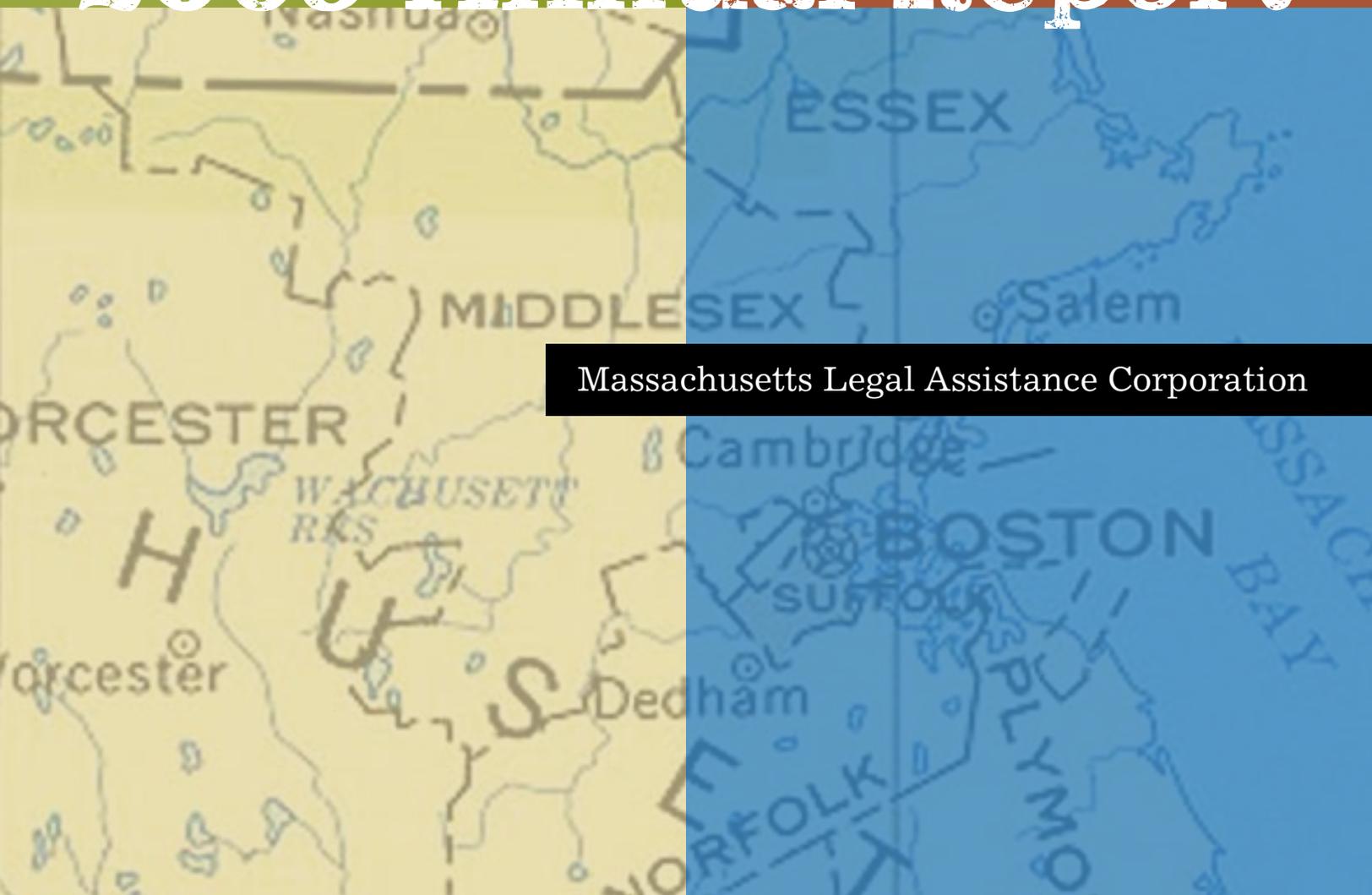


2009

The Massachusetts Legal Assistance Corporation is the largest funding source for civil legal aid programs in Massachusetts. It was established by the State Legislature in 1983 to ensure that low-income people with critical non-criminal legal problems would have access to legal information, advice and representation. With funding from the Commonwealth and the IOLTA program, 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.

