
Report to the Governor and General Court

FY25

Introduction

Massachusetts's network of legal aid organizations is a point of pride for the Commonwealth—and MLAC is proud to be the largest funder of civil legal aid in the state, thanks to the Legislature's commitment to investing in these vital programs.

In FY25, MLAC received \$51 million to fund civil legal aid through state budget line item 0321-1600. MLAC distributed that funding to 16 legal aid organizations across the Commonwealth. MLAC also received \$2.5 million through state budget line item 0321-1800 to fund the Access to Counsel Program. In addition, MLAC received money from Interest on Lawyers' Trust Accounts (IOLTA) funds, government grants, and private foundations. Altogether, in FY25 MLAC distributed \$72,589,416 in grants to 20 legal aid organizations across Massachusetts.

Our grantees solved critical problems for people with low incomes facing housing instability, wage theft, domestic abuse, consumer fraud, loss of income or affordable medical care, and other areas of civil legal need. Individuals and families at or below 125% of the federal poverty level qualify for legal aid. In 2025, that is \$40,187 per year for a family of four, and \$19,562 for an individual.

Left unresolved, many civil legal issues can lead to costly public expenditures such as emergency shelter and homelessness services. Civil legal aid protects people's rights and access to basic needs, and it saves money by addressing issues before they become more complex problems. It also helps families access federally-funded income supports (including SNAP, veterans benefits, Social Security benefits, and more).

Legal aid organizations are deeply invested in their communities. They provide training and guidance to community health centers, homeless shelters, domestic violence organizations, and other organizations. They also leverage the legal community's expertise, working with law schools and private pro bono attorneys to expand capacity.

In FY25, legal aid attorneys and staff helped more than 98,900 people by handling more than 46,890 civil legal cases. What follows in this report details the tremendous impact Massachusetts's investment in civil legal aid had on our neighbors and communities by advancing equal access to justice for all.

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MLAC Basics and Background

The Massachusetts Legal Assistance Corporation is the largest funding source for civil legal aid in the Commonwealth. MLAC was established by the Commonwealth in 1983 to ensure that people with low incomes facing critical, non-criminal legal problems would have access to legal information, advice, and representation.

MLAC's mission is to provide leadership and support to improve civil legal services to people with low incomes in Massachusetts through collaboration with the legal services community, the public, the bar, and the legislature.

MLAC receives funding from a variety of sources, primarily the state budget and Interest on Lawyers' Trust Accounts (IOLTA) funds, and disburses it to qualified civil legal aid organizations across the Commonwealth.

In FY25, MLAC received revenue from several sources:

- A state appropriation of \$51 million for General Support and \$2.5 million for the Access to Counsel Program
- IOLTA program and related funds of more than \$22.2 million
- Grants and other revenue totaling \$6.7 million

MLAC awarded a total of \$72,589,416 in grants and contracts in FY25.

In addition to funding, MLAC also provides these organizations with support in communications; data and research; engagement and culture; information technology; and program monitoring and evaluation. Detailed financial information, descriptions of the organizations funded, and MLAC's support services to legal aid organizations appear in the following pages.

About Civil Legal Aid

Civil legal aid organizations provide free information, advice, and representation to people with low incomes who otherwise would not receive help with serious legal issues related to housing, health care, immigration, employment, education, family law and domestic violence, disability, consumer benefits, elder issues and more. *As mentioned in the Introduction, to be eligible for MLAC-funded legal services in FY25, a household needed to have an annual income at or below 125 percent of the federal poverty level; in 2025, that equates to \$19,562 for an individual and \$40,187 for a family of four.*

Although the U.S. Constitution and the Massachusetts Constitution guarantee most criminal defendants a right to counsel, most people in civil cases do not have that right. That's true even though the consequences of civil cases can be severe: people can lose their homes, health, safety, family, and financial stability—without ever having spoken to a lawyer.

Civil legal aid seeks to ensure that all residents of Massachusetts have access to a lawyer and equal access to justice.

Cases and Clients: FY25

Total cases handled by MLAC-funded organizations: **46,896**

These cases benefited: **98,916 people**.

Cases handled by the **Disability Benefits Project**: **985**

These cases secure federal SSI/SSDI benefits for older residents and those with long-term disabilities.

