

AmeriCorps Legal Advocates of Massachusetts 2019-2020 Service Year



Detailed Position Description

Position: AmeriCorps Advocate
Reports To: ALA-Massachusetts Host Partner Site Supervisor
Coordinates With: ALA-Massachusetts Program Director

AmeriCorps Legal Advocates of Massachusetts (ALA-Massachusetts) will place 36 college and law school graduates to serve in 2019-2020. This is a full-time service position, requiring 1,700 hours over 46 weeks from September 9, 2019 to July 24, 2020. Applications will be accepted starting in February, 2019 until the positions are filled. Instructions for how to apply are at www.ala-mass.org.

Our AmeriCorps advocates serve at partner organizations throughout Massachusetts to provide legal assistance to low-income individuals and families. They are closely supervised by an onsite supervisor in all activities.

Essential Functions of the Position

ALA-Massachusetts advocates are placed in a variety of legal services organizations, and the essential functions of the position vary among our site partner placements. Some activities may depend on whether the member is admitted to practice law in Massachusetts. Regardless of educational level, each member can expect to engage in many of the following activities:

- interviewing potential clients for legal assistance in civil matters, in person, on the phone, or by email;
- assisting in making eligibility determinations;
- assisting legal professionals in providing counsel, brief service, or full representation to clients;
- providing legal information and referrals;
- participating in case development, including legal research and writing;
- performing case management, including client data collection, recording of case activity, and related administrative tasks;
- gathering factual documentation in support of client claims;
- communicating with clients, relevant public agencies, and opposing parties;
- preparing court pleadings, documents and forms;
- participating in case review meetings and practice area coalitions;
- attending administrative meetings and court proceedings;
- representing clients in court and at administrative hearings;
- using available language skills to assist clients;
- engaging with non-AmeriCorps volunteers;
- creating educational materials; and

- attending and presenting at community outreach events.

All of our advocates are required to:

- adhere to professional responsibility rules that govern the practice of law, including maintaining confidentiality of client information;
- participate in an average of 150 hours of training;
- attend periodic program-wide events throughout Massachusetts, including two overnight conferences;
- use the ALA-Massachusetts data collection system to complete weekly timesheets and client data reports; and
- write periodic reflection logs and program evaluations.

Housing is a primary focus for many of our partner organizations, but placements are made in a variety of civil law practice areas, including:

- Housing
- Immigration
- Access to Government Benefits
- Employment
- Education
- Income Maintenance
- Mental Health and Health Law
- Legal Problems of Elders
- Sealing of Criminal Records, and
- Family Law.

Under federal rules, AmeriCorps members cannot engage in political, union or religious activities during service hours. ALA-Massachusetts members cannot be enrolled in college or a graduate program while serving, and are strongly discouraged from studying for a bar exam during the service year. Licensed attorneys who serve with ALA-Massachusetts cannot engage in the practice of law outside of service hours.

Marginal Functions of the Position

ALA-Massachusetts Advocates may also undertake the following activities:

- creating working relationships with social service and governmental agencies;
- assisting the Program Director to plan program-wide events and trainings;
- assisting the Program Director in recruiting for future service members;
- fundraising in connection with a specific program or event;
- developing a working knowledge of community needs and resources; or
- participating in events for veterans and military families.