2009 Annual Report



Massachusetts Legal Assistance Corporation

2009 was an incredibly difficult year for civil legal aid – both across the country and here in Massachusetts. Revenue from MLAC’s primary source of funding, the Interest on Lawyers’ Trust Accounts (IOLTA) program, plummeted, forcing severe reductions to the already tight budgets of local legal aid programs just as the need for legal services skyrocketed.

From FY08 to FY09, MLAC saw its income from IOLTA drop by 63 percent, from \$17 million in FY08 to \$6.1 million in FY09, which forced MLAC to cut general support grants to programs by 45 percent (from \$23.6 million in FY08 to \$12.9 million in FY09). The cuts would have been much worse had we not used our entire reserve of \$3.5 million to cushion their effect.

In response, programs have instituted drastic cost-savings measures, instituting furloughs, leaving positions unfilled, reducing salaries and, as a last resort, laying off attorneys and paralegals. At the same time, calls to some programs have been up 25 to 40 percent.

Forced once again to do more with less, advocates have continued to fight for their clients’ rights – protecting tenants from eviction following foreclosure on their landlords, keeping victims of domestic violence and their children safe from continued abuse, and securing desperately needed federal benefits for elders and people living with disabilities (see Client Stories for some examples of their achievements).

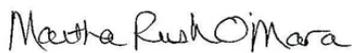
As dramatic and unfortunate as the decline in funding has been during the past year, civil legal aid has survived far more difficult battles. In 2003, then-Governor Mitt Romney vetoed MLAC’s entire funding, which, fortunately, was restored by the legislature.

Just as we continued to grow and thrive after that near-disaster, we are determined to stay strong and come back from this financial downfall more committed than ever. There have been two steep cutbacks in funding for civil legal aid since federal funding began 45 years ago – 1982 and 1996 – and each time legal aid has come back changed but stronger.

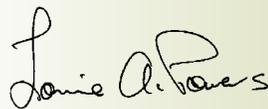
Looking ahead to the n

The story of the National Consumer Law Center (NCLC) illustrates this tenacity. In 1996, Congress ordered the federal Legal Services Corporation to defund the entire network of national and state support centers, including NCLC. This action deprived NCLC of 60 percent of its funding. NCLC quickly rebounded by transforming its fundraising and diversifying its sources of revenue. Today, its operating budget has nearly quadrupled. The permanent staff is now close to 50, and the national stature of the organization has soared. In August 2008, NCLC moved into its newly purchased offices at 7 Winthrop Square in downtown Boston, having completed a \$5.5 million capital campaign. The office provides wonderful space, not only for NCLC, but also for MLAC and the Massachusetts IOLTA Committee.

Unfortunately, we are not certain when the economy and IOLTA will rebound. FY10 will confront us with even greater challenges – both our state appropriation and the IOLTA revenue remain vulnerable, and our reserves have been depleted. However, despite the bleak outlook, we do know that along with our allies in the legislature, the bar and the legal aid community, we will continue to strive together until equal access to justice is a reality for all Massachusetts residents.



Martha Rush O'Mara
Chair



Lonnie A. Powers
Executive Director



2009 Program Accomplishments

- * MLAC-funded programs employed 220 attorneys and 55 paralegals (full-time equivalents) in FY09, a decline from FY08 of 4.3 percent and 8.3 percent, respectively, due to the loss in funding from MLAC and other sources.
- * Despite the decrease in staff, MLAC-funded programs closed 30,104 cases in FY09, slightly more than the number of cases closed in FY08. Their assistance benefitted 118,700 individuals and family members in Massachusetts.
- * 554 private attorneys collectively donated 23,115 hours of skilled pro-bono assistance through MLAC-funded programs, representing a value of \$5.2 million.
- * MLAC's Battered Women's Legal Assistance Project represented 2,382 domestic violence victims in complex cases involving physical safety, child custody and support, financial security, health care coverage and other issues.
- * MLAC's Disability Benefits Project closed 1,225 cases, winning federal SSI/SSDI benefits for clients in 88 percent of cases in which a decision was made. DBP brought \$666,037 in federal reimbursement to the Commonwealth and \$9.1 million in payments to clients.
- * MLAC's Medicare Advocacy Project helped 853 elders and people with disabilities obtain the Medicare benefits to which they were entitled.

ext 25 years



In September 2008, MLAC and the Massachusetts IOLTA Committee moved into new offices at 7 Winthrop Square in the Downtown Crossing section of Boston, which they share with the National Consumer Law Center (NCLC). On June 3, 2009, the three organizations joined to welcome supporters and partners at an Open House.



