Maryland Legal Aid provides legal advice and representation in the following areas:

**Income Maintenance**
-Provides assistance related to freedom from want, including safe and adequate housing, affordable health care, and livable wages. Ensuring that everyone in the world enjoys freedom from want requires society to assess its investment in civil matters—particularly civil law—to promote dignity, fairness and opportunity for everyone.

**Employment**
-Obtains illegally denied unemployment benefits
-Receives wages and back pay due
-Remedies employment discrimination

**Housing**
-Prevents foreclosures or mitigates their effects
-Helps persons with disabilities obtain and preserve housing
-Advocates on behalf of tenant organizations, individuals, and families for improvement of substandard housing
-Preserves affordable housing

**Consumer**
-Helps homeowners bilked by foreclosure rescue scams
-Assists with correcting erroneous credit reports
-Combats overly aggressive or illegal debt-collection activity
-Opposes bank account and wage garnishments of income and assets needed to meet basic subsistence needs
-Enforces sales contracts and warranties
-Remedies fraudulent sales practices and predatory contracts
-Avoids or delays utility terminations

**Health**
-Helps sick children, the disabled and the elderly get medical assistance
-Helps seniors get Medicaid assistance so they can live in their communities
-Assists people in preserving the long-term care placement of their choice
-Stops or obtains redress for harmful medical treatment
-Enforces terms of health or disability insurance contracts

**Family and Children**
-Assists custodial parents in maintaining custody and in obtaining, preserving or increasing child support
-Obtains protection from domestic violence and secures orders for custody, divorce and support for abuse survivors
-Helps parents obtain visitation rights, guardianships, or adoptions for dependent children
-Helps stop unwarranted termination of parental rights

**Farmer Workers**
-Educates farmworkers regarding their employment rights, including wage collection, suitable housing and workplace safety, and represents them in legal cases in those areas
-Educates service providers, government officials and the public about farmworkers’ rights and needs, such as language translation, access to social services, and job training
-Provides assistance to address wage non-payment, occupational safety violations, and substandard migrant camp conditions

**Education**
-Helps children get special education services to which they are entitled and avoid illegal or unfair school suspensions and expulsions

Maryland Legal Aid also represents children in CINA (Child in Need of Assistance) proceedings in 12 Maryland jurisdictions. Other vulnerable populations, such as homeowners facing foreclosure, migrant and seasonal farm workers, nursing home and assisted living residents, and veterans also receive representation through special projects.

For more details on the work of Maryland Legal Aid, please visit www.mdlaw.org.
When Mrs. W.’s 14-year old son lost his life in a drowning accident in 2006, the loss was immeasurable for her and her family. Mrs. W. and her husband found solace and kept their son’s memory close by relishing every minute spent with their two daughters and the many friends who were always visiting their expansive, rural property in Frederick County. “Throughout our married lives, there were always at least 10 kids playing soccer in our yard, running around, laughing and just having a great time,” said Mrs. W. Several years later, when one of her daughters followed her deceased brother’s long-held dream of joining the military and the other prepared to head to college, Mrs. W. and her husband found themselves faltering slightly. “We definitely had empty nest syndrome. Going from having kids running around our home at least five days a week to so much silence… well, it was a shock for us,” Mrs. W. stated. “And I can’t for the life of me tell you how it happened, but my husband and I decided that we wanted to take foster care classes.” From late 2009 until 2014, Mr. and Mrs. W. provided a safe and loving environment for 12 foster care children. The last three who entered their lives (in the winter of 2012) were biological siblings. They, along with their two other young siblings, had been placed in foster care, in different homes in Frederick County.

Maryland Legal Aid Staff Attorney Elise Snyder met the three siblings who were placed with Mr. and Mrs. W. within 24 hours after Child Protective Services (CPS) was called to come to the aid of a three-year-old boy who was alone and riding his bicycle along busy Highway 15. An investigation of the birth parents’ home followed quickly, resulting in a decision by CPS to immediately remove all five children from the home. “Our goal is always reunification with the birth parents,” said Attorney Snyder. “However, every child has a human right to security and safety. When a child is at risk of being abused or neglected, or if there are clear signs of ongoing drug abuse by the parents that result in neglect and unsafe living situations, then reunification may not be in the child’s best interest.”

