

MLRI Basic Public Benefits Advocacy Trainings

A series of trainings for legal, social and health services, and community advocates who assist low- and moderate-income individuals and families.



MCLE and the Massachusetts Law Reform Institute (MLRI) are collaborating to make annual basic public benefits advocacy training more accessible to the many public and private sector individuals and lawyers who assist Massachusetts residents in qualifying for and receiving public benefits.

1 Representing Unemployed Workers at Unemployment Insurance Hearings

Thursday, September 24, 2009

9:30 a.m. – 12:15 p.m.

2.75 Credits

Program No. 2100108P01

An unemployment insurance (UI) hearing is a high-stakes endeavor for your client and his or her family. UI, a critical safety net during periods of joblessness, is especially important now to help workers and their families during this recession. This seminar provides you with the expertise you need in order to help your clients get the UI benefits to which they are legally entitled. Our expert panel guides you through the intricacies of the entire UI system from eligibility criteria through the appeals process, and you will have the opportunity to observe a mock UI hearing.

Faculty: Monica Halas, Esq., Cochair, Greater Boston Legal Services, Boston; Margaret E. Monsell, Esq., Cochair, Massachusetts Law Reform Institute, Boston

Training materials include Unemployment Advocacy Guide: An Advocate's Guide to Unemployment in Massachusetts.

2 CORI Basics

Thursday, September 24, 2009

1:15 p.m. – 4 p.m.

2.75 Credits

Program No. 2100328P01

Massachusetts keeps criminal offender record information, known as "CORI," on every individual who enters the state's

criminal court system. CORI is recorded and kept on file even if the underlying case is ultimately dismissed or the accused is found not guilty. CORI is used in screening processes by employers, landlords, and government agencies. The increased use of CORI by employers and others has resulted in more and more people with criminal records being denied employment, housing, benefits, and other opportunities for economic stability that others take for granted. This program provides "nuts and bolts" instructions on how to seal a client's criminal record. You learn how to obtain a copy of a client's CORI, read and understand it, correct errors, determine if it can be sealed, and how to seal it.

Faculty: Pauline Quirion, Esq., Greater Boston Legal Services, Boston; Stephen A. Russo, Esq., Legal Advocacy Resource Center, Inc, Boston

3 Assisting Families Experiencing Homelessness: Emergency Assistance Shelter & Benefits

Monday, October 5, 2009

9:30 a.m. – 1 p.m.

3.5 Credits

Program No. 2100148P01

This program focuses on strategies to assist families experiencing homelessness in accessing and retaining shelter and services from the Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD). Trainers provide an overview of the recent major changes to the Emergency Assistance (EA) shelter system, as well as advocacy tips regarding the range of issues

facing families at-risk or experiencing homelessness as they seek access to EA diversion, prevention, shelter, housing, and stabilization resources. The training includes an overview of the system, the application process, denials, terminations, shelter placements, and program requirements.

Faculty: Kelly B. Turley, MSW, Senior Policy Advocate, Massachusetts Coalition for the Homeless, Lynn; Steven J. Valero, Esq., Greater Boston Legal Services, Boston

4 SSI & SSDI Basics

Tuesday, November 17, 2009

9:30 a.m. – 4 p.m.

5.5 Credits

Program No. 2100109P01

Social Security disability programs continue to be a major source of cash and health benefits for individuals with disabilities. However, dealing with a large federal agency can be daunting and overwhelming for an unrepresented claimant.

The program begins with an overview of the two disability programs administered by the Social Security Administration (SSA), with emphasis on eligibility requirements and procedures, including basic disability eligibility standards and non-disability issues such as income, resources, and non-citizen criteria. A brief overview of the new appeals process for disability application starts the afternoon session. Concluding the program is a brief review of post-entitlement issues, with special emphasis on overpayments.

Faculty: Linda L. Landry, Esq., Disability Law Center, Inc., Boston; Svetlana Uimenkova, Esq., Disability Law Center, Inc, Boston

5 Accessing Affordable Housing: Representing Low-Income Clients Effectively

Wednesday, December 9, 2009

9:30 a.m. – 4 p.m.

6.5 Credits

Program No. 2100329P01

Low-income housing is an increasingly scarce commodity in Massachusetts, and locating affordable housing is an activity

that requires a combination of awareness, skill, and perseverance. This training focuses primarily on the rules and regulations governing access to public and subsidized housing programs. The training examines issues that advocates need to understand when helping poor individuals and families find housing. Using a combination of lecture, case study, and small group discussion, the faculty introduces participants to every stage of the subsidized housing application process.

Faculty: Amy E. Copperman, Esq., Massachusetts Law Reform Institute, Boston

Training materials include Legal Tactics: Finding Public and Subsidized Housing.

6 Cash Assistance for Massachusetts Families & Individuals: TAFDC, EAEDC & Veterans' Benefits

Thursday, January 14, 2010

9:30 a.m. – 4 p.m.

5.5 Credits

Program No. 2100106P01

This training is for legal services advocates, lawyers in private practice, social and health services workers, and community activists who want to learn about or get an update on the basics of the two main cash assistance programs in Massachusetts: TAFDC (Transitional Aid to Families with Dependent Children)—the cash assistance program for families, and EAEDC (Emergency Aid to Elders, Disabled and Children)—the cash assistance program for elders and disabled and a few children. And this year, for the first time, information about veterans' benefits provided in afternoon workshops.

Faculty: Ruth A. Bourquin, Esq., Chair, Massachusetts Law Reform Institute, Boston

Training materials include TAFDC and EA Advocacy Guide and EAEDC Advocacy Guide.

