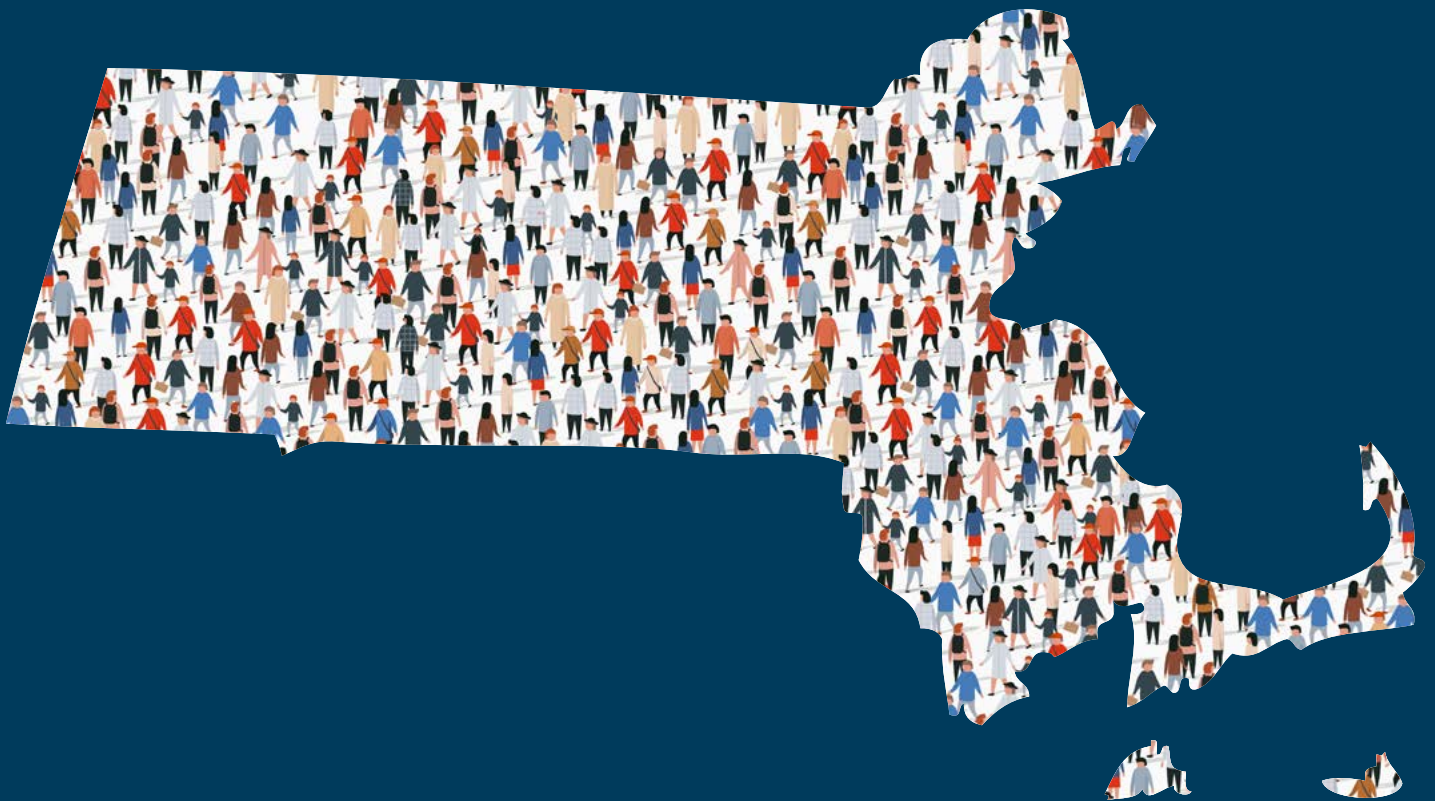


Massachusetts Legal Assistance Corporation

Funding Justice for All



FY19 Report to the Governor
and the General Court

Massachusetts
Legal
Assistance
Corporation

Dear Governor Baker, Clerk James, and Clerk Hurley,

Massachusetts is a leader among states in its willingness to invest in equal access to justice.

