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Montana Legal Services Association



A statewide law firm providing, protecting and enhancing access to justice

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MLSA Launches New Advocacy Blog



MLSA is launching a new advocacy blog, available at www.mtlsa.org by clicking on the "Advocacy Blog" tab at the top of the screen. A screen shot of the blog appears above. In the blog, MLSA staff members and "guest bloggers" will address issues affecting low-income Montanans. Anticipated topics include consumer law developments, "self-help law" efforts, and poverty-related issues. MLSA Executive Director Alison Paul authored the first post, which describes how the blog fits in with MLSA's mission and broad based advocacy efforts.

MLSA Advocacy Coordinator Michelle Hauer will coordinate the blog posts. "Among other things, broad based advocacy raises awareness of the critical need for equal access to the courts. The MLSA Advocacy Blog will enable MLSA to facilitate conversations regarding access to justice and issues that impact low-income communities," said Hauer. MLSA anticipates that the blog will be updated every two to three weeks.

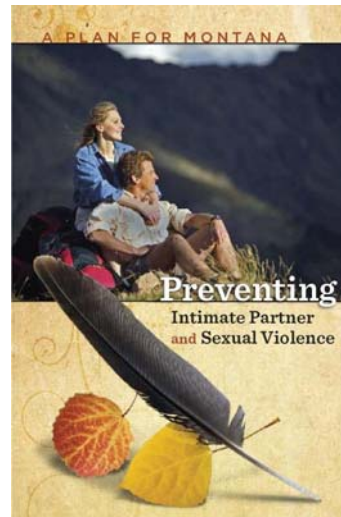
Montana Supreme Court Adopts Limited Scope Representation Rules

On March 15, 2011, the Montana Supreme Court amended the Montana Rules of Professional Conduct to encourage limited scope representation as one means of addressing unmet legal needs of low- and moderate-income Montanans. The Court's order partially granted a petition filed by the Montana Supreme Court Equal Justice Task Force, the Montana Supreme Court Commission on Self-Represented Litigants, and the State Bar Access to Justice Committee. The rule changes are effective October 1, 2011.

Among other things, the amended rules explain when a client's written consent is and is not required for limited scope representation, and provide that opposing counsel is to treat a party who receives limited

scope representation as unrepresented unless certain factors apply. MLSA appreciates the efforts of the petitioners and the Court in advancing these important rule changes.

April 4 Event Announcing Montana State Plan to Prevent Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence



The Montana Attorney General and the Montana Coalition Against Domestic & Sexual Violence will roll out a state plan to prevent intimate partner and sexual violence on Monday, April 4, from 12:00-1:30 p.m. at the Capitol Rotunda in Helena. Lunch will be served, and speakers from across Montana will discuss prevention issues.

MLSA Technical Assistance Attorney Christine Mandiloff participated in a collaborative effort by a number of groups and individuals to develop the plan. Mandiloff said, "The plan is the result of a year-long effort and reflects an ambitious yet realistic vision of a statewide system to eradicate intimate partner domestic and sexual violence. It's obvious from the numerous intimate partner homicides in Montana in the last few years that intervention efforts alone do not always end this type of violence. Now is the time for policy leaders, advocates, and the public to work together to prevent the violence. The plan provides a roadmap for that effort."

The plan sets forth eight goals to be accomplished in the next five to eight years, and volunteers are needed to help implement each goal. To RSVP for the April 4 event or to learn more, contact Ashley Duncan at aduncan@mcadsv.com.

AmeriCorps-ner: MLSA VISTA Project Names VISTA of the Quarter



On February 22nd, Marie Phillips was awarded the first ever VISTA of the Quarter award by the MLSA VISTA Project. This award was based on Phillips' service as reflected in her quarterly progress report (QPR) for October through December 2010. Phillips has been serving as a VISTA member at the S.A.V.E. Foundation since July 2010. Among other things, she reported that she recruited six volunteers to help with a plastics recycling drive, helped organize a benefit concert, began developing a gray water reuse system guide, and started a binder of research and resources so her projects can be sustained after her term of service. Phillips graduated from Western Washington University in Bellingham, Washington, with a B.A. in Environmental Studies and Economics. Phillips plans to attend law school and pursue her J.D. after completing her term of service.

The VISTA of the Quarter award recognizes an MLSA VISTA Project member who stands out based on a recent QPR. The next VISTA of the Quarter will be named on April 19th during a project conference call.



MLSA is Montana's statewide law firm providing civil legal services to clients living in poverty in Montana and on Montana's Indian reservations.

MLSA's HelpLine serves as the entry point to information, advice and referral. MLSA's specialty units include SelfHelp Law, Domestic Violence Law, Consumer Law, Native American Law, Migrant Farmworker Law, Housing Law, Public Benefits and Employment Law. MLSA is committed to making "justice for all" a reality in Montana.

Want to learn more? See our websites at www.mtlsa.org and www.montanalawhelp.org.

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