

**Building  
Bridges  
to Better  
Health**

**For thousands of households,  
LCR | HealthJustice provides  
critical, life-changing support  
at the many intersections of  
health and the law.**

# Building Bridges to Better Health

A person's health is significantly influenced by where they live and work, their immigration status, their access to healthcare, and other socioeconomic factors. As a result, people of color, immigrants, and low-income communities are much more likely to experience unequal and negative health outcomes. That's where LCR | HealthJustice comes in.

We collaborate with community-based healthcare clinics to support their most vulnerable patients, including people with disabilities and those seeking public benefits. As part of an integrated team that also includes care providers, social workers, and patient navigators, we provide free, comprehensive, one-on-one legal advice and representation. This representation takes many forms—from helping an elderly client secure Social Security benefits to representing a family whose apartment is contaminated with lead paint.

In addition to direct representation, HealthJustice supports public health efforts and advocates on behalf of vulnerable communities. For example, during the COVID-19 pandemic, we have worked alongside local community-based groups to organize vaccination clinics in low-income neighborhoods. We also engaged in extensive advocacy with healthcare providers on housing matters, shining a light on the eviction crisis exacerbated by the pandemic. At the national level, HealthJustice has filed *amicus* briefs on behalf of medical institutions from across the country to challenge the Trump Administration's unprecedented expansion of the "public charge rule," which penalized immigrants for making legitimate use of programs that improve their quality of life.

Through close coordination between attorneys, doctors, and community partners, we tackle the complex intersections of race, immigration, poverty, healthcare, and the law.

# A Legacy of Advocacy

HealthJustice is rooted in an innovative medical-legal partnership that LCR formed with MGH nearly two decades ago. Since 2003, we have provided direct representation to patients at the MGH Chelsea HealthCare Center—a partnership that remains the heart of our program. Working with care teams in Chelsea and across other MGH community-based health centers has given us a deep understanding of our clients' situations, helping to ensure that our services benefit families and patients who would otherwise lack access to high-quality legal aid.

In recent years, we have strengthened and expanded our programs and advocacy efforts focused on health law. In addition to Chelsea, we now offer direct legal services through MGH community health centers in Revere, Everett, and Charlestown. We have also incorporated tele-lawyering—critical during the most challenging periods of the COVID-19 pandemic—enabling us to provide a full complement of services remotely.

**All these efforts are critical, but the waiting list for individuals seeking to access our services still extends into the hundreds.**

**Significant growth, extensive needs.** As a result of these changes, we are serving more patients than ever through these expanded modes of communication and engagement. We are taking on record numbers of clients, resolving a wider range of complex issues for a diverse community that includes immigrant and refugee populations, and supporting clients over a larger geographic area.

This expansion has created new opportunities for collaboration with MGH and other community partners. For example, at the height of the family separation crisis at the U.S. border with Mexico, MGH doctors provided *pro bono* expert support critical to the success of our family reunification efforts, including testimony in some of the earliest cases filed against the federal government. We also joined forces with healthcare providers to file high-profile *amicus* briefs addressing urgent social justice issues such as the dangerous expansion of the controversial “public charge rule.”

All these efforts are critical, but the waiting list for individuals seeking to access our services still extends into the hundreds. To meet this urgent need, we must engage additional lawyers to provide *pro bono* legal services and secure philanthropic support to expand our capacity, reach, and impact.

# Focused Solutions

**LCR | HealthJustice** focuses first and foremost on the most vulnerable patients. In collaboration with the patient's care team and other providers, HealthJustice engages in a broad range of advocacy efforts—representing patients in court, negotiating with landlords, advocating before administrative agencies—all with the aim of improving health outcomes by addressing adjacent legal issues.

While our clients' needs are varied, the issues we address most frequently include:

## + **Disability benefits**

We help clients access their benefits by assisting with SSI/SSDI applications and representing clients during legal proceedings.

## + **Pandemic relief**

We have seen firsthand how the most severe impacts of the pandemic have disproportionately fallen on low-income families and communities of color. In response, we have collaborated with local partners and health providers to coordinate mobile vaccination units and multilingual vaccination clinics centered around public housing developments, churches, and community centers.

## + **Housing issues**

Health and housing go hand in hand. From negotiating with landlords to providing healthier, lead-free housing to representing tenants in housing court, we address housing issues that impact health.

## + **Immigration and naturalization**

A patient's immigration status can dramatically impact their access to care and coverage. With a special focus on elderly patients and people with disabilities, we help people navigate complex immigration legal issues.