As Mrs. W. recalls the first days and weeks of welcoming the children to her home, she still sounds startled when talking about the basic human interactions of which they seemed to have no history. “They had absolutely no social cues. If you spoke to them, they would just stand there like deer in headlights. They didn’t know the difference between dirty and clean. They weren’t used to people who didn’t do bad things, so they thought that was normal and acceptable,” she said. “But what they needed most was love and affection, and a home where they knew they were safe.” When it became clear that the birth parents were unable to reunify with their children, adoption of all five siblings by one family became a top priority. Under the direction of Child Protective Services, Mrs. W. and the foster mother who cared for the other two siblings developed a plan to reunite all of the siblings slowly, but methodically, under the W’s roof. Shortly before July 2014, Mr. and Mrs. W. legally adopted all five children.

The W’s two oldest daughters readily welcomed the children into a loving family. The children’s journey—and storybook-type transition—is not lost on Mr. and Mrs. W. “We are one family,” she said with a smile, before quietly adding, “We changed their focus, changed their paths. We turned the soil and found beautiful flowers.”

“We are one family. We changed their focus, changed their paths. We turned the soil and found beautiful flowers.”—Mrs. W.

The Rights of the Child

Maryland Legal Aid represents children in abuse and neglect cases (“CINA” cases) in Circuit Courts in twelve jurisdictions in Maryland. Over 71% of new CINA petitions in Maryland are filed in Baltimore City, and Baltimore, Montgomery and Prince George’s counties. Maryland Legal Aid represents children in all four of those jurisdictions. These cases begin when the State of Maryland, through local county Departments of Social Services, removes an alleged abused or neglected child from his/her home and places that child in shelter or foster care for protection.

When Primary Caregivers Cannot Meet Children’s Needs, Society’s Safety Nets Can Save Lives.
The Right to Be Heard... and Understood

Staff Attorney Virginia Rosa, Anne Arundel County Office
Paralegal Veronique Felix, Lower Eastern Shore Office

Imagine being stopped by a police officer and not being able to understand what the officer is saying. Imagine being hearing impaired and participating in a court proceeding, but being unable to understand the court-appointed sign language interpreter because the interpreter is signing a non-traditional sign language with which you are not familiar. Maryland Legal Aid is adamant that clients have a right to hear and understand what is being said to them in a legal matter and clients have a right to respond in a meaningful way.

To focus attention on that effort, Maryland Legal Aid’s Language Access Task Force develops advocacy projects that raise awareness about language access issues, particularly for individuals with Limited English Proficiency (LEP). Maryland Legal Aid uses the civil legal system to work toward elimination of discrimination on the basis of language or national origin; to provide equal access to the law and equal recognition before the law; to provide for freedom of expression and opinion, and to enable access to information for every human being.

The number of statewide foreclosure cases opened by Maryland Legal Aid:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>Cases Opened by Maryland Legal Aid in 2014</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Baltimore County</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prince George’s County</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The far-reaching impact of housing foreclosures continues to affect people from all walks of life and income levels.

The Right to Housing

Established in 2008, Maryland Legal Aid’s Foreclosure Legal Assistance Project (FLAP) represents low-income homeowners throughout Maryland at all stages of the foreclosure process, including mediations, motions to stay and dismiss sales, bankruptcies, exceptions to sales, motions for orders of possession and evictions. Advice and referrals are provided to those whom Maryland Legal Aid is not able to represent.

Imagine being stopped by a police officer and not being able to have a roof over one’s head. Rather, it should be seen as the right to live somewhere in security with peace and dignity. The right to housing is critical, without it, the attainment of many other human rights is compromised.
Mrs. D., mother of Z. and grandmother of his son T., still wallows in tears as she remembers the phone calls she received in the middle of the night from her young grandson. “Please grandma, come get me!” he would shout into the phone. “They are fighting again, they’re using drugs, please come and get me—right now!”

Because of Z.’s and his wife’s drug addiction, neither of them were able to care for themselves or T. From the time T. was born, it was Mrs. D. who ensured that his basic human needs for food, clothing and medical care were met to the extent that she could while living several miles away. Mrs. D. said. “After spending $8,000 to provide legal assistance to T. to return to his parents when they insisted that he live with them again. In the following years, Mrs. D. repeatedly “rescued” her grandson from situations no child should have to endure.