2009 MLAC Accomplishments

- * MLAC's Publications Clearinghouse program funded development and translation of basic legal information in Spanish, Portuguese, Vietnamese, Russian and Haitian Creole for the Masslegalhelp.org Web site, which received nearly 34,000 unique visitors each month in FY09.
- * In August 2008, the Client Council and Western Massachusetts Legal Services hosted a panel presentation, "The Intersection between Rural Poverty and Legal Aid," at the Food Bank of Western Massachusetts in Hatfield to raise awareness of the unique challenges facing the rural poor.
- * To continue commemorating its 25th Anniversary, MLAC held staff recognition lunches for each of the three regions outside of Boston – the Central/Western, Northeast and Southeast Regions – in October and November 2008 to thank employees for their continued dedication to legal aid.
- * There were more than 100 attendees at the public launch of the MLAC-funded report, "The Geography of Opportunity: Building Communities of Opportunity in Massachusetts" at the State House in January 2009. The event featured Professor John Powell, executive director of the Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity at The Ohio State University, as well as representatives of the Patrick administration, the legislature, and the non-profit and academic communities.
- * MLAC held its 8th annual Legal Aid Constituent Services Briefing in February 2009. More than 50 legislative staff attended to meet representatives from their local legal aid offices.
- * In April 2009, nearly 65 Massachusetts legal services staff members attended a day-long workshop on Structural Racism organized by the Diversity Coalition. The Diversity Coalition also facilitated two trainings: a Harassment Prevention and Investigation Workshop for Affirmative Action Officers and Program Directors in September and a Project Directors' Diversity Training in October.
- * MLAC's Central Technology System staff implemented a new phone system for six programs (14 separate offices) to enhance intra-office communication, and they transitioned to a new help desk provider that is more cost effective and offers after-hours support.

Lisa Damon

Legal Assistance Corporation of Central Massachusetts

The Damon family thought they had exhausted all of their options in trying to save their home. Then they called legal aid.

Spc. Michael Damon, his wife Lisa, and their two young children were close to being evicted after the mortgage company foreclosed on their Uxbridge home. Michael had returned injured after an 18-month tour of duty in Iraq and was unable to work. At the same time, the couple's adjustable rate mortgage jumped to almost 11 percent. Without Michael's income, the payments became too much.

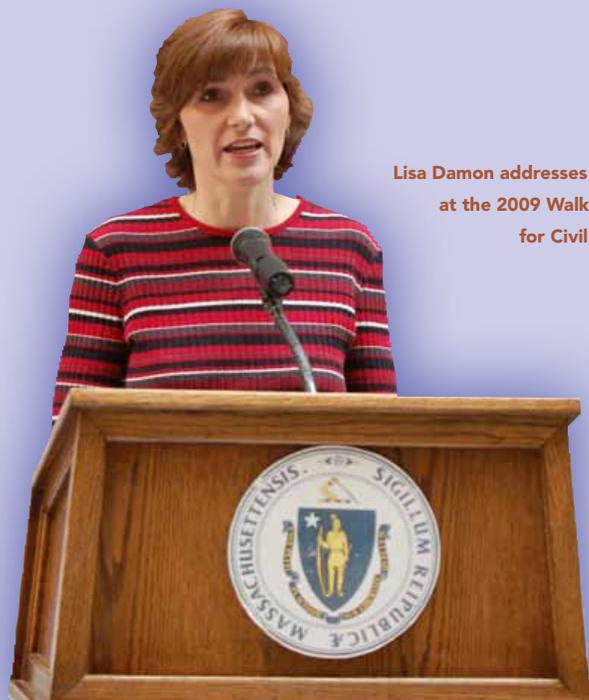
Unfortunately, the mortgage company was unwilling to negotiate with them despite months of Lisa's phone calls requesting a work-out agreement. Then the Damons received an eviction notice.

