

Civil Legal Aid in Health Care

Massachusetts
Legal
Assistance
Corporation
Line item 0321-1600

Civil legal aid ensures that low-income residents have access to health care by:

- Identifying and correcting administrative and insurance errors that jeopardize patients' access to treatment
- Addressing the improper denial, termination, or reduction of public health benefits
- Appealing denial of coverage for life-sustaining medications or procedures
- Advocating for the rights of children, immigrants, asylum seekers, older adults, people with mental illness, and others so that they can make the best medical decisions for themselves and their families



“After almost 8 years...my daughter’s SSI benefits got approved.”

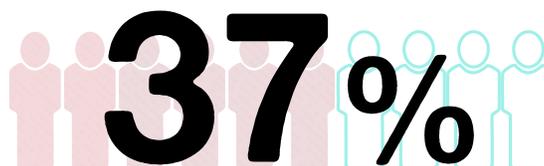
- Danielle, whose daughter has sickle cell disease and is a client of Greater Boston Legal Services

Low-income people at or below 125% of the federal poverty level (\$32,188 per year for a family of four) qualify for civil legal aid.

695 Health Cases closed in FY18, including:

MassHealth	286
Medicare	186
Private Health Insurance, Medical Debt, Drug Treatment, Detox, and other cases	150
Long-term Health Care, Home and Community-Based Care	49
State and Local Health	24

Unfortunately, lack of funding forces Massachusetts civil legal aid organizations to turn away:



of eligible residents who seek assistance with health-related matters.

Legal aid produced an **economic benefit** of

\$60.5 million

for the Commonwealth and its residents in FY18, including:

\$2.4 million

in health benefits, of which more than

\$780,000

are federal Medicare benefits

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In medical-legal partnerships, legal aid lawyers can “identify problems that patients present to their doctors... that can’t be solved with a prescription pad.”

- Faye Rachlin, Community Legal Aid

Medical-Legal Partnerships

Medical-legal partnerships place civil legal aid attorneys at hospitals, clinics, and community health centers to work alongside medical professionals and help address the root causes of an illness that a doctor alone might not be able to fix. For example, while a doctor can treat the symptoms of a child’s breathing problems caused by mold in their apartment, a legal aid lawyer can help ensure the landlord complies with public health and safety laws and regulations so that the child has a healthy place to live. Working in medical institutions also makes medical-legal partnership attorneys easily accessible to patients who seek help with other civil legal issues.

Medical-legal partnerships are an important part of the Commonwealth’s response to the opioid epidemic, which creates many medical and legal challenges. Civil legal aid attorneys in a medical setting can work to address barriers to health care, housing, and employment, which can help individuals with substance-use disorders find stability to sustain recovery.