

Annual Report

Fiscal Year 2015

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

Fiscal Year 2015 Accomplishments

- ▶ MLAC-funded programs employed 208 attorneys and 53 paralegals (full-time equivalents) in FY15.
- ▶ Despite persistent funding challenges, MLAC-funded programs closed 23,231 cases in FY15. This assistance benefited 76,198 individuals and family members in Massachusetts.
- ▶ 665 private attorneys collectively donated 36,571 hours of skilled pro-bono assistance through MLAC-funded programs, representing a value of over \$8 million.
- ▶ MLAC's Domestic Violence Legal Assistance Project represented 691 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 881 cases, winning federal SSI/SSDI benefits for clients in 79 percent of cases in which a decision was made. DBP brought \$564,823 in federal reimbursement to the Commonwealth and \$4.6 million in payments to clients.
- ▶ MLAC's Medicare Advocacy Project helped 408 elders and people with disabilities obtain the Medicare benefits to which they were entitled.

Fiscal Year 2015 Grants

REGIONAL PROGRAMS

Eastern Region

Greater Boston Legal Services

General Support	\$3,253,103
Domestic Violence Legal Assistance Project	\$766,096
Disability Benefits Project	\$309,584
Medicare Advocacy Project	\$289,288
Attorney General, HomeCorps	\$453,331
Fellowship	\$50,000
Technology Grants & Equipment	\$196,740
Justice AmeriCorps	\$23,000
Total	\$5,341,143

Boston College Legal Assistance Bureau

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

Community Legal Services and Counseling Center

General Support	\$90,848
Domestic Violence Legal Assistance Project	\$21,168
Disability Benefits Project	\$9,148
Justice AmeriCorps	\$11,500
Total	\$132,664

MetroWest Legal Services

General Support	\$457,901
Domestic Violence Legal Assistance Project	\$100,556
Disability Benefits Project	\$46,116
Attorney General, HomeCorps	\$115,153
Technology Grants & Equipment	\$26,572
Justice AmeriCorps	\$11,500
Total	\$757,798

Central/West Region

Community Legal Aid

General Support	\$2,804,703
Domestic Violence Legal Assistance Project	\$667,520
Disability Benefits Project	\$247,060
Medicare Advocacy Project	\$96,556
Attorney General, HomeCorps	\$665,659
Farmworkers	\$50,000
Justice AmeriCorps	\$23,000
Total	\$4,554,498

Northeast Region

Children's Law Center of Massachusetts

General Support	\$136,891
Total	\$136,891

Northeast Legal Aid

General Support	\$1,469,696
Domestic Violence Legal Assistance Project	\$376,396
Disability Benefits Project	\$159,208
Attorney General, HomeCorps	\$335,499
Justice AmeriCorps	\$11,500
Total	\$2,352,299

Southeast Region

South Coastal Counties Legal Services

General Support	\$1,708,889
Domestic Violence Legal Assistance Project	\$422,660
Disability Benefits Project	\$172,100
Medicare Advocacy Project	\$61,136
Attorney General, HomeCorps	\$261,593
Justice AmeriCorps	\$11,500
Total	\$2,637,878

STATEWIDE PROGRAMS

Center for Law and Education

General Support	\$122,641
Fellowship	\$26,667
Technology Grants & Equipment	\$8,027
Total	\$157,334

Center for Public Representation

General Support	\$208,491
Disability Benefits Project	\$35,396
Technology Grants & Equipment	\$9,618
Total	\$253,504

Disability Law Center

General Support	\$245,283
Disability Benefits Project	\$182,256
Technology Grants & Equipment	\$9,080
Total	\$436,619

Massachusetts Advocates for Children

General Support	\$96,887
Total	\$96,887

Massachusetts Law Reform Institute

General Support	\$1,471,691
Domestic Violence Legal Assistance Project	\$82,868
Attorney General, HomeCorps	\$36,612
Fellowship	\$92,139
Technology Grants & Equipment	\$103,504
Website	\$329,883
Total	\$2,116,697

National Consumer Law Center

General Support	\$122,641
Attorney General, HomeCorps	\$386,015
Total	\$508,656

Prisoners' Legal Services

General Support	\$159,434
Technology Grants & Equipment	\$4,731
Total	\$164,165

Volunteer Lawyers Project*

Attorney General, HomeCorps	\$47,042
Total	\$47,042

*VLP only received funds from the Attorney General's HomeCorps Initiative.

