

## MHLAC Intake (June 2023)



MHLAC provides information and conducts intake as described below. We may provide representation to people with, or perceived to have, a mental health condition when their legal issue meets MHLAC's case criteria. Even if we don't take your case for representation, the stories and experiences you share help inform MHLAC's strategies to improve mental health care within systems and our communities. We unfortunately cannot assist with every type of case. If your legal issue is not listed below you should contact the [Massachusetts Legal Resource Finder \(https://masslrf.org/en/home\)](https://masslrf.org/en/home) to find legal help.

*\* New Areas List as of June 2023 – please see criteria for each area listed below \**

### Education

**Intake criteria:** The student attends a Public or Charter School in Massachusetts **AND** the school is in Holyoke, Westfield, Springfield, Worcester, New Bedford, or Fall River **AND** the student has a known or perceived mental health condition

**AND**

There is a racial/language access or gender issue **AND**

- The parents have received correspondence from the school only in English or
- The parents have been asked to sign documents in English which they did not understand or
- The staff at the school do not talk to parents because of lack of interpreters or parents have been asked by the school to waive rights to an interpreter or
- The student's parents have attended meetings or hearings at which interpreters were not available or in which the school used untrained interpreters or
- The IEP process is stalled due to lack of interpreters/translators or
- The student has been suspended, expelled, asked to withdraw or has been unenrolled from school or
- The student is on an IEP and is not getting timely evaluations or
- The student is not attending school, dropped out or forced to go to an alternative school or another school in the District or
- The student is being bullied at school.

**How to request an Education intake:** MHLAC receives referrals only, *directly from organizations and advocates*. Screened by the Education team, the levels of assistance that may be offered include information and referral, brief advocacy, or full representation. While we are considering your case for representation, or if we rejected your case, you should reach out to the following organizations:

Community Legal Aid <a href="http://www.communitylegal.org/">http://www.communitylegal.org/</a>	855-252-5342
EdLaw Project <a href="https://www.youthadvocacyfoundation.org/the-edlaw-project">https://www.youthadvocacyfoundation.org/the-edlaw-project</a>	617-910-5829
Massachusetts Advocates for Children <a href="https://www.massadvocates.org/helpline">https://www.massadvocates.org/helpline</a>	617-357-8431

***Note:** for all education intakes we will need a copy of the student's education record before we can evaluate the case for representation.*

## Family Law

### Intake criteria:

- Parents with custody and parenting time cases, that can also include divorce, 209A orders, child support, alimony, limited property division or
- Termination or denial of DCF services or program to a parent with a mental health or psychiatric disability or
- Technical assistance to attorneys and case workers on behalf of parents with mental health issues in child welfare/DCF involved cases.

**How to request a Family Law intake:** To request assistance, parents can call, complete the FLP [online form](#) or [email](#) to request an intake interview. Once the intake about their situation is completed, the case is screened by the Family Law Project staff. The levels of assistance that may be offered include information and referral, brief advocacy, or full representation.

## Mental Health Treatment, in Facilities, Emergency Rooms and Group Homes

### Intake criteria:

- Experiences of mistreatment and rights violations in a hospital emergency room or mental health facility or
- Allegations of improper disclosure of confidential mental health treatment information or
- Eviction or threat of eviction from DMH group home (supported housing) settings or
- Interactions with police or
- Access to mental health treatment issues while in jail.

**How to request an intake:** Individuals can call, complete [online form](#), or write to us. MHLAC will contact the individual to complete an intake interview about their situation. MHLAC will provide information and referral. Brief advocacy offered on a case-by-case basis.

## What to expect

MHLAC's Intake Department will respond within 2 business days to callers currently hospitalized in a facility. For all other intake areas listed above (education, family law and mental health treatment access not currently in a facility) intake requests, MHLAC will make contact to conduct an intake interview within 8-10 business days. Look at this webpage to help prepare for your intake interview <http://mhlac.org/legal-help/> .

*Disclaimer: Leaving a message, sending an email or submitting an online/website form does not create an attorney client relationship with our office, the Mental Health Legal Advisors Committee. We maintain all information collected via our communication platforms in a secure and confidential location. We will not share your information without your authorization.*