

Massachusetts Access to Justice Commission

Mission Statement

March 1, 2015

The goal of the Massachusetts Access to Justice Commission is to achieve equal justice for all persons in the Commonwealth. It strives to accomplish this goal by providing leadership and vision to, and coordination with, the many organizations and interested persons involved in providing and improving access to justice for those unable to afford counsel.

The Commission will pursue its mission by various means including the following:

- 1) Strengthening the civil legal services community in providing legal services for those unable to afford counsel.
- 2) Enlarging the number of attorneys trained, willing, and able to provide pro bono civil legal services.
- 3) Enlarging the number of attorneys in the private bar trained, willing and able to provide civil legal services through limited assistance representation or other means to low and moderate-income individuals who are unable to afford legal representation and unable to obtain legal aid representation.
- 4) Enlarging the number of nonlawyers trained, willing and able to provide appropriate assistance to improving access to justice.
- 5) Improving the ability of those without counsel to identify, articulate, and present their legal claims and defenses in civil judicial and administrative proceedings.
- 6) Working closely with the Chief Justices of the Supreme Judicial Court and the Trial Court, the Trial Court Administrator and the Special Advisor to the Trial Court on Access to Justice Initiatives to broaden access to justice within the court system.
- 7) Coordinating the efforts of the broad network of legal, social service and administrative organizations and interested persons who seek to improve access to justice by (a) sharing information regarding successful programs, approaches, and strategies in delivering civil legal services to those unable to afford counsel, (b) identifying best practices and technologies for delivering such legal services, (c) determining the changing legal needs of those unable to afford counsel, as well as enduring unaddressed and under-addressed legal needs, and (d) developing goals and strategies for meeting those legal needs.
- 8) Reviewing the state of access to justice in Massachusetts, educating the public about access to justice and providing a neutral forum in which important issues affecting access to civil justice can be discussed among the branches of government and the civil legal services community, including a broad cross-section of providers, funders, clients, bar leaders and other interested parties.
- 9) Reporting annually to the Supreme Judicial Court on the status of access to justice in the Commonwealth, including recommendations for reforms and Commission goals and activities.

The success of the Commission will be measured by the extent to which persons can more effectively present their claims and defenses in our courts and administrative agencies, regardless of income or language ability.