A friend referred the Damons to the Legal Assistance Corporation of Central Massachusetts (LACCM). Their LACCM attorney stepped in and got the mortgage company to dismiss the eviction. Now, nearly two years later, the LACCM attorney

Client Stories

succeeded in having a second eviction case dismissed and Michael has been re-deployed to Iraq. The Damons are working with the LACCM attorney and a pro bono attorney from Roddy, Klein & Ryan to stay in their home, with the goal of buying the home back.

Lisa says the family will be forever grateful for the help. "When everyone else failed us, legal aid was there."



Lisa Damon addresses the crowd
at the 2009 Walk to the Hill
for Civil Legal Aid.

Carolyn Leary

Greater Boston Legal Services

For years, a Massachusetts regulation categorically denied unemployment benefits to workers who sought part-time employment after working full-time, even if they had a compelling reason for wanting part-time work. The regulation disproportionately affected working mothers, who often must balance work schedules with changing child care duties.

"For three years
GBLS helped
me fight for my
unemployment.
They never
gave up on me...
legal services
is my hero."



Dorchester resident and working mother Carolyn Leary was one of the unintended victims of this regulation. She worked full-time for four years as a customer service agent for a medical billing company. She lost her job, however, when her employer would not let her modify her hours to care for her young son, who was no longer eligible for daily child care.

Carolyn immediately began looking for a part-time job that would allow her to look after her son while supporting her family. In the meantime, she applied for unemployment assistance. Because she was looking for part-time work, the Department of Unemployment Assistance (DUA) denied her claim according to the regulation without even considering her compelling reason for a reduced work schedule.

Carolyn came to Greater Boston Legal Services (GBLS), where she met with an employment attorney. GBLS knew about the regulation and its effect on working mothers, and together Carolyn and her attorney challenged the DUA regulation. It was a long and difficult battle, but Carolyn persevered.

Finally, the Superior Court invalidated the regulation, and Carolyn was able to receive unemployment assistance while she looked for a new job. She is now happily employed at a health center near her home and her son's school, and she is proud that her case will benefit other working mothers and their families in these difficult economic times.

Anthony Butler

Legal Assistance Corporation of Central Massachusetts

Anthony lost the best job of his life when his employer accused him and his assistant of stealing some sticky notes.

After six years on the job, 57-year-old Anthony Butler had worked his way up to the position of supervisor in a warehouse that stored returned goods for a grocery store. Anthony's department processed the goods and redistributed them to local food banks. "I loved my job. I loved helping other people," says Anthony.

But Anthony began to doubt his job security when a new manager was hired and began cutting costs. Although he had always received good reviews and was respected by his co-workers, Anthony was also the longest-tenured and highest-paid supervisor in the warehouse.

One morning, Anthony's assistant supervisor approached him holding a package of yellow sticky notes, asking if he needed any to write down phone messages. Anthony answered that he did not know, and the assistant supervisor left the room with the notes.

That afternoon, the manager called Anthony and the assistant supervisor into his office. He told them that he had video footage of them stealing the notes. The assistant supervisor admitted to taking the notes, thinking they were not worth much and could be useful. The manager, however, told them both to turn over their keys and leave the premises. Anthony was never allowed back.

When Anthony applied for unemployment benefits, he was denied because of the employer's claim about the theft. Anthony had to wait five months for his appeal hearing. During this time, he had no income. He lost his vehicle, he could not find a new job, and he feared that his professional reputation was ruined.

Before his appeal hearing, the unemployment office referred Anthony to Legal Assistance Corporation of Central Massachusetts (LACCM). A LACCM paralegal prepared Anthony for testimony, and she represented him at the hearing. Under questioning by the paralegal, the employer admitted that they did not have a video of Anthony stealing anything. The judge ruled in Anthony's favor, and he started receiving unemployment benefits immediately.

Although Anthony is still searching for a new job, he maintains a positive outlook. "Now I know that there are good people in the world. Legal aid saved me."