Cases handled by the **Domestic Violence Legal Assistance Project**: **1,481**

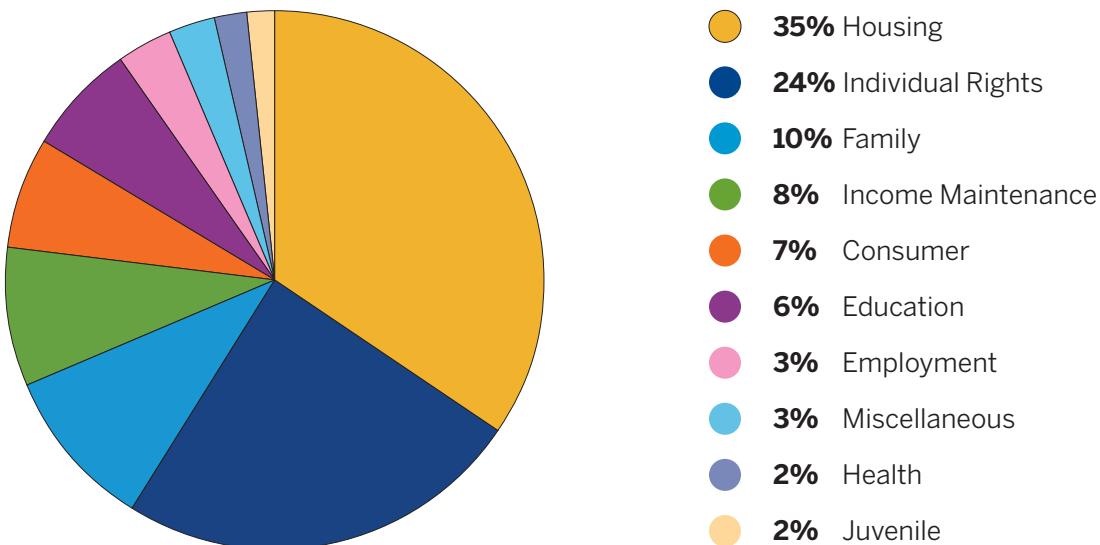
These cases address physical safety, child custody and support, and health care coverage.

Cases handled by the **Medicare Advocacy Project**: **211**

These cases assist seniors and people with disabilities.

