

Annual Report

Fiscal Year 2016

Massachusetts
Legal
Assistance
Corporation

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MLAC at a Glance

The Massachusetts Legal Assistance Corporation (MLAC) was established by the Commonwealth in 1983 to ensure that low-income people with critical non-criminal legal problems would have access to legal information, advice and representation.

MLAC is the largest funding source for civil legal aid programs in Massachusetts. With funding from the Commonwealth and the Interest on Lawyers' Trust Accounts, MLAC provides grants to 16 local and statewide civil legal aid programs, as well as operational training and support to the Massachusetts legal aid community.

Fiscal Year 2016 Accomplishments

- ▶ MLAC-funded programs employed 218 attorneys and 52 paralegals (full-time equivalents) in FY16.
- ▶ Despite persistent funding challenges, MLAC-funded programs closed 23,225 cases in FY16. This assistance benefited 88,601 individuals and family members in Massachusetts.
- ▶ 661 private attorneys collectively donated 36,571 hours of skilled pro-bono assistance through MLAC-funded programs, representing a value of \$8.2 million.
- ▶ MLAC's Domestic Violence Legal Assistance Project represented 646 domestic violence victims in complex cases involving physical safety, child custody and support, financial security, health care coverage, and other issues. The average number of court appearances per case was three.
- ▶ MLAC's Disability Benefits Project closed 740 cases, winning federal SSI/SSDI benefits for clients in 78 percent of cases in which a decision was made. DBP brought \$240,993 in federal reimbursement to the Commonwealth and \$4.4 million in payments to clients.
- ▶ MLAC's Medicare Advocacy Project helped 402 elders and people with disabilities obtain the Medicare benefits to which they were entitled.

Fiscal Year 2016 Grants

\$21,944,037 total

REGIONAL PROGRAMS

Central/West Region **\$5,139,626 total**

Community Legal Aid

General Support	\$3,238,504
Domestic Violence Legal Assistance Project	\$667,520
Disability Benefits Project	\$247,060
Medicare Advocacy Project	\$96,556
Attorney General, HomeCorps	\$723,699
Farmworkers	\$50,000
Bank of America Settlement & Other Grants	\$116,287
Total	\$5,139,626

Northeast Region **\$2,823,382 total**

Children's Law Center of Massachusetts

General Support	\$159,096
Total	\$159,096

Northeast Legal Aid

General Support	\$1,714,000
Domestic Violence Legal Assistance Project	\$376,396
Disability Benefits Project	\$159,208
Attorney General, HomeCorps	\$349,627
Bank of America Settlement & Other Grants	\$65,056
Total	\$2,664,286

Southeast Region **\$3,025,048 total**

South Coastal Counties Legal Services

General Support	\$2,002,183
Domestic Violence Legal Assistance Project	\$422,660
Disability Benefits Project	\$172,100
Medicare Advocacy Project	\$61,136
Attorney General, HomeCorps	\$268,177
Fellowship	\$50,000
Bank of America Settlement & Other Grants	\$48,792
Total	\$3,025,048

Eastern Region **\$6,779,123 total**

Greater Boston Legal Services

General Support	\$3,568,764
Domestic Violence Legal Assistance Project	\$766,096
Disability Benefits Project	\$309,584
Medicare Advocacy Project	\$289,288
Attorney General, HomeCorps	\$454,353
Fellowship	\$50,000
Technology Grants & Equipment	\$177,091
Bank of America Settlement & Other Grants	\$126,015
Total	\$5,741,190

Boston College Legal Assistance Bureau

Disability Benefits Project	\$18,028
Total	\$18,028

Community Legal Services and Counseling Center

General Support	\$90,348
Domestic Violence Legal Assistance Project	\$21,168
Disability Benefits Project	\$9,148
Bank of America Settlement & Other Grants	\$5,795
Total	\$126,459

MetroWest Legal Services

General Support	\$535,992
Domestic Violence Legal Assistance Project	\$100,556
Disability Benefits Project	\$46,116
Attorney General, HomeCorps	\$116,649
Fellowship	\$50,568
Technology Grants & Equipment	\$27,302
Justice AmeriCorps	\$16,264
Total	\$893,446

STATEWIDE PROGRAMS

Center for Law and Education

General Support	\$140,992
Fellowship	\$75,000
Technology Grants & Equipment	\$7,986
Total	\$223,978

Center for Public Representation

General Support	\$239,684
Disability Benefits Project	\$35,396
Technology Grants & Equipment	\$9,389
Total	\$284,469

Disability Law Center

General Support	\$281,984
Disability Benefits Project	\$182,256
Technology Grants & Equipment	\$8,723
Total	\$472,963

Massachusetts Advocates for Children

General Support	\$111,384
Total	\$111,384

Massachusetts Law Reform Institute

General Support	\$1,691,892
Domestic Violence Legal Assistance Project	\$82,868
Attorney General, HomeCorps	\$46,688
Fellowship	\$79,095
Technology Grants & Equipment	\$106,764
Website	\$357,165
Bank of America Settlement & Other Grants	\$374
Total	\$2,364,846

National Consumer Law Center

General Support	\$140,992
Attorney General, HomeCorps	\$319,057
Bank of America Settlement & Other Grants	\$8,132
Total	\$468,181

