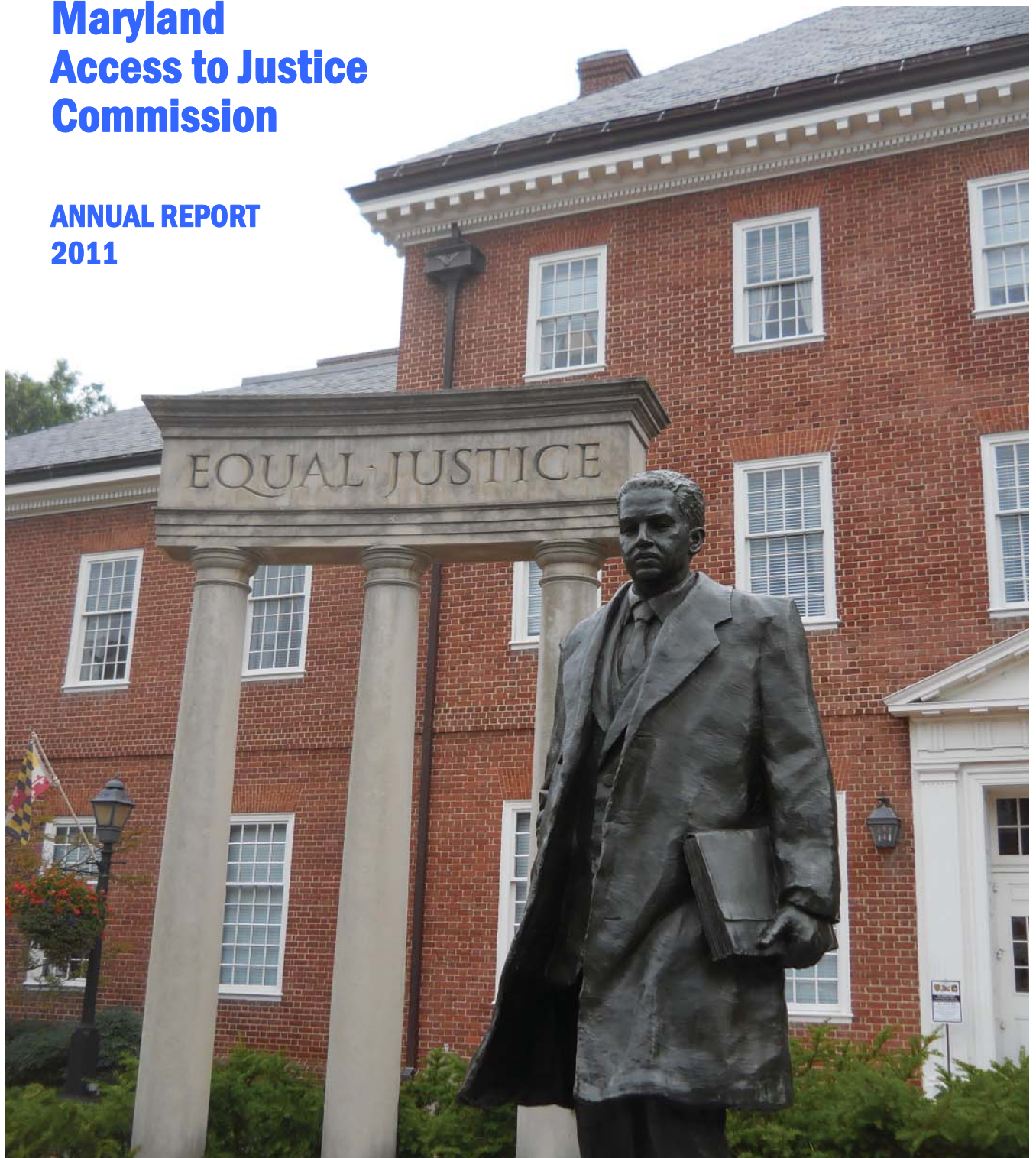
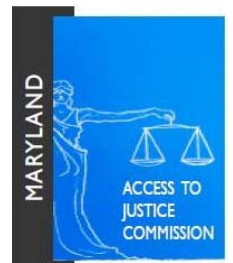


Maryland Access to Justice Commission

**ANNUAL REPORT
2011**



Maryland Access to Justice Commission
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OUR MISSION

By bringing together leaders and stakeholders from the Maryland Judiciary and its justice system partners, the Commission gives meaningful voice to the public whose interest it serves. Therefore . . . the Commission shall develop, consolidate, coordinate and/or implement initiatives designed to, and which are consistent with the Judiciary's policy to expand access to, and enhance the quality of, civil justice for persons who encounter barriers in gaining access to Maryland's civil justice system.

Duties. To carry out its purposes, the Commission shall:

- (i) Consult extensively with members of communities that experience barriers to justice, including persons living in poverty, language minorities, persons with disabilities, and others, to obtain their views regarding the barriers to equal justice and proposed solutions;
- (ii) Establish a coordinated planning process that involves members of the community affected by the crisis in equal access to justice in an effort to develop strategies to improve access and reduce barriers;
- (iii) Facilitate efforts to create improved coordination and support of civil legal services programs;
- (iv) Work with the courts, administrative agencies and lawmaking bodies to propose and promote rules and systemic changes that will open greater access to the justice system; and
- (v) Propose and promote strategies to generate adequate levels of public, private and volunteer resources and funding for the State's civil justice network and the access to justice initiatives identified by the Commission.

Excerpted from:

Maryland Court of Appeals, Administrative Order as to the Maryland Access to Justice Commission, 19 March 2010.

Defining Access to Justice for Maryland

Access to justice means all Marylanders can benefit from the rights, protections, services and opportunities that the law and the legal system provide. Having access to justice requires that the information and resources Marylanders need to access these rights are adequately funded and are available regardless of ability, age, gender, religion, institutionalization, income, language, literacy, race, ethnicity or sexual orientation.

Access to justice must include:

- ***Practices, procedures and resources that support the ability of the self-represented to navigate through and fully participate in the legal system, including online resources.***
- ***Courthouses and facilities housing law-related services that are supported and maintained with adequate funding in order to be safe, accessible, convenient, and technologically current.***
- ***The availability of a full range of legal services including information, advice, appropriate referrals, and full representation by an attorney, as necessary.***
- ***The opportunity to participate in mediation or other appropriate dispute resolution services as well as the opportunity to understand their benefits and limitations.***
- ***The commitment of all branches of government to support these principles through fiscal and legislative policies designed to make them a reality for all Marylanders.***

Maryland Access to Justice Commission

Hon. Irma S. Raker

Chair, Maryland Access to Justice Commission
Judge (Ret.), Court of Appeals of Maryland

Hon. Ben C. Clyburn

Vice-Chair, Maryland Access to Justice Commission
Chief Judge, District Court of Maryland

Richard Abbott

Family Division Director, Circuit Court for Baltimore County

Chadfield B. Clapsaddle

Exec. Dir., Ofc. of Capital Budgeting, Dept. of Budget and Management
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Hon. Sandra K. Dalton

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State Law Librarian, Maryland State Law Library

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Designee for Atty. Gen. Gansler

Hon. Kathleen Dumais

Delegate, Maryland House of Delegates
Designee for Speaker Michael E. Busch

Hon. Mary Ellen Barbera

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Susan Erlichman

Executive Director, Maryland Legal Services Corporation

Gray Barton

Executive Director, Problem-Solving Courts Committee

Hon. Douglas Gansler

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Frank Broccolina

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Administrative Office of the Courts

Phoebe Haddon

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Exec. Dir., Women's Law Ctr. of Maryland

Hon. John R. Hargrove, Jr.

Judge, Baltimore City District Court

Del. Michael E. Busch

Speaker, Maryland House of Delegates
Designee: Del. Kathleen Dumais

Hon. Glenn T. Harrell, Jr.

Judge, Court of Appeals of Maryland

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Administrative Judge, Circuit Court
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Kwame Kwakye

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Designee for Chadfield Clapsaddle

Connie Kratovil-Lavelle

Executive Director, Family Administration,
Administrative Office of the Courts

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Chief Judge, Court of Special Appeals
Designee: Hon. Shirley M. Watts

Hon. Daniel Long

Chair, Legislative Committee
Admin. Judge, Circuit Ct. for Somerset Co.
Designee: Hon. William D. Missouri

Kristen Mahoney

Executive Director, Governor's Office on
Crime Control & Prevention
*Member and Designee for
Governor Martin O'Malley*

Michael Millemann

Professor, Univ. of Maryland School of Law
Designee for Phoebe Haddon

Sen. Thomas V. "Mike" Miller, Jr.

Senate President, Maryland Senate
Designee: To be filled.

Hon. William D. Missouri

Circuit Court for Prince George's Co. (ret.)
Designee for Hon. Daniel Long

John Nethercut

Executive Director, Public Justice Center

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Letter from the Chair



Dear Colleagues:

I am pleased to share with you this *Annual Report* reflecting on the work of the Maryland Access to Justice Commission during 2011.

The past year we have been able to focus on innovations to benefit those who must address their legal problems without benefit of counsel. At the same time, the Commission has continued its efforts to ensure that representation is accessible and affordable. We continue to monitor the progress of the Commission's proposal for court rules to promote limited scope representation, and for broader reforms like enhancing the use of attorneys' fees in cases with a larger social benefit, and advancing a statewide dialogue about a civil right to counsel.

This report includes an update on a number of more modest, practical innovations that we hope will contribute to the health of the delivery system, the commitment of the Bar, and the accessibility of the courts.

That the Commission has been able to advance the promise of equal access to justice in a number of ways, is due in no small part to the extraordinary commitment of our many justice system partners. All Marylanders benefit when leaders in the Judiciary, the Executive and Legislative Branches, the Bar, the legal services community and the community at large collaborate to support those in need.

We look forward to continuing this important work in the coming year as we renew our commitment to ensure equal access to justice for all.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Irma S. Raker".

Irma S. Raker
Maryland Court of Appeals (ret.)
Chair, Maryland Access to Justice Commission

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Introduction

Like the fragile families it serves, our system of civil justice is vulnerable. It depends upon the willingness of individuals to mediate disputes through the courts. As long as the courts are perceived as neutral, fair and accessible, individuals will voluntarily participate in that system, submitting to its rulings to address their disputes. If individuals perceive that system as overly complex, impenetrable, or its outcomes predetermined, they will go elsewhere.

The Maryland Access to Justice Commission has adopted a broad approach to its work, focusing on court innovations, as well as strategies that help craft a market for private legal services that is more accessible to low- and moderate-income Marylanders, and reforms that strengthen the existing civil legal services delivery system.

This report outlines the activities of the Maryland Access to Justice Commission during 2011. The Commission continues to do most of its work through its five committees:

- Access & Delivery of Legal Services Committee
- Critical Barriers Committee
- Definitions, Standards & Awards Committee
- Public Education Committee
- Self-Represented Litigant Committee

The Commission's work remains critically important as more and more individuals experience job loss, foreclosure, debt and the effects of ongoing economic strain.

The public must understand how to use the courts, and must feel they can be effectively heard – either because they are armed to handle their own case effectively, or because they have the benefit of counsel. Only then will individuals consent to rely on the justice system and observe its rulings. It is upon this fragile consensus that our civil society depends.

Supporting the Self-Represented

Using Technology to Broaden the Reach of the District Court Self-Help Center

The Maryland Access to Justice Commission continues to support the District Court of Maryland in addressing the needs of those without counsel. This past year, the District Court Self-Help Center moved into “Phase II,” expanding the reach of the Center statewide by providing phone and live chat services. In September of 2011, the District Court of Maryland launched its “Virtual Self-Help Center” by adding live chat and phone-based services. The Center added two additional staff attorneys to accommodate the increase in services. The Center is now staffed by one supervising attorney, three full-time staff attorneys, a paralegal and an administrative assistant.

Maryland Access to Justice Commission staff assisted the District Court, supporting the purchase and installation of live chat technology, and staffing the District Court Self-Help Center Advisory Team, which provides guidance for the project. Maryland Legal Aid operates the District Court Self-Help Center under a contract with the Maryland Judiciary.