**Some of our recent victories:**

**Assisting clients in becoming naturalized U.S. citizens**

**Assisting clients in defending contested disability claims**

**Securing disability benefits for clients**

**Securing guardianships for incapacitated youth who are turning 18**

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# A Meaningful and Growing Impact

The COVID-19 pandemic threw healthcare systems globally into disarray. It also transformed LCR | HealthJustice—propelling the program to an even greater level of engagement, visibility, and impact.

When the COVID-19 vaccine became available, we rapidly mobilized to democratize and diversify access to vaccination. Thanks to our sustained advocacy, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and the City of Boston agreed to expand access and distribution beyond mass vaccination sites to low-income and minority communities. HealthJustice played an essential role in connecting community organizations to vaccine supplies. Through these efforts, more than 5,000 people have been vaccinated against COVID-19—a significant public health achievement that would not have been possible without HealthJustice’s holistic legal advocacy and grassroots community engagement.

Currently, disability and housing cases make up the majority of our caseload, as clients try to maintain stable housing in the face of an ongoing pandemic, high inflation, and the Boston area’s exceptionally high cost of living. HealthJustice has been instrumental in helping families avoid eviction during these challenging times—not only through direct negotiation with landlords, but also by helping clients secure emergency rental assistance through the state’s Residential Assistance for Families in Transition (RAFT) program. In response to the pandemic, our RAFT advocacy has secured more than \$750,000 in emergency rental assistance benefits for hundreds of low-income households.

# A LCR | HealthJustice Case Study

For more than a year, **LCR | HealthJustice** has been representing a single mother who is battling a life-threatening illness while raising a child with a neurological condition. When the mother was first referred to HealthJustice, she was concerned about her son's future and well-being. By securing a guardianship, HealthJustice ensured that the mother could continue to make life-saving medical and financial decisions for her child after he turns 18.

HealthJustice also helped the family navigate the legal complexities around obtaining Social Security benefits. With our support, the mother obtained disability benefits for both herself and her child—resources that are vital for the family's future. And in light of the mother's underlying medical conditions, HealthJustice secured *pro bono* counsel for the family's estate planning needs. Through this process, she legally designated an individual who can care for her child in the event her health declines further.

HealthJustice is currently helping the mother obtain safe, affordable housing. We are negotiating with a landlord to ensure that an available housing unit is brought up to code. As legally required repairs are completed, the family will finally have a home where they can begin to move forward.

There are countless people facing intertwined health and legal challenges, and they often don't know where to turn for help. With HealthJustice's life-changing legal support, thousands of families have found **hope for the future.**

# A Healthier Tomorrow

Over the past two decades, LCR | HealthJustice has evolved from a partnership with one community-based health center to a robust program that provides direct representation across several health clinics. We have helped to advance population health through activities such as mobile vaccine clinics, and advocated holistically and broadly for the needs of our most vulnerable community members. There is still much more that we can—and must—do.

In the face of unprecedented challenges to healthcare access, we are well-positioned to defend vital services and protections, including access to reproductive health.

We currently face running a waitlist of hundreds of patients who could benefit from our legal services. To meet the need, we require the financial resources to grow the HealthJustice team. We also need *pro bono* support from law firms. With the help of law firms, community partners, and philanthropic supporters, we can greatly expand the reach, scope, and impact of HealthJustice—and help change our clients' lives for the better.

## **Our goals include:**

- Deepening and expanding our efforts to provide free, one-on-one legal assistance
- Growing our reach and impact through new partnerships with other community-based health centers
- Providing services that address a broad range of health-adjacent issues, including poverty, housing insecurity, racial discrimination, and immigration issues
- Expanding our education, outreach, and legal literacy activities through community-based partnerships
- Delivering services that are even more culturally relevant and linguistically appropriate
- Ensuring access to reproductive health

# Join Us

**LCR | HealthJustice** provides a local and national model for direct support to help ensure the health and well-being of people of color and immigrants. With volunteer and philanthropic support from allies, donors, and law firms, we can offer assistance to more people, in more areas of the law, and in more health centers—all with a continued focus on our most vulnerable community members.

Learn more about LCR | HealthJustice and how you can support this life-changing work at [lawyersforcivilrights.org](https://www.lawyersforcivilrights.org)

**This is law  
for a healthier  
community.**

**This is a  
bridge to  
brighter  
futures.**

**This is  
LCR+Heal**

thJustice.

## About LCR

**Lawyers for Civil Rights (LCR)** works with communities of color and immigrants to fight discrimination and foster equity through creative and courageous legal advocacy, education, and economic empowerment. In partnership with law firms and community allies, we provide free, life-changing legal support to individuals, families, and small businesses. **LCR | HealthJustice** provides free legal support to empower patients and improve health outcomes.