Prisoners' Legal Services

General Support	\$183,288
Technology Grants & Equipment	\$4,452
Total	\$187,740

Volunteer Lawyers Project*

Attorney General, HomeCorps	\$47,930
Bank of America Settlement & Other Grants	\$15,367
Total	\$63,297

Statewide total: \$4,176,858

Statement of Activities and Changes in Net Assets

for the year ending June 30, 2016

REVENUE

Commonwealth of Massachusetts Appropriation	\$17,000,000
Attorney General's Office	
HomeCorps Program	\$1,329,179
Citigroup Settlement Funds	\$997,000
Bank of America Settlement Funds	\$325,326
HomeCorps Management Fees	\$28,208
Massachusetts IOLTA Committee	\$71,599
Interest on Lawyers' Trust Accounts Program	\$3,922,807
Opt-out Bar Registration Fees	\$810,810
Pro Hac Vice Fees	\$145,696
Cy Pres Awards	\$141
Interest and Other Income	\$39,571
Donated Legal Services	\$32,139
Total Revenues	\$24,702,476

EXPENSES	General Support	Restricted Projects	Program Support Initiatives	IOLTA Administrative Services	MLAC Administrative	Total
Grants Awarded						
General Support	\$14,924,728					\$14,924,728
Disability Benefits Project		\$1,178,892				\$1,178,892
Medicare Advocacy Project		\$446,980				\$446,980
Domestic Violence Legal Assistance Project		\$2,437,264				\$2,437,264
HomeCorps		\$2,651,505				\$2,651,505
Salaries**		\$21,497	\$471,249	\$11,840	\$567,011	\$1,071,597
Payroll taxes and fringe benefits**		\$5,572	\$118,729	\$3,575	\$141,762	\$269,638
Occupancy			\$26,128	\$56,184	\$250,072	\$332,384
Professional Services			\$617,331		\$311,049	\$928,380
Other support services			\$235,570		\$54,846	\$290,416
Fellowships			\$304,663			\$304,663
Travel			\$8,706		\$40,153	\$48,859
Office			\$2,239		\$16,083	\$18,322
Depreciation					\$51,493	\$51,493
Total expenses before allocation of administrative expense	\$14,924,728	\$6,741,710	\$1,784,615	\$71,599	\$1,432,469	\$24,955,121
Allocation of Administrative Expense	\$1,400,330				(\$1,400,330)	
Total Expenses	\$16,325,058	\$6,741,710	\$1,784,615	\$71,599	\$32,139	\$24,955,121

MLAC directs all of its state-appropriated funds for general support, loan forgiveness, the Disability Benefits Project, the Medicare Advocacy Project, and the Domestic Violence Legal Assistance Project. General support and loan forgiveness are supplemented by IOLTA funds. In FY16 \$1,980,611 in IOLTA funds was directed to general support and \$6,890 to loan forgiveness.

** Salaries for Restricted Projects are for HomeCorps only.

ASSETS

Net Assets June 30, 2015	\$2,313,088
FY16 Net Income or (Loss)	\$3,165,414
Net Assets June 30, 2016	\$5,478,502

Meet a Legal Aid Client

Lisa, a mother from Medford, never expected to need legal aid.

Her son was a high school senior when a simple surgery to have his wisdom teeth removed set him on a path to a decade-long addiction, first to prescription painkillers and later heroin.

Over many years, Lisa and her husband worked desperately to help their son, paying for multiple stints of inpatient rehab and even having him involuntarily committed to Bridgewater State Hospital for treatment. They were willing to do anything to save his life.

When her son lost a good friend to an overdose, he broke down and realized that he had only two choices: to fight this addiction, or to die. He chose to fight. He made a commitment to methadone treatment—daily doses of methadone, weekly counseling, random drug testing—and he was ready to work hard and be healthy. Lisa allowed him to move back home so he would have a stable place to live while he was in treatment. She had just been diagnosed with breast cancer, and would endure a dozen surgeries before being declared cancer free. With Lisa unable to work, MassHealth was her son's only option to cover the cost of his treatment.

After many months of successful treatment, a letter arrived in the mail saying her son's MassHealth coverage would be discontinued. Despite contacting MassHealth repeatedly, Lisa was unable to find out what the issue was or how to fix it. She was terrified, knowing that interruption of her son's treatment, even for one day, could have grave consequences—including an unimaginably painful withdrawal and potential relapse. She appealed MassHealth's decision, knowing that it was his only chance to maintain coverage while she searched for a solution.

Lisa received notice of the appeal hearing date, and with it came a pamphlet about legal aid. Getting that pamphlet and calling Greater Boston Legal Services changed everything for Lisa and her family. GBLS was able to work with MassHealth to resolve the issue—related to an administrative change in how income and coverage eligibility was calculated, after the implementation of the Affordable Care Act—in a matter of days.

Said Lisa, "My son is committed to staying healthy, and he works at it every single day. I am eternally grateful that he has that chance, and I have legal aid to thank for it. Legal aid really can be the difference between life and death."



Lisa speaks at the 17th Annual Walk to the Hill for Civil Legal Aid at the State House.

"Legal aid gave my son a second chance at life."

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