

Basic Public Benefits Advocacy Trainings

MCLE, the Massachusetts Law Reform Institute (MLRI), and other Massachusetts legal services programs collaborate to provide annual basic public benefits advocacy training events for the many public and private sector lawyers and community advocates who assist Massachusetts residents to qualify for and receive public benefits.



September 2024–February 2025 Program Schedule

1. Tenants' Rights

Boston & Live Webcast—Tuesday, September 24, 2024, 9:30 am–3:30 pm (2250046P01 / 2250046WBC)

Rebroadcasts—Wednesday, October 9, 2024, 9:30 am–3:30 pm (2250046RB1); Thursday, October 17, 2024, 9:30 am–3:30 pm (2250046RB2)

Earn up to 5 CLE credits

2. Assisting Families Experiencing Homelessness

Live Webcast Only (no in person option)—Tuesday, October 1, 2024, 9:30 am–3:00 pm (2250047P01 / 2250047WBC)

Rebroadcasts—Wednesday, October 16, 2023, 9:30 am–3:00 pm (2250047RB1); Thursday, October 24, 2023, 9:30 am–3:00 pm (2250047RB2)

Earn up to 4.5 CLE credits

3. CORI Basics: Criminal Record Sealing, Expungement & Related Issues

Boston & Live Webcast—Monday, October 7, 2024, 9:30 am–1:15 pm (2250048P01 / 2250048WBC)

Rebroadcasts—Tuesday, October 22, 2024, 1:00 pm–4:45 pm (2250048RB1); Wednesday, October 30, 2024, 11:00 am–2:45 pm (2250048RB2)

Earn up to 3.5 CLE credits

4. SSI & SSDI Basics

Boston & Live Webcast—Wednesday, November 6, 2024, 9:30 am–4:00 pm (2250049P01 / 2250049WBC)

Rebroadcasts—Thursday, November 21, 2024, 9:30 am–4:00 pm (2250049RB1); Friday, December 6, 9:30 am–4:00 pm (2250049RB2)

Earn up to 5.5 CLE credits

5. Overview of the TAFDC Program, Massachusetts' Cash Assistance Program for Families

Boston & Live Webcast—Tuesday, December 3, 2024, 9:30 am–2:30 pm (2250050P01 / 2250050WBC)

Rebroadcasts—Wednesday, December 18, 2024, 9:30 am–2:30 pm (2250050RB1); Thursday, December 26, 2024, 9:30 am–2:30 pm (2250050RB2)

Earn up to 4.5 CLE credits

6. Utilities—Advocacy for Low-Income Households in Massachusetts

Boston & Live Webcast—Thursday, January 16, 2025, 12:45 pm–3:15 pm (2250051P01 / 2250051WBC)

Rebroadcasts—Friday, January 31, 2025, 9:00 am–11:30 am (2250051RB1); Monday, February 10, 2025, 2:00 pm–4:30 pm (2250051RB2)

Earn up to 2 CLE credits

7. SNAP/Nutrition Advocacy 101

Boston & Live Webcast—Wednesday, January 29, 2025, 9:30 am–12:30 pm (2250052P01 / 2250052WBC)

Rebroadcasts—Thursday, February 13, 2025, 2:00 pm–5:00 pm (2250052RB1); Friday, February 21, 2025, 9:30 am–12:30 pm (2250052RB2)

Earn up to 3 CLE credits

8. Health Care Access Programs

Boston & Live Webcast—Tuesday, February 4, 2025, 9:30 am–4:00 pm (2250053P01 / 2250053WBC)

Rebroadcasts—Wednesday, February 19, 2025, 9:30 am–4:00 pm (2250053RB1); Thursday, February 27, 2025, 9:30 am–4:00 pm (2250053RB2)

Earn up to 5.5 CLE credits

Tuition *each program*

- \$35 Legal Services Attorneys and Non Lawyer Advocates
- \$125 All Others

► See next pages for program details.

September 2024–February 2025 Program Details

1. Tenants' Rights

This training is for community and lay advocates, mediators, housing and legal advocates, and others interested in gaining a better understanding of tenants' rights in Massachusetts. The training focuses on evictions, getting repairs made, rents, and housing discrimination. While the eviction process part of the program applies to all tenants, the training focuses primarily on rights of tenants in private housing.