Thanks to the increasing state appropriation for the Massachusetts Legal Assistance Corporation (through line item 0321-1600), legal aid organizations across the Commonwealth have had greater resources to assist low-income residents facing serious legal issues. The organizations MLAC funds provide essential, high-quality representation to people struggling with problems related to consumer issues, disability rights, domestic violence, education, employment, health care, housing, immigration, opioid addiction, prisoners' rights, public benefits, veterans' benefits, and the well-being of older adults.

We are pleased to present this report on our work in Fiscal Year 2019. It describes the organizations that receive funding from MLAC, the amount each organization received in FY19, the performance of these organizations in delivering legal assistance, and the individuals served—as required by MLAC's founding statute. In Fall 2019, MLAC will publish its annual report, which will include additional information about the work of Massachusetts legal aid organizations.

On behalf of MLAC and the organizations that it funds, I extend my deepest thanks to you and the legislature for supporting civil legal aid. I look forward to continuing to work with you in pursuit of equal access to justice for all.



Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Lynne M. Parker'.

Lynne M. Parker
Executive Director



MLAC at a glance

The Massachusetts Legal Assistance Corporation is the largest source for civil legal aid funding in the Commonwealth.

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's mission is to provide "leadership and support to improve civil legal services to low-income people 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 Account (IOLTA) funds, and disperses it to qualified civil legal aid organizations across the Commonwealth.

In FY2019, MLAC received revenue from several sources:

- A state appropriation of \$21.04 million
- IOLTA funds of over \$6.6 million
- Grants and other revenue totaling \$6.58 million

MLAC awarded a total of \$29,023,186 in grants to:

- 6 Regional Legal Aid Organizations
- 12 Statewide Legal Aid Organizations
- 6 Community Organizations

In addition to funding, MLAC also provides these organizations with support in: communications; data and research; development of new attorneys; diversity, equity, and inclusion; and information technology. 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 advice and representation to low-income people who otherwise would not receive help with serious legal issues related to housing, healthcare, immigration, employment, education, family law and domestic violence, disability, consumer problems, and elder issues. To be eligible for legal services in FY19, a family of four would have to have an annual income at or below 125 percent of the federal poverty level: \$32,188.

Although the U.S. Constitution and the Massachusetts Constitution guarantee 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.



Highlights from Fiscal Year 2019

37,267

Total Cases Handled
by MLAC-funded
organizations

These cases benefitted more than

88,000 people

1,534

Cases handled by the
Disability Benefits Project,
securing federal SSI/SSDI
benefits for elderly
residents and those with
long-term disabilities

1,927

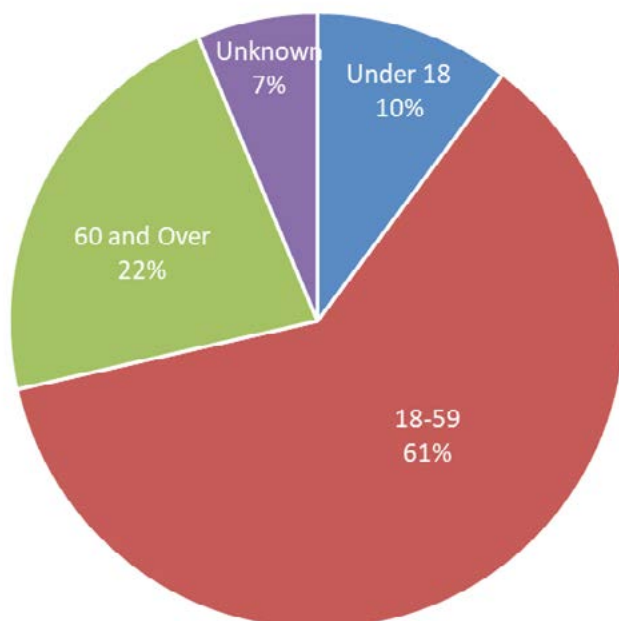
Cases handled by the
Domestic Violence Legal
Assistance Project, addressing
physical safety, child custody
and support, and
health care coverage

