



LAW ON THE FRONTLINES: Legal Reference for Public Libraries

Five Year Report



CONFERENCE OF
MARYLAND COURT LAW
LIBRARY DIRECTORS

Table of Contents

- 03** The Access to Justice Gap & the Need for Quality Legal Information
- 05** Frontlines Project Impact
- 09** Frontlines is Part of a National Movement
- 10** Frontlines Adds Value to a Public Library Partnership Ecosystem in Maryland
- 11** Frontlines Project Details
- 14** Frontlines Project Future
- 15** Recognition for Everyone Involved in Moving Frontlines Forward

The Access to Justice Gap & the Need for Quality Legal Information

The Legal Services Corporation’s 2022 Justice Gap Report found that a staggering “3 in 4 low-income households experienced one or more civil legal problems”¹ in the previous year; additionally, those same low-income Americans did not get “any or enough legal help for 92% of their substantial civil legal problems,”² which often involve basic human needs like shelter, safety, and economic security. The Report concludes that most Americans deal with these life-altering civil legal problems by “go[ing] it alone”³ - “without any legal information, advice, or representation”⁴ to help them resolve their problems.

Unlike in the criminal justice system, the civil justice system provides no right to an attorney in most civil legal matters if a person cannot afford to hire an attorney. Tackling this yawning access to justice gap necessitates innovations involving a broad range of partners both inside and outside the legal profession. As mentioned in the LSC Report, the gaps in access fall on a spectrum, starting with a lack of access to legal information. Receiving quality and timely legal information from trusted sources during a time of stress and upheaval cannot be underestimated. Indeed, it can be the difference between being set on the road to a legal solution or going down a legal spiral.

As experts in legal information, law libraries and law librarians have long been allies in the access to justice movement because they have a duty to serve the public and provide legal information. Richard Zorza, one of the leaders and founders of the access to

“

Access to Justice starts with access to quality legal information.”

- Maryland Access to Justice Commission



3 in 4 low-income households experience one or more civil legal problems in a year.

92% of the substantial civil legal problems faced by low-income Americans received little or no help.

¹ THE JUSTICE GAP: THE UNMET CIVIL LEGAL NEEDS OF LOW-INCOME AMERICANS at <https://justicegap.lsc.gov/resource/executive-summary/> (last checked on 9/9/23).

² Id.

³ THE JUSTICE GAP: THE UNMET CIVIL LEGAL NEEDS OF LOW-INCOME AMERICANS at <https://justicegap.lsc.gov/resource/section-1-introduction/> (last checked on 9/9/23).

⁴ Id.

justice movement and an architect of expanding services to self-represented litigants (SRLs, i.e. those who are trying to navigate the civil justice system on their own), recognized that “law libraries have great potential to play an important role in making the judicial system more user-friendly and accessible to people without lawyers.”⁵ This holds true in Maryland, where the public and SRLs were the largest patron base of law libraries, constituting 75% of 32,666 service interactions in 2022.⁶

Access to justice movement leaders also saw great potential in partnering with public libraries and public library staff. Public libraries have greater geographical reach and more accessible evening and weekend hours than court-located law libraries; and public library staff are recognized as trustworthy information experts in their communities. However, a recurring roadblock with this approach was that public librarians were hesitant when dealing with legal reference questions for fear of crossing the line between legal information and legal advice, i.e. the unauthorized practice of law (UPL).⁷ The need for education and training to change the default perspective on UPL to permitting legal reference, rather than restricting it, was evident. Law librarians were the obvious and best conduits to achieve this change, given their facility with helping SRLs with their legal questions without crossing the line into UPL.

Teaching about legal information is an inherent part of a law librarian’s responsibilities. In Maryland, law libraries and law librarians have a long history of training public librarians in legal reference.

The Law on the Frontlines Project (“Frontlines”) took existing and long-standing on-request training efforts and formalized them. Spearheaded by Catherine McGuire, Reena Shah and Joan Bellistri, in 2016, the Thurgood Marshall State Law Library,⁸ the Maryland Access to Justice

The vision of Frontlines was to enable and empower public library staff across the state to provide quality legal reference in their local communities to ensure that legal information about the civil justice system is accessible to every Marylander who needs it.

