

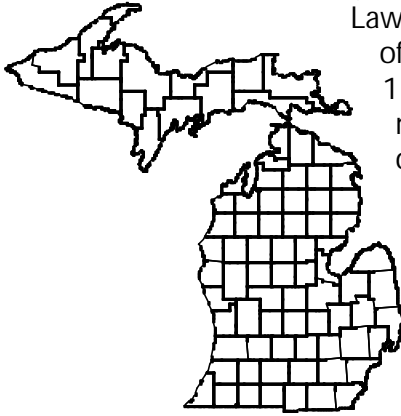
# MICHIGAN POVERTY LAW PROGRAM

MPLP Office Locations: Ann Arbor and Grand Rapids

**MPLP Service Area:** Statewide

**Service Population:** Legal services programs in Michigan

MPLP is a partnership of the Michigan Migrant Legal Assistance Project, the University of Michigan Law School, and Legal Services of Southeastern Michigan. In 1998, MPLP continued its mission to support the work of Michigan's regional legal services agencies, providing services which included case consultation, task forces addressing major areas of the law, publications, training sessions, a brief bank, technology support, a

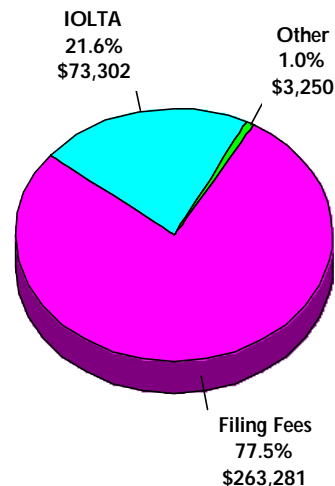


website for advocates, legislative tracking and advocacy, and court representation on significant issues. MPLP added consumer law and elder law task forces in 1998. MPLP responded to more than 900 requests from local programs for assistance (a fourfold increase over 1997), continued to lead substantive law task forces, published many issue alerts, and planned or participated as trainers in many training events attended by hundreds of participants. MPLP co-counseled three cases with regional programs in the Michigan Supreme Court.

A child with a rare disease was denied SSI (federal disability benefits) despite the fact that the disease automatically meets the listing of impairments qualifying for benefits. After denials at the hearing and in the appeal to the U.S. District Court, MPLP appealed this case to the Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals. Upon its review of MPLP's brief, the Department of Justice joined in a stipulated order reversing the agency denial and reinstating all benefits for the child.

A single mother moved from a shelter to federally funded transitional housing. The local commission managing the housing retained broad discretion in reasons to force residents to leave and attempted to evict the mother. The housing commission did not use grievance hearings as required by federal law, and it took the position that eviction did not require court action. Following a favorable preliminary injunction preventing evictions without due process, the case was settled, requiring court action for any evictions and the use of grievance procedures to resolve tenants' complaints.

**MPLP Sources of Funding for 1998: \$ 339,833**



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Contact: Gary N. Gershon, Executive Director ! 616-454-5055

**Community Outreach and Collaboration:** Through improved training, information sharing, and case-specific support, MPLP worked to improve the ability of local legal services programs to advocate on behalf of their clients. MPLP conducted 22 days of training for 441 participants. The program expanded the annual statewide training to include consumer law and support staff training. MPLP also provided a strong statewide voice on important issues affecting low-income people. To increase awareness of MPLP's services, staff members visited five local programs. MPLP published the first issue of a quarterly newsletter to keep legal services staff members around the state updated on activities and resources. MPLP also continued work on its website, which includes a searchable brief and pleadings bank, information on task force meetings, training opportunities, legislative updates, and issue alerts prepared by MPLP staff and staff from the Center for Civil Justice. MPLP staff also continued to provide leadership to the statewide Legal Services Computer Committee and helped to conduct user evaluations of the technology pilot projects for e-mail, case management and Internet access, as well as planning for statewide expansion in these areas. Additional details appear on the MPLP website at [www.mplp.org](http://www.mplp.org). MPLP also manages another website at [www.mlan.org](http://www.mlan.org) (Michigan Legal Assistance Network) with legal information for advocates and the public.

**Pro Bono Support:** MPLP has worked with the State Bar of Michigan to develop and support the Michigan Michigan Litigation Assistance Partnership Program (MI-LAPP), which refers cases and matters to large law firms statewide. In 1998, MI-LAPP began a recruitment strategy for law firms and continued outreach to local legal services programs to identify cases appropriate for referrals. MI-LAPP also coordinated with Community Legal Resources in Detroit to connect community groups with pro bono attorneys who provide advice and legal representation to nonprofit organizations. By the end of 1998, 20 different firms had accepted 80 cases, more than four times the cases referred in 1997.