289

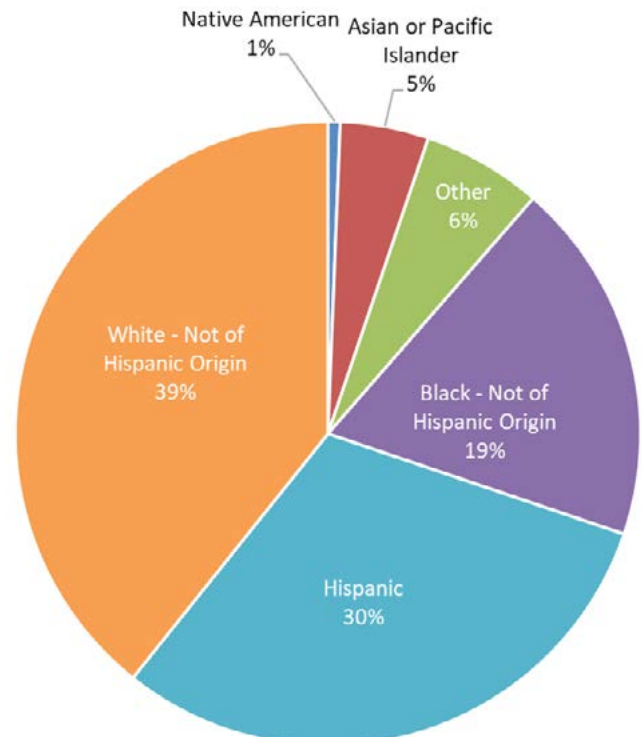
Cases handled by the
Medicare Advocacy Project,
assisting elders and people
with disabilities

Legal Aid Client Demographics in Fiscal Year 2019

Age



Race/Ethnicity



Serving all of Massachusetts

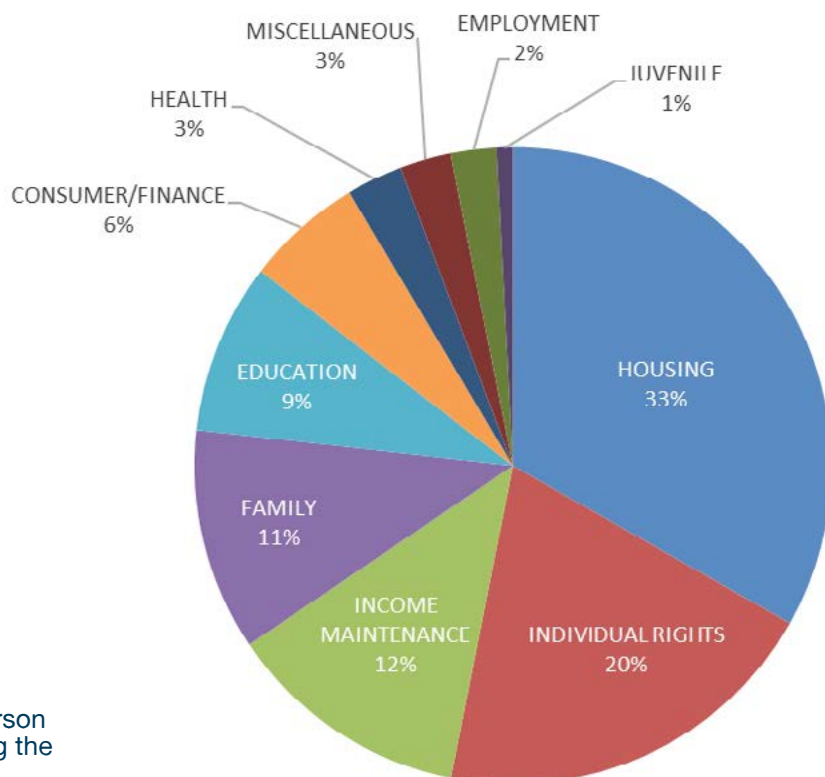


94% of Massachusetts cities and towns had at least one person with a case handled by a civil legal aid organization

62% of Massachusetts cities and towns had at least 10 people with cases handled by a civil legal aid organization

The 6 percent of towns that did not have a single person helped by civil legal aid in fiscal year 2019 are among the least populous in Massachusetts.

