

# Civil Legal Aid in Income Maintenance

During the COVID-19 crisis, legal aid lawyers help low-income people receive essential benefits, including unemployment compensation, food benefits, and temporary assistance.

**Legal Aid lawyers help ensure that people can access basic necessities and obtain the benefits that they are qualified to receive, by:**

- Helping people gain access to government benefits, such as SNAP (food stamps)
- Assisting people who have been wrongly denied benefits
- Aiding people who need help filing for, or appealing, a denial of unemployment benefits

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.

## Carol's Story

Carol had been denied federal SNAP benefits for decades due to a rule that disqualified her from receiving these food benefits for life—even after she lost her job due to COVID-19. Lawyers with the Massachusetts Law Reform Institute successfully argued that she should not have been disqualified and helped get her benefits reinstated.



***“People need to know there’s help out there.”***

**Carol, civil legal aid client**

## 1,704 income maintenance cases closed in FY21, including:

SSI (Supplemental Security Income)	507
SSDI (Social Security Disability Insurance)	431
SNAP (Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program)	314
Other Income Maintenance	170
TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families)	120
Social Security	67
Veterans Benefits	54
State and Local Maintenance	41

Last year,  
legal aid provided  
**\$103 million**  
in economic benefits to  
the Commonwealth and its  
residents