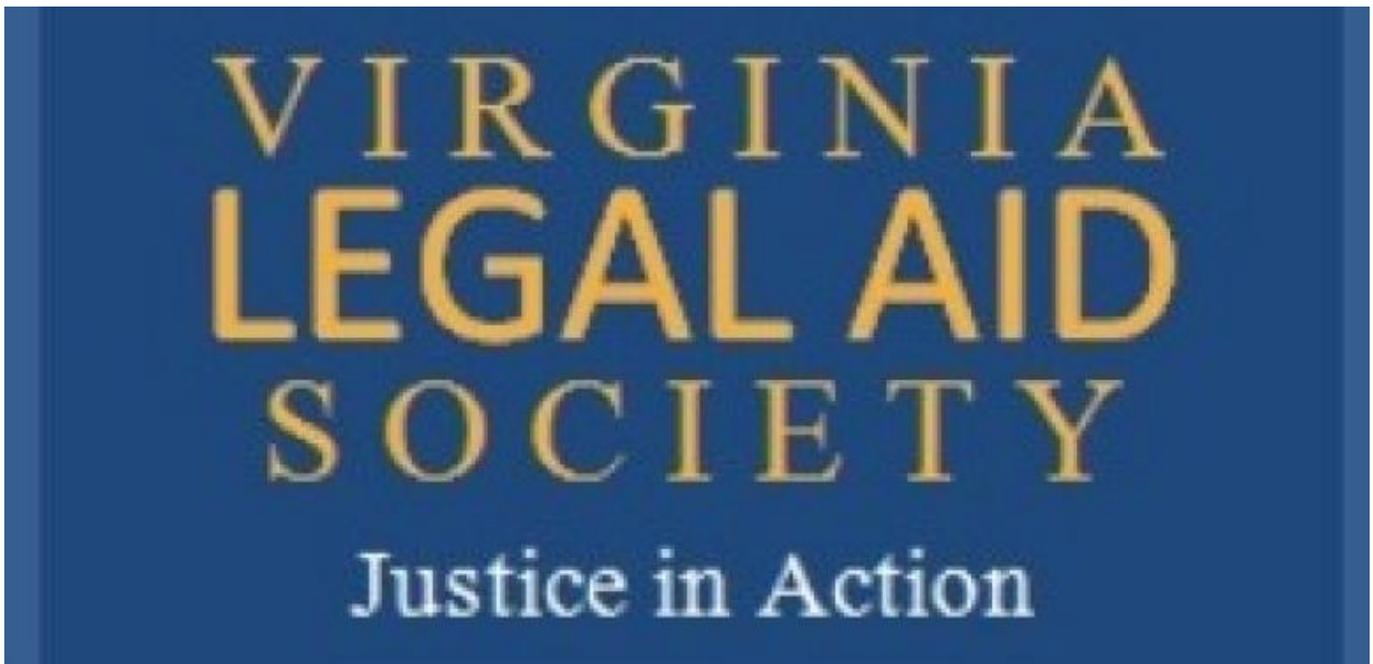


# **News: VA Legal Aid Society's New Online Triage System Dramatically Realigns Staff Resources to Increase Service to Eligible Clients (VA Legal Aid 2016)**



With a [new online eligibility tool \(neotalogic.com\)](http://neotalogic.com) built in Neota Logic, Virginia Legal Aid Society (VLAS), which typically handles 14,000 calls a year on its hotline, successfully diverted 1,800 ineligible intakes in the first eight months of the tool being live, allowing staff to serve more eligible clients and automating the referral process of ineligible applicants. The online tool works by screening self-represented

litigants with venue, case, and income related questions and offers ineligible candidates a list of useful legal resources, offering users the legal help they need when they need it and in a format they can understand. It joins [a growing field of online legal aid intake and triage systems \(srln.org\)](#) that are improving the efficiency and effectiveness of screening and caseload management.

David Neumeyer, Executive Director at VLAS, shared the following statistics regarding the online eligibility app's success from January to September of 2015:

- 4,074 applications were initiated on the app
- 1653, or 41%, were found probably eligible and urged to complete our full online application or call our toll-free number
- 1518, or 37%, were ineligible because of the location of their problem and were referred to <http://lsc.gov> to find the legal aid program serving their location
- 173, or 4%, were ineligible because of their income or assets and were referred to the Virginia State Bar Lawyer Referral Service
- 115, or 4%, were ineligible because of having a criminal or traffic problem and were referred to the VSB Lawyer Referral Service and to their local courts if they couldn't afford an attorney
- 615, or 15% did not complete the app

Neumeyer noted that, with the tool, his team can now help more people, adding that the app costs nothing to maintain and requires "no ongoing support; it just operates!" He added that "by identifying and referring those ineligible to other resources, the system saved our LawLine staff from 1,806 live intakes with individuals that we could not help, making more time available and reducing wait times for those we could help."

The VLAS screening tool was developed when the organization was invited to participate in Georgetown Law Center's Iron Tech Lawyer program in 2014. After identifying their need to better triage the thousands of calls coming into the Society every year, four law students worked with VLAS to build the tool, now accessed on the Society's website and hosted by Neota Logic. When developing the tool, VLAS asked the student team to create something that would not only identify applicants they could not help but could also steer those applicants toward other suitable resources.

Michael Mills, the Co-founder & Chief Strategy Officer of Neota Logic, said: “The VLAS intake screening application is an excellent example of technology applied to improve access to justice: the application is focused on solving a simple but real problem; it was easy to build and is easy to update; prospective clients can use it anytime anywhere; and the time Society staff save by not interviewing ineligible prospects is now available for client service” He added that “Neota Logic is very pleased its expert systems platform can be useful to VLAS and others for similarly innovative applications through our law school and law firm programs.”

Just two months after the VLAS met its student team, the app was ready to test and demonstrate, and it tied for first place in the popular vote in Georgetown’s Iron Tech Lawyer Competition in April 2014. Soon after, it was dramatically improving VLAS’ efficiency. Want to try it out? [Head here \(neotalogic.com\)](http://neotalogic.com) to experience the VLAS eligibility screening tool.

The updated numbers from January 1, 2015 to December 31, 2015 reveal that:

- 5306 individuals used the app
- 2218 were found eligible
- 791 were uncertain
- 1925 were ineligible for location
- 142 were ineligible for issue (110 Criminal, 36 Traffic)
- 226 were ineligible for financial

For more information about VLAS’ tool and the work it took to built it, contact David Neumeyer at [davidn@vlas.org](mailto:davidn@vlas.org).

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