*"LEGAL AID RESTORED
my faith in
humanity."*

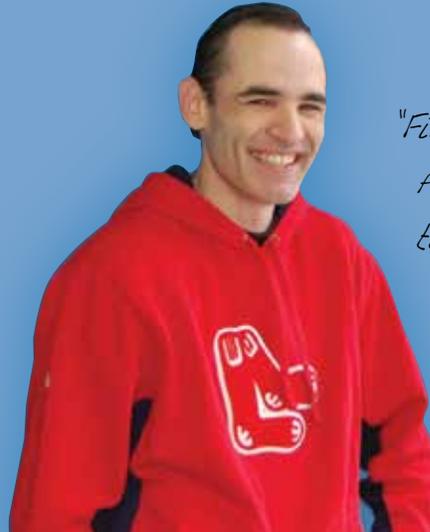


Leigh Ainsworth

MetroWest Legal Services

Leigh Ainsworth was used to overcoming adversity, but then his life took a dramatic turn, and for the first time he needed legal help.

A traumatic brain injury as a child had left Leigh with functional disabilities, so he lived with his family as an adult. Then one day, a violent domestic attack on Leigh sent him to the hospital with serious injuries.



*"Finally I can move
forward, thanks
to my legal aid
attorneys."*

Healing from the attack was just the beginning of Leigh's problems. He needed to establish a new legal guardian immediately. Also, recurring conflicts between his MassHealth and Medicare coverage made it difficult for him to receive critical medical treatment and prescriptions. And, most importantly, he needed to find somewhere safe to live after he was discharged from the hospital.

Luckily, Leigh has a generous and dedicated uncle, named Peter, who wanted to become his legal guardian. They needed help, though, navigating the numerous legal and administrative problems confronting Leigh. According to Peter, "I've never had to deal with a situation like this before. Often, we didn't even know who to ask when we had questions."

The court referred Leigh and Peter to MetroWest Legal Services (MWLS). There, Leigh found help from a dedicated team of attorneys who specialize in a variety of practice areas – family law, housing, disability benefits and Medicare. Over the next year, the attorneys led Leigh through many complicated bureaucratic mazes to get him the help he needed. Today Leigh feels safe living on his own in Natick, and his uncle is working with him to build an independent life.

LOCAL PROGRAMS

Eastern Region

Greater Boston Legal Services	\$5,162,497
General Support:	\$3,253,899
Disability Benefits Project:	\$387,388
Medicare Advocacy Project:	\$442,958
Battered Women's Legal Assistance Project:	\$895,552
Technology Grants & Equipment:	\$159,221
Fellowships:	\$23,479

Subgrantees of GBLs:

Community Legal Services and Counseling Center	\$145,653
General Support:	\$89,900
Disability Benefits Project:	\$35,915
Battered Women's Legal Assistance Project:	\$19,838

MetroWest Legal Services	\$629,080
General Support:	\$427,101
Disability Benefits Project:	\$58,807
Battered Women's Legal Assistance Project:	\$117,045
Technology Grants & Equipment:	\$20,406
Fellowships:	\$5,721

Subgrantees of NLS:

Children's Law Center of Massachusetts	\$149,638
General Support Statewide:	\$26,251
General Support Local (subgrant):	\$112,399
Technology Grants & Equipment:	\$10,988
<i>Children's Law Center of Massachusetts receives both statewide and local funding.</i>	

Merrimack Valley Legal Services	\$487,573
Battered Women's Legal Assistance Project:	\$437,573
Fellowship:	\$50,000

Southeast Region

South Coastal Counties Legal Services	\$2,724,031
General Support:	\$1,795,199
Disability Benefits Project:	\$203,016
Medicare Advocacy Project:	\$80,498
Battered Women's Legal Assistance Project:	\$491,420
Technology Grants & Equipment:	\$19,151
Fellowships:	\$120,747
Technical Assistance Grant:	\$14,000

MLAC Grants FY09

Central/West Region

Legal Assistance Corporation of Central Massachusetts	\$1,761,577
General Support:	\$1,166,800
Disability Benefits Project:	\$111,583
Medicare Advocacy Project:	\$41,146
Battered Women's Legal Assistance Project:	\$319,395
Technology Grants & Equipment:	\$66,607
Fellowships:	\$43,047
Technical Assistance Grant:	\$13,000

