

THE VALUE OF ADVOCACY

For the client: In addition to solving problems that contribute to psychological distress, advocacy helps to accord clients a measure of autonomy and dignity. By participating in the processes that affect their lives, clients grow in their independence, self esteem and ability to work with others.

For the human service worker: Having an advocate work with a client means an "extra pair of hands" to resolve a client's problems. Because he or she is external to the system, an advocate can also help to improve communication, diffuse tensions and resolve conflicts when disagreements have arisen between a client and a service provider.

For the human service systems: Because of their access and perspective, advocates help to root out systematic problems that are hidden, even from those working in the system. By participating in the development of policies and practices, advocates help prevent future abuse and neglect. By articulating their clients' concerns, advocates contribute to making the mental health system more responsive and humane. In that way, advocates play a crucial role in the feedback loop that assures quality of service.

For the community: By recognizing and advocating for the rights and interests of clients, advocates help increase public awareness and appreciation of a "hidden" population. Advocates also help generate public support for financial, medical and social progress in mental health treatment, housing and social services.

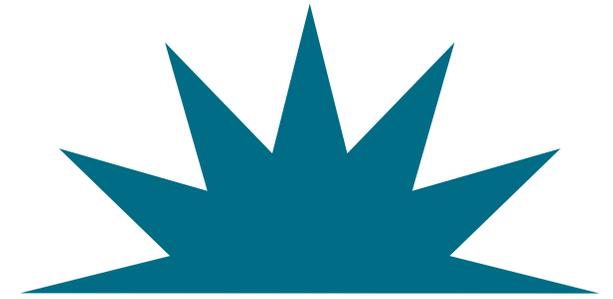
OTHER LAW FOUNDATION PROGRAMS

Health Legal Services provides direct legal services to individuals living with HIV/AIDS or diabetes in a wide range of practice areas including public and private benefits and insurance, housing and consumer matters, simple estate planning, employment discrimination and reasonable accommodation matters, breach-of-confidentiality issues and representation or referrals on other legal issues.

Fair Housing Law Project provides education, advocacy, and legal representation to prevent and redress instances of housing discrimination and predatory mortgage lending. Its mission is to ensure that all people may freely choose a place to live without regard to their race, color, religion, gender, age, national origin, ancestry, sexual orientation, marital status, source of income, disability or whether they have children in their family or operate a home daycare.

Legal Advocates for Children & Youth provides representation to youth in areas including guardianships, juvenile dependency, emancipations, education, family law, issues faced by homeless and foster youth, domestic violence and problems experienced by pregnant and parenting teens. LACY advances the legal rights of minors in Santa Clara County, empowering them to lead healthy and productive lives. We listen to, advise, and advocate for our clients to ensure their voices are heard and their rights are protected.

Public Interest Law Firm represents disadvantaged individuals on issues which affect important civil rights and have significant impact on the community. Priority areas are: civil and constitutional rights; children and youth; individuals with disabilities and elders; housing and homelessness; and immigrant and refugee rights. Local law firms provide pro bono services in impact litigation and advocacy.



MENTAL HEALTH ADVOCACY PROJECT

a program of
LAW
FOUNDATION
of Silicon Valley

**Chúng tôi nói tiếng Việt
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HISTORY & PURPOSE

Mental Health Advocacy Project (MHAP) was established in 1978 as a program of the Law Foundation of Silicon Valley and provides legal and advocacy services to over 5,000 clients per year. MHAP is the only legal assistance organization in Santa Clara County that provides specialized services for people identified as having mental health or developmental disabilities. MHAP works to expand the rights and to promote the social dignity of its clients by participating in the reform of the political, economic, and social structures that affect their lives, and by increasing public awareness of the social problems they experience.

MISSION

MHAP's mission is to empower people identified as having mental or developmental disabilities to live more independent, secure and satisfying lives through the enforcement of their legal rights and the advancement of their social and economic well-being.

LEGAL SERVICES

MHAP provides free legal and advocacy assistance through the work of advocates and attorneys in three practice units:

Economic Rights provides assistance with public benefits, mainly SSI, SSDI, Medi-Cal, Medicare, CalWorks, Healthy Families, General Assistance; some consumer rights, and equal access to public services;

Housing Rights addresses issues of housing and homelessness by defending evictions and assisting with housing complaints, including discrimination, reasonable accommodations, abuse and neglect, landlord/tenant conflicts and habitability; Section 8 voucher and public housing terminations; and shelter discharges; and

Patients' Rights works on both individual and system levels to ensure compliance with laws governing mental health patients' rights in psychiatric facilities and programs, and represents patients in mental health due process hearings. We also help individuals with autism, mental retardation, and conditions like mental retardation with complaints about developmental services, including access to regional center services.

All residents of Santa Clara County who are or have been identified, or who self-identify, as having mental or developmental disabilities qualify for our services. MHAP also provides information and referral in the areas of rehabilitation, employment, family and criminal law.

To use our services: Call MHAP on the telephone or visit our office. We will interview you and take basic information about your legal problem. An advocate will call you within two days to provide you with advice or assistance.

OTHER SERVICES

OUTREACH AND EDUCATION

MHAP provides training to mental health, social service and housing providers; government agencies and officials; other low income legal services providers; clients and the general public. Such training is furnished in the form of on-site workshops and publication and distribution of educational materials. For example, MHAP staff members regularly visit hospitals, residential care and long-term care facilities, homeless shelters, and outpatient clinics to deliver training to groups of individuals from its client community. Additionally, MHAP staff members represent the interests of its client community in a variety of public forums.

MONITORING

In addition to individual assistance, MHAP also provides regular monitoring of mental health facilities and services and review and analysis of policies and procedures for compliance with mental health and other laws.

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

MHAP gives advice and information (technical assistance) to mental health, social service and housing providers so long as such advice does not constitute legal advice and is not in conflict of interest with our obligations to the interests of our client community. MHAP produces and distributes model policies for service providers for such issues as informed consent, privacy in care facilities, homeless shelter grievances, managed care complaints, right to reasonable accommodation, voter registration requirements for mental health services, and durable powers of attorney.

To request accommodation or alternate format to participate call name and phone number or TTY/TDD free relay service at (800) 735-2929 or 7-1-1.