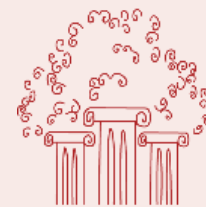


Court Watch Volunteering

With MA Language Access Coalition

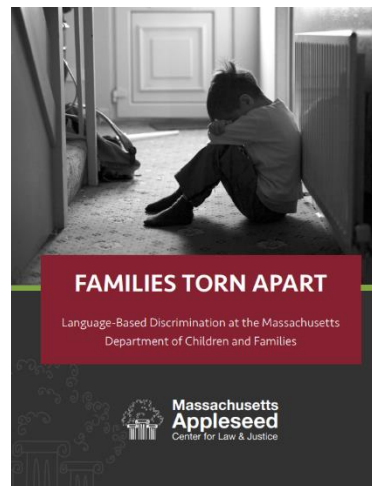


**Massachusetts
Appleseed**
Center for Law & Justice

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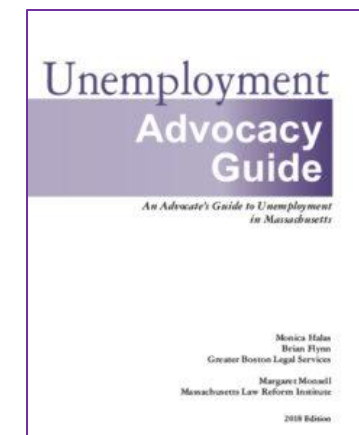
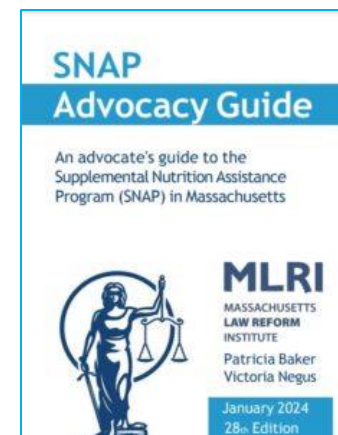
About MA Appleseed

- We promote **equal rights** and **opportunities** for Massachusetts residents by developing and advocating for systemic solutions to social justice issues
- We identify practical solutions through **data collection** and **robust analysis**
- We **collaborate** with community groups, government institutions, and other stakeholders to identify emerging issues, study the causes, recommend solutions, and implement those improvements



About MA Law Reform Institute

- We provide statewide **advocacy** and **leadership** in advancing laws, policies, and practices that secure **economic, racial, and social justice** for low-income communities
- Our advocacy is framed by: addressing and **combatting poverty**, ensuring **access to justice**, and advancing **racial equity**
- We engage in legislative initiatives, administrative rulemaking and **advocacy**, litigation, **coalition building**, and technical support
- We manage online legal informational services:
 - Mass Legal Help: [MassLegalHelp.org](https://www.masslegalhelp.org)
 - Free Legal Answers: [Mass.freelegalanswers.org](https://www.mass.freelegalanswers.org)
 - MA Legal Resources Finder: [Masslrf.org](https://www.masslrf.org)
 - Mass Legal Services: [MassLegalServices.org](https://www.masslegalservices.org)



Language Access in the MA Courts

- The MA Language Access Coalition promotes equity for Limited English Proficient (LEP) and Deaf and Hard of Hearing (D/HH) residents as they navigate state systems
- Within the larger coalition, MA Appleseed and MA Law Reform Institute lead the Courts Language Access Working Group (CLAWG)
- CLAWG focuses on barriers to language access that LEP and D/HH court users face in the legal system, the focus of the project at hand
 - Interpretation issues – availability, accuracy, scheduling
 - Document translation – general lack of access
 - Court users feel intimidated and discriminated against

Project Overview

- **Goal:** Collect stories from both advocates and LEP and D/HH litigants to understand the main barriers these court users face; write a report detailing our findings and recommendations for improvement
- The report will be informed by the lived experience and insight of LEP and D/HH court users
- Data collection methods
 - Listening sessions with LEP and D/HH litigants
 - Survey of advocates and lawyers who work with LEP and D/HH litigants
 - Court watching

Research Questions

- **What challenges do LEP and D/HH individuals face when trying to access interpretation and translation services within the court system?**
- **Regarding the court process, what systemic barriers are preventing LEP and D/HH court users from obtaining language services?**
- What are the lived experiences of LEP and D/HH court users in MA trial courts?
- In which courts (both in a geographic and court type sense) are LEP and D/HH court users facing the most language access barriers?
- What success stories have LEP and D/HH court users experienced when it comes to language access in the judicial system?
- What are other state court systems doing to improve language access that MA could emulate? How can the MA courts improve access to justice for LEP and D/HH court users?

About Court Watching

- Anyone can go to court to observe (whether for a project or out of interest)
- Things to know about court watching, etiquette, etc. are included in our project materials
- We ask that volunteers court watch for about 3-hour time blocks at a time
- You'll fill out a printed survey in court (no computers allowed) and then an online version of the survey after
- Your observations will provide an "on the ground" perspective of the everyday happenings in court as it relates to language access issues
 - Information gathered will bolster our other data collection methods

Filling Out The Survey

- Simply click the link provided, which will bring you to the survey on Qualtrics
- Fill out the survey to the best of your ability, leaving blank any questions you can't answer or didn't observe in court
- Use the notes you took while court watching to inform your survey responses
- You can move forwards and backwards as you complete the survey should you need to change any answers
- Complete the online survey as soon after your court watch as possible to make sure you include details and things you remember from observing



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Next Steps & Questions

- If you are interested in participating in this project or have any questions, contact Miriam at miriam@massappleseed.org or Iris at icoloma-gaines@mlri.org
 - We will send all the materials you need to get involved!
- **Keep in touch!**
 - **MA Appleseed:** Join the email list at bit.ly/join-ma-appleseed and follow us on Instagram (@massappleseed)
 - **MLRI:** Join the email list at <https://bit.ly/join-mlri> and follow us on Instagram (@masslawreform)

Thank you!