Western Massachusetts Legal Services	\$2,340,049
General Support:	\$1,668,400
Disability Benefits Project:	\$134,887
Medicare Advocacy Project:	\$54,140
Battered Women's Legal Assistance Project:	\$456,845
Technology Grants & Equipment:	\$12,777
Technical Assistance Grant:	\$13,000

Northeast Region

Neighborhood Legal Services	\$1,973,873
General Support:	\$1,486,300
Disability Benefits Project:	\$169,020
Technology Grants & Equipment:	\$16,743

STATEWIDE PROGRAMS

Center for Law and Education	\$125,003
General Support:	\$125,003

Center for Public Representation	\$279,165
General Support:	\$212,500
Disability Benefits Project:	\$58,259
Technology Grants & Equipment:	\$8,406

Disability Law Center	\$468,543
General Support:	\$250,000
Disability Benefits Project:	\$211,926
Litigation Support:	\$6,617

Massachusetts Advocates for Children	\$100,614
General Support:	\$98,751
Technology Grants & Equipment:	\$1,863

Massachusetts Correctional Legal Services (d/b/a Prisoners' Legal Services)	\$162,501
General Support:	\$162,501

Massachusetts Law Reform Institute	\$2,029,336
General Support:	\$1,500,000
Battered Women's Legal Assistance Project:	\$96,356
Websites Project:	\$325,616
Farm Workers:	\$20,000
Technology Grants & Equipment:	\$87,364

National Consumer Law Center	\$125,001
General Support:	\$125,001

STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES AND CHANGES IN NET ASSETS for the year ended June 30, 2009

	A P P R O P R I A T E D P R O J E C T S							IOLTA Administrative Services	MLAC Administrative	Asset Funds	Fixed Total All Funds
	Disability Benefits Project	Medicare Advocacy Project	Women's Legal Assistance Project	Battered Women's Legal Assistance Project	General Support	Technical Assistance					
REVENUE											
Commonwealth of Massachusetts	1,370,801	618,742	2,834,024	2,834,024	6,246,857						11,070,424
IOLTA					6,132,743						6,132,743
Management fees						10,506	64,585				64,585
Net assets released from restrictions					51,757						51,757
Interest and other income	17,295	7,797	35,713	35,713				34,092			146,654
Total revenue	1,388,096	626,539	2,869,737	2,869,737	12,431,357	10,506	64,585	34,092	0	0	17,424,912
EXPENSES											
Grants awarded	1,370,801	618,742	2,834,024	2,834,024	12,791,153	328,780					17,943,500
Loan forgiveness					152,457						152,457
Salaries						534,146	16,198	681,748			1,232,092
Occupancy						31,520	43,839	196,963			272,322
Professional services						528,350		308,926			837,276
Payroll taxes and fringe benefits						139,773	4,548	164,130			308,451
Other support services						75,089		83,526			158,615
Fellowships						254,600					254,600
Depreciation									418,933		418,933
Travel						16,641		40,063			56,704
Office						56,041		16,294			72,335
Loss on disposal of fixed assets										4,900	
Total expenses before allocation of administrative expense	1,370,801	618,742	2,834,024	2,834,024	12,943,610	1,964,940	64,585	1,491,650	423,833	0	21,712,185
Allocation of administrative expense	118,639	53,550	245,277	245,277	1,074,184			-1,491,650			0
Total expenses	1,489,440	672,292	3,079,301	3,079,301	14,017,794	1,964,940	64,585	0	423,833	21,712,185	
Excess (deficiency) of revenue	-101,344	-45,753	-209,564	-209,564	-1,586,437	-1,954,434	0	34,092	-423,833		-4,287,273
NET ASSETS: June 30, 2008	0	0	0	0	4,165,637	0	0	0	546,569	0	4,712,206
Transfer to other funds	101,344	45,753	209,564	209,564	-2,370,650	1,954,434	0	-34,092	93,647		0
NET ASSETS: June 30, 2009	0	0	0	0	208,550	0	0	0	216,383	0	424,933

Financials

Massachusetts Legal Assistance Corporation

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