Live Chat

Live Chat “buttons” are available on a number of Judiciary and District Court web pages (<http://mdcourts.gov/district/selfhelpcenter/home.html>), as well as on the People’s Law Library site (www.peoples-law.org). Users communicate via online text with the Center’s attorneys. Attorneys can push links including web pages, and forms, and co-browse with the participant to assist them in using court forms. Transcripts of the chats can also be provided to the client at the conclusion of the session, so they have a written record of the information provided to them.

Data Collection and Project Evaluation

Comprehensive data is collected on all transactions. Walk-in users complete an on-site, automated intake survey using a public access computer before they are served. Live chat users complete an online survey before their texting session begins, and staff collect data on all walk-in, phone and live chat services provided. In addition, the supervising attorney can review all live chat transcripts in real time or after the session has concluded to ensure appropriate service is provided.

The Court Research & Development Department of the Administrative Office of the Courts, in collaboration with the University of Maryland, School of Social Work, and the Maryland Judiciary Research Consortium, is in the process of completing a program evaluation.

Increased Impact

The Center has significantly increased the number of individuals served as a result of the new services. The District Court Self-Help Center opened its doors in December 2009, and served 4,300 individuals during its first year of operations. With new services in place, the Center now serves approximately 1,500 clients per month including 500 walk-in clients, 400-500 phone clients and 500-600 additional users statewide via live chat. The Center has served approximately 16,000 individuals since its inception.

Developing Core Resources for the Self-Represented

The Maryland Access to Justice Commission has collaborated with the Judiciary's Office of Communications & Public Affairs to develop a series of written and multimedia projects to provide information to individuals who must proceed in the courts without the benefit of counsel. The Commission has a number of Powerpoint videos, live action videos and podcasts in development on a range of procedural and legal consumer topics including: what to expect when you come to court; how to get legal help; how to work with your attorney; service of process; filing fee waivers; using witnesses and documents; and defending a small claim.

These materials are intended to supplement the web-based information available from the People's Law Library, www.peoples-law.org, Maryland's legal content website, and in written brochures from the courts and various legal services providers.

Maryland Courts Video

During 2011, the Maryland Access to Justice Commission released a 10-minute live action video introduction to the Maryland court system. The video, written by the Commission and produced by the Judiciary's Office of Communications & Public Affairs, outlines the various levels of the Maryland state court system, and provides a general orientation for individuals litigating in Maryland. The video is also used to introduce new court employees to the work of the Judiciary. The video is available for viewing at <http://mdcourts.gov/video/mdcourtsystem.wmv>.

A transcript of the video and the other multimedia materials is provided online to ensure the tools are accessible to the hearing impaired.

Court Reforms and Innovations

Training Non-Judicial Court Staff on Serving the Public

The Commission continued to expand on its efforts to support court staff in serving the public. The Commission collaborated with the Administrative Office of the Courts, Department of Human Resources, to develop and offer a one-day course building on the materials published by the Commission in 2010 entitled, *What Can I Do to Help You? A Guide for Court Staff: How to Distinguish Legal Information from Legal Advice to Better Service the Public*. The course is designed as a "train the trainer" event. Court clerks, court administrators and other court supervisory staff were invited to attend or to send individuals to be trained who could then bring the course back to local staff. Attendees are provided with course materials and a set of online resources including exercises, a manual and a link to a video. The video was produced by the Commission and the Office of Communications & Public Affairs. It may be used with new employees as part of their orientation, or can be used as part of a locally delivered course for Judiciary employees. The Commission's

Executive Director co-taught the course four times along with Human Resources training staff in late 2011 and early 2012.

Fee Waivers for Indigent Legal Services Clients

During the past year, the Commission made strides to address concerns from the legal services community that their indigent clients were not receiving automatic prepayment waivers, and to improve the process through which fee waivers are granted for those in need. The Access & Delivery of Legal Services Committee proposed a series of rule changes to strengthen the courts' fee waiver provisions. The proposal was adopted and endorsed by the Commission and recommendations were forwarded to the Court of Appeals Standing Committee on Rules of Practice & Procedure (Rules Committee).

The proposal is intended to:

- Ensure that courts automatically waive the filing fee prepayment requirement for litigants represented by Maryland Legal Services Corporation (MLSC)-funded providers;
- Extend the automatic waiver to those represented in civil matters by the Office of the Public Defender;
- Improve the process for fee waivers requested by self-represented litigants who may be indigent by requiring the application of MLSC income-eligibility guidelines as a standard for fee waivers for self-represented persons who allege indigency.
- Make some corrections and update the current fee schedules and rules.

The proposal includes recommended changes to Maryland Rules 1-325, 2-603 and 3-603, and would highlight fee waiver provisions by including in the rules some of the material that now is only available in a fee schedule posted on the Judiciary's website. The proposal has been referred to a subcommittee of the Rules Committee for consideration.

Inspiring Court Leaders

Leadership Session IV – Access to Justice – April 26, 2011

The Commission had an opportunity in 2011 to promote access to justice values and practices among Maryland court leaders. In April, the Commission planned and hosted a full-day retreat for court leadership teams, in collaboration with the Administrative Office of the Courts, Court Research & Development Department. Court leadership teams include administrative judges, chief clerks, and court administrators from all Maryland Circuit Courts, and all District Court locations. The agenda for the day included sessions on self help centers, limited scope representation, civil right to counsel, language access, legal information & advice, and making access to justice a local reality. Commission Vice-Chair and Chief Judge of the District Court of Maryland, Hon. Ben C. Clyburn presented as part of a panel on

“Procedural Fairness and the High Volume Docket.” Commission Chair, Hon. Irma S. Raker, moderated the day-long event.

Rethinking the Practice of Law to Enhance Access

Limited Scope Representation

During the past year, the Commission has continued to monitor the rule-making process for its proposed rules to promote the practice of limited scope representation. The rules, developed by the Commission during 2010, were intended as a follow-up to an earlier Commission white paper which urged the development and provision of “unbundled” legal services as a way to make legal help financially-feasible for low- and moderate-income individuals.

The Commission participated in several subcommittee and full Rules Committee meetings at which the rules were considered. At a meeting in January 2012, the Rules Committee discussed a final round of changes. A revised version will be considered at the next Rules Committee meeting. It is anticipated that they will be included in a report to the Court of Appeals for their consideration sometime during 2012.

Supporting Public Interest Practice

Loan Assistance Repayment

House Bill 523 Passes, Harnessing *Pro Hac Vice* Fees to Advance Public Interest Practice

Recommendations made by the Commission bore fruit during the 2011 Legislative Session when the General Assembly passed House Bill 523. The bill created a *pro hac vice* fee, a fee charged out-of-state attorneys entering an appearance in Maryland, to generate funds to support the Janet L. Hoffman Loan Assistance Repayment Program that benefits lawyers working in the public interest. The bill, which took effect October 1, 2011, creates a \$100 *pro hac vice* fee, \$75 of which is provided to the Janet L. Hoffman Loan Assistance Repayment Program to increase the number of loan assistance grants for lawyers working in public interest organizations. Lawyers can receive up to \$10,000 for three years under the program.

Two Additional Ideas for the Future - Deductible Awards and Loan Payments

The bill was sponsored by Del. Sandy Rosenberg and was one of three bills submitted to implement recommendations made by the Commission during 2010. Of the other two bills, House Bill 440 would have made loan assistance awards deductible from the recipient’s gross income for the purposes of Maryland taxes, and would require the State to consider restructuring the award as a forgivable loan to permit the award to be deductible from the recipient’s gross income for the purposes of federal taxes. House Bill 623 would have provided that loan payments by attorneys in public interest or public service practice were deductible from their gross

income for the purpose of state taxes. The Commission testified in support of all three bills. House Bill 440 and House Bill 623 were not successful but represent additional ways the General Assembly might support public interest legal practice in the future.

The Venable Access to Justice for Victims of Domestic Violence Fellowship

The Venable Access to Justice for Victims of Domestic Violence Fellowship, created during 2010 by the Commission, in collaboration with the Office of Vice President Biden, the Dept. of Justice Access to Justice Commission, the University of Baltimore School of Law, the House of Ruth, and with funding from Venable, LLP, was launched with the hiring of its first fellow, Elizabeth Ketterdine, in August 2011.

The fellowship places a graduate of the University of Baltimore School of Law who has participated in the Family Law Clinic, in a one-year position with the House of Ruth's Protective Order Advocacy Representation Project (POARP) at the District Court in Baltimore City. Venable, LLP, funds the paid position and provides mentoring, support and access to first-year associate programs and resources to the fellow during their year of service.

Funding For Civil Legal Services

Filing Fee Surcharge

While civil legal services remain critically vulnerable in a time of heightened demand, 2011 provided an opportunity to assess how well the State's remedy for funding shortages worked. Due to the economic crisis and unprecedented low interest rates, one primary source of civil legal services funding, the Interest on Lawyers Trust Accounts (IOLTA) program had plummeted from \$6.7 million in Fiscal Year 2008 to \$2.2 million in Fiscal Year 2010. To address this significant decline, the Maryland Access to Justice Commission partnered with the Maryland Judiciary, the Maryland Legal Services Corporation, Maryland Legal Aid and others to advocate for an increase in court filing fee surcharges to generate additional revenue to support civil legal services. With its partners, the Commission successfully advocated for the passage of Senate Bill 248 during the 2010 Legislative Session.

During Fiscal Year 2011 (July 2010 – July 2011) the filing fee surcharge generated \$12.9 million for civil legal service programs, an increase of \$4.9 million. This was critical as IOLTA revenues remained historically low generating only \$2.5 million during this same period. One of the reasons the bill did not generate the \$6.5 million originally predicted was that it was implemented during a period when court filings declined. The filing fee surcharge increase provided critical resources and enabled most Maryland legal service providers to continue operations at a basic level.

Despite this good news, challenges remain. MLSC, which manages the state's IOLTA program and administers the funding generated from the filing fee surcharge, has had to spend from its reserve to maintain core operating grants for its

34 grantees. After cutting grants by approximately 20% in 2010, MLSC restored funding for most grantees to pre-recession levels upon enactment of the filing fee increase, with an increase to its single largest grantee, Maryland Legal Aid. MLSC anticipated these commitments would require modest spending from reserves; however, the lower than anticipated new fee revenue, as well as the continuation of near-zero interest rates necessitated deeper spending from reserves in Fiscal Year 2011 and Fiscal Year 2012. It is anticipated that MSLC grantees will be subject to grant cuts during Fiscal Year 2013 to ensure MLSC does not completely deplete its reserves.

Class Action Residual Funds

Since its creation, the Maryland Access to Justice Commission has made an effort to tap every possible funding resource used in other states to generate resources for civil legal services. One area several states have targeted is unclaimed funds that remain after awards have been distributed in a class action. Funds often become available because class members cannot be located, or fail to submit claims, or because the court determines that awards to individual class members are so small they provide negligible benefit to those individuals. Residual funds may then be put to their next best use in the form of a *cy pres* award to an outside entity, such as a legal services program, that the Court and counsel agree will serve the interests “as near as possible” of the injured class.

Five states -- Illinois, Massachusetts, North Carolina, Tennessee and Washington State -- have passed legislation or adopted court rules to channel and promote awards of class action residual funds to legal services organizations.

The Commission has proposed a change to Maryland Rule 2-231, the rule governing class actions, to direct *cy pres* awards made from class action residual funds to appropriate civil legal services providers. The Commission aims to encourage courts to award residual funds that remain after a class action to organizations providing legal services to low-income Marylanders. The proposed rule is modeled after the remedy adopted in Illinois.

The proposed change would add a reference to residual funds in a common fund created in a class action, requiring that class action settlements provide for the distribution of at least 50% of residual funds be award to an “eligible organization,” defined as one of the state’s civil legal services providers. The other 50% may be directed to another nonprofit charitable organization. The proposed rule would also require that judgments provide for the distribution of residual funds to an “eligible organization.”

The proposal is currently pending with the Court of Appeals Standing Committee on Rules of Practice & Procedure.