Materials include *Legal Tactics: Tenants' Rights in Massachusetts*.

Faculty

Annette R. Duke, Esq., *Massachusetts Law Reform Institute, Boston*

2. Assisting Families Experiencing Homelessness

This program focuses on strategies to assist families experiencing homelessness in accessing and retaining shelter, short-term housing, and services from the Massachusetts Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities (EOHLC). Trainers provide an overview of the Emergency Assistance (EA) shelter and services program, including current restrictions on access to EA shelter. The training also includes advocacy tips regarding the range of issues facing families at risk or experiencing homelessness as they seek access to EA shelter, overflow shelter, and the HomeBASE program. The training includes an overview of the system, the application process, denials, terminations, shelter placements, and program requirements.

This training is for legal services advocates, lawyers in private practice, social and health services workers, and community activists who want to learn about the nuts-and-bolts of the EA system and the HomeBASE program. Materials include the *Emergency Assistance Advocacy Guide: A Guide to Emergency Shelter and Rehousing Services for Homeless Families with Children in Massachusetts*.

Faculty

Andrea M. Park, Esq., *Massachusetts Law Reform Institute, Boston*
Kelly Turley, *Massachusetts Coalition for the Homeless, Lynn*

3. CORI Basics: Criminal Record Sealing, Expungement & Related Issues

This seminar provides an overview of criminal offender record information (CORI) laws as related to employment, housing, and other collateral consequences. Topics include, but are not limited to, how to seal and expunge criminal and juvenile records; how to get and correct CORI reports; Chapter 151B anti-discrimination provisions that apply to job interviews and job applications; tenant protections regarding use of criminal records by landlords and housing authorities; varied legal protections depending on the type of record sealed; when to expunge versus a seal a record; appeals of denials of requests for sealing or expungement; new caselaw by the Supreme Judicial Court on expungement of records; and new or pending legislation on CORI.

Massachusetts keeps "CORI" on every individual who has a criminal case in a Massachusetts state court. CORI is recorded and kept on file even if the underlying case is ultimately dismissed

or the accused is found not guilty. CORI is available to police, and also used in screening processes by employers, landlords, government agencies, and others. Clients with criminal records face barriers to employment, housing, benefits and opportunities for economic stability. This training is for legal services advocates, lawyers in private practice, social and health services workers, and community activists who want to learn about the law or get a refresher course on the basics of CORI.

Faculty

Pauline Quirion, Esq., *Greater Boston Legal Services, Boston*
Sean Casey, Esq., *Massachusetts Probation Services, Boston*
Ventura Dennis, Esq., *Greater Boston Legal Services, Boston*
Sophia L. Hall, Esq., *Lawyers for Civil Rights, Boston*
Susan Hegel, Esq., *Greater Boston Legal Services, Cambridge*
Agapi Koulouris, Esq., *Department of Criminal Justice Information Services, Chelsea*
Susan Malouin, Esq., *Northeast Legal Services, Lawrence*

4. SSI & SSDI Basics

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, especially 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 online procedures and any remaining COVID-19 related procedures, basic disability eligibility standards and non-disability issues such as income, resources, and non-citizen criteria. An explanation of the recently revised evidence submission and analysis rules begins the afternoon session followed by an overview of the appeals process for disability applications. Concluding the program is a review of certain post-entitlement issues, with special emphasis on continuing disability reviews, work incentives rules, and benefits overpayments.

The training is for legal services advocates, lawyers in private practice who are thinking of representing clients before SSA, social and health workers, and community activists.

Faculty

Linda Landry, Esq., *Disability Law Center, Boston*
Svetlana Uminkova, Esq., *Disability Law Center, Boston*

5. Overview of the TAFDC Program, Massachusetts' Cash Assistance Program for Families

This training is for legal services advocates, lawyers in private practice, social and health services workers, and community activists who want to learn about TAFDC (Transitional Aid to Families with Dependent Children)—the cash assistance program for families. The training provides an overview of program rules and eligibility, as well as information about recent policy and practice changes. The training will also cover applying for and keeping TAFDC benefits, and protections for specific populations including people with disabilities, people dealing with domestic violence, and people with limited English proficiency. Child care and immigration topics will also be covered.

