

Civil Legal Aid for Older Adults

Legal aid lawyers play a crucial role in protecting the health, safety, and financial stability of older residents of the Commonwealth, who are especially vulnerable during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Ava's Story



Ava*, an 88-year-old woman with Alzheimer's, was being cared for by her adult daughter full time as her personal care assistant (PCA). During COVID, her insurance

company conducted a virtual reassessment and decided to reduce her PCA hours significantly. It also denied Ava's physical therapy. Greater Boston Legal Services (GBLS) represented Ava in a Board of Hearings appeal, where her attorney ensured that her hours were not cut until an in-person reassessment was done. With assistance from GBLS, Ava's PCA hours were restored and even increased. GBLS also represented Ava in the physical therapy issue, and her PT denial was reversed and the physical therapy reinstated.

**Name has been changed.*

Legal Aid lawyers help older adults facing issues related to:

- Housing and physical safety
- Access to health care, disability benefits, Medicare, Social Security, veterans' benefits, and other public benefits
- Bankruptcy, financial abuse, and other consumer law challenges
- Guardianship, care of children and grandchildren, and other family law issues
- Durable powers of attorney and health care proxies
- Nursing home issues, including transfer and discharge, conditions and evictions

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



22% of Legal Aid clients in FY21 were age 60 or older

According to a 2021 UMass Boston study, **64% of older women and 56% of older men** living alone in Massachusetts **lack the financial resources to cover their basic expenses.**

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