Donation Page

The Commission has created a vehicle to help reinforce knowledge about the delivery system among Maryland's lawyers, and to give those attorneys an opportunity to support legal services organizations in the State. This year, for the first time, the Commission added a single web page to the online reporting pro bono report that Maryland attorneys complete each year. The webpage invites attorneys, if they so choose, to make a one-time voluntary contribution to a legal services organization. The page offers links to each organization's web page, scrollover text that describes their mission, and a direct link to that organization's online donation page, to aid attorneys who may want to make a financial contribution. Maryland Rule of Professional Conduct 6.1 provides that a lawyer may discharge their professional responsibility to provide *pro bono* representation "by contributing financial support to organizations that provide legal services to persons of limited means."

The Commission does not receive or handle any funds as the online contributions are deposited directly in the providers' online payment accounts. The Commission is tracking the donations reported through the web page, however, and will be able to determine how effective the page has been. In the following reporting cycle, attorneys will be reminded of the donation they made in the year prior when completing their report, so they can include the amount in reporting their financial contributions.

Many state access to justice commissions are creations of the state bar association, and, as a result, have been directly involved in private fundraising campaigns for civil legal services. Because it is housed within the Judicial Branch, the Maryland Access to Justice Commission is limited in the types of fundraising activities it can undertake. The Commission, does, however, manage the *pro bono* and IOLTA reporting responsibilities of the Administrative Office of the Courts, in accordance with the Maryland Rules. The Commission contracts with outside vendors, and collaborates with the Pro Bono Resource Center of Maryland and the Maryland Legal Services Corporation to manage the mandatory reporting process conducted annually for over 35,000 Maryland lawyers. Over 80% of lawyers choose to file their report online.

Expanding Rights and Market Incentives

Fee-Shifting to Promote the Public Interest in Maryland

The Commission continued to pursue the use of attorneys' fees as a means to promote access to justice by creating market incentives for attorneys to take cases that promote individual rights or that have a larger public impact. In its *Interim Report* in 2009, the Commission recognized the role fee-shifting schemes play in expanding access to legal representation. The Commission noted the large number of fee-shifting statutes in the State, and noted especially the lack of a provision for attorneys' fees in cases involving State constitutional claims. During 2010, the

Commission articulated the benefit of fee-shifting schemes in a white paper, *Fee-Shifting to Promote the Public Interest in Maryland*.

During 2011, the Commission continued to advance its work in support of fee-shifting. The Commission's white paper has been accepted and is scheduled for publication in the *University of Baltimore Law Forum* (*publication pending*).

The Commission has been vetting a proposed fee-shifting statute with the Maryland Judiciary. The Commission will continue working with the Judiciary, stakeholders and others to consider submitting a bill in a future legislative session.

Civil Right to Counsel

During the past year, the Commission continued its work to promote a dialogue about civil right to counsel in Maryland and nationwide, building on its 2010 report, *Implementing a Civil Right to Counsel in Maryland*.

The Commission gained a national reputation for its groundbreaking implementation strategy and cost assessment for a civil right to counsel. The Commission's Executive Director made a conference call presentation for the National Coalition on a Civil Right to Counsel, highlighting the report. The Executive Director, Commission member, Hon. Cathy Hollenberg Serrette, and Civil Right to Counsel Subcommittee member, Deb Gardner, presented a panel discussion on a civil right to counsel at the Maryland Partners for Justice Conference in Baltimore in May. Finally, the Commission was invited to participate in two panels at a national symposium on a civil right to counsel held at the National Legal Aid & Defender's Association (NLADA) Conference in Washington, DC, in December 2011.

On June 20, 2011, the United States Supreme Court announced its decision in *Turner v. Rogers*, 564 U.S. ____ (2011), finding there was no categorical right to counsel in a civil contempt matter where the opposing party was an unrepresented custodial parent seeking to enforce child support. The court held that the Due Process Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment does not automatically require the appointment of counsel, but, in lieu of counsel, the court should have provided substitute procedural safeguards to ensure a fair process. The safeguards referenced suggest to some that the Court was positing a more active role for judges in cases involving the self-represented. To those more skeptical, the opinion is an affirmation that those advocating a civil right to counsel are wise to focus their efforts on state-level reforms.

In an effort to engage Maryland legislators in the statewide conversation about a civil right to counsel, the Commission urged the Maryland Judiciary to include in its 2012 legislative package, a bill to create a legislative Task Force on a Civil Right to Counsel. The bill, which is pending before the Maryland General Assembly, would create a 13-member task force with membership appointed from the Maryland Senate, the Maryland House of Delegates, and additional members appointed by the Governor and the Chief Judge, including a representative of the Maryland State Bar

Association. If the bill passes in its initial form, the task force will be staffed by the Maryland Access to Justice Commission.

Promoting Public Awareness

Media Kit

The Commission's Public Education Committee developed a Media Kit during 2011, to aid members of the media looking for data and statistics about access to justice in the state, and to promote a better understanding of the civil legal services delivery system, how it is structured, how it is funded, and the challenges it faces in serving low-income Marylanders.

The Media Kit is available online at: www.mdcourts.gov/mdatjc/pdfs/mediakit.pdf.

Mis Leyes, Mis Tribunales, Mi Maryland

The Commission expanded its public awareness campaign, *My Laws, My Courts, My Maryland*, to Spanish speakers in 2011, publishing a series of eight posters in Spanish. The posters were translated courtesy of the Administrative Office of the Courts, Program Services Department, which manages the court's Interpreter Program and handles translation services. The posters are available for downloading from the Commission's website and are available in larger printed formats, free-of-charge. Copies of the Spanish language posters have been distributed to clerk's offices, legal service providers, and other stakeholders.

Presentations

The past year provided a number of opportunities to share information with stakeholders in Maryland and across the country about the work of the Commission, and to enhance awareness of the need for access to justice.

Legislative Briefings

Commission Chair, Hon. Irma S. Raker, Vice-Chair Hon. Ben C. Clyburn, and Executive Director, Pamela Cardullo Ortiz, make several presentations to Maryland legislators during the 2011 Legislative Session. These events were informational, designed to educate legislators about the civil legal services delivery system, the legal needs of Maryland's low- and moderate-income population, and to build support for the work of the Commission. Presentations were made to the Women's Caucus and to the Republican Caucus.

NLADA Conference

The Maryland Access to Justice Commission was invited to share its work with participants at the National Legal Aid & Defender Association (NLADA) conference in Washington, DC, in December 2011. Commission Chair, Hon. Irma S. Raker,

Commission member, Wilhelm Joseph, and Executive Director Ortiz participated in a joint panel with representatives from the District of Columbia Access to Justice Commission.

Reinforcing Efforts that Enhance Access to Justice

The Maryland Access to Justice Awards

The Commission launched its annual awards program in 2011 by presenting awards in five categories to laudable individuals and programs. The awards were presented at the annual Judicial Conference in Annapolis, Maryland, on May 13, 2011. The awards recognize individuals, programs and entities in the State that improve the ability of all Marylanders to access the courts or to get legal help in civil legal matters.

The 2011 honorees were:

Judge of the Year

Hon. Ben C. Clyburn, Chief Judge, District Court of Maryland

Legislator of the Year

Hon. Kathleen Dumais, Maryland House of Delegates
Senator Brian Frosh, Maryland Senate

Executive Branch Award

Governor Martin O'Malley

Judicial Branch Excellence Award

Joan Bellistri, Director, Anne Arundel County Public Law Library

Outstanding Program of the Year

Tenants in Foreclosure Project, Public Justice Center
Matt Hill, Project Attorney

Addressing the Needs of Special Populations

To ensure the Commission remains grounded in the needs of the State's most vulnerable, the Critical Barriers Committee launched a series of special stakeholder meetings. Each involved invitations to panelists who represent a particular critical population. These meetings have included legal services advocates, private attorneys, interest-based organizations and ordinary citizens. To date the Critical Barriers Committee has met with groups representing the needs of the incarcerated, seniors, and persons with disabilities. The Critical Barriers Committee plans to continue these meetings, and to make recommendations based on the conversations held with these stakeholders. The Committee also examines the needs of persons with limited English proficiency through the work of its Language Access Subcommittee.

Access to the People's Law Library for the Incarcerated

As a result of its investigation into the needs of the incarcerated and those soon to be released, the Commission authorized its staff to print and distribute to correctional and detention facilities binders with the content from the People's Law Library, Maryland's legal content website. This will provide the incarcerated, including those preparing for reentry, access to useful legal information that they might not otherwise be able to use given that those in correctional and detention facilities generally do not have access to the Internet. The binders will be distributed in early 2012 and periodic replacement pages will be provided to keep the material up-to-date.

Conclusion

The Commission continues to advance the recommendations made in its 2009 *Interim Report*, and to follow up on the projects launched since its inception. Like any effort at systemic change, many of the Commission's projects will take time to bear fruit. It is gratifying to see the immediate impact of on-the-ground projects like the District Court Self-Help Center, which serve so many Marylanders. Other initiatives will require continued collaboration and public awareness efforts to affect the type of culture change needed to ensure all in the State equal access to justice. It is an effort that remains ever more critical as the economic difficulties facing the State have a disproportionate effect on the dispossessed and the disadvantaged.

APPENDICES

MARYLAND ACCESS TO JUSTICE COMMISSION

IRMA S. RAKER
JUDGE, MARYLAND COURT OF APPEALS (RET.)
CHAIR

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CHIEF JUDGE, DISTRICT COURT OF MARYLAND
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HON. GLENN HARRELL, JR.
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KATHY HOWARD
WILHELM H. JOSEPH, JR.
KWAME KWAKYE
CONNIE KRATOVIL-LAVELLE
HON. PETER KRAUSER
HON. DANIEL LONG
KRISTEN MAHONEY
MICHAEL MILLEMANN
HON. THOMAS V. MIKE MILLER
HON. WILLIAM D. MISSOURI
JOHN NETHERCUT
HON. MARTIN O'MALLEY
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WENDY RILEY
JONATHAN ROSENTHAL
HON. CATHY HOLLENBERG SERRETTE
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ROBERTA WARNKEN
HON. SHIRLEY WATTS
DAVE WEISSERT
RACHEL WOHL

PAMELA CARDULLO ORTIZ
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

15 December 2011

Hon. Alan M. Wilner, Chair
Standing Committee on
Rules of Practice & Procedure
2011-D Commerce Park Drive
Annapolis, MD 21401

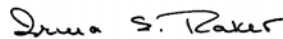
Dear Judge Wilner:

This past year, a number of concerns have been brought to the attention of the Maryland Access to Justice Commission regarding the manner in which fee waivers are handled and considered by the trial courts. The Commission reviewed those concerns, and recommends changes to Rules 1-325, 2-603 and 3-603, in an effort to address them. Included with this letter is a fact sheet that summarizes what we hope to address with the proposal, and the proposed rule changes.

The proposal was vetted with judges, clerks and court administrators and, I believe, represents an effective way to improve the way fee waivers are handled. On behalf of the Commission, I am writing to request that the Rules Committee consider the enclosed draft rule changes for adoption by the Maryland Court of Appeals. I believe that we can significantly improve access to justice by adopting these recommended changes.

If the Commission or I can be of further help to the Committee as it considers the enclosed draft rules, please feel free to call upon us.

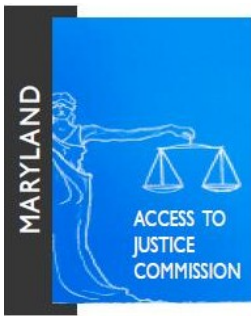
Very truly yours,



Irma S. Raker, Chair

Enclosure

cc: Sandra Haines, Reporter, Rules Committee



Maryland Access to Justice Commission

Proposed Rule Changes Regarding Fee Waivers

Fall 2011

PURPOSE

- Ensure that courts automatically waive the filing fee for litigants represented by MLSC-funded providers.
- Extend the automatic waiver to those represented in civil matters by the Office of the Public Defender.
- Improve the process for fee waivers requested by self-represented litigants who may be indigent. The proposal would require judges to consider whether these petitions (not represented by an MLSC-provider) meet MLSC guidelines when exercising his or her discretion to determine whether to grant a prepayment waiver or a final waiver of costs.
- Make some corrections and update current fee schedules and rules.

FEE SCHEDULES

- Fee schedules are adopted by the State Court Administrator in accordance with CJP §7-202 and are posted online.
- Much of the fee waiver process is included in those schedules. That information is only available online and not referenced in the rules.
- Current fee schedule references the old Judicare project and its COMAR references.