“T. was in great danger most of his life,” Mrs. D. said. “And for her own life, Mrs. D. turned to Maryland Legal Aid’s Southern Maryland office for help. Upon hearing the details of the situation, including Mrs. D.’s attempts to gain legal custody of T. since he was an infant, Maryland Legal Aid Senior Attorney Margaret Maupin assured Mrs. D. that although the organization does not typically handle third-party grandparent custody cases, this situation also presented compelling evidence of human rights abuses of a vulnerable child. She also provided immediate comfort to Mrs. D., advising her that Maryland Legal Aid would do everything possible to help her gain legal custody of her beloved grandson, and end the threats on her life, as well.

“The flurry of threatening text messages from her son and his wife, threatening to hire people to kidnap, physically harm and kill Mrs. D. were the worst I’ve ever seen,” said Attorney Maupin. She took additional action that resulted in full and legal custody being awarded to Mrs. D. within four months of their first meeting.

Now T. and his grandmother are enjoying lives free of fear and intimidation. “My grandson is a remarkable human being and lives free of fear and intimidation. “My grandson has paint ball—just like other kids have! We can breathe easy now. My grandson has a future.”

Perhaps no scenario can more graphically depict the critical need for every individual to have his or her basic human right to security met as when we see a loved one, especially a young loved one, in harm’s way.

Mrs. D., who turned down my pleas for help, I didn’t know where to turn.”

Finally, on a summer day in 2013, Mrs. D.’s son Z. experienced a manic and delusional episode, which included exposing himself to his neighbor and young daughter while they were gardening in the adjoining yard. Fortunately, the police arrived soon after Z. collapsed, and they removed T. from the home. It wasn’t long before Mrs. D., more determined than ever to “save” her grandson from his living nightmare, filed a petition for custody without any legal assistance. The threatening texts and phone calls from his son and his wife resumed almost immediately, and they were more horrific and graphic than ever.

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“Unless there are exceptional circumstances, if a parent is fit and able to provide care for his or her child, then family reunification is always our goal.”

Supervising Attorney Janine Scott, Baltimore City Domestic Law Unit

Ms. Y., a single mother of seven, shatters stereotypes. Ms. Y.’s two oldest children are enrolled in college and the younger ones are doing well in school. She is close to completing a Welfare to Work program and has already secured and started a job, all geared to becoming a self-sustaining parent and role model for her children.

However, when Ms. Y. contacted Maryland Legal Aid in May 2014, she was desperate to reunify her family. By the time her youngest child was born in December 2012, it was apparent that her home needed major repairs in order to be safe for her children. The landlord agreed to fix the leaking roof and remediate the mold problems, and Ms. Y. and her older children temporarily moved in with her mother. Due to internal family conflicts, she hesitantly agreed to allow her infant daughter to live with the child’s paternal grandmother for the brief period of time needed for home repairs.

After a few months, the home was ready for the family to return. However, at the paternal grandmother’s urging, Ms. Y. agreed to let her baby stay with the grandmother a bit longer, so she could continue her part-time clerical work, secure her GED and complete her Welfare to Work program.

Ms. Y. was determined to acquire the job readiness skills needed to compete in today’s business environment and find a steady job. She knew realizing these goals would allow her to become self-sufficient and have all of her children back at home together as a cohesive family.

“Unless there are exceptional circumstances, if a parent is fit and able to provide care for his or her child, then family reunification is always our goal,” advises Janine Scott, Supervising Attorney in Maryland Legal Aid’s Baltimore City Domestic Law Unit. “The paternal grandmother had bonded with the baby and it was increasingly difficult for Ms. Y. to gain access to her,” she added. In fact, the grandmother was so determined to keep her granddaughter that she filed a restraining order against Ms. Y., which prohibited her from seeing her child.

Since there was no basis for the order, all of the facts in the case pointed clearly and favorably to Ms. Y. regaining custody of her baby. Just two days after Scott represented Ms. Y. in court, Ms. Y. regained sole custody of her daughter, thereby reunifying her children and moving on with life as a close-knit and loving family.

A child’s right to be with her parent— if the parent is capable of caring for her safely—is a basic human right. It is one of many such rights that Maryland Legal Aid is committed to upholding.

THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD/The Right to Family Reunification

Maryland Legal Aid
Senior Paralegal Barbara Coleman

On December 8, 2014, Maryland Legal Aid Senior Paralegal Barbara Coleman was awarded The William L. Marbury Outstanding Advocate Award. Presented by the Maryland Legal Services Corporation, the award is given to “a non-attorney who has demonstrated outstanding service in Maryland representing the rights and legal needs of low-income persons.”