Case Types

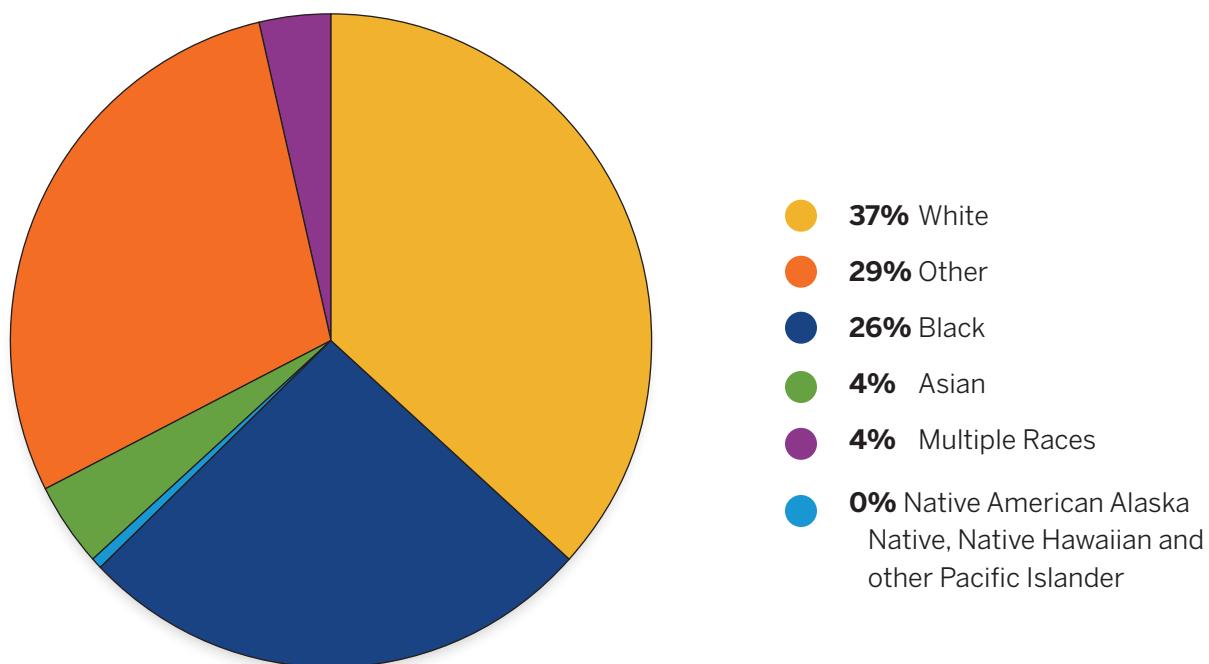
CASES CLOSED FY25



Client Demographics

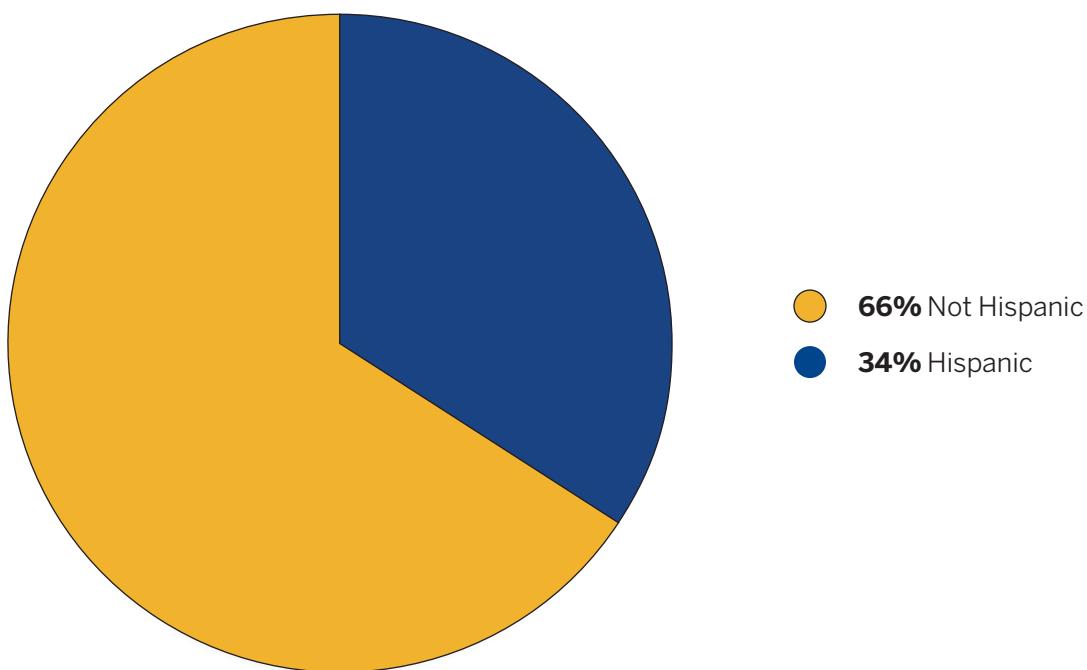
Race

CASES CLOSED FY25



Ethnicity

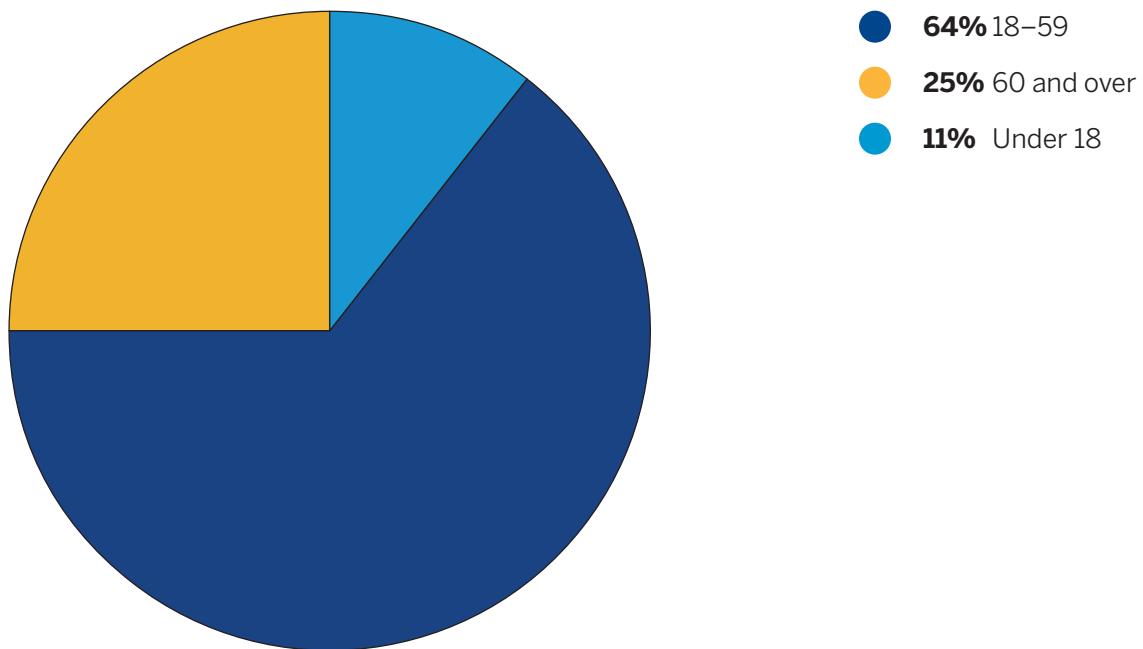
CASES CLOSED FY25



Client Demographics

Age Range

CASES CLOSED FY25



Serving all of Massachusetts

94% of Massachusetts cities and towns had at least one person with a case handled by a civil legal aid organization

68% of Massachusetts cities and towns had at least 10 people with a case handled by a civil legal aid organization

The few towns that did not have a single person helped by civil legal aid in FY25 are among the least populous in Massachusetts.

