
Massachusetts Legal Assistance Corporation

ANNUAL REPORT
FISCAL YEAR 2018

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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 17 local and statewide civil legal aid programs, as well as operational training and support to the Massachusetts legal aid community.

Fiscal Year 2018 Accomplishments

- ▶ MLAC-funded programs employed 268 attorneys and 57 paralegals (full-time equivalents) in FY18.
- ▶ Despite persistent funding challenges, MLAC-funded programs closed 22,234 cases in FY18. This assistance benefited 81,569 individuals and family members in Massachusetts.
- ▶ 774 private attorneys collectively donated 40,011 hours of skilled pro-bono assistance through MLAC-funded programs, representing a value of \$9 million.
- ▶ MLAC's Domestic Violence Legal Assistance Project represented 392 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 3.2.
- ▶ MLAC's Disability Benefits Project closed 869 cases, winning federal disability benefits for low-income clients across the state. In addition to federal reimbursement to the Commonwealth, these efforts brought several million dollars in direct payments to clients with disabilities.
- ▶ MLAC's Medicare Advocacy Project helped 186 elders and people with disabilities obtain the Medicare benefits to which they were entitled.

Fiscal Year 2018 Grants

REGIONAL PROGRAMS

Regional total: \$20,628,116

Eastern Region **\$7,991,160 total**

Greater Boston Legal Services

General Support	\$4,359,158
Disability Benefits Project	\$312,011
Domestic Violence Legal Assistance Project	\$744,911
Medicare Advocacy Project	\$240,920
Fellowship	\$100,000
Technology	\$250,105
Grantmakers Concerned with Immigrants and Refugees	\$85,000
Immigration Relief Grant	\$52,500
Massachusetts Office for Victim Assistance	\$518,237
Total	\$6,662,842

Community Legal Services and Counseling Center

General Support	\$103,238
Disability Benefits Project	\$6,497
Domestic Violence Legal Assistance Project	\$15,787
Massachusetts Office for Victim Assistance	\$119,409
Immigration Relief Grant	\$26,250
Total	\$271,181

MetroWest Legal Services

General Support	\$628,588
Disability Benefits Project	\$46,722
Domestic Violence Legal Assistance Project	\$118,754
Technology	\$36,607
Grantmakers Concerned with Immigrants and Refugees	\$75,000
Immigration Relief Grant	\$21,000
Massachusetts Office for Victim Assistance	\$130,466
Total	\$1,057,137

Central/West Region **\$5,536,091 total**

Community Legal Aid

General Support	\$3,871,760
Disability Benefits Project	\$248,154
Domestic Violence Legal Assistance Project	\$677,418
Medicare Advocacy Project	\$128,342
Farmworkers	\$50,000
Immigration Relief Grant	\$61,250
Massachusetts Office for Victim Assistance	\$499,167
Total	\$5,536,091

Southeast Region **\$3,615,884 total**

South Coastal Counties Legal Services

General Support	\$2,390,576
Disability Benefits Project	\$179,397
Domestic Violence Legal Assistance Project	\$407,699
Medicare Advocacy Project	\$77,718
Grantmakers Concerned with Immigrants and Refugees	\$80,000
Immigration Relief Grant	\$35,000
Massachusetts Office for Victim Assistance	\$445,494
Total	\$3,615,884

Northeast Region **\$3,484,981 total**

Northeast Legal Aid

General Support	\$2,064,500
Disability Benefits Project	\$165,141
Domestic Violence Legal Assistance Project	\$389,830
Fellowship	\$50,000
Grantmakers Concerned with Immigrants and Refugees	\$85,000
Immigration Relief Grant	\$42,000
Massachusetts Office for Victim Assistance	\$338,233
Total	\$3,134,704

Children's Law Center of Massachusetts

General Support	\$191,764
Fellowship	\$50,000
Immigration Relief Grant	\$21,000
Massachusetts Office for Victim Assistance	\$87,513
Total	\$350,277

