Resource Guide

Generated November 28, 2026 · 1 open facilities · closed facilities are not listed · call before you go: details change quickly

MA

MetroWest Legal Services (aka "South Middlesex Legal Services" (for Violence Victims)

Info/Hotline · Open

Acton "Safety Net" Leadership Summit
63 Fountain Street, Suite 304, Framingham, MA 01702

Phone 800 696 1501, 508 620 1830
Web www.smlegal.org
Hours Monday through Friday, 9:00 am to 5:00 pm
Serves See service areas below.
Eligibility victims of violence
Service Permanent

From their website:

Our Mission Statement

The mission of South Middlesex Legal Services is to provide legal advocacy to protect and advance the rights of the poor, elderly, disabled and other disenfranchised people in our service area (listed below) in obtaining legal, social and economic justice. SMLS will assist client eligible persons in securing access to basic needs and in challenging institutional barriers in order to achieve equal justice for all.

Per United Way/211, this group also provides probono legal assistance for violence victims.

Information About SMLS

Since 1976, South Middlesex Legal Services (SMLS) has been serving the needs of local low–income, disabled and elderly persons in 36 communities from Dedham to Marlborough and from Bedford to the Rhode Island border. SMLS advocates represent battered victims in contested family law cases, defend tenants to prevent them from becoming homeless, advocate in schools for children with special needs, help elderly and disabled people in obtaining disability, welfare and medical benefits and assist people making the transition from welfare to work. The SMLS staff represents approximately 2,200 low–income and elderly clients each year.

Tratamos con casos de vivienda, desempleo, violéncia domestica, educacción y benefícios del bíenestar público y del gobierno.

Cases Handled (see website for more details):

– Domestic Relations

Through the Domestic Violence Project, SMLS provides services to approximately 225 abuse victims each year. We represent victims in their contested Probate and Family Court cases, with the highest priority being those cases involving children, elderly or disabled adults, and those who are linguistically or culturally isolated. Most cases resolve controversies concerning custody or visitation of minor children and child support. We do not handle cases that involve child support only. For some clients, we provide only advice or limited services. Sometimes this is because the victim needs information before taking the next step of separating from the abuser. In other situations, however, it is because limited resources do not allow us to provide more extensive services to all who need them.

Assisting victims with children is our highest priority. They need stable homes, safe contact with the absent parent, and economic security to provide essential food and shelter. Without an attorney's assistance, victims often do not know how to obtain appropriate custody, visitation, support and restraining orders to provide these basics for their children. Often they are misinformed about their rights by their batterers.

Through our PRIVATE BAR VOLUNTEER PROGRAM, SMLS provides basic Family Law services. Local private attorneys volunteer their services and take uncontested divorces, adoptions, guardianships, and paternity cases for SMLS clients.

For further Legal Information visit Massachusetts Legal Services and for other related sites click here.

– Disability and Benefits

Two attorneys and a paralegal at SMLS focus on transitional assistance benefits (Food Stamps, TAFDC, EAEDC, EA Shelter), Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI), Supplemental Security Income (SSI), Veterans Benefits, and Unemployment Compensation. These advocates help individuals and families navigate a complex labyrinth of state and federal laws and procedures and overcome bureaucratic roadblocks to ensure access to benefits to which they are entitled.

The Disability and Benefits Unit at SMLS is in constant contact with administrative agencies, pursuing both formal and informal appeals through the gamut of agency reviews and fair hearings, all the way through to the state and federal court systems. Many of the clients served by the Unit have physical and/or mental disabilities, and the Disability and Benefits advocates work tirelessly to ensure that these individuals realize full and fair treatment. Few other law offices provide the time, patience and expertise to be successful in this greatly needed, yet not overly serviced, area of law.

For further Legal Information visit Massachusetts Legal Services and for other related sites click here.

– Health Care Access Project

The HealthCare Access Project Coordinator provides advice and assistance from application through the appeal process for MassHealth, Commonwealth Care, The Children's Medical Security Plan and the Health Safety Net benefits. The HealthCare Access Project is funded in part by a grant from the Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts Foundation and the MetroWest Community Health Care Foundation.

– Housing

SMLS' housing work focuses on protecting low–income families from losing their affordable housing or their homes. Housing attorneys represent approximately 660 housing clients each year. In the SMLS service area, approximately 2,100 families and/or individuals face eviction and of that number 80% – 85% are unrepresented (70% of those people are low–income). Due to limited resources, we focus our eviction defense on tenants with subsidies, since these are so difficult to obtain. Loss of a subsidy generally results in a family becoming homeless.

Housing attorneys also represent applicants in appeal hearings who have been denied admission into subsidized housing programs, and homeowners facing foreclosure. Representation may include negotiations with lenders, bankruptcy actions, and suits against the lenders for predatory lending violations.

– Homeless Advocacy Project

The Homeless Advocacy Project (HAP) focuses its efforts on the homeless of MetroWest to help them obtain permanent, sustainable housing or generate income to sustain permanent housing. Due to the vulnerable nature of this population, an attorney will utilize a holistic legal approach to serve individuals and families facing a myriad of civil legal issues. The HAP attorney helps with the following issues:

Subsidized Housing Eligibility
Credit and CORI issues
SSI/SSDI Eligibility
Bankruptcies
Child Support Modifications
The attorney also provides regular outreach and access to the area's homeless shelters and acts as a reference to the network of homelessness agencies in the region.