PROPOSED RULE CHANGES

- **Rule 1-325. Filing fees and costs – Indigency.**
 - Fee schedules are not well known and not often referenced. The rule change would incorporate the existing procedure and its improvements in a rule.
 - Changes incorporate the provision for legal services providers, add a provision for public defenders, and provide for the use of MLSC guidelines when judges exercise their discretion in granting fee waivers for self-represented litigants.
- **Rule 2-603. Costs [Circuit Courts] and Rule 3-603. Costs [District Court]**
 - The current rule referenced court cost waivers for indigent persons in domestic relations cases only.
 - If we are referencing fee waivers in the rules, it seemed appropriate to also reference the issue in the rule governing costs.
 - Proposed modifications would remove the reference to domestic relations cases in the Circuit Court rule and reference waiver of costs for all indigents in both the Circuit and District Court rule.

Rule 1-325. Filing fees and costs - Indigency.

(a) *Generally.*- A person unable by reason of poverty to pay any filing fee or other court costs ordinarily required to be prepaid may file a request for an order waiving the prepayment of those costs. The person shall file with the request an affidavit verifying the facts set forth in that person's pleading, notice of appeal, application for leave to appeal or request for process, and stating the grounds for entitlement to the waiver. If the person is represented by an attorney, the request and affidavit shall be accompanied by the attorney's signed certification that the claim, appeal, application, or request for process is meritorious. The court shall review the papers presented and may require the person to supplement or explain any of the matters set forth in the papers. If the court is satisfied that the person is unable by reason of poverty to pay the filing fee or other court costs ordinarily required to be prepaid and the claim, appeal, application, or request for process is not frivolous, it shall waive by order the prepayment of such costs.

(b) *Exception to prepayment requirements.*

(1) Filing Fee, MLSC Surcharge and Costs. A clerk shall not collect a filing fee, surcharge for the Maryland Legal Services Corporation, or other court cost in advance in:

(A) a case in which a court orders waiver of the prepayment of a filing fee;

(B) a case in which the plaintiff or petitioner is represented by counsel retained through a pro bono or legal services program that is recognized by Maryland Legal Services Corporation, if the program provides the clerk with a memorandum that names the program, attorney(s), and client(s), that specifies that representation is being provided for client(s) meeting the financial eligibility criteria of the Corporation, and that states that payment of filing fees is not required under the Prisoner Litigation Act;

(C) a case in which representation is being provided by Maryland Legal Aid Bureau, Inc.;

(D) a case in which the plaintiff or petitioner is represented by counsel provided by the Office of the Public Defender;

(2) Use of MLSC Guidelines. In exercising its discretion in determining whether to grant a prepayment waiver, the court shall consider:

(A) whether the petitioner has a family household income that qualifies under the client income guidelines for the Maryland Legal Services Corporation (MLSC) for the current year;

(B) whether an attorney is representing the petitioner pro bono;

(C) whether the petitioner is the recipient of government benefits including food stamps, Section 8 housing, TANF or other programs;

(D) other factors that may reflect on the petitioner's ability to pay the filing fee.

(3) Charges, Costs, and Fees in Excepted Cases. If this rule, a schedule, statute, or a court waives prepayment of a charge, cost, or fee in a case, the court shall award charges, costs, and fees in accordance with this Rule, at the conclusion of the case. In determining whether to grant a complete waiver of fees in a civil case, the court shall consider:

(A) whether the petitioner has a family household income that qualifies under the client income guidelines for the Maryland Legal Services Corporation (MLSC) for the current year;

(B) whether an attorney is representing the petitioner pro bono;

(C) whether the petitioner is the recipient of government benefits including food stamps, Section 8 housing, or TANF;

(D) other factors that may reflect on the petitioner's ability to pay the filing fee.

~~(b)~~ *Appeals where public defender representation denied - Payment by State.*- The court shall order the State to pay the court costs related to an appeal or an application for leave to appeal and the costs of preparing any transcript of testimony, brief, appendices, and record extract necessary in connection with the appeal, in any case in which (1) the Public Defender's Office is authorized by these rules or other law to represent a party, (2) the Public Defender has declined representation of the party, and (3) the party is unable by reason of poverty to pay those costs.

Rule 2-603. Costs.

(a) **Allowance and allocation.**- Unless otherwise provided by rule, law, or order of court, the prevailing party is entitled to costs. The court, by order, may allocate costs among the parties.

(b) **Assessment by the clerk.**- The clerk shall assess as costs all fees of the clerk and sheriff, statutory fees actually paid to witnesses who testify, and, in proceedings under Title 7, Chapter 200 of these Rules, the costs specified by Rule 7-206 (a). On written request of a party, the clerk shall assess other costs prescribed by rule or law. The clerk shall notify each party of the assessment in writing. On motion of any party filed within five days after the party receives notice of the clerk's assessment, the court shall review the action of the clerk.

(c) **Assessment by the court.**- When the court orders or requests a transcript or, on its own initiative, appoints an expert or interpreter, the court may assess as costs some or all of the expenses or may order payment of some or all of the expenses from public funds. On motion of a party and after hearing, if requested, the court may assess as costs any reasonable and necessary expenses, to the extent permitted by rule or law.

(d) **Joint liability.**- When an action is brought for the use or benefit of another as provided in Rule 2-201, the person for whom the action is brought and the person bringing the action, except the State of Maryland, shall be liable for the payment of any costs assessed against either of them.

(e) Waiver of costs ~~in domestic relations cases~~ - Indigency.- In A CIVIL ACTION ~~an action under Title 9, Chapter 200 of these Rules,~~ the court shall waive final costs, including any compensation, fees, and costs of a master or examiner if the court finds that the party against whom the costs are assessed is unable to pay them by reason of poverty. The party may seek the waiver at the conclusion of the case in accordance with Rule 1-325 (a). If the party was granted a waiver pursuant to that Rule and remains unable to pay the costs, the affidavit required by Rule 1-325 (a) need only recite the existence of the prior waiver and the party's continued inability to pay.

Rule 3-603. Costs.

(a) Allowance and allocation.- Unless otherwise provided by rule, law, or order of court, the prevailing party is entitled to the allowance of costs. The court, by order, may allocate costs among the parties.

(b) Assessment by the court.- When the court orders or requests a transcript or, on its own initiative, appoints an expert or interpreter, the court may assess as costs some or all of the expenses or may order payment of some or all of the expenses from public funds. On motion of a party and after hearing, if requested, the court may assess as costs any reasonable and necessary expenses, to the extent permitted by rule or law.

(c) Joint liability.- When an action is brought for the use or benefit of another as provided in Rule 3-201, the person for whom the action is brought and the person bringing the action, except the State of Maryland, shall be liable for the payment of any costs assessed against either of them.

(D) WAIVER OF COSTS - INDIGENCY.- IN A CIVIL ACTION, THE COURT SHALL WAIVE FINAL COSTS, INCLUDING ANY COMPENSATION, AND FEES, IF THE COURT FINDS THAT THE PARTY AGAINST WHOM THE COSTS ARE ASSESSED IS UNABLE TO PAY THEM BY REASON OF POVERTY. THE PARTY MAY SEEK THE WAIVER AT THE CONCLUSION OF THE CASE IN ACCORDANCE WITH RULE 1-325 (A). IF THE PARTY WAS GRANTED A WAIVER PURSUANT TO THAT RULE AND REMAINS UNABLE TO PAY THE COSTS, THE AFFIDAVIT REQUIRED BY RULE 1-325 (A) NEED ONLY RECITE THE EXISTENCE OF THE PRIOR WAIVER AND THE PARTY'S CONTINUED INABILITY TO PAY.

HOUSE BILL 523

D1

1lr1561

By: **Delegates Rosenberg and Dumais**
Introduced and read first time: February 7, 2011
Assigned to: Judiciary and Ways and Means

Committee Report: Favorable with amendments
House action: Adopted
Read second time: March 8, 2011

CHAPTER _____

1 AN ACT concerning

2 **Courts – Fee for the Special Admission of an Out-of-State Attorney – Janet L.**
3 **Hoffman Loan Assistance Repayment Program**

4 FOR the purpose of requiring the State Court Administrator to assess a certain fee for
5 the special admission of an out-of-state attorney and to pay a certain portion of
6 the fee into the Janet L. Hoffman Loan Assistance Repayment Program;
7 requiring certain funds for the Program to be allocated to certain individuals;
8 providing that funds for the Program include money paid to the Program from
9 the assessment of a certain fee; and generally relating to funding for the Janet
10 L. Hoffman Loan Assistance Repayment Program with fees paid for the special
11 admission of out-of-state attorneys.

12 BY repealing and reenacting, without amendments,
13 Article – Business Occupations and Professions
14 Section 10–215
15 Annotated Code of Maryland
16 (2010 Replacement Volume)

17 BY repealing and reenacting, with amendments,
18 Article – Courts and Judicial Proceedings
19 Section 7–202
20 Annotated Code of Maryland
21 (2006 Replacement Volume and 2010 Supplement)

22 BY repealing and reenacting, without amendments,

EXPLANATION: CAPITALS INDICATE MATTER ADDED TO EXISTING LAW.

[Brackets] indicate matter deleted from existing law.

Underlining indicates amendments to bill.

~~Strike-out~~ indicates matter stricken from the bill by amendment or deleted from the law by amendment.



1 Article – Education
2 Section 18–1502
3 Annotated Code of Maryland
4 (2008 Replacement Volume and 2010 Supplement)

5 BY repealing and reenacting, with amendments,
6 Article – Education
7 Section 18–1504
8 Annotated Code of Maryland
9 (2008 Replacement Volume and 2010 Supplement)

10 SECTION 1. BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF
11 MARYLAND, That the Laws of Maryland read as follows:

12 **Article – Business Occupations and Professions**

13 10–215.

14 (a) Subject to subsections (b) and (c) of this section, on a motion filed as
15 required by rules adopted by the Court of Appeals, a court may grant special
16 admission to practice law in a particular case to an individual who is:

17 (1) admitted to the bar of another state; and

18 (2) employed by a party in the case before:

19 (i) a court or other unit of the State government; or

20 (ii) a unit of a political subdivision of the State.

21 (b) A special admission to practice law may be granted only:

22 (1) by the court hearing the case for which an individual requests the
23 special admission; or

24 (2) if the case is before a unit other than a court, by:

25 (i) the circuit court for the county where the unit has its
26 principal office; or

27 (ii) any circuit court to which the case may be appealed.

28 (c) An individual may practice law under this section only in connection with
29 the case for which the special admission is granted.

30 (d) An individual who practices law under this section is subject to
31 disciplinary proceedings as the Maryland Rules provide.

1 18-1502.

2 (a) There is a program of loan assistance repayment known as the Janet L.
3 Hoffman Loan Assistance Repayment Program in the State.

4 (b) The Office of Student Financial Assistance shall assist in the repayment
5 of the amount of any higher education loan owed by an individual who:

6 (1) (i) Receives a graduate, professional, or undergraduate degree
7 from:

8 1. A college or university in the State of Maryland; or

9 2. A school of law; or

10 (ii) Receives a Resident Teacher Certificate (RTC) from the
11 Department after completing an alternative teaching preparation program approved
12 by the State Superintendent;

13 (2) Obtains eligible employment;

14 (3) Receives an income that is less than the maximum eligible total
15 income levels established by the Office, including any additional sources of income;
16 and

17 (4) Satisfies any other criteria established by the Office.

18 (c) An applicant for assistance in the repayment of a commercial loan shall
19 demonstrate to the Office that the commercial loan was used for tuition, educational
20 expenses, or living expenses for graduate or undergraduate study.

21 (d) Assistance in the repayment of a loan from an entity set forth in §
22 18-1501(c)(2) of this subtitle shall require the approval of the Office.

23 18-1504.

