

Civil Legal Aid for Children

During the COVID-19 crisis, legal aid has been a lifeline for children and their families who need help asserting their right to an equal education and other rights.

Eduardo's Story



Eduardo* is a Latino student with autism in the sixth grade. Prior to the pandemic, he had been thriving in an inclusion setting with supports such as an aide. When schools closed due to

COVID, Eduardo struggled to adjust to his new routine. Because Eduardo was not logging on to remote learning every day, the school district filed a report of abuse or neglect with the Department of Children and Families. Massachusetts Advocates for Children (MAC) successfully advocated for DCF to issue a finding that the allegation of neglect was unsupported because his absences from remote learning were due to barriers related to his disability. MAC's attorney also advocated successfully for the school district to provide in-person services for Eduardo so he could learn more easily.

** Name has been changed.*

Legal Aid lawyers help children who face civil legal issues related to:

- Access to equal education and equal opportunity during the pandemic, regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, language, or disability
- Immigration, family separation, and asylum
- Guardianship, custody, domestic violence, and other family law issues
- Public benefits for families, including: SNAP, disability benefits, emergency assistance, and access to health care
- Trauma that affects children's ability to succeed in school

Low-income people at or below 125% of the federal poverty level (\$34,688 per year for a family of four) qualify for civil legal aid.

Last year, legal aid provided

\$103 million

in economic benefits to the Commonwealth and its residents, including

\$3.2 million

won in total lifetime child support through legal aid advocacy last year

In FY21, legal aid lawyers provided direct representation to **more than 1,500 children**. Thousands more benefitted from services to family members.



7% of legal aid clients in FY21 were under 18

Massachusetts Legal Assistance Corporation
18 Tremont St., Suite 1010
Boston, Massachusetts 02108
617-367-8544

Lynne Parker
MLAC
lparker@mlac.org
617-391-5640

Elaine O'Reilly | Mary Ann Walsh
Governmental Strategies
eoreilly@governmentalstrategies.com | 617-447-5174
mawalsh@governmentalstrategies.com | 617-447-3711