Commission (which is now powered by the Maryland State Bar Association),⁹ and the Conference of Maryland Court Law Library Directors¹⁰ forged a partnership and worked to create the first state-wide curriculum and a continuous training program for public library staff in legal reference in the state of Maryland. The vision of Frontlines was to enable and empower public library staff across the state to provide quality legal reference in their local communities to ensure that legal information about the civil justice system is accessible to every Marylander who needs it. Frontlines reached out to leaders at the Maryland State Library (MSL) and successfully enlisted the MSL’s support to offer the curriculum to all regional and county public library systems in Maryland. The training, which was called Law on the Frontlines: Legal Reference for Public Libraries, began in 2018.

5 Zorza, Richard, THE SUSTAINABLE 21ST CENTURY LAW LIBRARY: VISION, DEPLOYMENT AND ASSESSMENT FOR ACCESS TO JUSTICE (April 2012), as seen in LAW LIBRARIES AND ACCESS TO JUSTICE A Report of the American Association of Law Libraries Special Committee on Access to Justice July 2014, available at: <http://www.aallnet.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/AccessToJusticeSpecialCommittee2014LawLibrariesAndAccessToJustice.pdf> (last checked on 9/9/23).

6 RESOURCES FOR THE SELF-REPRESENTED IN MARYLAND COURTS, FY2022, p. 28 at https://lipa.access.preservica.com/uncategorized/IO_60b1315f-8e71-4ea9-ae1b-968ad8079de7/.

7 In a survey conducted in 2012 by Minnesota Legal Services State Support, 77% of public librarians were concerned about providing legal information. A common concern in 25% of these responses was crossing the line from legal reference to legal advice. MN Legal Services State Support, 2012 Survey, as cited in LAW LIBRARIES AND ACCESS TO JUSTICE A Report of the American Association of Law Libraries Special Committee on Access to Justice July 2014 at <http://www.aallnet.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/AccessToJusticeSpecialCommittee2014LawLibrariesAndAccessToJustice.pdf> (last checked on 9/9/23).

8 Thurgood Marshall State Law Library: <https://mdcourts.gov/lawlib>.

9 Maryland Access to Justice Commission: <https://www.mdaccesstojustice.org/>.

10 Conference of Maryland Court Law Library Directors: <https://mdcourts.gov/lawlib/about-us/CMCCLD>.

Frontlines Project Impact

Unique Frontlines Curriculum

The Frontlines curriculum was different from traditional training provided to public library staff. Maryland's law librarians had a longstanding presence in providing on-request classes to general reference staff in public libraries in classic "legal research," with a concentration on identifying the laws – statutes, regulations, and cases – defining a particular legal question. Through relationships with public library systems, however, law librarians were able to see the need to develop a course more tailored to the needs of those on the frontlines. In response, the State Law Library over the past decade shifted its training focus from the law itself to how legal information questions were managed. This curriculum addressing management of the legal reference interaction became the base of the Frontlines statewide curriculum.

Through every training, the goal of Frontlines is to ensure learners gleaned the following:

- ▶ Understand the connection between legal reference and the access to justice gap;
- ▶ Increase the comfort level of public library staff with legal information questions;
- ▶ Increase the understanding of best practices for legal reference;
- ▶ Grow knowledge of reliable basic resources; and
- ▶ Ensure public access to quality legal information to address access to justice issues.