24 **(A) FUNDS FOR THE JANET L. HOFFMAN LOAN ASSISTANCE**
25 **REPAYMENT PROGRAM DESCRIBED IN SUBSECTION (B)(2) OF THIS SECTION**
26 **SHALL BE ALLOCATED BY THE COMMISSION TO AN INDIVIDUAL WHO:**

27 **(1) HAS RECEIVED A GRADUATE DEGREE FROM A SCHOOL OF**
28 **LAW; AND**

29 **(2) HAS SUBMITTED AN APPLICATION FOR THE JANET L.**
30 **HOFFMAN LOAN ASSISTANCE REPAYMENT PROGRAM THAT THE COMMISSION**
31 **DISAPPROVED DUE TO INSUFFICIENT FUNDS.**

1 ~~(A)~~ **(B)** Funds for the Janet L. Hoffman Loan Assistance Repayment
2 Program shall [be]:

3 **(1)** **BE** provided on an annual basis in the State budget; **AND**

4 **(2)** **INCLUDE MONEY PAID TO THE PROGRAM FROM THE FEE**
5 **CHARGED FOR A SPECIAL ADMISSION OF AN OUT-OF-STATE ATTORNEY UNDER §**
6 **7-202(E) OF THE COURTS ARTICLE.**

7 ~~(B)~~ **(C)** If a federal matching grant loan program furnishes professional
8 services in an eligible field of employment to low-income or underserved residents of
9 the State, the Office may apply not more than 50 percent of the funds provided in the
10 State budget for the Janet L. Hoffman Loan Assistance Repayment Program to the
11 State’s participation in the federal program.

12 SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act shall take effect
13 October 1, 2011.

Approved:

Governor.

Speaker of the House of Delegates.

President of the Senate.

MARYLAND ACCESS TO JUSTICE COMMISSION

IRMA S. RAKER
JUDGE, MARYLAND COURT OF APPEALS (RET.)
CHAIR

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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

15 December 2011

Hon. Alan M. Wilner, Chair
Standing Committee on
Rules of Practice & Procedure
2011-D Commerce Park Drive
Annapolis, MD 21401

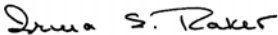
Dear Judge Wilner:

During these difficult financial times, states are tapping every possible resource to ensure sufficient funding is available to address the civil legal of the many people affected by the financial crisis. One area that has been utilized in other states to successfully generate additional funds for legal services is the use of class action residual funds.

After considering the responses of other states, the Maryland Access to Justice Commission would like to propose an amendment to Rule 2-231 to reference residual funds in a common fund created in a class action. The proposal is modeled on a statute passed in Illinois at the urging of the Chicago Bar Foundation. It would require that class action settlements provide for the distribution of at least 50% of residual funds to an "eligible organization" defined as one of the state's civil legal services providers. The other 50% would be available to go to another nonprofit charitable organization. It would also require the judgments provide for the distribution of residual funds to an "eligible organization."

On behalf of the Commission, I am writing to request that the Rules Committee consider the enclosed draft rule change for adoption by the Maryland Court of Appeals. This rule change will help strengthen funding for civil legal services and ensure those services are available to those in need. If the Commission or I can be of further help to the Committee as it considers the enclosed draft rules, please feel free to call upon us.

Very truly yours,


Irma S. Raker, Chair

Enclosure

cc: Sandra Haines, Reporter, Rules Committee

PROPOSED RESIDUAL FUNDS RULE:

Add to Rule 2-231:

(j) Residual funds in a common fund created in a class action.

(1) Definitions. As used in this Section:

(A) "Eligible organization" means a not-for-profit organization that:

(i) is tax exempt from the payment of federal taxes under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code or affiliates with such a tax exempt organization; and

(ii) provides legal services to eligible clients as defined in Md. Human Services Code Ann. § 11-101, and is either a grantee of the Maryland Legal Services Corporation or is identified by the Maryland Legal Services Corporation as a qualified legal services provider.

(iii) The Maryland Legal Services Corporation shall also be considered an eligible organization under this Rule.

(B) "Residual funds" means all unclaimed funds, including uncashed checks or other unclaimed payments, that remain in a common fund created in a class action after court-approved payments are made for the following:

(i) class member claims; and

(ii) attorney's fees and costs.

(2) Settlement. An order approving a proposed settlement of a class action that results in the creation of a common fund for the benefit of the class shall, consistent with this Rule, establish a process for the administration of the settlement and shall provide for the distribution of any residual funds to one or more eligible organizations, except that up to 50% of the residual funds may be distributed to one or more other nonprofit charitable organization or other organizations that serve the public good if the court finds there is good cause to approve such a distribution as part of a settlement.

(3) Judgment. A judgment in favor of the plaintiff in a class action that results in the creation of a common fund for the benefit of the class shall provide for the distribution of any residual funds to one or more eligible organizations.

(4) State and its political subdivisions. This Rule does not apply to any class action lawsuit against the State of Maryland or any of its political subdivisions.

(5) Application. This Rule applies to all actions commenced on or after the effective date of this Rule and to all actions pending on the effective date of this Rule for which no court order has been entered

preliminarily approving a proposed settlement for a class of plaintiffs.

HOUSE BILL 265

D1

2lr1298
CF SB 280

By: **Chair, Judiciary Committee (By Request – Maryland Judicial Conference)**

Introduced and read first time: January 27, 2012

Assigned to: Judiciary

A BILL ENTITLED

1 AN ACT concerning

2 **Task Force to Study Implementing a Civil Right to Counsel in Maryland**

3 FOR the purpose of establishing the Task Force to Study Implementing a Civil Right
4 to Counsel in Maryland; providing for the composition, chair, and staffing of the
5 Task Force; prohibiting a member of the Task Force from receiving certain
6 compensation, but authorizing the reimbursement of certain expenses;
7 requiring the Task Force to study and make recommendations regarding certain
8 matters; requiring the Task Force to report its findings and recommendations to
9 certain public officials on or before a certain date; providing for the termination
10 of this Act; and generally relating to the Task Force to Study Implementing a
11 Civil Right to Counsel in Maryland.

12 SECTION 1. BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF
13 MARYLAND, That:

14 (a) There is a Task Force to Study Implementing a Civil Right to Counsel in
15 Maryland.

16 (b) The Task Force consists of the following members:

17 (1) three members of the Senate of Maryland, appointed by the
18 President of the Senate;

19 (2) three members of the House of Delegates, appointed by the
20 Speaker of the House;

21 (3) three members appointed by the Governor, one of whom shall be
22 an attorney who is a member of the Maryland State Bar Association and who is
23 appointed after consultation with the President of the Maryland State Bar Association
24 and one of whom shall be an attorney or a legal provider or both; and

EXPLANATION: CAPITALS INDICATE MATTER ADDED TO EXISTING LAW.

[Brackets] indicate matter deleted from existing law.



1 (4) three members who are representatives of the Judiciary, appointed
2 by the Chief Judge of the Court of Appeals.

3 (c) The Chief Judge of the Court of Appeals shall designate the chair of the
4 Task Force, who shall have a vote in the recommendations of the Task Force.

5 (d) The Maryland Access to Justice Commission shall provide staff for the
6 Task Force.

7 (e) A member of the Task Force:

8 (1) may not receive compensation as a member of the Task Force; but

9 (2) is entitled to reimbursement for expenses under the Standard
10 State Travel Regulations, as provided in the State budget.

11 (f) The Task Force shall:

12 (1) study the current resources available to assist in providing counsel
13 to low-income Marylanders compared to the depth of the unmet need, including the
14 resulting burden on the court system and the stress on other public resources;

15 (2) study whether low-income Marylanders should have the right to
16 counsel at public expense in basic human needs cases, such as those involving shelter,
17 sustenance, safety, health, or child custody, including review and analysis of the
18 Maryland Access to Justice Commission's "Implementing a Civil Right to Counsel in
19 Maryland" report and each other previous report by a task force, commission, or
20 workgroup on this issue;

21 (3) study alternatives regarding the currently underserved citizenry of
22 the State and the operation of the court system;

23 (4) study how the right to counsel might be implemented in Maryland;

24 (5) study the costs to provide meaningful access to counsel and the
25 savings to the court system and other public resources;

26 (6) study the possible revenue sources; and

27 (7) make recommendations regarding the matters described in this
28 subsection.

29 (g) On or before October 1, 2013, the Task Force shall report its findings and
30 recommendations to the Governor, the Chief Judge of the Court of Appeals, and, in
31 accordance with § 2-1246 of the State Government Article, the President of the
32 Senate, the Speaker of the House, the Senate Budget and Taxation Committee, the

1 Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee, the House Appropriations Committee, and
2 the House Judiciary Committee.

3 SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act shall take effect
4 October 1, 2012. It shall remain effective for a period of 1 year and, at the end of
5 September 30, 2013, with no further action required by the General Assembly, this Act
6 shall be abrogated and of no further force and effect.

SENATE BILL 280

D1

2lr1426
CF 2lr1298

By: **Chair, Judicial Proceedings Committee (By Request – Maryland Judicial Conference)**

Introduced and read first time: January 26, 2012

Assigned to: Judicial Proceedings

A BILL ENTITLED

1 AN ACT concerning

2 **Task Force to Study Implementing a Civil Right to Counsel in Maryland**

3 FOR the purpose of establishing the Task Force to Study Implementing a Civil Right
4 to Counsel in Maryland; providing for the composition, chair, and staffing of the
5 Task Force; prohibiting a member of the Task Force from receiving certain
6 compensation, but authorizing the reimbursement of certain expenses;
7 requiring the Task Force to study and make recommendations regarding certain
8 matters; requiring the Task Force to report its findings and recommendations to
9 certain public officials on or before a certain date; providing for the termination
10 of this Act; and generally relating to the Task Force to Study Implementing a
11 Civil Right to Counsel in Maryland.

12 SECTION 1. BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF
13 MARYLAND, That:

14 (a) There is a Task Force to Study Implementing a Civil Right to Counsel in
15 Maryland.

16 (b) The Task Force consists of the following members:

17 (1) three members of the Senate of Maryland, appointed by the
18 President of the Senate;

19 (2) three members of the House of Delegates, appointed by the
20 Speaker of the House;

21 (3) three members appointed by the Governor, one of whom shall be
22 an attorney who is a member of the Maryland State Bar Association and who is
23 appointed after consultation with the President of the Maryland State Bar Association
24 and one of whom shall be an attorney or a legal provider or both; and

EXPLANATION: CAPITALS INDICATE MATTER ADDED TO EXISTING LAW.

[Brackets] indicate matter deleted from existing law.



1 (4) three members who are representatives of the Judiciary, appointed
2 by the Chief Judge of the Court of Appeals.

3 (c) The Chief Judge of the Court of Appeals shall designate the chair of the
4 Task Force, who shall have a vote in the recommendations of the Task Force.

5 (d) The Maryland Access to Justice Commission shall provide staff for the
6 Task Force.

7 (e) A member of the Task Force:

8 (1) may not receive compensation as a member of the Task Force; but

9 (2) is entitled to reimbursement for expenses under the Standard
10 State Travel Regulations, as provided in the State budget.

11 (f) The Task Force shall:

12 (1) study the current resources available to assist in providing counsel
13 to low-income Marylanders compared to the depth of the unmet need, including the
14 resulting burden on the court system and the stress on other public resources;

15 (2) study whether low-income Marylanders should have the right to
16 counsel at public expense in basic human needs cases, such as those involving shelter,
17 sustenance, safety, health, or child custody, including review and analysis of the
18 Maryland Access to Justice Commission's "Implementing a Civil Right to Counsel in
19 Maryland" report and each other previous report by a task force, commission, or
20 workgroup on this issue;

21 (3) study alternatives regarding the currently underserved citizenry of
22 the State and the operation of the court system;

23 (4) study how the right to counsel might be implemented in Maryland;

24 (5) study the costs to provide meaningful access to counsel and the
25 savings to the court system and other public resources;

26 (6) study the possible revenue sources; and

27 (7) make recommendations regarding the matters described in this
28 subsection.

29 (g) On or before October 1, 2013, the Task Force shall report its findings and
30 recommendations to the Governor, the Chief Judge of the Court of Appeals, and, in
31 accordance with § 2-1246 of the State Government Article, the President of the
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2 the House Judiciary Committee.