7 Food Stamps/SNAP

Tuesday, February 2, 2010

9:30 a.m. – 12:15 p.m.

2.75 Credits

Program No. 2100107P01

The federal Food Stamp/Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is the first line of defense against hunger for thousands of Massachusetts residents. The state has implemented numerous policy changes and received federal approvals of waivers to both increase participation and increase the value of the monthly benefit. However, many individual households still struggle with getting their applications approved at overburdened local offices. Dealing with a food stamp office or getting emergency (expedited) benefits can be overwhelming for an unrepresented family or individual.

This training begins with an overview of the federal Food Stamp/SNAP program, the caseload dynamics over the years, and the major federal changes implemented in the past year. This program provides an introduction to the Food Stamp/SNAP program.

Faculty: Patricia J. Baker, Massachusetts Law Reform Institute, Boston; Laura R. Gallant, Esq., Neighborhood Legal Services, Lynn

Training materials include Food Stamp/SNAP Advocacy Guide.

8 Supports for Working Poor Families: How To Maximize Income & Reduce Expenses

Tuesday, February 2, 2010

1:15 p.m. – 4 p.m.

2.75 Credits

Program No. 2100110P01

This session focuses on various supplemental benefits and assistance programs which help working families and individuals to maximize their income and reduce their expenses. The first part is presented in a lecture format and the second part utilizes small break-out groups and case hypotheticals.

Faculty: Laura R. Gallant, Esq., Neighborhood Legal Services, Lynn; Ellen J. Shachter, Esq., Cambridge & Somerville Legal Services, Cambridge

9 Elder Benefits Programs

Thursday, February 25, 2010

9:30 a.m. – 4 p.m.

6.5 Credits

Program No. 2100330P01

In these hard times, elders in Massachusetts depend on a variety of benefits programs to meet their income, health, heat and nutrition needs. These include income supplement programs, retirement benefits, food and nutrition services, home-based care services, and health care programs. This program provides legal services advocates, lawyers and paralegals in private practice, social and health services workers, and community activists with an overview and basic knowledge of the resources available to elders with an emphasis on program criteria relevant to elders and how to navigate the complexities across programs.

Faculty: Deborah H. Thomson, Esq., The PASS Group, Boston

10 Health Care Access Programs

Tuesday, March 16, 2010

9:30 a.m. – 4 p.m.

6.5 Credits

Program No. 2100331P01

The 2006 Massachusetts health reform law and the MassHealth waiver have created programs that offer affordable health coverage for almost all low-income state residents, but navigating the eligibility system has gotten a lot more complicated. This program gives outreach workers, social workers, providers, and advocates a nuts-and-bolts overview of the eligibility requirements of the main health care programs and advice on how to assist their patients and clients in becoming enrolled and maintaining coverage.

Faculty: Steven M. Belec, Boston Public Health Commission, Boston; Neil F. Cronin, Massachusetts Law Reform Institute, Boston; Victoria Pulos, Esq., Massachusetts Law Reform Institute, Boston; Gerry E. Thomas, Boston Public Health Commission, Boston

Training materials include MassHealth Advocacy Guide.

11 Immigrants & Public Benefits

Wednesday, April 7, 2010

9:30 a.m. – 1 p.m.

2.75 Credits

Program No. 2100234P01

This training offers the nuts-and-bolts on immigration status and benefits for non-citizens. Massachusetts is one of the top states with a significant immigrant population. This training walks you through the basics of immigration and public benefits rules to help you understand which benefits are available for specific immigrant populations. It will cover any changes during 2009 in Department of Transitional Assistance, MassHealth, and Social Security Administration policy on immigrant eligibility.

Faculty: Patricia J. Baker, Massachusetts Law Reform Institute, Boston; Virginia Benzan, Esq., Massachusetts Law Reform Institute, Boston; Eva A. Millona, Massachusetts Immigrant and Refugee Advocacy Coalition, Boston; Victoria Pulos, Esq., Massachusetts Law Reform Institute, Boston

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2 ORDER DETAILS

- PROGRAM: Representing Unemployed Workers at Unemployment Insurance Hearings; 2100108P01; Boston \$ _____
PROGRAM: CORI Basics; 2100328P01; Boston \$ _____
PROGRAM: Assisting Families Experiencing Homelessness: Emergency Assistance Shelter & Benefits; 2100148P01; Boston \$ _____
PROGRAM: SSI & SSDI Basics; 2100109P01; Boston \$ _____
PROGRAM: Accessing Affordable Housing: Representing Low-Income Clients Effectively; 2100329P01; Boston \$ _____
PROGRAM: Cash Assistance for Massachusetts Families & Individuals: TAFDC, EAEDC & Veterans' Benefits; 2100106P01; Boston. \$ _____
PROGRAM: Food Stamps/SNAP; 2100107P01; Boston \$ _____
PROGRAM: Supports for Working Poor Families: How To Maximize Income & Reduce Expenses; 2100110P01; Boston . \$ _____
PROGRAM: Elder Benefits Programs; 2100330P01; Boston \$ _____
PROGRAM: Health Care Access Programs; 2100331P01; Boston \$ _____
PROGRAM: Immigrants & Public Benefits; 2100234P01; Boston \$ _____

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PROGRAMS

Representing Unemployed Workers September 24, 2009

CORI Basics September 24, 2009

Assisting Families Experiencing Homelessness October 5, 2009

SSI & SSDI Basics November 17, 2009

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