Type of Case



Full-Time Legal Aid Staff

279

Attorneys

62

Paralegals

Pro Bono Attorneys

2,489 private attorneys

collectively accepted

4,660 cases

through legal aid organizations on behalf of low-income residents, providing

73,802 hours

of pro bono work worth

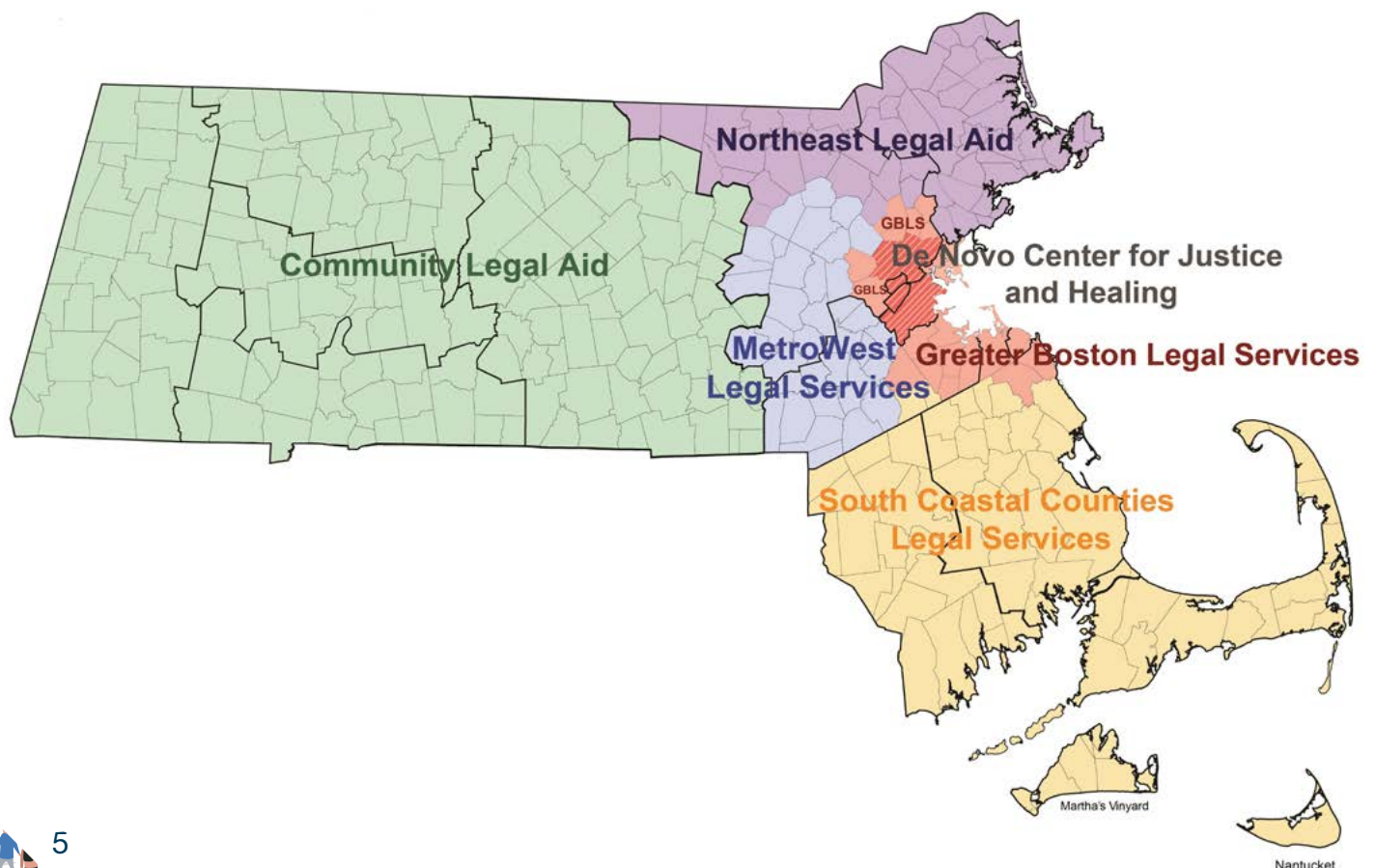
\$16,605,461

Organizations MLAC Funds

MLAC uses state-appropriated funds to support two different types of civil legal aid organizations: regional and statewide.

Regional Organizations help people from a particular geographic area resolve a variety of types of civil legal problems related to housing, health care, 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. (It was formerly known as Community Legal Services and Counseling Center (CLSACC).)
- **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 specialize in specific subjects or types of law and serve people across the Commonwealth. They also provide support to the regional organizations.

- **Center for Law and Education** provides expertise on education-related cases.
- **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 low-income people and 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 homeless and low-income veterans.

With additional funding, MLAC supports other statewide organizations that provide legal aid.