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My Laws, My Courts, My Maryland

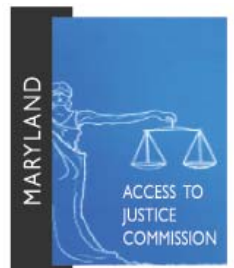
Promoting Equal Justice for All

media kit



MARYLAND ACCESS TO JUSTICE COMMISSION

2001 E/F Commerce Park Drive
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
410-260-1258
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Maryland Access to Justice Commission

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MARYLAND ACCESS TO JUSTICE MEDIA KIT

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- I. LEGAL SERVICES OVERVIEW
- II. GRAPHICS
- III. LEGAL SERVICES FUNDING
- IV. ACCESS TO JUSTICE STATISTICS
- V. CRIMINAL VS. CIVIL JUSTICE: WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?



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LEGAL SERVICES OVERVIEW

How Do Low-Income Marylanders Get Legal Help?

Where do low-income Marylanders turn for help when they have a legal problem or question? There are about a substantial number of organizations in our State that provide basic information, legal advice or legal representation to qualifying individuals. Some programs provide general legal assistance. Others serve particular jurisdictions or regions of the State. Still others may provide help to those with specific types of legal problems.

Maryland's legal services delivery system is a *triage-based* system. There are not enough legal services programs or providers to serve the needs of the many thousands of individuals in our state who need legal help but cannot afford to hire their own attorney. Existing programs could serve few individuals if each were assigned an attorney to assist them from beginning to end, so many individuals are first provided basic information. If their case is complex or they require more assistance, they may turn to other programs that provide more specific aid or more in-depth assistance. It may be helpful to think of these programs as falling into one of **four tiers**, each of which provides a different range of services to individuals with general or particularized needs. See the accompanying figure, "*Spectrum of Civil Legal Services Delivery System.*"

First Tier. The first represents those individuals who have a basic question about the law or those who are trying to determine if they have a legal need. This includes the **general public**, and those who may have a question about their rights, responsibilities or remedies. This also includes those who need a referral to a legal provider. These individuals can turn to a range of **online** and **written** resources to determine whether

they need to consult with a lawyer or legal program. Examples of these sources include:

- Maryland People's Law Library
peoples-law.org
Maryland's legal information website with substantive information about Maryland law, and a complete directory of legal services providers with links to forms and additional information.
- Maryland State Bar Association Brochures
For information and ordering: **msba.org**

Second Tier. The next tier represents a smaller subset of individuals who have a specific legal need that is relatively simple, and who can proceed to address their legal problem on their own, with some basic help. These individuals include the many thousands of **self-represented** persons who appear each day in Maryland courts. These individuals can take advantage of **court-based self-help centers** and **hotlines**. Examples include:

- Circuit Court Family Law Self-Help Centers
mdcourts.gov/family
Walk-in assistance in family case types.
- District Court Self-Help Center
mdcourts.gov/district/selfhelpcenter/home.html
Walk-in assistance in Anne Arundel County.
Coming Soon: Telephone, email, skype and live chat services for users statewide.
- Legal Forms Helpline
1-800-818-9888
- Family Law Hotline
1-800-845-8550
- See **peoples-law.org** for a complete list of Maryland legal hotlines.

Third Tier. The next, still smaller subset of individuals are those who are capable of some level of self-representation, but who may need more in-depth support because their case is more complex, more technical or there is more at stake. One can think of these individuals as "**partially self-represented.**" These individuals would benefit from engaging an attorney or securing a provider who offered **limited scope representation**. Victims of domestic violence are able to obtain a range of services including representation at a final protective order hearing from the state's **domestic violence legal services** programs:

- Some **private attorneys** offer limited scope representation through which an otherwise self-represented person can engage the attorney to assist them with specific tasks for a predetermined fee.
- The Women’s Law Center of Maryland has launched a limited scope pilot project to further test this practice model. For information see **wlcmd.org**.
- For a list of Protective Order Advocacy Representation Projects (POARP) and other legal programs for victims of domestic violence, see **peoples-law.org** and click on “Domestic Violence.”

Fourth Tier. Finally, there will also be a small percentage of people with legal needs who will require the full assistance of an attorney. These **fully represented** individuals require more in-depth help because their case is one involving a high level of conflict, technical or complex issues, or because the individual is a person, because of age, ability or infirmity, who is of limited capacity or otherwise unable to proceed on their own. These individuals can seek help from **staff attorney, pro bono** and **reduced fee programs**. Examples include:

- **Maryland Legal Aid**
Staff attorney program.
800-999-8904
- **Maryland Volunteer Lawyers Service**
Pro bono program.
800-510-0050
410-547-6537
Online intake: **www.mvlslaw.org**
- **Civil Justice, Inc.**
Reduced fee program.
410-706-0174



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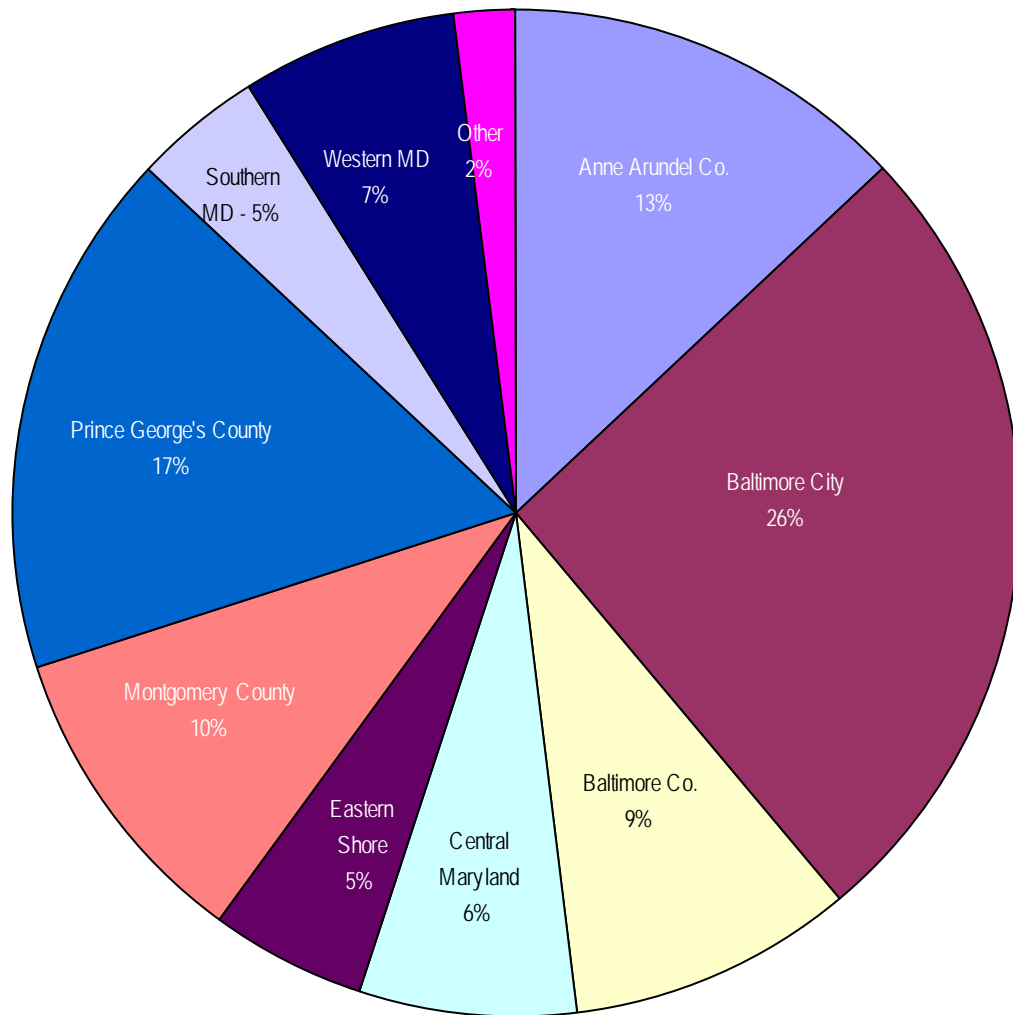
A PICTURE IS WORTH A THOUSAND WORDS: GRAPHICS PORTRAYING THE LEGAL SERVICES DELIVERY SYSTEM

The graphs and charts on the following pages are provided to help convey how the Maryland legal services delivery system works, who is served by that system, and why it is so difficult for Marylanders to get legal help when they need it.

Most of these illustrations appeared in the Commission's 2009 *Interim Report*, available at mdcourts.gov/mdatjc.

**MLSC Funded Legal Services Providers
RESIDENCE OF CLIENTS SERVED**

Where do Legal Services Clients Live in Maryland?

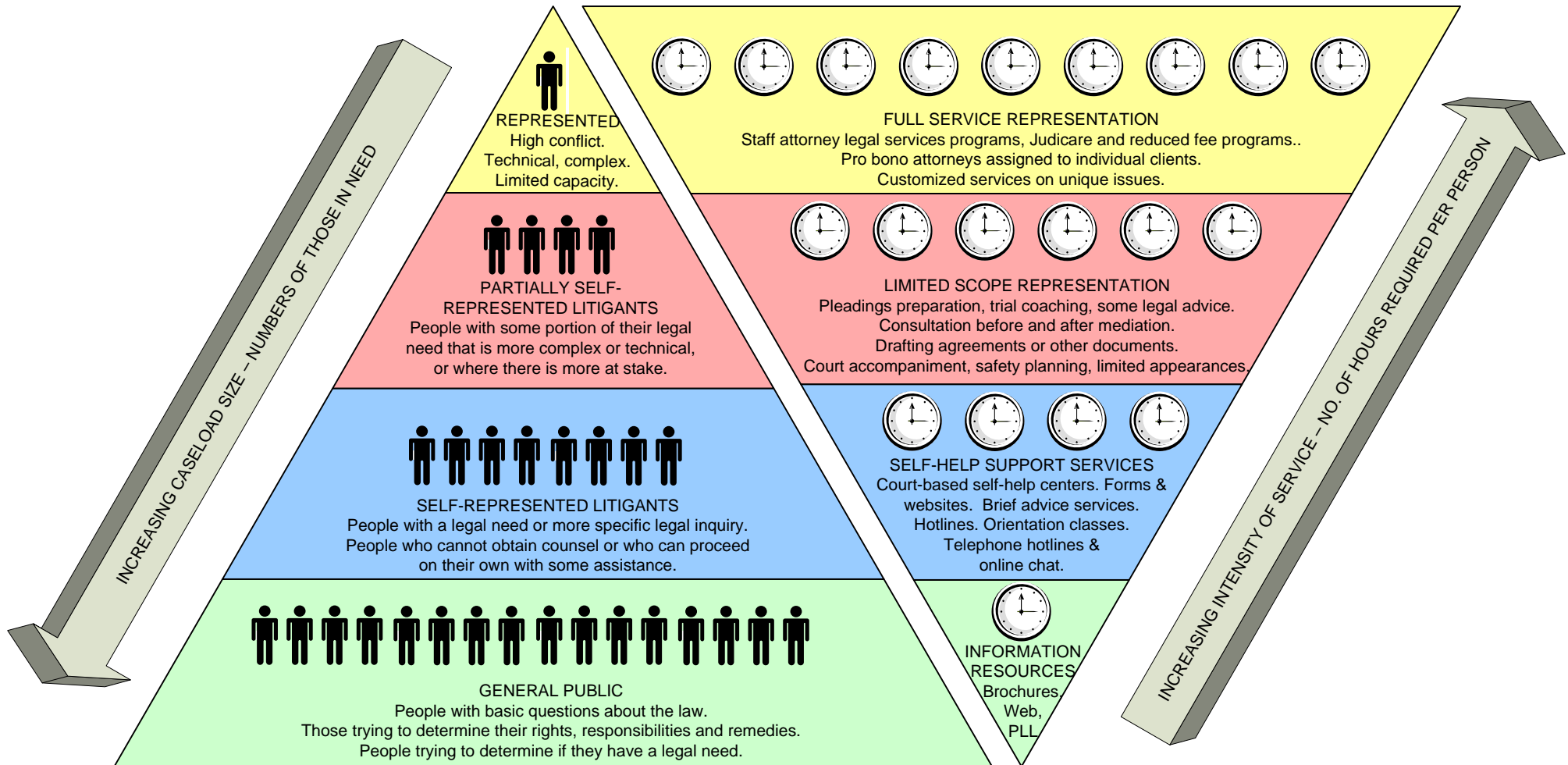


Central Maryland: Carroll, Harford and Howard Counties
Eastern Shore: Caroline, Cecil, Dorchester, Kent, Queen Anne's, Somerset, Talbot, Wicomico and Worcester Counties
Southern Maryland: Calvert, Charles and St. Mary's Counties
Western Maryland: Allegany, Frederick, Garrett and Washington Counties.

