\_\_\_\_

I am going to read a list of problems that persons can have. Please tell me whether this is a problem for persons in your neighborhood. If this is a problem, could you tell me whether the problem is not at all serious, somewhat serious, or very serious for persons in this neighborhood.

	not at all serious	somewhat serious	very serious
1. Housing, such as the cost of utilities, paying the rent or mortgage payment, or the cost of maintenance	1	2	3
2. Language	1	2	3
3. Getting welfare services	1	2	3
4. Discrimination	1	2	3
5. Crime/safety	1	2	3
6. Law enforcement	1	2	3
7. Employment, such as job discrimination or difficulty finding a job	1	2	3
8. Health care	1	2	3
9. Family problem, such as divorce	1	2	3
10. Consumer problems, such as having difficulty getting credit or a loan, debt collectors, or being unable to pay bills	1	2	3
11. City services in the neighborhood, such as street maintenance or garbage collection	1	2	3
12. Alcohol or drug over-use	1	2	3
13. Recreation	1	2	3
14. Education	1	2	3
15. Transportation	1	2	3
16. Youth	1	2	3
17. Cost of food	1	2	3
18. Other problems in this neighborhood			
a. _____	1	2	3
b. _____	1	2	3
c. _____	1	2	3

Part B—Problem Areas: Respondent

What are your own three most serious problems?

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

I'm going to read the list of problems again and I would like you to tell me which ones have been problems for you.

	not at all serious	somewhat serious	very serious
1. Housing, such as the cost of utilities, paying the rent or mortgage payment, or the cost of maintenance	1	2	3
2. Language	1	2	3
3. Getting welfare services	1	2	3
4. Discrimination	1	2	3
5. Crime/safety	1	2	3
6. Law enforcement	1	2	3
7. Employment, such as job discrimination or difficulty finding a job	1	2	3
8. Health care	1	2	3
9. Family problem, such as divorce	1	2	3
10. Consumer problems, such as having difficulty getting credit or a loan, debt collectors, or being unable to pay bills	1	2	3
11. City services in the neighborhood, such as street maintenance or garbage collection	1	2	3
12. Alcohol or drug over-use	1	2	3
13. Recreation	1	2	3
14. Education	1	2	3
15. Transportation	1	2	3
16. Youth	1	2	3
17. Cost of food	1	2	3
18. Other problems			
a. _____	1	2	3
b. _____	1	2	3
c. _____	1	2	3



Part C – City Services

The following are a list of services provided to your neighborhood by the City of Omaha. Please rate the quality of the provision of these services: 1-excellent, 2-good, 3-fair, or 4-poor.

	excellent	good	fair	poor
1. Street maintenance	1	2	3	4
2. Garbage pick-up	1	2	3	4
3. Street lighting	1	2	3	4
4. Police service	1	2	3	4
5. Fire protection	1	2	3	4
6. Traffic control (i.e., street lights, signs)	1	2	3	4
7. Rescue squad service	1	2	3	4
8. Recreational facilities and programs	1	2	3	4
9. Water supply and sewers	1	2	3	4
10. Public transportation	1	2	3	4
11. Weed control on public areas and enforcement of weed ordinance on vacant lots in area	1	2	3	4
12. Housing code enforcement	1	2	3	4
13. Other _____	1	2	3	4

Part D – Health

1. How many times have you been ill in the last year? \_\_\_\_\_
2. How many times have you sought medical services in the last year? \_\_\_\_\_
3. How many times have you used these services in the last year?
  - a. dentist \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. private doctor \_\_\_\_\_
  - c. medical clinic \_\_\_\_\_
  - d. medical school \_\_\_\_\_
  - e. hospital \_\_\_\_\_
  - f. other \_\_\_\_\_
4. How do you usually pay for medical services?