- **Victim Rights Law Center** provides free legal services for sexual assault victims with legal issues in the areas of privacy, safety, housing, education, employment, immigration, LGBTQ-specific issues, criminal justice advocacy, and financial stability.
- **Volunteer Lawyers Project** provides volunteer lawyers, paralegals, and law students—led by staff attorneys—to give equal access to representation to the people of Greater Boston.



Special Projects

The Massachusetts Legal Assistance Corporation supports initiatives to assist the legal aid organizations it funds and expand their funding sources.

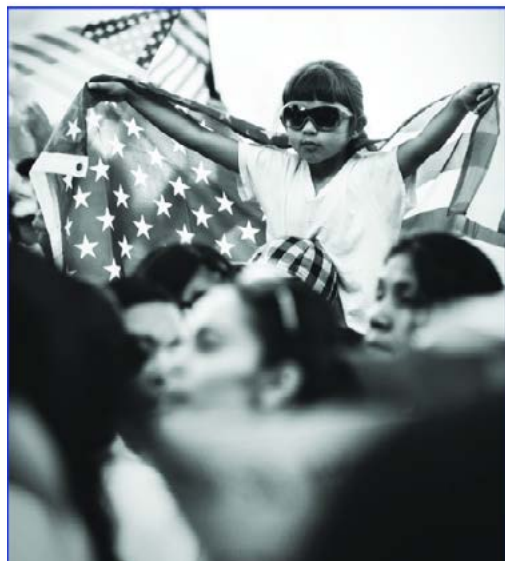
Greater Boston Immigrant Defense Fund

The **Greater Boston Immigrant Defense Fund** is a partnership of the city of Boston, the Massachusetts Law Reform Institute, MLAC, and a group of foundations to support legal aid and community organizations that provide legal representation and education to immigrants facing deportation.

The GBIDF, part of the Delivering on the Dream national funding network, is a public-private partnership and funder collaborative that works to increase access to legal services and legal information to defend immigrant communities, refugees, and temporary status holders. It was launched in 2017 by MLAC, Boston Mayor Martin J. Walsh, and MLRI as a two-year pilot program, awarding more than \$1.1 million to legal services organizations and nonprofit community partners. The Fund is committed to building the capacity of Eastern Massachusetts to protect and defend immigrant and refugee communities by increasing legal representation for individuals facing deportation proceedings in Immigration Court who cannot afford a lawyer. It also provides community education and preparedness programming, such as Know Your Rights trainings, legal screenings, and referrals.

The Growing Wave of Federal Immigration Restrictions

What's at Stake for Massachusetts?



Civil Legal Aid for Victims of Crime

The **Civil Legal Aid for Victims of Crime** initiative helps victims of crime throughout Massachusetts with their related civil legal problems — including family law, housing, immigration, disability rights, child welfare, education, consumer, identity theft, employment rights and public benefits.

Crime victims often experience difficult legal problems that cannot be solved through 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. The Massachusetts Law Reform Institute and the Massachusetts Legal Assistance Corporation also provide training, support and overall CLAVC project coordination.

Nine civil legal aid organizations provide direct legal services to victims of crime through this initiative: Community Legal Aid, De Novo Center for Justice and Healing, Greater Boston Legal Services, MetroWest Legal Services, Northeast Legal Aid, South Coastal Counties Legal Services, Children's Law Center, Disability Law Center, and Victim Rights Law Center.



Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

The **Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion initiative** improves services to low-income clients by building cultural competence, addressing diversity-related issues, and promoting equity 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 reflect the diversity of their clients and exemplify our shared values of justice and fairness.

The Statewide Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Council is led by MLAC's Director of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion and consists of staff representatives from legal aid organizations across the Commonwealth. It encourages transparency and communication between MLAC and the organizations it funds and promotes shared solutions to persistent inequities.

Fellowships

MLAC funds two fellowships.

The **Racial Justice Fellowship** was created in 2006 to expand the reach of legal aid in communities that have had difficulty obtaining access to the justice system or legal services due to linguistic or cultural barriers. The goal of the fellowship is to use systemic advocacy and other strategies to address pervasive problems of racial injustice, given the disproportionately high rate of poverty among communities of color and the unmet legal needs of these communities.

The Racial Justice Fellowship funds a two-year position at legal aid organizations in Massachusetts.

The **Bart Gordon Fellowship** helps legal aid organizations enhance their services by providing funding to hire recent law school graduates equipped to assist underserved communities. The fellowship, which rotates among the Massachusetts legal aid organizations that receive funding from MLAC, provides financial support to new attorneys qualified to address these barriers.