SOURCE: Maryland Legal Services Corporation, Fiscal Year 2010.

The Civil Legal Services Delivery System

LEGAL SERVICE PROVIDERS

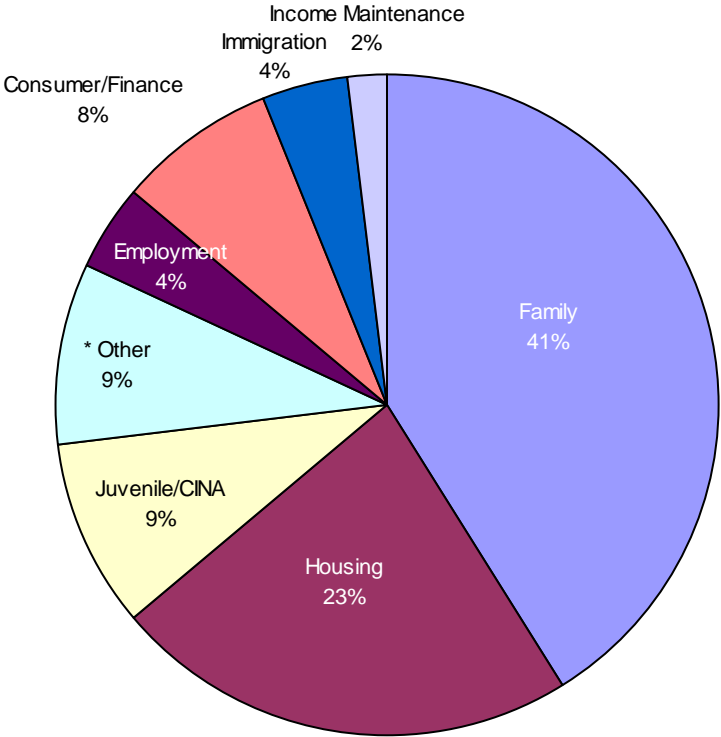


LEGAL CONSUMERS

This illustrates the narrowing effect that happens when individuals seek help for a legal problem. Many individuals begin by seeking general assistance. Most require only brief advice or general information. For some, a higher level of assistance is required. Because only a small percentage of cases actually goes to trial, even fewer will require full representation at trial. The legal services community must offer a range of services appropriate to the needs of those they serve. The intensity of service (and cost) is inversely proportional to the number of persons who need that level of service. An effective delivery system will be one with a range of services so that services can be appropriately, and cost-effectively matched to the need.

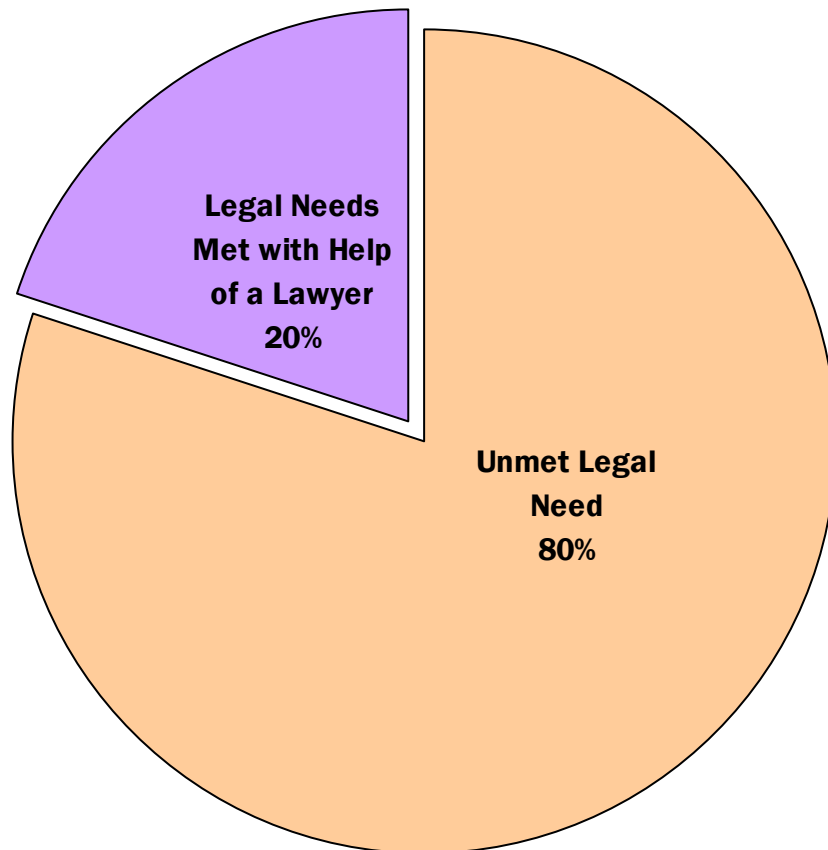
**MLSC Funded Legal Services Providers
TYPES OF CASES CLOSED**

**What Types of Cases do Legal Services Clients Need Help
With in Maryland?**



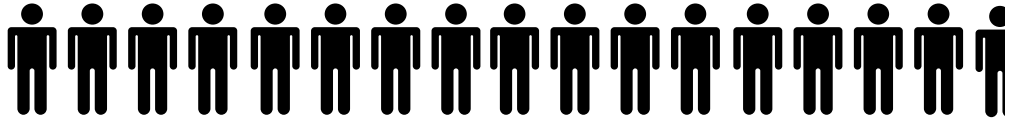
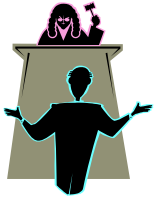
* Education, Health, Individual Rights, Estates and Trusts and Miscellaneous issues.

Percentage of Legal Problems Experienced by Low-Income Persons that are Addressed with the Help of a Lawyer

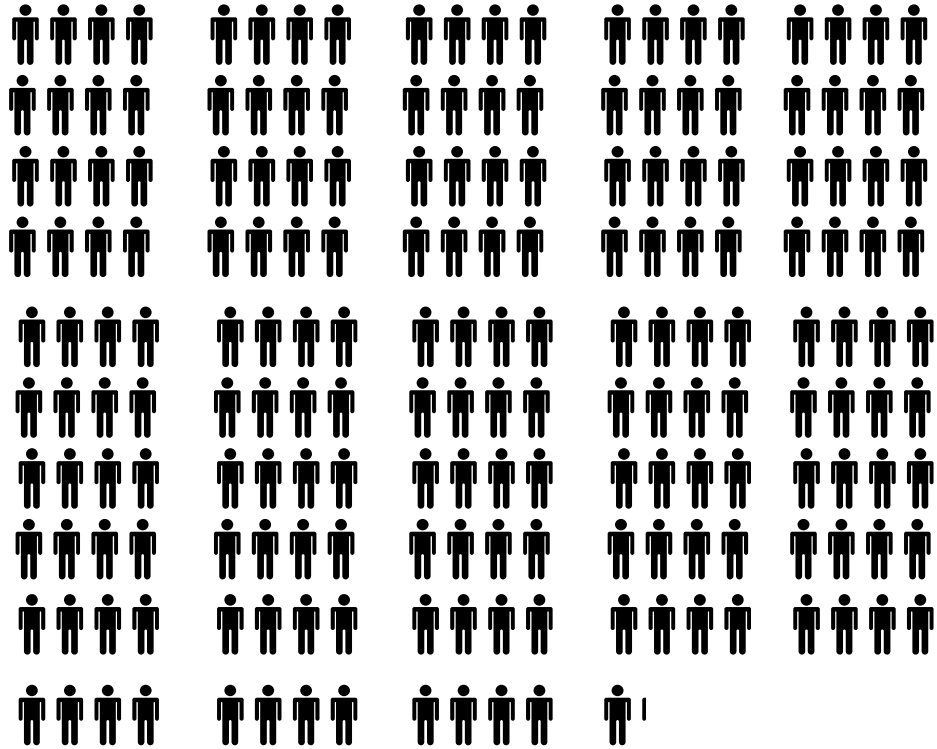


Legal Services Corporation, *Documenting the Justice Gap in America* (June 2007).

Why Is It So Hard for Low-Income Persons to Get Legal Help in Civil Matters When They Need It?




No. of persons per lawyer in Maryland: 165



No. of poor persons per legal services lawyer in Maryland: 1,931

Maryland Population (2010 Census): 5,773,552
 No. of Active Full-Time Lawyers in Maryland (Dec 2009): 34,967
 Percent of Marylander's below poverty (2010): 9.2%
 Percent of Lawyers Employed in Legal Services Positions (FY2010): 0.7% of all lawyers (275 lawyers)

 = 10 people

Sources:

Administrative Office of the Courts, Current Status of Pro Bono Service Among Maryland Lawyers, Year 2009 (November 9, 2010).

U.S. Census Bureau (<http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/24000.html>) (last visited: 6/7/11)



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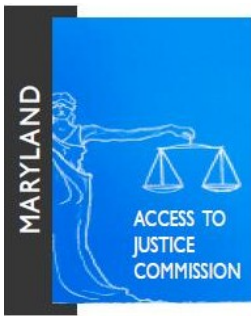
LEGAL SERVICES FUNDING

How Are Legal Services Organizations Funded in Maryland?

Sources of Funding. Civil legal services organizations have several key sources of funding in our State.

- **Federal Funding from LSC – A Mixed Blessing.** The federal Legal Services Corporation provides federal funding to legal services providers. In Maryland there is **one** organization only that receives LSC funds, Maryland Legal Aid. All LSC grantees are limited in the way they can use those funds. Funds may not be used for: class action lawsuits, suits against the government, redistricting cases, lobbying, representation of incarcerated individuals or the undocumented. LSC grantees are also subject to a provision that precludes them from undertaking these types of actions, even with funds they receive from other sources. As long as Maryland Legal Aid receives LSC funds at all, it cannot do any of this type of work, regardless of how that other work is funded.
- **Other Federal Funds.** Legal services providers in Maryland receive some funding from other federal government agencies, generally in the form of grants. These may include Violence Against Women Act funds, other funds administered by the Department of Justice or other Executive Branch agencies.
- **Interest on Lawyers' Trust Accounts (IOLTA).** All attorneys are required to deposit client funds in special trust accounts. The interest from those accounts is forwarded to the Maryland Legal Services Corporation which makes grants from those funds. Interest rates have remained historically low recently and, as a result, the revenue generated from these IOLTA accounts has plummeted.

- **Filing Fee Surcharge.** Court users pay a filing fee when they initiate a court case. A surcharge applied to that fee is collected by the State and the funds are provided to the Maryland Legal Services Corporation which makes grants from those funds. In 2010, the Maryland General Assembly increased the filing fee surcharge to make up for a decline in interest revenue from IOLTA accounts. That increase will sunset in 2013 unless the Maryland General Assembly takes steps to extend it.
- **State Appropriations.** While many states provide a substantial appropriation to support civil legal services, in Maryland, this has not been a significant source of funding to date. The Maryland Legal Services Corporation has historically received a \$500,000 annual appropriation from the Abandoned Property Fund, which it uses to make grants to legal services providers serving the indigent.
- **Private Funding.** A number of providers enhance grant funds by raising private donations. Maryland Legal Aid, for example, has established an Equal Justice Council through which it raises private funds to support its activities.