\$25,741,114 total

STATEWIDE PROGRAMS

Statewide total: \$5,112,998

Center for Law and Education

General Support	\$169,676
Technology	\$10,317
Total	\$179,993

Center for Public Representation

General Support	\$288,448
Disability Benefits Project	\$38,711
Technology	\$13,351
Total	\$340,510

Disability Law Center

General Support	\$339,350
Disability Benefits Project	\$182,256
Technology	\$14,643
Massachusetts Office for Victim Assistance	\$131,380
Total	\$667,629

Massachusetts Advocates for Children

General Support	\$134,040
Fellowship	\$50,000
Total	\$184,040

Massachusetts Law Reform Institute

General Support	\$2,036,094
Domestic Violence Legal Assistance Project	\$82,868
Fellowship	\$56,097
Technology	\$142,205
Website	\$351,180
Grantmakers Concerned with Immigrants and Refugees	\$25,000
Immigration Relief Grant	\$49,000
Massachusetts Office for Victim Assistance	\$190,551
Total	\$2,932,995

National Consumer Law Center

General Support	\$169,676
Fellowship	\$80,000
Massachusetts Office for Victim Assistance	\$8,920
Total	\$258,596

PAIR Project

Grantmakers Concerned with Immigrants and Refugees	\$70,000
Immigration Relief Grant	\$42,000
Total	\$112,000

Prisoners' Legal Services

General Support	\$220,574
Technology	\$5,075
Total	\$225,649

Victim Rights Law Center

Massachusetts Office for Victim Assistance	\$131,586
Total	\$131,586

Volunteer Lawyers Project

Massachusetts Office for Victim Assistance	\$80,001
Total	\$80,001

COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS

Community total: \$140,000

Brazilian Worker Center

Grantmakers Concerned with Immigrants and Refugees	\$25,000
Total	\$25,000

Catholic Social Services of Fall River

Grantmakers Concerned with Immigrants and Refugees	\$30,000
Total	\$30,000

Centro Presente

Grantmakers Concerned with Immigrants and Refugees	\$30,000
Total	\$30,000

Chelsea Collaborative

Grantmakers Concerned with Immigrants and Refugees	\$30,000
Total	\$30,000

Essex County Community Organization

Grantmakers Concerned with Immigrants and Refugees	\$25,000
Total	\$25,000

Statement of Activities and Changes in Net Assets

for the year ending June 30, 2018

REVENUE

Commonwealth of Massachusetts Appropriation	\$18,000,000
Massachusetts Office for Victim Assistance	\$2,776,251
Grantmakers Concerned with Immigrants and Refugees	\$575,000
Immigration Relief Funding	\$375,000
Massachusetts IOLTA Committee	
Interest on Lawyers' Trust Accounts Program	\$4,083,719
Cy Pres Awards	\$2,782,676
Opt-out Bar Registration Fees	\$700,131
Pro Hac Vice Fees	\$151,762
Management Fees	\$86,233
Interest and Other Income	\$109,164
Donated Legal Services	\$83,894
Total Revenues	\$29,723,830

EXPENSES

	General Support	Restricted Projects	Program Support Initiatives	IOLTA Administrative Services	MLAC Administrative	Total
Grants Awarded						
General Support	\$17,840,924					\$17,840,924
Disability Benefits Project	\$1,178,889					\$1,178,889
Medicare Advocacy Project	\$446,980					\$446,980
Domestic Violence Legal Assistance Project	\$2,437,264					\$2,437,267
Massachusetts Office for Victim Assistance		\$2,680,957				\$2,680,957
Grantmakers Concerned with Immigrants & Refugees		\$560,000				\$560,000
Immigration Relief Funding		\$350,000				\$350,000
Salaries**		\$72,052	\$552,340	\$14,399	\$631,496	\$1,270,287
Payroll taxes and fringe benefits**		\$19,309	\$137,203	\$3,391	\$145,562	\$305,465
Occupancy			\$22,053	\$67,622	\$274,847	\$364,522
Professional Services		\$23,398	\$662,095		\$382,120	\$1,067,613
Other support services		\$14,115	\$468,435		\$48,591	\$531,141
Fellowships			\$386,097			\$386,097
Travel		\$442	\$7,610		\$30,223	\$38,275
Office		\$1,414	\$1,331	\$821	\$26,352	\$29,918
Depreciation					\$40,184	\$40,184
Total expenses before allocation of administrative expense	\$21,904,060	\$3,721,687	\$2,237,164	\$86,233	\$1,579,375	\$29,528,519
Allocation of Administrative Expense	\$1,490,917	\$4,564			\$(1,495,481)	
Total Expenses	\$23,394,977	\$3,726,251	\$2,237,164	\$86,233	\$83,894	\$29,528,519