Statement of Activities and Changes in Net Assets

for the year ending June 30, 2015

REVENUE

Commonwealth of Massachusetts Appropriation	\$14,731,500
Attorney General's Office	
HomeCorps Program	\$2,300,904
HomeCorps Management Fees	\$61,667
Massachusetts IOLTA Committee	
Interest on Lawyers' Trust Accounts Program	\$3,712,441
Opt-out Bar Registration Fees	\$760,313
Pro Hac Vice Fees	\$117,925
Cy Pres Awards	\$87,032
IOLTA Committee Management Fees	\$73,792
Interest and Other Income	\$27,852
Donated Legal Services	\$67,951
Total Revenues	\$21,941,377

EXPENSES	General Support	Restricted Projects	Program Support Initiatives	IOLTA Administrative Services	MLAC Administrative	Total
Grants Awarded						
General Support	\$13,083,441					\$13,083,441
Loan Forgiveness	\$88,063					\$88,063
Disability Benefits Project		\$1,178,896				\$1,178,896
Medicare Advocacy Project		\$446,980				\$446,980
Domestic Violence Legal Assistance Project		\$2,437,264				\$2,437,264
HomeCorps		\$2,300,904				\$2,300,904
Salaries**		\$48,743	\$462,740	\$10,410	\$554,433	\$1,076,326
Occupancy			\$22,053	\$60,368	\$212,031	\$294,452
Payroll taxes and fringe benefits			\$112,728	\$3,014	\$138,379	\$254,121
Professional Services			\$487,379		\$354,695	\$842,074
Other support services			\$299,066		\$62,588	\$361,654
Fellowships			\$168,806			\$168,806
Travel			\$5,923		\$28,911	\$34,834
Office			\$3,293			\$3,293
Depreciation					\$35,390	\$35,390
Total expenses before allocation of administrative expense	\$13,171,504	\$6,412,787	\$1,561,988	\$73,792	\$1,386,427	\$22,606,498
Allocation of Administrative Expense	\$1,318,476				(\$1,318,476)	
Total Expenses	\$14,489,980	\$6,412,787	\$1,561,988	\$73,792	\$67,951	\$22,606,498

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 FY15 \$2,224,552 in IOLTA funds was directed to general support and \$10,039 to loan forgiveness.

** Salaries for Restricted Projects are for HomeCorps only.

ASSETS

Net Assets June 30, 2014	\$2,652,883
FY15 Net Income or (Loss)	(\$665,121)
Net Assets June 30, 2015	\$1,987,762

Meet a Legal Aid Client

Seven-year-old Jamal* (a Yankees fan despite a lifetime living in Massachusetts) is one of the more than 80 children who have benefited from legal intervention under Greater Boston Legal Services' School to Prison Pipeline Intervention Project, created in fall 2014. Through the Project, attorney Elizabeth McIntyre represents Boston-area children with disabilities who face illegal school suspensions, ensuring that they receive any trauma-informed special education services and home-based mental health care that they need to make their time at school meaningful.

Having endured years of violence and homelessness, Jamal was diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder. Combined with his ADHD, these traumas led to behavioral challenges. For example, one day when his class was listening to music, Jamal did not want to listen and covered his ears. One of his teachers leaned over to pry Jamal's hands off his ears and he panicked. He screamed at his teachers, smacked their hands away, and ran out of the room. He was chased by school staff until they encircled him. Staff pushed him to the floor and held him there, and when he hit, bit, and scratched them to get free, they suspended him.

After Attorney McIntyre met Jamal and his family, she organized a meeting with school staff. She reminded the school of the stringent legal standard for restraints and impressed upon them how restraints re-traumatize children. They discussed the school's obligations under the new school discipline law that requires schools to use suspension only as a last resort. Attorney McIntyre defended Jamal in suspension hearings and connected Jamal's family with mental health care providers who provide child-centered, trauma-informed in-home therapy.

As of this writing, Jamal has not been suspended or restrained in over a year. After his school learned to accommodate his disabilities, he started soaking up the material at an astonishing rate and his reading and writing skills improved greatly. This child may have been headed toward failure in school, but just a few months after Attorney McIntyre's intervention he cheerfully showed her his school papers on his family's refrigerator, proudly pointing to a sticker that said "GREAT!" Jamal explained, "That's because I'm great."



Jamal

* Name has been changed to protect the privacy of the client.

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