

MICHIGAN POVERTY LAW PROGRAM

MPLP Office Location: Ann Arbor

Service Area: Statewide

Service Population: Legal services programs in Michigan



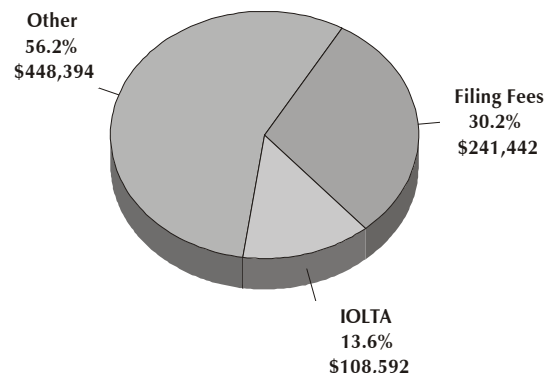
MPLP's mission is to improve client advocacy by supporting Michigan's local aid programs through training, legal research assistance and case consultations, technology, and case representation on significant issues. In 2000, MPLP closed 67 cases, co-counseled or consulted on many others, directed still

more to pro bono resources, responded to more than 800 requests from local programs for assistance, and published issue alerts and quarterly newsletters. MPLP conducted 19 days of training with 829 individuals attending and held seven half-day seminars with 151 individuals attending. MPLP staffed 22 taskforce meetings in the areas of housing, family, public benefits, consumer, and elder law that attracted 425 attendees. MPLP and the Michigan League for Human Services joined forces to create the Michigan Advocacy Project, which tracked legislation affecting low-income people and responded to requests for comment and assistance from legislators.

A single mother working as a security guard changed jobs and had to reapply for child day care benefits from the state Family Independence Agency (FIA). She filled out the correct forms and returned them to the FIA office, but during this time, she was assigned to a new FIA caseworker. The new caseworker claimed that the client did not turn in the appropriate documentation and denied day care benefits. The University of Michigan Law School Clinic represented the mother at a hearing and won retroactive approval of day care benefits so her children could receive care while she worked.

A homeless shelter received a number of small grants to run a free on-site health clinic for shelter residents. The shelter had a number of questions about its potential liability due to operation of a medical clinic, the type of liability insurance needed, and the structure for medical supervision of its nurse practitioner. The MI-LAPP program referred the matter to a corporate and insurance specialist at the law firm Clark Hill who provided pro bono assistance to the shelter to address these issues and open the clinic.

MPLP Sources of Funding for 2000: \$ 798,428



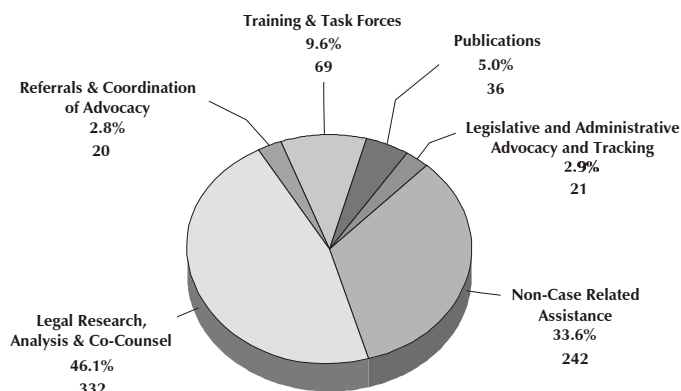
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Community Outreach and Collaboration. In 2000, MPLP worked with local legal services programs across Michigan to promote community involvement. This effort included "Fill the Basket," a food stamp outreach project conducted with the Center for Civil Justice in Saginaw. As part of the Fill the Basket outreach, MPLP created the Michigan Food Stamp Network (<http://www.foodstamphelp.org>), an on-line food stamp resource for community advocates and recipients. The Web site includes food stamp legal education information and resource materials and features an on-line food stamp calculator, which allows advocates and recipients to estimate their correct food stamp amount for any month. MPLP also worked with the Legal Assistance Center in Grand Rapids to develop a set of user-friendly Michigan court forms that will be accessible on the Internet for people who cannot afford an attorney. The forms will help people complete the paperwork they need to represent themselves in court. MPLP also hired a publications attorney to help coordinate community legal education materials from programs around the state to make producing and updating these materials easier. In legislative and regulatory efforts, the Michigan Advocacy Project coordinated with other organizations to represent the interests of poor Michigan residents on issues including exploitative payday loan companies, temporary child custody orders for parents fighting spousal abuse, deferral of domestic violence victims from work requirements for welfare benefits, urban homesteading, and utility deregulation.

Pro Bono Support. MPLP has worked with the State Bar of Michigan to develop and support the Michigan Litigation Assistance Partnership Program (MI-LAPP), which refers cases and matters to large law firms statewide. In 2000, MI-LAPP continued to grow, referring out 87 new cases. For example, volunteer MI-LAPP attorneys assisted migrant farmworkers seeking unpaid wages from an employer that declared bankruptcy. MI-LAPP also worked with Community Legal Resources in Detroit to match pro bono attorneys with nonprofit community organizations in need of assistance with issues such as incorporation or application for nonprofit status from the Internal Revenue Service.

MPLP Types of Activity in 2000



MPLP Completed Activities in 2000: 720