Longtime colleague (and supervisor) Blake Fetrow, Chief Attorney of Maryland Legal Aid’s Metropolitan Maryland office, shares his thoughts about Barbara:

“Over her distinguished 37-year career with Maryland Legal Aid, Barbara Coleman has been a tireless advocate for low-income people and seniors in need in both Baltimore City and Howard County. She has helped literally thousands of people in need during her years with the organization.

“Barbara Coleman has been the face of Maryland Legal Aid in Howard County for many years. A person who recognizes a problem and comes up with a solution, Barbara not only addresses our clients’ legal problems, but also their life situations. Although many of us, myself included, have been assigned as her “supervisor,” the truth is that Barbara is the one who drives us to do more in Howard County, both through her example and through her urging us to increase our work and to help more people in new and creative ways.”

Chief Attorney Blake Fetrow, Metropolitan Maryland Office
Maryland Legal Aid’s online intake process was established to address the need expressed by many individuals for an opportunity to have a preliminary consultation about their legal concerns without having to leave their homes, coordinate transportation, or take time from work to visit one of Maryland Legal Aid’s 12 full-service offices during designated walk-in intake hours. Easy to access and use, the online intake system is available for Marylanders 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Maryland Legal Aid Online Intake Application: www.mdlab.org/intake

Applicants who come to Maryland Legal Aid’s Baltimore City office at 500 E. Lexington Street can apply for services at intake kiosks in the office lobby. Applicants can complete an online intake application and can receive a response within 48 hours.

The online intake system is a convenient option that expedites the intake process for individuals who apply for services. In 2014, the online intake system processed 3,688 applications. Added to the 4,702 in-person and 77,928 telephone intakes, the organization was able to serve 86,318 clients via the intake process in 2014.

THE EQUAL JUSTICE COUNCIL
The Equal Justice Council (EJC) is composed of managing attorneys from Maryland’s top law firms and other prominent members of the Maryland Bar and corporate community. Since 1997, members of the EJC have raised critically needed funds for Maryland Legal Aid in order to promote equal access to justice, while also serving as advocates who raise awareness of the organization’s important work.

Equal Justice Council Leadership

Co-Chairpersons: Andrew Jay Graham, Esq.
Benjamin Rosenberg, Esq.
Chair Emeritus: Decatur H. Miller, Esq.

Law Firm Campaign Co-Chairpersons: Martin S. Himeles, Jr., Esq.
Paul M. Nussbaum, Esq.
Lee H. Ogbum, Esq.

ONLINE INTAKE SYSTEM
Streamlines & Expedites Service
Chief Attorney Bobbie Steyer, Intake Services
Web Developer Russ Bloomquist

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BASIC HUMAN NEEDS = BASIC HUMAN RIGHTS

*Law Firms of Distinction contributed a minimum of $300 per attorney.

THANK YOU!

The list that follows reflects the generosity of donors in calendar year 2014.

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THANK YOU!
FINANCIAL REPORT 2014

BASIC HUMAN NEEDS = BASIC HUMAN RIGHTS

1% Fundraising 14% Administration 85% Program Services

Operating Income 2014 $23,720,561 2013 $27,417,236
Operating Expenses 2014 $22,421,834 2013 $23,857,141
Net Assets, End of Year 2014 $18,549,501 2013 $14,485,820

The components of Net Assets at 12/31/2014 were: unrestricted $12,911,858; temporarily restricted $5,430,645, and permanently restricted $5,000.

Operating Expenses:

- Fundraising 1%
- Administration 14%
- Program Services 85%

Served by County 2014

- Anne Arundel
- Baltimore City
- Baltimore County
- Calvert
- Caroline
- Carroll
- Cecil
- Charles
- Dorchester
- Frederick
- Garrett
- Harford
- Howard
- Kent
- Montgomery
- Montgomery County
- Prince George's
- Somerset
- Talbot
- Washington
- Worcester

Other, Administration <1%
Education <1%
Employment 1%

Client Case Types

- Family 32%
- Health 1%
- Housing 24%
- Income Maintenance 3%
- Individual Rights 1%
- Consumer 19%
- Miscellaneous 7%