(don't read choices—there may be more than one answer)

  - a. cash \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. health insurance \_\_\_\_\_
  - c. Medicare \_\_\_\_\_
  - d. Medicaid \_\_\_\_\_

5. Did you have any problems with the health services?

- a. yes \_\_\_\_\_ answer questions 6-10
- b. no \_\_\_\_\_ go to Part E – omit questions 6-10

6. Were you denied admission to a hospital for treatment of a serious illness or injury?

- a. yes \_\_\_\_\_
- b. no \_\_\_\_\_

7. Did you receive inadequate health care from a doctor or member of a health care staff?

- a. yes \_\_\_\_\_
- b. no \_\_\_\_\_

8. Did a doctor refuse to accept you as a patient because you were on Medicaid or Medicare?

- a. yes \_\_\_\_\_
- b. no \_\_\_\_\_

9. Did a medical insurance company refuse to pay your medical or drug bill?

- a. yes \_\_\_\_\_
- b. no \_\_\_\_\_

10. What other health care problems did you have?

- a. \_\_\_\_\_
- b. \_\_\_\_\_
- c. \_\_\_\_\_

### Part E – Employment

1. Have you or any member of your household had problems related to employment in the last year?

- a. yes \_\_\_\_\_ complete questions 2-6
- b. no \_\_\_\_\_ go on to Part F – omit questions 2-6

2. Did the problem relate to having difficulty finding a job, being denied promotion, or being fired?

- a. yes \_\_\_\_\_ go to question 3
- b. no \_\_\_\_\_ omit question 3, go to question 4

3. Was the problem in finding a job, being denied promotion, or being fired caused by any of the following:

	yes	no
a. race	1	2
b. sex	1	2
c. age	1	2
d. criminal record	1	2
e. a mental or physical handicap	1	2

4. Have you or any member of your household been required to work in unsafe or unsanitary conditions?

- a. yes \_\_\_\_\_
- b. no \_\_\_\_\_

5. Have you or a member of your household had difficulty in collecting:

	yes	no
a. wages on time	1	2
b. unemployment benefits	1	2
c. workman's compensation	1	2
d. pension benefits	1	2

6. What other work-related problems have you or members of your household had?

- a. \_\_\_\_\_
- b. \_\_\_\_\_
- c. \_\_\_\_\_

**Part F – Housing**

During the past year, have you owned or rented your housing?

- a. rented \_\_\_\_\_ go to the Rent House or Apartment Section
- b. owned \_\_\_\_\_ go to the Own House or Apartment Section
- c. both \_\_\_\_\_ complete both sections

**Rent House or Apartment Section**

1. Was your housing privately owned \_\_\_\_\_ or an Omaha Housing Authority unit \_\_\_\_\_ ?

2. Have you or members of your household had any problems related to renting an apartment or house in the last year?

- a. yes \_\_\_\_\_ complete questions 3-11
- b. no \_\_\_\_\_ go on to Part G - omit questions 3-11

3. Have you or members of your household been denied a rental house or apartment because of:

	yes	no
a. race	1	2
b. sex	1	2
c. having children	1	2
d. age	1	2
e. income	1	2
f. being a welfare recipient	1	2
g. marital status	1	2
h. other _____	1	2

	yes	no
4. Have you had a problem getting the landlord to make the needed repairs?	1	2
5. Have you had a problem with the landlord coming into your home or apartment?	1	2
6. Do you have a problem with the security of your home or apartment?	1	2
7. Have you been evicted with or without notice from the court?	1	2
8. Have you been locked out of your house or apartment by your landlord?	1	2
9. Have you had your possessions held by your landlord?	1	2
10. Did your landlord withhold your security deposit after you left?	1	2
11. What other problems have you or members of your household had in the last year related to housing?		
a. _____		
b. _____		
c. _____		

Own House or Apartment Section

1. Have you had problems in the past year related to owning your house or apartment?

- a. yes \_\_\_\_\_ complete 2-7  
b. no \_\_\_\_\_ go to Part G — omit Part, F 2-7

	yes	no
2. Have you had a problem in getting a loan to purchase your house?	1	2
3. Have you had difficulty meeting the monthly mortgage payments?	1	2
4. Have you been notified of foreclosure by the bank or savings/loan institution?	1	2
5. Has your mortgage been foreclosed?	1	2
6. Have you been denied a loan to make home repairs or improvements?	1	2
7. What other home ownership problems have you had?		
a. _____		
b. _____		
c. _____		

Part G – Consumer Problems

1. Have you or members of your household had consumer problems in the past year? These problems relate to buying products and services, borrowing money, or paying bills.