Legal Aid Staff

481 Attorneys

132 Paralegals

These numbers represent full-time equivalents (FTEs).

Pro Bono Attorneys

2,211 pro bono attorneys collectively accepted **2,470** cases through legal aid organizations on behalf of residents with low incomes, providing **37,390** hours of pro bono work worth **\$8,412,773**.

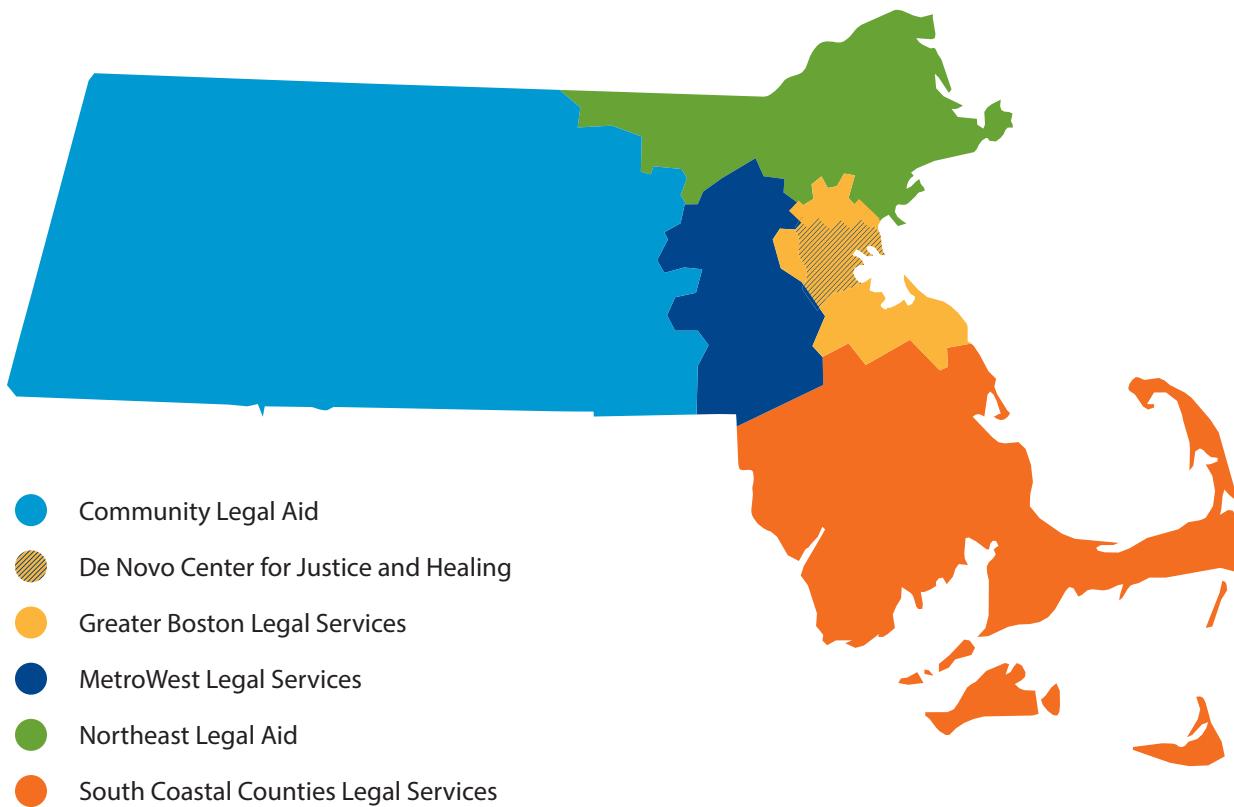
Legal Aid Organizations MLAC Funds

MLAC uses state-appropriated funds (under line item 0321-1600) to support two different types of civil legal aid organizations: regional and statewide.

REGIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

Regional organizations help people from a particular geographic area resolve a variety of civil legal problems related to housing, health care, unemployment insurance, public benefits, immigration, domestic violence, and other serious issues.

- **Community Legal Aid**, with offices in Worcester, Northampton, Pittsfield, Springfield, and Fitchburg, serves Central and Western Massachusetts.
- **De Novo Center for Justice and Healing**, based in Cambridge, serves Boston, Cambridge, and interior suburbs of Boston.
- **Greater Boston Legal Services**, with offices in Boston and Cambridge, serves the Greater Boston area.
- **MetroWest Legal Services**, based in Framingham, serves the MetroWest region.
- **Northeast Legal Aid**, with offices in Lawrence, Lowell, and Lynn, serves Essex and Northern Middlesex Counties.
- **South Coastal Counties Legal Services**, with offices in New Bedford, Fall River, Brockton, and Hyannis, serves Cape Cod, the Islands, and Southeastern Massachusetts.



STATEWIDE ORGANIZATIONS

Statewide organizations specialize in specific subjects or types of law and serve people across the Commonwealth. They also provide support to regional organizations.

- **Center for Law and Education** strives to make the right of all students to quality education a reality and to help communities address their own education problems effectively, with an emphasis on assistance to low-income students.
- **Center for Public Representation** is dedicated to enforcing and expanding the rights of people with disabilities and others who are in segregated settings.
- **Children's Law Center of Massachusetts** advocates for the rights of young people across Massachusetts.
- **Disability Law Center** is the Protection and Advocacy agency for Massachusetts, protecting the rights of people with disabilities.
- **Massachusetts Advocates for Children** represents children, students, and youth who face significant barriers because of their economic status, disability, race, ethnicity/culture, immigration status, language, and/or traumatic life experiences.
- **Massachusetts Law Reform Institute** provides statewide advocacy and leadership in advancing laws, policies, and practices that secure economic, racial, and social justice for people with low incomes and their communities.
- **National Consumer Law Center** advises on a variety of consumer law issues, including student loans, debt collection, disaster protection, mortgages, and consumer protection.
- **Political Asylum/Immigration Representation (PAIR) Project** provides legal services to asylum seekers and promotes the rights of detained immigrants.
- **Prisoners' Legal Services** protects the health and civil rights of people who are incarcerated in Massachusetts.
- **Veterans Legal Services** promotes the self-sufficiency, stability, and financial security of veterans with low incomes and those who are unhoused.

Specialized Funding for Victims of Crime and Other Vulnerable Populations

Civil Legal Aid for Victims of Crime

The Civil Legal Aid for Victims of Crime (CLAVC) initiative helps victims of crime throughout Massachusetts with their related civil legal problems—including family law, housing, immigration, disability rights, child welfare, education, consumer issues, identity theft, employment rights, and public benefits. Crime victims often experience difficult legal problems that cannot be addressed in the criminal law system. For example, a victim of an assault may be unable to work, leading to financial distress, including an eviction and debt collection problems. Or, a survivor of domestic violence may need legal help to get a divorce and child support. Jane Doe, Inc. and the National Consumer Law Center provide training and support. MLAC and the Massachusetts Law Reform Institute also provide training, support, and overall CLAVC project coordination. CLAVC is (partially) supported by the Massachusetts Office for Victim Assistance through state bridge funds, and/or a Victims of Crime Act of 1984 (VOCA) grant from the Office for Victims of Crime, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice, and/or the Human Trafficking and Drunk Driving Trust Funds. In FY25, the initiative awarded more than \$2.6 million to ten civil legal aid organizations which provide direct legal services to victims of crime.