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 FY18 \$2,605,046 in IOLTA funds was directed to general support and \$14,327 to loan forgiveness.

** Salaries for Restricted Projects are for HomeCorps only.

ASSETS

Net Assets June 30, 2017	\$1,654,784
Net Assets released from purpose restrictions	\$1,196,059
FY18 Net Income or (Loss)	\$195,311
Net Assets June 30, 2018	\$3,046,154

Meet a Legal Aid Client

Danielle didn't know anything about sickle-cell anemia before her daughter Arianna was born and diagnosed with the disease. Danielle had to learn a lot very quickly in order to care for her daughter.

By the time Arianna turned one, she had been hospitalized several times with fevers and infections, a scary thing for any parent to go through. Danielle missed a lot of work because of her daughter's illness, and eventually lost her job. While she looked for a new job, she applied for Supplemental Security Income benefits, or SSI, for her daughter. More than anything, Danielle wanted to provide her daughter with a normal, stable life, despite her diagnosis.

After the initial application for SSI was denied, Danielle was encouraged to re-apply by someone at Boston Children's Hospital. The application was denied a second time because of a missing signature. In the meantime, Danielle found a job as a caseworker at the Head Start program Arianna attended, allowing her to look after Arianna and to help other families like hers. Through that work, she learned about Greater Boston Legal Services (GBLS), and contacted them for help getting SSI for her daughter.

That's how Danielle met Tara Doucette, her legal aid attorney, who represented her before an administrative law judge to appeal the rejection of the application for SSI. Despite the dangers faced by people with sickle cell—especially children—the medical expert at the hearing said the disease wasn't always severe, that that Arianna's hospitalizations up to that point had been precautionary. Danielle was angry and scared, knowing that for her daughter, almost any infection could be life-threatening. Unfortunately, the appeal was denied.

With Tara's help, Danielle fought through years of denials and appeals; Tara was part of a team of people working to keep Arianna healthy. During that time, Arianna faced many health crises and hospitalizations and in one case, her spleen nearly ruptured. It was hard for Danielle to see her daughter suffer, knowing that she had already missed out on so much of a normal childhood because of sickle cell. Arianna's medical crises can be triggered by cold temperatures or dehydration, so in the winter, she has to spend recess in the nurse's office, missing out on social time with her peers. One summer, she ended up in the hospital in extreme pain after dipping her legs in a cold lake at a friend's birthday party—the temperature change was too much for her body to handle.

When her daughter was diagnosed with sickle cell, Danielle had just a high school diploma, but she knew she needed to learn new skills to fight for her daughter. She also wanted to help others navigate the complicated system her family had faced, so she went back to school and became a social worker. It took years, and it was hard to juggle work, school, and family, but because of what she had been through with her daughter, she knew it was worth it, so she could be a resource for moms and families in need.

Finally, after almost eight years, and with significant legal help from Tara and GBLS, Arianna's SSI benefits got approved, retroactive to the date of the original application. Arianna is nine now; she's doing well and she has ongoing benefits to cover costs related to her illness.

Danielle said her family wouldn't be where it is now without legal aid. "Whenever I felt out of my element and scared, Tara told me, 'I'll take care of the lawyer piece, you take care of your daughter.' It helped me so much to leave it in her hands. It gave me a sense of security, a feeling that I had a voice." She continued, "If you don't have somebody that's going to fight along with you all that time, you want to give up. GBLS—and Tara—never gave up on us, and that gave us hope."



"[Knowing I had help from legal aid] gave me a sense of security, a feeling that I had a voice."

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