- a. yes \_\_\_\_\_ complete questions 2-10
- b. no \_\_\_\_\_ go to Part H –omit Part G, 2-10

	yes	no
2. Have you had problems obtaining credit?	1	2
3. Has paying large utility bills been a problem for you?	1	2
4. Have door-to-door salespersons bothered you?	1	2
5. Have you had problems with work done by repairmen?	1	2
6. Have you purchased a car under warranty that was not satisfactorily repaired?	1	2
7. Do you get contracts too complex to understand?	1	2
8. Have you had problems with creditors?		
a. yes _____ answer 9 and 10		
b. no _____ go to 10 – omit 9		

9. Have creditors:

- a. called or written to you demanding payment? 1      2
- b. sued you for non-payment of bills? 1      2
- c. harrassed you at work? 1      2
- d. garnisheed your wages? 1      2
- e. repossessed any of your property? 1      2

10. What other consumer-related problems have you had?

- a. \_\_\_\_\_
- b. \_\_\_\_\_
- c. \_\_\_\_\_

Part H – Family Problems

1. Are you married?

- a. yes \_\_\_\_\_
- b. no \_\_\_\_\_

2. Have you been divorced?

- a. yes \_\_\_\_\_ go to 3
- b. no \_\_\_\_\_ go to 4 – omit 3

3. Have you had any problems related to the divorce in the last year?

- a. yes \_\_\_\_\_
- b. no \_\_\_\_\_ go to 8 – omit 4-7

yes      no

4. Did you have difficulty finding an attorney?

1      2

5. Have you had a problem enforcing restraining orders?

1      2

6. Have you had a problem with child visitation?

1      2

7. Have you had a problem receiving or being able to pay court-ordered child support or alimony?

1      2

8. Do you have school-age children?

- a. yes \_\_\_\_\_
- b. no \_\_\_\_\_ go to 17 – omit 9-16

9. Have your children had school-related problems?

- a. yes \_\_\_\_\_
- b. no \_\_\_\_\_ go to 17 – omit 10-16

10. Have they been suspended or expelled from school?

1      2

11. Have they been prevented from returning to school after being suspended or expelled?

1      2

12. Have they been kept from classes because of inability to pay for books and supplies?

1      2

13. Have they been physically punished by a teacher or principal?

1      2

14. Have they been injured by other students?

1      2

15. Have they been denied admission to school or certain classes because of a mental or physical handicap or the lack of a vaccination?