Organizations that received CLAVC funds:

Children's Law Center of Massachusetts

Community Legal Aid

De Novo Center for Justice and Healing

Disability Law Center

Greater Boston Legal Services

Massachusetts Law Reform Institute

MetroWest Legal Services

Northeast Legal Aid

South Coastal Counties Legal Services

Victim Rights Law Center

Massachusetts Immigration Legal Assistance Fund

In 2019, an anonymous donor provided MLAC with funding to create the Massachusetts Immigration Legal Assistance Fund (MILAF). The purpose of this fund is to help legal aid organizations respond to persistent, unmet legal needs among immigrant and refugee populations in the Commonwealth. MILAF provides funding to organizations that work to fill the gaps within services to immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers. MILAF protects the rights of immigrants facing legal crises so they can pursue a stable future. In FY25, the fund awarded \$625,000 to 13 organizations. To date, the fund has awarded over \$5.2 million.

Organizations that received MILAF funds:

Community Legal Aid
Children's Law Center of Massachusetts
De Novo Center for Justice and Healing
Greater Boston Legal Services
Health Law Advocates
Justice at Work
Massachusetts Law Reform Institute
Northeast Legal Aid
PAIR Project
Prisoners' Legal Services
Rian Immigrant Center
South Coastal Counties Legal Services

Afghan Refugee Project

Three philanthropic partners provided funding for MLAC to create a program to assist Afghan refugees in filing and completing their legal status applications and resolutions in the Greater Boston area. Additional support was received from two resettlement agencies to fund five dedicated attorneys for this project. In FY24, the Afghan Refugee Project granted \$360,000 to three legal aid organizations. To date, the fund has distributed over \$1.4 million.

Organizations that received Afghan Refugee Project funds:

Greater Boston Legal Services
MetroWest Legal Services
PAIR Project

Strengthening the Legal Aid Network

In addition to operating funds, MLAC provides supportive services to its grantees in the following areas:

Central Technology Project

The Central Technology Project team at MLAC works to optimize and standardize technology for legal aid organizations to promote efficiency and ultimately improve the client experience. The Technology team also provides Help Desk support and training to legal aid staff and manages the organizations' hardware, software, telephone and internet services, video conferencing, and networks.

Communications

MLAC's Communications team supports organizational priorities through messaging and content creation. The team oversees MLAC's website and social media channels, where it promotes awareness of civil legal aid. Additionally, MLAC Communications supports MLAC grantees by convening regular meetings for communications and publishes a quarterly email newsletter.

Data and Analysis

MLAC's Data team employs sophisticated tools and analysis to support informed decision-making at MLAC, its grantees, and its funders. The team collects and analyzes a wide range of information about the legal aid organizations funded by MLAC, the clients they serve, and the low-income population of Massachusetts. With that data, the team reports on the legal aid workforce (e.g., workforce diversity, areas of practice, language ability, and experience) and the impact the workforce is having on behalf of people with low incomes (e.g., improved safety, health, income, housing, and more). The team then recommends new goals and strategies for addressing current and emerging legal needs. The Data team strives to fulfill its mission effectively while promoting transparency and trust.

Engagement and Culture

MLAC improves services to legal aid clients by building cultural competence among staff as well as promoting equality and inclusion within MLAC and the civil legal aid organizations it funds. Through education and training, improved hiring practices, statewide events, and collaboration, this initiative spurs legal aid organizations to exemplify our shared values of justice and fairness.

Equal Justice Coalition

The Equal Justice Coalition (EJC) works with the Massachusetts Bar Association and the Boston Bar Association to expand access to civil legal aid for Massachusetts residents with low incomes. The EJC includes bar associations, law firms, law schools, and other legal professionals who advocate to protect and increase the state appropriation for civil legal aid. The EJC engages in year-round legislative advocacy and organizes a “Walk to the Hill” each January.

Grants

MLAC’s Grants team manages all incoming and outgoing grants and oversees an online Grants Portal supporting grant application, contracting, budgeting, and reporting. The team works with grantees to ensure adherence with all state and federal requirements and MLAC policies through regular monitoring and technical assistance.

Program Evaluation

MLAC conducts periodic evaluations of its grantees using a thorough, time-tested peer review model that engages attorneys and other professionals skilled in organizational development and legal aid service delivery. Performance standards are drawn from the American Bar Association’s Standards for the Delivery of Civil Legal Services.

Client Story

Civil Legal Aid Helps Resilient Mom Keep Her Family Safe

Lizbeth Valerio-Green is a successful businesswoman and single mom of two. Her legal aid story is one of perseverance, strength, and determination in the face of difficulty.