One new Gordon Fellow is funded each year for a one-year term. (There is an option to renew for a second year.) Bart J. Gordon was a Springfield attorney and a founding member of the MLAC Board of Directors. This fellowship program was renamed in his honor after his passing in 1995.

Central Technology Project

The Central Technology Project seeks to standardize technology for MLAC- and Legal Services Corporation-funded legal aid organizations in Massachusetts. It provides user support and training and serves as the Help Desk for all legal aid staff in Massachusetts.

The staff of the Central Technology Project oversees the central technology system and software, including Voice over IP, CITRIX, Microsoft Outlook, LegalFiles, and wide area network, as well as data collection and reporting mechanisms for all funders.

Legal Aid Clients

Fred's Story

Legal aid saves family on the brink of foreclosure



Fred Connelly always worked hard, juggling jobs in construction, teaching, and wood-working in his basement workshop to make ends meet. He never imagined he'd face foreclosure on a house he built himself and lived in for 30 years.

Fred and his wife, Rose, bought their house in 1978. He renovated the house himself, digging and laying the foundation and constructing walls to transform what was once a summer cottage into a year-round house fit for an entire family. In that house, Fred and Rose raised their son and grandson. The four live there to this day.

"What these people do is nothing short of amazing."

"After working hard my whole life and playing by the rules, I never thought my family and I would end up homeless," said Fred. But a sudden injury set off a chain of events that left him unable to pay his mortgage.

When a lull in the construction business came, Fred took a job teaching the trade in the same vocational high school he attended—a position that he held for more than 30 years. In February 2005, Fred broke up a fight between two students and was pushed into staging equipment, resulting in three herniated disks. The injury and four resulting surgeries took Fred out of the work force for many years. Not long after Fred's injury, Rose was laid off from her job, and Fred's son was diagnosed with cancer. Without steady income and facing numerous health issues, the family struggled to make mortgage payments. Fred tried to refinance, but without success.

Eventually, Fred received a foreclosure notice instructing him to remove all of their possessions from the house within 48 hours. With help from their neighbors, the family moved out everything they owned, including Fred's elaborate – and heavy – basement carpentry shop.

Rose's sister referred the family to Quincy Community Action Programs (QCAP), where a representative told Fred that only a judge could make the family leave their home. QCAP referred the family to Greater Boston Legal Services. That's where they met their lawyer, Todd Kaplan, who worked hundreds of hours over two and a half years, in housing court, with the department of Housing and Urban Development, and with two brokerage firms.

Todd's advocacy paid off. "The last time we were in court, the judge looked at the lawyers from the bank and said 'You're not taking this man's house. Not now. Not after he built it himself. We have to do something.' I knew then there might be a chance to get my home back," Fred said.

Todd negotiated a plan for Fred to repurchase the house. With his back beginning to heal, Fred has returned to work with his son at a contracting company. He is thankful to Greater Boston Legal Services. "What these people do is nothing short of amazing," Fred said, "I want other people to be able to get the help that I did."



Carmen's Story

Mother and son receive asylum thanks to legal aid

Carmen feared for her life when she fled violence in El Salvador and journeyed with her young son to safety. Unfortunately, their arrival in the United States brought new challenges.

"I made the decision to come to the United States, and once I crossed the border things became very difficult for me," Carmen said through an interpreter. U.S. immigration officials detained Carmen and her son and began deportation proceedings in Boston immigration court. Unless Carmen prevailed in court, she would likely be forced to return to El Salvador, where she feared they might be tortured or killed.

Defendants in immigration court do not have a right to an attorney. Carmen and her son faced the prospect of navigating a complex court system in an unfamiliar language alone.

Carmen said that U.S. officials treated her like a criminal, and the stress she experienced turned into severe depression. As she received mental health treatment at the Edward M. Kennedy Community Health Center in Framingham, Carmen shared her concerns with her behavioral health provider. The therapist referred her to Katie Condon Grace, a legal aid lawyer with MetroWest Legal Services who works at the health center twice a week through a Medical Legal Partnership. Katie determined that Carmen and her son had a strong claim for asylum.



"She is not just my lawyer. She is a part of me. She is a part of my family."