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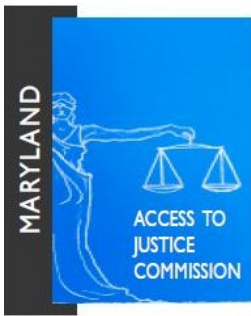
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ACCESS TO JUSTICE STATISTICS

- In Maryland, approximately 531,166 individuals (9.2%) are living below the federal poverty level.¹
- Over 77,000 Maryland families (5.5%) live in poverty.²
- Of those over age 5, 14.9% of Marylanders speak a language other than English at home.²
- To qualify for help from Maryland Legal Aid, a person with a family of 4 must make less than \$27,938 (125% of federal poverty guidelines). An individual with a household size of 1 must make less than \$13,613.³
- To qualify for help from most other MLSC-funded organizations, a person with a family of 4 must make less than \$50,999 (50% of Maryland median income). An individual must make less than \$26,519.⁴
- Approximately 1,000,000 Marylanders qualify for legal assistance from organizations funded by the Maryland Legal Services Corporation.⁵
- In Maryland it is estimated that only about 22% of the civil legal needs of low-income and poor residents are being met.⁵
- Only 0.7% of Maryland lawyers are employed by a legal services organization.
- The average starting salary for a public interest attorney in Maryland is about \$50,000. Most new law school graduates carry \$100,000 in student loan debt.⁶
- In 2009, Maryland lawyers provided 1,139,866 hours of *pro bono* service.⁷
- During that same year, Maryland lawyers donated over \$3.2 million dollars to organizations that provide legal services to people of limited means.⁷

Sources:

1. <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/status/24000.html>
2. <http://factfinder.census.gov/home>
3. <http://www.lsc.gov/lscgov4/45CFR1611AppendixA2011.pdf>
4. <http://www.mlsc.org/Income.Eligibility11.htm>
5. Maryland Access to Justice Commission, *Implementing a Civil Right to Counsel in Maryland* (2010).
6. <http://www.forbes.com/forbes/2009/0202/060.html>
7. Maryland Administrative Office of the Courts, *Current Status of Pro Bono Service Among Maryland Lawyers, Year 2009*.



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CRIMINAL VS. CIVIL JUSTICE: WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?

	CIVIL CASES	CRIMINAL CASES
Who brings the case?	In civil matters, the case is brought to the attention of the court (filed) by you or another individual private citizen or corporation.	In criminal matters, the case is brought by the State, through the action of the prosecutor.
What's at stake?	If you lose this civil case you might lose custody of a child, your home or other possession , you might lose money , or in some instances (e.g., civil contempt) you could be temporarily incarcerated until you follow the orders of the court.	If you lose this criminal case, you might lose your physical liberty . (You might go to jail). You could also lose money if you are ordered to pay a fine or court costs.
How does it feel?	Being involved in a civil court case, whether civil or criminal, can be one of the scariest and most stressful experiences you can have.	Being involved in a criminal court case, whether civil or criminal, can be one of the scariest and most stressful experiences you can have.
Am I always entitled to a free lawyer if I cannot afford to hire one myself?	No. In a civil case, you do not have a constitutional right to a free lawyer if you cannot afford it. You may have a lawyer, but you will have to pay for it yourself. There are some organizations that may be able to provide some help if you cannot afford to hire a lawyer, but there is no guarantee they will be able to help you.	Yes. In a criminal case, if you cannot afford one, a lawyer will be appointed to represent you in your criminal matter, at State expense.
Where can I get more information?	For general civil legal information and information on how to find free or low-cost legal help, see: www.peoples-law.org .	For a criminal case, contact the Office of the Public Defender: 877- 430-5187 (toll free) or www.opd.state.md.us .

Ojalá lo hubiera sabido



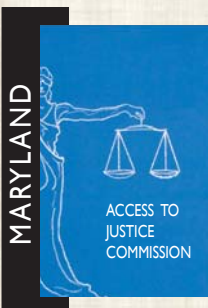
En los casos civiles, no tiene el derecho constitucional a un abogado gratis pero es posible que los proveedores de servicios legales de Maryland le puedan ayudar.

Los casos civiles incluyen:
guardia y custodia de un menor
manutención de menores
divorcio
inquilino - arrendador
acreedor-deudor
reclamaciones de menor cuantía
violencia doméstica
beneficios públicos
bancarrota

Si cree que es posible que tenga un problema legal, llame a un proveedor de servicios legales de Maryland. Consiga ayuda pronto para evitar problemas mayores más adelante.

Para ayuda legal contacte a:

- Maryland Legal Aid (Ayuda legal de Maryland), 800-999-8904
- Maryland Volunteer Lawyers Service (Servicio de abogados voluntarios de Maryland), 800-510-0050
- O diríjase a www.peoples-law.org para ver una lista completa de los proveedores de Maryland de servicios legales para los residentes de ingresos bajos de Maryland o para buscar información sobre servicios que le refieran a abogados, programas por el bien público /pro bono, centros para ayudarse a sí mismo, líneas directas y otros recursos. Es posible que correspondan ciertas limitaciones.



Comisión de Maryland - Acceso a la Justicia

MIS LEYES, MIS TRIBUNALES, MI MARYLAND

Promueven la misma justicia para todos

www.mdcourts.gov/mdatjc

Recibí ayuda legal cuando la necesitaba



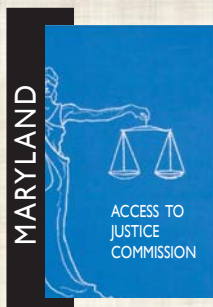
Si usted cree que pueda tener un problema legal civil (no penal) y no tiene dinero para contratar a su propio abogado, llame a un proveedor de servicios legales de Maryland.

Consiga ayuda pronto para evitar problemas mayores más adelante.

- . servicios de referencia de abogados
- . programas pro bono (gratis)
- . centros para ayudarse a sí mismo
- . líneas de teléfono directas
- . programas con abogados de plantilla

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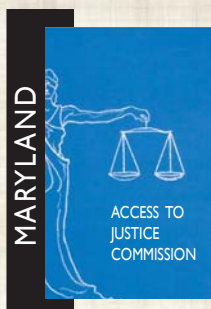
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Comisión de Maryland - Acceso a la Justicia

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Mi casa estaba en juicio hipotecario y yo no sabía qué hacer



Encontré un abogado gratis a través de un programa de servicios legales de Maryland.

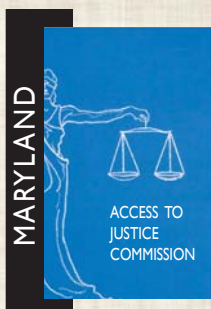
El abogado me ayudó a entender mis opciones y a dar los pasos necesarios para resolver mi problema.

Consiga ayuda pronto para evitar problemas mayores más adelante.

- . servicios de referencia de abogados
- . programas pro bono (gratis)
- . centros para ayudarse a sí mismo
- . líneas de teléfono directas
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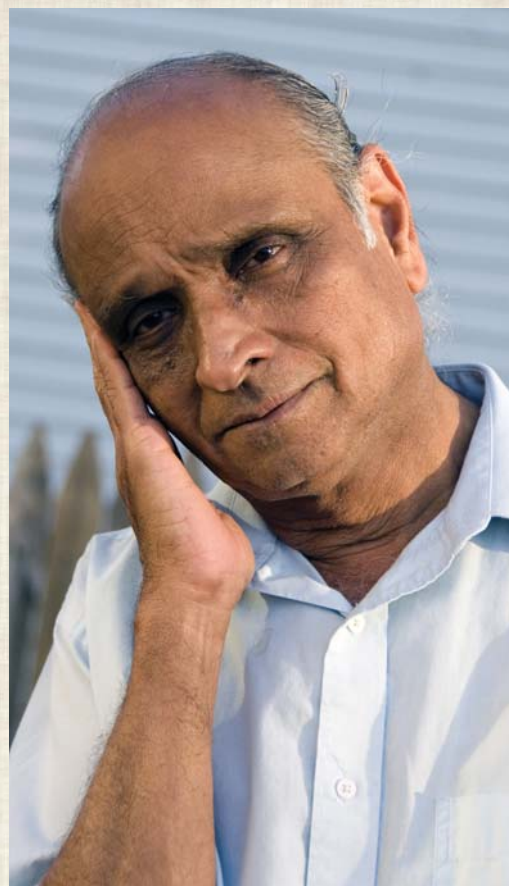
www.mdcourts.gov/mdatjc

Estaba endeudado y no sabía qué hacer

Un programa de servicios legales de Maryland me encontró un abogado gratis que me ayudó a entender mis opciones y a dar los pasos necesarios para proteger mis derechos.

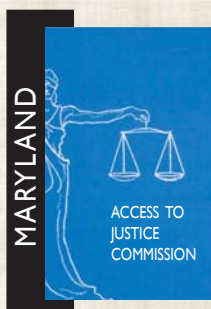
Consiga ayuda pronto para evitar problemas mayores más adelante.

- . servicios de referencia de abogados
- . programas pro bono (gratis)
- . centros para ayudarse a sí mismo
- . líneas de teléfono directas
- . programas con abogados de plantilla



Para ayuda legal contacte a:

- Maryland Legal Aid (Ayuda legal de Maryland), 800-999-8904
- Maryland Volunteer Lawyers Service (Servicio de abogados voluntarios de Maryland), 800-510-0050
- O dirijase a www.peoples-law.org para ver una lista completa de los proveedores de Maryland de servicios legales para residentes de ingresos bajos de Maryland o para buscar información sobre servicios que le refieran a abogados, programas gratis, centros para ayudarse a sí mismo, líneas directas de teléfono y otros recursos. Es posible que correspondan ciertas limitaciones.



Comisión de Maryland - Acceso a la Justicia

Mis Leyes, Mis Tribunales, Mis Maryland

Promueven la misma justicia para todos

www.mdcourts.gov/mdatjc

Cuando mi familia tuvo un problema, los tribunales estaban allí para ayudarnos

Cada vez que surgía un problema sobre nuestros hijos, mi ex esposa y yo no llegábamos a ponernos de acuerdo. Por último, regresamos al tribunal.

El tribunal era un lugar neutral donde podíamos resolver nuestras diferencias y juntos tomar algunas decisiones sobre nuestros hijos.

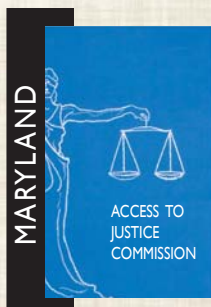
El tribunal nos envió a la mediación y luego nos ayudó a finalizar el acuerdo al que llegamos.



Para más información sobre los tribunales de Maryland, vaya a www.mdcourts.gov.

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¿El derecho a un abogado gratis? ... quizás no



A mi amigo lo acusaron de un delito. No podía pagarle a un abogado. Pudo conseguir un abogado gratis a través de la oficina del defensor público.

Yo pensé que tenía el derecho a un abogado gratis también ya que tampoco podía pagar por uno. Pero me equivoqué. Mi caso era un caso civil y no un caso penal.

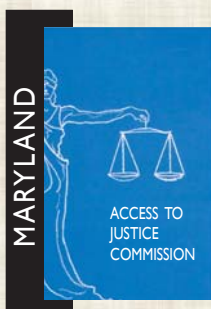


Ojalá lo hubiera sabido.

En la mayoría de los casos civiles usted no tiene derecho a un abogado gratis, pero es posible que los proveedores de servicios legales de Maryland le puedan ayudar.

Para ayuda legal contacte a:

- Maryland Legal Aid (Ayuda legal de Maryland), 800-999-8904
- Maryland Volunteer Lawyers Service (Servicio de abogados voluntarios de Maryland), 800-510-0050
- O diríjase a www.peoples-law.org para ver una lista completa de los proveedores de Maryland de servicios legales para residentes de ingresos bajos de Maryland o para buscar información sobre servicios que le refieran a abogados, programas gratis, centros para ayudarse a sí mismo, líneas directas de teléfono y otros recursos. Es posible que correspondan ciertas limitaciones.



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Tenía un problema legal y no sabía qué hacer

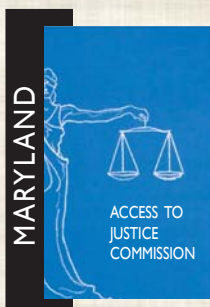


Encontré un abogado gratis a través de un programa de servicios legales de Maryland. El abogado me ayudó a entender mis opciones y a conseguir la ayuda que necesitaba.

Apoyen a los programas que apoyan las personas necesitadas.

Apoyen a los proveedores de servicios legales gratis y de bajo costo de Maryland.

- . servicios de referencia de abogados
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