Lizbeth's ex-husband abused her physically, psychologically, and economically. Once he banged her head so hard, she knew she had to get help. After that incident, Lizbeth obtained a restraining order against her ex, but he defied the order and she had no choice but to take herself and her young children to a homeless shelter for safety.

Lizbeth called her local legal aid office and connected with a Family Law attorney. With patience and persistence, the attorney helped Lizbeth divorce her abusive ex-husband and ensure the continued protection of the children. Lizbeth went on to become a certified medical and legal interpreter, and recently got her real estate license while working towards her Associate's degree. In January 2025, Lizbeth spoke at the Equal Justice Coalition's "Walk to the Hill" lobby day for civil legal aid at the Massachusetts State House.



Lizbeth Valerio-Green speaks at the 2025 "Walk to the Hill" – photo credit: Jenna Joyce Photography

"Legal aid helped me with a difficult divorce case...that protected me and my children. The best way I can repay what these organizations have done for me is by standing here today and urging you to continue supporting free legal services. Your support gives people like me hope and the chance to rebuild our lives."

Lizbeth Valerio-Green

Activities & Changes in Net Assets

FY25 Revenue

Commonwealth of Massachusetts Appropriation for General Support	\$51,000,000
Commonwealth of Massachusetts Appropriation for Access to Counsel Program	\$2,500,000
Massachusetts IOLTA Committee	
Interest on Lawyers' Trust Accounts	\$22,259,007
Program Opt-Out Bar Registration Fees	\$775,802
Cy Pres Awards	\$725,040
Pro Hac Vice Fees	\$290,168
Management Fees	\$178,079
Massachusetts Office for Victim Assistance	\$2,822,400
Interest and Other Income	\$1,160,788
Net Assets released from purpose restrictions	\$780,715
Donated Services	\$2,370
TOTAL	\$82,494,369

MLAC directs its state-appropriated funds from line item 0321-1600 to General Support, the Disability Benefits Project, the Medicare Advocacy Project, and the Domestic Violence Legal Assistance Project. MLAC directs its state-appropriated funds from line item 0321-1800 to the Access to Counsel Program.

Net Assets

Beginning of Year: July 1, 2024	End of year: June 30, 2025
\$16,435,140	\$20,427,883

FY25 Expenses

	Program Services	General and Administrative	Total
Personnel and Related Costs			
Salaries	\$958,667	\$1,166,616	\$2,125,283
Payroll taxes and fringe benefits	\$199,369	\$438,737	\$638,106
Total Personnel and Related Costs	\$1,158,036	\$1,605,353	\$2,763,389
Grants and Contracts Awarded			
General Support Funding			
Regional and Statewide Organizations	\$60,664,732	—	\$60,664,732
Domestic Violence Legal Assistance Project	\$2,437,260	—	\$2,437,260
Disability Benefits Project	\$1,178,888	—	\$1,178,888
Medicare Advocacy Project	\$596,976	—	\$596,976
Forgivable Loan Disbursements	\$122,144	—	\$122,144
Other Grants			
Access to Counsel Program	\$2,317,823	—	\$2,317,823
Massachusetts Office for Victim Assistance	\$2,655,261	—	\$2,655,261
Immigrant and Refugee Rights Funding	\$985,000	—	\$985,000
Website (including grants and vendor contracts)	\$707,177	—	\$707,177
Central Technology	\$354,274	—	\$354,274
Farmworkers	\$75,000	—	\$75,000
Language Access Program	\$100,000	—	\$100,000
Fellowships	\$394,881	—	\$394,881
Total Grants and Contracts Awarded	\$72,589,416	—	\$72,589,416
Other			
Professional Services	\$1,134,560	\$622,189	\$1,756,749
Occupancy	\$227,356	\$399,127	\$626,483
Other Support Services	\$479,502	\$49,115	\$528,617
Office and Other	\$8,478	\$59,599	\$68,077
Travel	\$5,451	\$1,062	\$6,513
Total Other	\$1,855,347	\$1,131,092	\$2,986,439
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$75,602,799	\$2,736,445	\$78,339,244

MLAC Fiscal Year 2025 Grants: \$72,577,654

Regional Organizations

Community Legal Aid

General Support	\$13,824,723
Access to Counsel Program	\$521,890
Special Projects	\$1,122,364
Victims of Crime Act Funding	\$521,907
Immigrant and Refugee Rights Funding	\$60,000
Fellowship	\$100,000
Farmworkers	\$75,000
TOTAL	\$16,225,884