Materials include PowerPoints handouts and other resources. An updated *TAFDC Advocacy Guide: An Advocate's Guide* will also be provided. The December 2019 edition is available free at www.masslegalservices.org/TAFDCAdvocacyGuide.

Faculty

Betsy Gwin, Esq., *Massachusetts Law Reform Institute, Boston*
Lisa Bradley, *Greater Boston Legal Services, Boston*
Lizbeth Ginsburg, Esq., *Greater Boston Legal Services, Boston*
Sarah Levy, Esq., *Greater Boston Legal Services, Boston*
Naomi Meyer, Esq., *Greater Boston Legal Services, Boston*

6. Utilities—Advocacy for Low-Income Households in Massachusetts

This training covers the broad range of topics that arise when low-income households are trying to initiate or protect their utility service, as well as pay their non-utility energy bills (oil, propane). Topics include how to start service and protect service from termination, how to restore terminated service, how to get the low-income discount rate, payment plans and arrearage management programs, funding sources that help pay utility bills, avoiding overpriced energy supply contracts, helping victims of domestic violence and crimes, and advocating for clients at the Department of Public Utilities.

Training materials include *Utilities Advocacy for Low-Income Households in Massachusetts*. All materials will be available on the National Consumer Law Center website. This training is designed for anyone working in the field and helping low-income clients with their utility problems, including social workers, housing search workers, elder advocates, immigration advocates, domestic violence program staff, community action program staff, and lawyers.

Faculty

Jenifer Bosco, Esq., *National Consumer Law Center Inc., Boston*
Jerry Battle, Esq., *National Consumer Law Center Inc., Boston*

7. SNAP/Nutrition Advocacy 101

The federally funded Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly called Food Stamps) remains the first line of defense against hunger for about one in seven Massachusetts residents (over 1.1 million individuals, 67,000 Massachusetts households). Families and individuals often struggle with getting their SNAP applications and recertifications approved. Collecting all the required proofs and getting through the application process can be overwhelming for an unrepresented household. Some of the most challenging cases involve the rules for immigrant-headed households. Special rules also apply to households with older adults and persons with disabilities.

The training includes an overview of the SNAP program, an update on federal and state SNAP changes, and an in-depth look at the nuts and bolts of SNAP eligibility, benefit amount, online tools, troubleshooting, and appeal rights. This training is designed for legal services advocates, food pantry and food bank staff, social services and health services workers, and community activists who want to learn about the basic SNAP rules and advocacy tips.

Faculty

Patricia J. Baker, *Massachusetts Law Reform Institute, Boston*
Victoria Negus, *Massachusetts Law Reform Institute, Boston*
Ashley Vandella Jones-Pierce, Esq., *Greater Boston Legal Services, Boston*

8. Health Care Access Programs

This training is designed to help attendees understand MassHealth and other subsidized health programs available to people under age 65 in Massachusetts. The morning program provides an overview of the eligibility requirements for MassHealth and the process for applying and enrolling in coverage. It also provides an update on new state and federal policies in 2024 and 2025 affecting MassHealth, the Massachusetts Health Connector, and Health Safety Net programs. The afternoon program provides an overview of subsidized coverage from the Health Connector in its Connector Care program and practical troubleshooting tips for resolving common eligibility and access to service problems with MassHealth and the Health Connector. This training gives outreach workers, social workers, providers, and advocates an up-to-date nuts-and-bolts overview of eligibility issues, and how to assist their patients and clients in becoming enrolled and maintaining coverage. The training is designed for new advocates but will also be helpful for experienced advocates looking for a review and update. Detailed online materials will be provided.

Faculty

Jeni Kaplan, Esq., *Mass. Law Reform Institute, Boston*
Kate Symmonds, Esq., *Mass. Law Reform Institute, Boston*
Sonia Amado, *City of Boston Public Health Commission, Boston*
Andrew Cohen, Esq., *Health Law Advocates, Inc., Boston*
Hannah Frigand, *Health Care for All, Boston*
Ashley Jones-Pierce, Esq., *Greater Boston Legal Services, Boston*