



MARYLAND
LEGAL AID

Advancing
Human Rights and
Justice for All

For Immediate Release

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Maryland Legal Aid will resume walk-in intake for individuals seeking in-person legal assistance

BALTIMORE, Md., (July 24, 2020) - Maryland Legal Aid's (MLA's) 12 statewide offices will re-open for walk-in intake on a limited basis on Monday, July 27th. The walk-in intake procedures will follow a strict set of protocols intended to protect the health and safety of all staff, clients, and visitors.

Because of COVID-19, MLA's intake process has been focused solely on online and telephone intake since mid-March. The decision to resume walk-in intake comes at a critical time when low-income and vulnerable Marylanders are experiencing an increased need for civil legal assistance as a result of COVID-19.

"By re-opening its doors to provide in-person legal assistance, MLA will continue to provide high-quality service delivery to clients with a focus on maximizing client dignity, accessibility, and user friendliness," said MLA's Executive Director Wilhelm H. Joseph, Jr.

As an essential business, MLA has been operating via a hybrid approach of in-office and telework. For the week of July 20th, MLA welcomed its staff back to its offices in accordance with each office's plan for continued operations. Each MLA office is operating at up to 50% capacity. Before re-opening its doors to clients, it was important to have a week for staff to acclimate to new health and safety protocols and guidelines put in place in each office. These protocols and guidelines are applicable to all staff, clients, and visitors; and follow CDC recommendations such as wearing masks/face coverings over the nose and mouth, social distancing of at least 6 feet; and completing brief, daily health assessments and temperature screenings.

MLA's two-step re-opening schedule is in tandem with the schedules of the Maryland courts and administrative forums to re-open their doors to more in-person hearings, for which MLA staff are needed to prepare cases and clients for legal representation.

Applicants can continue to apply for help by telephone and online, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week (Online Intake: www.mdlab.org; Telephone Intake: 667-224-7845 or 410-951-7750). Additionally, MLA's Community Lawyering Initiative is still actively providing legal assistance in person and by email and telephone in coordination with local libraries, schools, and community partners.

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About Maryland Legal Aid

Maryland Legal Aid (MLA) is a private, non-profit law firm that provides free, civil legal services to people who are in Baltimore City and Maryland's 23 counties from 12 offices. As Maryland's 3rd largest law firm, MLA handles cases involving a wide range of issues, including family, housing, government benefits, healthcare, education, employment, and consumer law. MLA also represents children in CINA (Child in Need of Assistance) proceedings in 14 jurisdictions. Other vulnerable populations, such as homeowners facing foreclosure, migrant and seasonal farm workers, people with developmental and mental health disabilities, nursing home and assisted living residents, and veterans seeking benefits and assistance with related legal issues also receive

representation through special projects. MLA's Community Lawyering Initiative, which includes its *Lawyer in the Library* program, assists with expunging criminal records to remove barriers to obtaining housing, employment, and child custody through clinics held in libraries, community centers, non-profit organizations, places of worship, schools, medical facilities, and other gathering places.

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