De Novo Center for Justice and Healing

General Support	\$356,419
Access to Counsel Program	\$357,776
Special Projects	\$24,560
Victims of Crime Act Funding	\$123,467
Immigrant and Refugee Rights Funding	\$47,500
TOTAL	\$909,722

Greater Boston Legal Services

General Support	\$15,226,462
Access to Counsel Program	\$369,589
Special Projects	\$1,370,368
Victims of Crime Act Funding	\$479,412
Immigrant and Refugee Rights Funding	\$167,500
Technology	\$193,538
TOTAL	\$17,806,869

MetroWest Legal Services

General Support	\$2,626,203
Access to Counsel Program	\$240,196
Special Projects	\$180,972
Victims of a Crime Act Funding	\$98,861
Immigrant and Refugee Rights Funding	\$167,500
Technology	\$31,328
TOTAL	\$3,345,060

Northeast Legal Aid

General Support	\$7,700,931
Access to Counsel Program	\$519,810
Special Projects	\$547,804
Victims of Crime Act Funding	\$327,247
Immigrant and Refugee Rights Funding	\$47,500
TOTAL	\$9,143,292

South Coastal Counties Legal Services

General Support	\$8,646,026
Access to Counsel Program	\$210,000
Special Projects	\$701,932
Victims of Crime Act Funding	\$326,194
Immigrant and Refugee Rights Funding	\$47,500
Fellowship	\$70,000
TOTAL	\$10,001,652

Statewide Organizations**Center for Law and Education**

General Support	\$559,749
Technology Grant	\$7,427
TOTAL	\$567,176

Center for Public Representation

General Support	\$813,282
Technology Grant	\$10,333
TOTAL	\$823,615

Children's Law Center of Massachusetts

General Support	\$681,929
Fellowship	\$67,519
Victims of Crime Act Funding	\$121,618
Immigrant and Refugee rights Funding	\$45,000
TOTAL	\$916,066

Disability Law Center

General Support	\$1,119,498
Special Projects	\$182,256
Victims of Crime Act Funding	\$77,510
Technology	\$9,141
Fellowship	\$70,000
TOTAL	\$1,458,405

Massachusetts Advocates for Children

General Support	\$442,201
TOTAL	\$442,201

Massachusetts Law Reform Institute

General Support	\$6,716,985
Access to Counsel Program	\$48,567
Special Projects	\$82,868
Websites Project	\$692,226
Language Access Project	\$100,000
Victims of a Crime Act Funding	\$199,346
Immigrant and Refugee Rights Funding	\$20,000
Technology	\$99,479
TOTAL	\$7,959,471

National Consumer Law Center

General Support	\$478,400
TOTAL	\$478,400

PAIR Project

General Support	\$433,197
Immigrant and Refugee Rights Funding	\$167,500
Technology	\$621
TOTAL	\$601,318

Prisoners' Legal Services

General Support	\$727,674
Immigrant and Refugee Rights Funding	\$47,500
Fellowship	\$90,550
TOTAL	\$865,724

Veterans Legal Services

General Support	\$433,197
Technology	\$2,407
TOTAL	\$435,604

Community Organizations and Other Programs**Victims of Crime Act Funding**

Victim Rights Law Center	\$379,699
TOTAL	\$379,699

Immigrant and Refugee Rights Funding

Massachusetts Immigration Legal Assistance Fund	
Health Law Advocates	\$47,500
Justice at Work	\$60,000
Rian Immigrant Center	\$60,000
TOTAL	\$167,500

Access to Counsel Program

Volunteer Lawyers Project	\$49,995
TOTAL	\$49,995

GUIDE TO TERMS AND ABBREVIATIONS**General Support**

Funds are from the state appropriation.

Special Projects

Funds are from the state appropriation.

- Disability Benefits Project—**\$1,178,888**
- Domestic Violence Legal Assistance Project—**\$2,437,260**
- Medicare Advocacy Project—**\$596,976**

Victims of Crime Act

Funds are from a federal grant through the Massachusetts Office for Victim Assistance.

Immigrant and Refugee Rights Funding

Funds are from private foundations and refugee resettlement organizations.

- Massachusetts Immigration Legal Assistance Fund (MILAF)
- Afghan Refugee Project (ARP)

MLAC Board and Staff

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