Katie represented Carmen and her son in Boston immigration court, as Carmen feared for her life. The proceedings dragged on for more than a year and a half before an immigration judge finally granted them asylum. They are now legal permanent residents who live without fear of the violence they faced in El Salvador. Carmen credits Katie for changing the course of her life. "For me she is not just my lawyer. She is a part of me. She is a part of my family," Carmen said.

Legal Aid in the News

Community Legal Aid lawyers file suit against retirement home owners claiming disability and religious discrimination . . . In Central West Justice Center case, SJC rules employees at Chang & Sons farm in Whately are entitled to overtime . . . Welfare family cap is lifted in, following advocacy by MLRI . . . Massachusetts Advocates for Children case reveals unlawful discipline practice at Boston Public Schools . . . Greater Boston Legal Services represents underpaid workers at Happy Lamb Hot Pot . . . As rents soar, tenants try to stave off eviction

Fiscal Year 2019 Grants: \$29,023,186

Statewide Organizations

Center for Law and Education

General Support	\$181,390.82
Technology	\$10,866.97
Total	\$192,257.79

Center for Public Representation

General Support	\$308,364.52
Disability Benefits Project	\$37,148.00
Technology	\$13,243.83
Total	\$358,756.35

Children's Law Center of Massachusetts

General Support	\$215,874.98
Fellowship	\$50,000.00
Immigration Relief Grant	\$21,000.00
Massachusetts Office for Victim Assistance	\$56,546.87
Total	\$343,421.85

Disability Law Center

General Support	\$362,783.67
Disability Benefits Project	\$182,256.00
Technology	\$17,518.61
Massachusetts Office for Victim Assistance	\$83,549.37
Total	\$646,107.65

Massachusetts Advocates for Children

General Support	\$143,298.95
Fellowship	\$50,000.00
Total	\$193,298.95

Massachusetts Law Reform Institute

General Support	\$2,176,691.30
Domestic Violence Legal Assistance Project	\$82,868.00
Fellowship	\$17,817.14
Technology	\$136,631.73
Website	\$382,503.00
Grantmakers Concerned with Immigrants and Refugees	\$25,000.00
Immigration Relief Grant	\$49,000.00
Massachusetts Office for Victim Assistance	\$230,629.07
Total	\$3,101,140.24

National Consumer Law Center

General Support	\$181,390.82
Massachusetts Office for Victim Assistance	\$20,724.04
Total	\$202,114.86

PAIR Project

General Support	\$53,716.08
Grantmakers Concerned with Immigrants and Refugees	\$70,000.00
Immigration Relief Grant	\$42,000.00
Total	\$165,716.08

Prisoners' Legal Services

General Support	\$235,807.41
Technology	\$2,450.20
Total	\$238,257.61

Veterans Legal Services

General Support	\$105,245.57
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Victim Rights Law Center

Massachusetts Office for Victim Assistance	\$491,205.05
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Volunteer Lawyers Project

Massachusetts Office for Victim Assistance	\$84,976.05
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One-time Appropriation

Lawrence Family Development, Inc.	\$40,000.00
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Regional Organizations

Greater Boston Legal Services

General Support	\$4,862,059.63
Disability Benefits Project	\$319,908.00
Domestic Violence Legal Assistance Project	\$755,736.00
Medicare Advocacy Project	\$242,148.00
Fellowship	\$80,000.00
Technology	\$274,357.18
Grantmakers Concerned with Immigrants and Refugees	\$85,000.00
Immigration Relief Grant	\$52,500.00
Massachusetts Office for Victim Assistance	\$761,981.31
Total	\$7,433,690.12

De Novo Center for Justice and Healing

General Support	\$114,401.74
Disability Benefits Project	\$7,528.00
Domestic Violence Legal Assistance Project	\$17,784.00
Massachusetts Office for Victim Assistance	\$133,166.53
Immigration Relief Grant	\$26,250.00
Total	\$299,130.27

MetroWest Legal Services

General Support	\$700,894.26
Disability Benefits Project	\$46,116.00
Domestic Violence Legal Assistance Project	\$108,944.00
Technology	\$39,566.62
Grantmakers Concerned with Immigrants and Refugees	\$75,000.00
Immigration Relief Grant	\$21,000.00
Massachusetts Office for Victim Assistance	\$131,922.04
Total	\$1,123,442.92

