

# JUSTICE.

MASSACHUSETTS LEGAL ASSISTANCE CORPORATION

• FY09 Fact Sheet •

Line item 0321-1600

	FY08	FY09
General Support	\$5,430,541	\$6,246,857
Battered Women's Legal Assistance	\$2,490,993	\$2,834,024
Disability Benefits	\$1,204,604	\$1,370,801
Medicare Advocacy	\$544,286	\$618,742
Total	\$9,670,424	\$11,070,424

For Massachusetts families and individuals facing serious challenges in meeting basic human needs, the justice system is often the only recourse for resolving these issues. Many residents, though, can't afford an attorney to help them. Civil legal aid programs bridge this gap with advice and representation. Income eligibility is set at 125 percent of the federal poverty line, or \$510 per week for a family of four. Families at this level of income have nowhere else to turn. Legal aid is their last resort.

## Civil Legal Aid at Work:

### Housing

Foreclosures in Massachusetts have risen 76 percent in the past year. Legal aid programs across the Commonwealth prevent many families from becoming homeless by representing low income homeowners caught in subprime mortgages and fraudulent lending practices. Attorneys are also advocating for tenants facing eviction because their landlord's properties have been foreclosed. Legal aid continues to assist many elderly and vulnerable clients with other serious housing needs, as well.

### Safety

Legal protection is the first step out of domestic violence. Civil legal aid helps thousands of battered women and children escape from dangerous situations. Legal aid helps victims secure custody rights and child support. For many disabled and elderly individuals, legal aid remains the only recourse for other health and safety needs.

### Employment

Civil legal aid programs assist Massachusetts residents unfairly denied wages or who have inaccurate CORI (Criminal Offender Record Information) information preventing them from employment.

*Legal aid is a solid investment for the Commonwealth. The appropriation to MLAC (\$9.4 million in FY07) leveraged over five times as much funding from other sources.*

**ABOUT MLAC:** Recognizing justice as a fundamental value to the Commonwealth, the Legislature established MLAC in 1983 to provide support and leadership for civil legal aid. MLAC makes grants to local and statewide legal aid programs, with funding coming from the state budget and the Interest on Lawyers' Trust Accounts program. Client issues include domestic violence, child custody and support, health care, housing, disability benefits, elder abuse, and similar non-criminal problems.

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