

Massachusetts Access to Justice Commission
Mission Statement
March 2021

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 non-lawyers 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. Advocating for and prioritizing racial equality and justice in our civil legal system to ensure that equality under the law is an enduring reality for all. This includes combatting both explicit and implicit bias and systemic racism, and identifying and eliminating barriers that might prevent people of color from obtaining appropriate relief within the civil justice and administrative justice systems.
7. Ensuring equal access to the civil justice and administrative justice systems for those without lawyers in remote/virtual court proceedings including people with barriers to participation, such as limited access to legal advice, guidance, and information, limited access to computers and the internet, limited English language proficiency, and physical and cognitive disabilities.
8. 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.

9. 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.
10. Working closely with the Chief Justices of the Supreme Judicial Court and the Trial Court, the Trial Court Administrator and the Senior Manager for Access to Justice Initiatives within the Trial Court to broaden access to justice within the court system.
11. 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.