Community Legal Aid

General Support	\$4,335,871.38
Disability Benefits Project	\$248,140.00
Domestic Violence Legal Assistance Project	\$673,948.00
Fellowship	\$50,000.00
Medicare Advocacy Project	\$127,948.00
Farmworkers	\$50,000.00
Immigration Relief Grant	\$61,250.00
Massachusetts Office for Victim Assistance	\$907,114.99
Total	\$6,454,272.37

Northeast Legal Aid

General Support	\$2,350,736.78
Disability Benefits Project	\$166,368.00
Domestic Violence Legal Assistance Project	\$393,020.00
Grantmakers Concerned with Immigrants and Refugees	\$85,000.00
Immigration Relief Grant	\$42,000.00
Massachusetts Office for Victim Assistance	\$373,619.54
Total	\$3,410,744.32

South Coastal Counties Legal Services

General Support	\$2,605,383.42
Disability Benefits Project	\$171,428.00
Domestic Violence Legal Assistance Project	\$404,968.00
Fellowship	\$50,000.00
Medicare Advocacy Project	\$76,884.00
Grantmakers Concerned with Immigrants and Refugees	\$80,000.00
Immigration Relief Grant	\$35,000.00
Massachusetts Office for Victim Assistance	\$535,745.12
Total	\$3,959,408.54

Community Organizations

Brazilian Worker Center	\$30,000.00
Catholic Social Services of Fall River	\$30,000.00
Centro Presente	\$30,000.00
Chelsea Collaborative	\$30,000.00
Essex County Community Organization	\$30,000.00
Immigrant Family Services Institute	\$30,000.00

Activities & Changes in Net Assets

REVENUE

Commonwealth of Massachusetts Appropriation	\$21,040,000
Massachusetts Office for Victim Assistance	\$3,937,226
Massachusetts IOLTA Committee	
Interest on Lawyers' Trust Accounts Program	\$6,619,294
Cy Pres Awards	\$241,850
Opt-out Bar Registration Fees	\$881,329
Pro Hac Vice Fees	\$169,676
Management Fees	\$101,707
Interest and Other Income	\$183,038
Net assets released from purpose restrictions	\$1,015,000
Donated Legal Services	\$50,594
Total Revenues	\$34,239,714

EXPENSES

	General Support	Restricted Projects	Program Support Initiatives	IOLTA Administrative Services	MLAC Administrative	Total
Grants Awarded						
General Support	\$19,901,049					\$19,901,049
Disability Benefits Project	\$1,178,892					\$1,178,892
Medicare Advocacy Project	\$446,980					\$446,980
Domestic Violence Legal Assistance Project	\$2,437,268					\$2,437,268
Massachusetts Office for Victim Assistance		\$3,843,743				\$3,843,743
Immigration Relief Funding		\$950,000				\$950,000
Salaries		\$80,863	\$635,328	\$14,467	\$678,497	\$1,409,155
Payroll taxes and fringe benefits		\$23,390	\$161,148	\$4,168	\$139,497	\$328,203
Occupancy			\$44,861	\$70,688	\$355,727	\$471,276
Professional Services		\$28,135	\$566,726		\$342,197	\$937,058
Other support services		\$14,281	\$480,222		\$38,076	\$532,579
Fellowships			\$297,817			\$297,817
Travel		\$121	\$8,511		\$20,880	\$29,512
Office and other		\$1,445	\$1,958	\$9,384	\$52,879	\$65,666
Bad debt			\$96,642			\$96,642
Depreciation					\$17,647	\$17,647
Total expenses before allocation of administrative expense	\$23,964,189	\$4,941,978	\$2,293,213	\$98,707	\$1,645,400	\$32,943,487
Allocation of Administrative Expense	\$1,584,558	\$10,248			\$(1,594,806)	
Total Expenses	\$25,584,747	\$4,952,226	\$2,293,213	\$98,707	\$50,594	\$32,943,487

MLAC directs all of its state-appropriated funds for general support, the Disability Benefits Project, the Medicare Advocacy Project, and the Domestic Violence Legal Assistance Project. General support is supplemented by IOLTA funds. In FY19, \$2,924,189 in IOLTA funds were directed to general support.

ASSETS

Net Assets June 30, 2018	\$3,046,154
Net Assets released from purpose restrictions	\$(690,000)
FY19 Net Income or (Loss) without donor restrictions	\$1,296,227
Net Assets June 30, 2019	\$3,652,381

MLAC Board of Directors

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