Frontlines Website & Resources

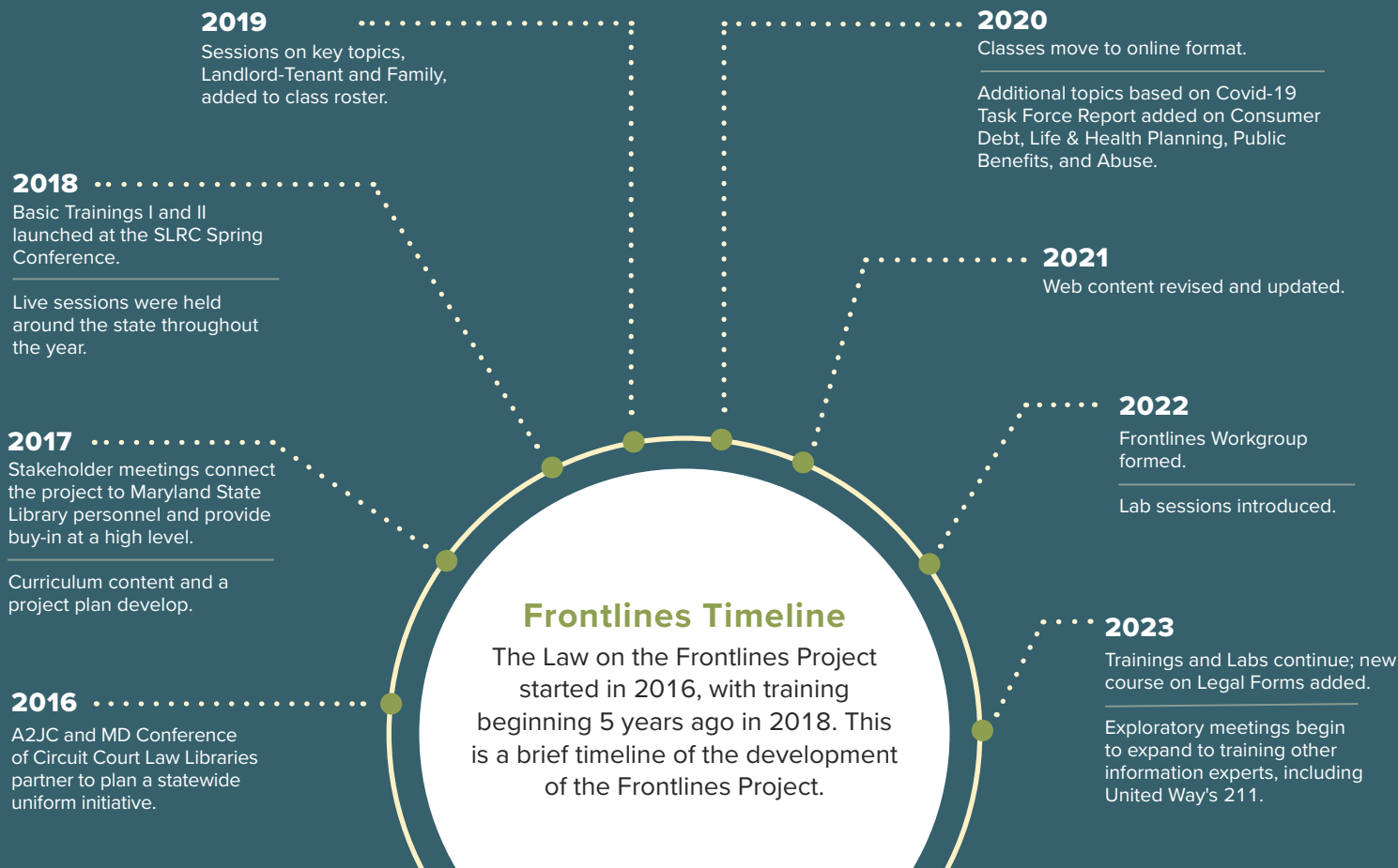
In addition to developing the curriculum and conducting the training, the Thurgood Marshall State Law Library developed a landing page for the [Frontlines Project](#).¹¹ The Frontlines Project page links to a [Training Sessions](#)¹² page where past training sessions are available online and on-demand to view. Further, future training opportunities are listed on the page enabling public library staff to register for the training directly from the links on the webpage.

Another resource that exists for public librarians and was developed prior to the Frontlines curriculum is the [Maryland Public Library Toolkit](#).¹³ Maryland's Public Library Toolkit is part of a larger fifty-state project of the Legal Information Services to the Public Special Interest Section (LISP-SIS) of the American Association of Law Libraries (AALL). The Toolkit is designed for public library reference staff as a reference guide to Maryland primary and secondary legal resources. The Toolkit continues to serve as a strong supplement to the Frontlines training.

¹¹ Law on the Frontlines landing page: <https://www.courts.state.md.us/lawlib/using-library/for-librarians/legal-reference-training>.

¹² Frontlines Project Training Sessions page: <https://www.courts.state.md.us/lawlib/using-library/for-librarians/legal-reference-training/PLR-schedule-training>.

¹³ Maryland Public Library Toolkit: <https://mdcourts.gov/lawlib/using-library/for-librarians/public-library-toolkit>.



Frontlines by the Numbers

Five years since the first Frontlines training took place at the Enoch Pratt Free Library/State Library Resource Center (SLRC) in 2018, Frontlines has conducted 30+ in-person and virtual trainings and is proud to have trained 1200+ information providers, including public library staff in all 23 Maryland counties and Baltimore City.