1      2

16. What other problems have your children had?

- a. \_\_\_\_\_
- b. \_\_\_\_\_
- c. \_\_\_\_\_

17. What other family problems have you had?

a. \_\_\_\_\_

b. \_\_\_\_\_

c. \_\_\_\_\_

**Part I -- Social Security and AFDC Benefits**

1. Have you or any member of your household had a problem related to the Social Security Administration this year?

a. yes \_\_\_\_\_

b. no \_\_\_\_\_ go to 8 -- omit 2-7

yes      no

2. Did you have a problem understanding the requirements of the different programs or completing the required forms?

1      2

3. Were there delays in receiving notice of eligibility or awaiting decisions on claims?

1      2

4. Were you informed of reasons for not being entitled to benefits?

1      2

5. Were there delays in receiving checks or action on claims for Medicare benefits?

1      2

6. Did you have a problem obtaining a legal representative at administrative hearings?

1      2

7. Did you have any other problems with Social Security benefits?

a. \_\_\_\_\_

b. \_\_\_\_\_

c. \_\_\_\_\_

8. Have you or a member of your family received AFDC benefits in the last year?

a. yes \_\_\_\_\_

b. no \_\_\_\_\_ go to Part J -- omit 1, 9-13

9. Did you have a problem knowing where to apply for benefits?

1      2

10. Were you denied the opportunity to complete a written application?

1      2

11. Were you not given the reasons for a reduction or termination of benefits?

1      2

12. Did you have a problem obtaining a legal representative to appeal a ruling by the agency?

1      2

13. Were you informed of the right to appeal any decision made by the agency?

1      2

Part J -- Legal Aid

1. How many times have you had legal questions or problems in the last year? (contracts, mortgages, loans)

- a. \_\_\_\_\_ complete 2 and 3
- b. none \_\_\_\_\_ go to 4 – omit 2 and 3

2. What type of legal questions or problems did you have in the past year?

- a. \_\_\_\_\_
- b. \_\_\_\_\_
- c. \_\_\_\_\_

3. Who did you ask about legal matters?

- a. private lawyer
- b. Legal Aid
- c. family
- d. priest/minister
- e. doctor
- f. other \_\_\_\_\_

go to 5 – omit 4

4. If you had legal problems who would you consult?

- a. private lawyer
- b. Legal Aid
- c. family
- d. priest/minister
- e. doctor
- f. other \_\_\_\_\_

go to 6 – omit 5

5. How many times have you contacted a lawyer or lawyer's assistant for help in the last year?

- a. \_\_\_\_\_ go to 7 – omit 6
- b. none \_\_\_\_\_

6. Why didn't you contact a lawyer or lawyer's assistant?

- a. no legal problems
- b. didn't know where to go
- c. too expensive
- d. transportation problems
- e. health problems
- f. rely on family

7. Have you ever been a Legal Aid client?

- a. yes \_\_\_\_\_
- b. no \_\_\_\_\_ go to 9 – omit question 8



8. Were you satisfied with the service that you received?

- a. yes \_\_\_\_\_
- b. no \_\_\_\_\_ If no, why not?

9. Have you ever heard of Legal Aid?

- a. yes \_\_\_\_\_
- b. no \_\_\_\_\_ go to 11 -- omit 10

10. Did you know that Legal Aid --

	yes	no
a. provides free legal representation in most civil cases?	1	2
b. only provides services to persons who are poor?	1	2
c. does not represent anybody in criminal cases?	1	2
d. is located at 500 South 18th Street in Omaha?	1	2

11. How could Legal Aid better assist you, your family, friends, neighbors, and neighborhood?

- a. \_\_\_\_\_
- b. \_\_\_\_\_
- c. \_\_\_\_\_
- d. \_\_\_\_\_
- e. \_\_\_\_\_

Part K -- Respondent Information

Now I need some information for classification purposes.

1. Is your age:

- a. under 20 \_\_\_\_\_
- b. 20-40 \_\_\_\_\_
- c. 41-60 \_\_\_\_\_
- d. over 60 \_\_\_\_\_

2. What is your race?

- a. black \_\_\_\_\_
- b. white \_\_\_\_\_
- c. Mexican-American \_\_\_\_\_
- d. Indian \_\_\_\_\_
- e. other \_\_\_\_\_

3. How many people, including yourself, live in your household?

- a. adults \_\_\_\_\_
- b. children (under 18) \_\_\_\_\_

4. What is your marital status?

- a. married \_\_\_\_\_
- b. widowed \_\_\_\_\_
- c. separated or divorced \_\_\_\_\_
- d. never married \_\_\_\_\_
- e. other \_\_\_\_\_

5. Were you or anyone in your household employed during the past month?

- a. yes \_\_\_\_\_
- b. no \_\_\_\_\_

If yes: who?

What kind of work?

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

6. Do you or anyone in your household currently receive income from any of the following?

	yes	no
a. Social Security Retirement (including survivors benefits)	1	2
b. Supplemental Security Income (SSI)	1	2
c. AFDC	1	2
d. General Assistance	1	2
e. Unemployment Compensation	1	2
f. a retirement plan	1	2
g. Workmen's Compensation	1	2
h. private disability policy	1	2
i. alimony or child support	1	2
j. other	1	2

7. Sex:

- a. male \_\_\_\_\_
- b. female \_\_\_\_\_