

# About Massachusetts Legal Assistance Corporation



Line Item 0321-1600

Massachusetts Legal Assistance Corporation is the largest funder of civil legal aid in the Commonwealth.

## MLAC BASICS

### Background

MLAC was established by the Legislature in 1983 to ensure that residents with low incomes facing critical, civil (non-criminal) legal problems would have access to legal information, advice, and representation.

### Mission

MLAC's mission is to provide leadership and support to improve civil legal services to people with low incomes in Massachusetts through collaboration with the legal services community, the public, the bar, and the legislature.

### Funding

MLAC receives funding from a variety of sources, primarily the state budget. Other significant funds come from Interest on Lawyers Trust Accounts (IOLTA), private foundations, and government grants. MLAC disburses its funding to qualified civil legal aid organizations across the Commonwealth.

### Support

In addition to funding, MLAC supports legal aid organizations with communications; data and research; diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives; information technology; and program monitoring and evaluation. MLAC also partners with legal aid organizations, bar associations, the Equal Justice Coalition, and the Access to Justice Commission to activate a network of *pro bono* lawyers and publish self-help materials.

## LEGAL AID'S IMPACT IN FY23

# 95,648

people benefited from civil legal aid in Massachusetts

# Nearly \$100 million

in estimated economic benefits delivered to the Commonwealth and residents

Residents in

# 95%

of cities and towns in Massachusetts were assisted by civil legal aid

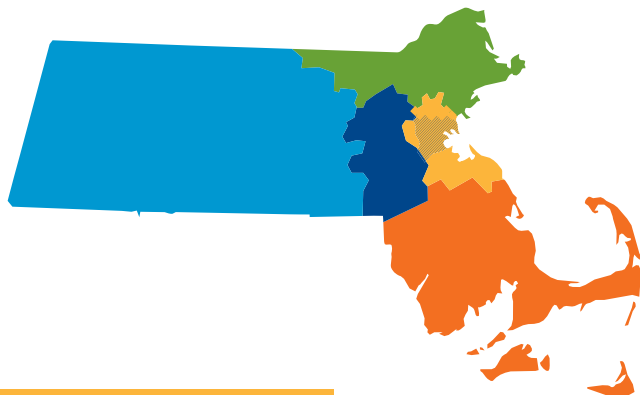
## ABOUT CIVIL LEGAL AID

Civil legal aid organizations provide free information, advice, and representation to people who otherwise would not receive help with serious civil legal issues related to housing, healthcare, immigration, employment, education, family law and domestic violence, disability, consumer problems, and elder issues. **People and families with incomes at or below 125% of the federal poverty line—(which in 2023 is \$37,500 per year for a family of four and \$18,255 for an individual) —are eligible for civil legal aid.**

Although the U.S. and Massachusetts Constitutions guarantee criminal defendants a right to counsel, in most civil cases, people do not have that right. The consequences of these 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 works to ensure that all residents of Massachusetts have equal access to justice.**

## MLAC uses state-appropriated funds to support regional and statewide legal aid organizations, as well as special projects.



### REGIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

- **Community Legal Aid** serves western and central Massachusetts.
- **De Novo Center for Justice and Healing** serves Boston, Cambridge, and interior suburbs of Boston.
- **Greater Boston Legal Services** serves the Greater Boston area.
- **MetroWest Legal Services** serves the MetroWest region.
- **Northeast Legal Aid** serves Essex and Northern Middlesex Counties.
- **South Coastal Counties Legal Services** serves Cape Cod, the Islands, and Southeastern Massachusetts.

In addition to these regional organizations, MLAC provides funding to 10 statewide legal aid organizations, which specialize in specific issues, populations, or types of law. MLAC also provides general support funding through the Disability Benefits Project, Domestic Violence Legal Assistance Project, and Medicare Advocacy Project.

For a full list of grants and organizations MLAC supports, please visit our website: [www.mlac.org](http://www.mlac.org).

**\$57,139,201**

Total grants distributed by MLAC in FY22

**\$49 million**

Amount of MLAC appropriation in the FY24 state budget

*"Gracias a la ayuda de [asistencia legal], yo me siento una madre mas preparada para luchar por los derechos de mi hijo. [asistencia legal] logro crear un grupo de apoyo en mi ciudad proveyendo asistencia a padres de niños de educación especial .... Me siento agradecida y feliz de nos hayan dedicado el tiempo para empoderarnos..."*  
- Legal aid client

*"Thanks to [legal aid's] help, I feel that I'm a mother well prepared to fight for my son's rights. [Legal aid] was able to create a support group in my town which provided assistance to parents of special education children ... I feel grateful and happy that they have dedicated the time to empower us ..."*

### Legal aid advocates help people of all ages address vital civil legal issues, such as:

- Housing
- Immigration
- Employment
- Family law and domestic violence
- Health care
- Education
- Income maintenance

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