

Human Needs & Human Rights

“Where after all, do universal human rights begin? In small places, close to home—so close and so small that they cannot be seen on any maps of the world. Yet they are the world of the individual person; the neighborhood they live in; the school they attend; the factory, farm, store, or office where they work. Such are the places where every man, woman, and child seeks equal justice, equal opportunity, equal dignity without discrimination. Unless these rights have meaning there, they have little meaning anywhere. Without concerted citizen action to uphold them close to home, we shall look in vain for progress in the larger world.”

—Eleanor Roosevelt

Maryland Legal Aid: Who We Are

This brochure was prepared by Maryland Legal Aid, a non-profit law firm dedicated to providing high-quality legal advocacy to protect and advance human rights for individuals, families, and communities.

Community needs

Maryland Legal Aid asked individuals who are low-income across Maryland to tell us about their most significant needs and concerns. In EVERY COMMUNITY we repeatedly heard these three needs:

- The need to increase the supply of affordable housing;
- The need for jobs, and jobs that pay living wages;
- The need for accessible and affordable health care.

These needs are actually human rights

After many years of struggling to define human rights, the concept that certain rights should apply to everyone, not just to the rich, is now widely accepted. The **Universal Declaration of Human Rights**, adopted after World War II, is the world’s foremost human rights document and is founded upon the belief that all people have inalienable rights—rights that exist solely because of their humanity.

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For more information visit www.mdlab.org.

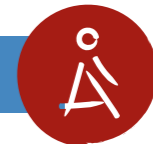
Human
Rights

Human Needs & Human Rights

Advancing Human Rights and Justice for All in Maryland since 1911



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MARYLAND
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Article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights

Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of him/herself and of his/her family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his/her control...

While most people can name some rights—like freedom of speech and belief—the full scope of human rights is very broad. Individual rights to liberty, travel, property, due process, and non-discrimination are intertwined with an individual's income and resources. International Human Rights treaties recognize this and require countries to respect these rights and to take action to help people realize:

- the right to housing;
- the right to living wage jobs;
- the right to income security in the event of unemployment; and
- the right to health care.

The state of human rights in Maryland

In Maryland, 8,000 people are homeless on any given night. Roughly half-a-million people work, but are still unable to afford housing and basic necessities. Another 700,000 people live without health insurance. The lack of human rights is not an issue reserved for developing countries.

How do human rights get recognized and respected?

Many people throughout history have stood up for human rights: Thomas Jefferson, Eleanor Roosevelt, Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Jr., and Nelson Mandela to name a few. While these people became famous for their human rights work, each represents thousands of individuals with similar ideas and the courage to act on them.

Who will fight for human rights today?

At Maryland Legal Aid, we are working on the long-term goal of achieving human rights for all struggling individuals, groups, children and families. In response to the specific needs and concerns expressed by people throughout the state of Maryland, we are focusing on the following:

Human Right to Housing

Everyone has a right to housing that is affordable, safe, secure. Having housing that is located close to schools and jobs and other basic resources helps to ensure stability. Maryland Legal Aid works with individuals and families in danger of being evicted when they have a good legal defense. Maryland Legal Aid also works with tenant groups in public and subsidized housing to ensure preservation and development of affordable housing.

Human Right to Health Care

Maryland Legal Aid fights to get individuals Medical Assistance. We help older adults with disabilities get the long-term care they need. Maryland Legal Aid also partners with other groups that are trying to protect the human right to affordable, accessible, quality health care for everyone.

Human Right to Employment

Maryland Legal Aid helps individuals who are denied unemployment insurance if they lost their job through no fault of their own, and we also help workers form groups to fight bad

employment practices, because workers have power when they are united.

Everyone can be a human rights advocate

At times, an individual may feel like he or she can accomplish very little. However, throughout history, individuals have fought for human rights resulting in global recognition of those rights. In the long term, governments and courts do not set trends; they adopt those already established by the people. Making human rights a reality requires effective and sustained action at a grass roots level. You may already be involved in these actions—if so, tell your Maryland Legal Aid advocate about them. You may want to be involved, but don't know what to do—ask your Maryland Legal Aid advocate.

Human rights for all will only be achieved when *all of us* recognize them, and take action together to make them real.

Universal Declaration of Human Rights:
<http://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/>