Pro se Housing Clinic

SMLS offers weekly pro se housing clinics for tenants living in our service area, who are facing eviction. At each clinic, a housing attorney outlines the eviction process, discusses relevant defenses, and explains what to expect at the court appearance. The housing attorney also distributes court forms and helps tenants to complete them.

For further Legal Information visit Massachusetts Legal Services and for other related sites click here.

– Elder Law

Through its Senior Citizen's Legal Project, SMLS provides services to individuals over 60 living in our service area. The advocates help clients with the following:

Housing – Landlord and Tenant issues, primarily eviction cases involving public, subsidized or private housing and foreclosures.
Durable Powers of Attorney, Health Care Proxies, and Defense of Guardianships and Conservatorships.
Nursing Home Issues – Including transfer and discharge, conditions, and evictions.
Benefits – Social Security, SSI, Unemployment, Medicaid, Medicare, and the Department of Transitional Assistance benefits.
Domestic Relations – Including restraining orders, divorces, modification of divorce agreements, and contempt actions.
Bankruptcies.
Community Legal Education – Attorneys provide presentations to senior groups on legal topics of particular interest to elders.

For further Legal Information visit Massachusetts Legal Services and for other related sites click here.

– Special Education

SMLS assists students and parents in their special education cases, addressing an unmet community health need. Special needs children have medical, physical, or mental health conditions which interfere with their ability to participate fully in school. In order to succeed in an academic setting, they require specifically targeted assistance, such as physical or occupational therapy, counseling, medication, accommodations for a physical handicap or adjustments for neurological deficits. By working with families, school personnel, experts and treatment providers, the Project Attorney works to ensure that children's needs are correctly identified and that appropriate services are developed and delivered. Low–income and minority children are more likely to receive inadequate services. The Project addresses these existing inequities and thus, we hope, creates lasting and positive change for children with special needs.

For further Legal Information visit Massachusetts Legal Services and for other related sites click here.

Funding Sources for SMLS

Acton–Boxborough United Way
BayPath Elder Services, Inc.
Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts Foundation
Boston Bar Foundation
Concord–Carlisle Community Chest
HESSCO Elder Services, Inc.
Massachusetts Bar Foundation
Massachusetts Legal Assistance Corporation (MLAC)
Maynard Community Chest
MetroWest Community Health Care Foundation
The 200 Foundation, Inc.
U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
United Way of Tri–County
Wellesley Hills Junior Woman's Club

Communities Served by SMLS

Our office is located at 354 Waverly Street in Framingham, MA.
We serve clients who reside in the following communities:

Acton Dover Lincoln Norfolk Sudbury
Ashland Foxborough Marlborough Northborough* Walpole
Bedford Framingham Maynard Norwood Wayland
Bellingham Franklin Medfield Plainville Wellesley
Canton* Holliston Medway Sharon Westborough*
Carlisle Hopkinton Millis Sherborn Weston
Concord Hudson Natick Southborough* Westwood
Dedham Lexington Needham Stow Wrentham

*For Elders Only

Services offered: Advocacy, * (ANY/ALL Types); Advocacy, Battered Women ; Advocacy, Child Advocacy; Advocacy, Disabled/ Handicapped; Advocacy, Domestic Violence; Advocacy, Employment, "At–Risk" Job Applicants; Advocacy, Health & Human Rights; Advocacy, Housing, Community, Housing Development; Advocacy, Housing, Eviction Defense; Advocacy, Housing, Long Term Care Residents (Seniors/Elders); Advocacy, Legislation Support; Advocacy, Medical, Patient Rights; Advocacy, Migrants/ Immigrant, Legal Services; Advocacy, Migrants/Immigrant Workers ; Advocacy, Services, Youth Services; Advocacy, Special Needs Folks; Advocacy, Special Needs Folks, Seniors/Elders; Assistance, Referrals * General Information & Referral; Assistance, Referrals, Information & Referral (For Seniors/Elders); Assistance, Referrals, Legal Information & Resource Referrals (For Elders/Seniors); Assistance, Referrals, Legal Referrals; Information Resource * (ANY/ALL Types); Legal, Attorney, Pro Bono Attorney, Volunteer; Legal, Services, Volunteer; Services, Domestic Violence Intervention Services; Services, Family, Parent, Non–custodial Parent, Services in Support of; Services, Immigration, Refugee Resettlement (See also "Assistance"); Services, Legal Assistance; Services, Legal Assistance (For Low–Income Families); Services, Legal, Notary Service (FREE)
Campaigns: 211 (groups that are ASSOCIATED with 211); Acton Leadership Summit, Acton Massachusetts; Government, US Deptartment of Housing & Urban Development (HUD); Government, US/State Dept. of Health & Human Services (DHHS); United Way
Updated Nov 19, 2008 · https://reliefdb.org/shelters/3497