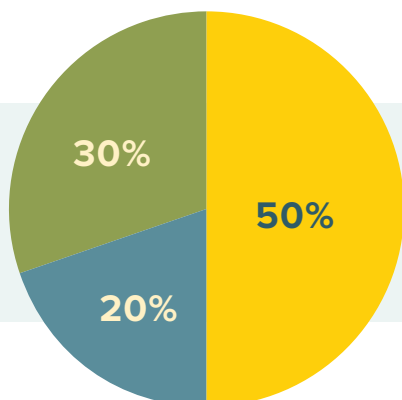
The majority of attendees have been from public library systems, but other learners hailed from special libraries, the bar, and more. Half of attendees have been professional library staff, about one-fifth have been from library management, and the remaining have been library associates.

5 years and counting

30+ sessions since 2018

1200+ library staff trained

24/24 MD jurisdictions represented



Types of attendees at the Frontlines Training Sessions

● library associates ● professional library staff ● library management



Positive Feedback on Frontlines

Recalling that the main purpose of Frontlines is to empower public library staff to transform their default response to a legal reference question from “no, I cannot help” to “yes, I can help,” we are proud to report on the success of the endeavor.

This [2019 Frontlines Training video](#)¹⁴ shows that the trainings are having the desired impact:

“[The training] was helpful in giving me more tools to answer [legal reference] questions instead of being more likely to say, no, I cannot do anything for you.”

- Elaine Conway, Queen Anne’s County Library (2019)

Post-session survey results also show positive results, indicating that a full 100% of respondents find the training helpful. Specific feedback is positive:

100%

of respondents found the Frontlines training helpful

“The presentation was concise, clear, to the point and addressed what many of us have encountered. It has given us practical and accurate information along with guidance to resources that we can share with our customers and colleagues.”

“All of the sessions have been very informative and have made me more confident in helping customers with law questions.”

“Good course -- should be taken by all public librarians and library associates.”

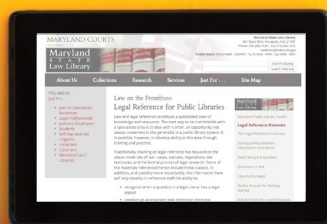
“Just last week I had another family law inquiry and although I know these resources best (used them through my divorce) I felt more confident navigating, knowing which links to send to my patron, etc.”

“I currently work in the Materials Management department. The Frontlines training provided me with more information about what types of legal and consumer questions library customers may have. I used this information to help me select print resources for our adult nonfiction collection. I also learned more about where to find information about these topics online so I can look them up for background information when making selection decisions.”

¹⁴ Maryland Access to Justice Commission 2019 Frontlines Training Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6APTiqRcpAA>.

Law on the Frontlines: Legal Reference for Public Libraries

Making Law More Accessible



TRAINING IN LEGAL REFERENCE

Through an institutional partnership, the Thurgood Marshall State Library, the Maryland Access to Justice Commission, and the Conference of Maryland Court Law Library Directors have developed a standardized state-wide curriculum for legal reference. In collaboration with the Maryland State Library since 2017, the curriculum is offered to public library systems to enable and empower public library staff across Maryland to provide quality legal reference in their local communities, ensuring that the law is accessible to every Marylander who needs it.

For each completed training, a Certificate of Completion indicating Contact hours will be provided.

Sessions address:

- The role of public libraries in advancing Access to Justice
- Best Practices for legal reference interviews
- Legal resources in a variety of subjects
- Basics on the structure of law
- Recognizing the difference between information and advice
- Where to refer forward

**ACCESS TO QUALITY
LEGAL INFORMATION =
ACCESS TO JUSTICE**

Only **20%** of Marylanders receive the civil legal aid they need. Public Libraries can play an important role in increasing access to justice by providing their patrons access to quality and trustworthy legal information.

FALL 2023 TRAININGS & LABS

All sessions 9:00am – 10:00am

September 13, 2023 - Basics I: Legal Reference Best Practices

September 27, 2023 - Basics II: Foundations of Law for Public Library Reference

October 4, 2023 - Family Law

October 24, 2023 - Frontlines Lab:* Focus on Family Law

November 8, 2023 - Consumer Law

November 29, 2023 - Frontlines Lab:* Focus on Consumer Law

December 5, 2023 - NEW: Legal Forms

December 13, 2023, 9-10am, Frontlines Lab:* Focus on Forms

Find more information www.msba.org/training-sessions.

Questions?

Contact Joan.Bellistri@mdcourts.gov



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Frontlines is Part of a National Movement

As mentioned earlier in the report, from quick overviews to lengthy legal research courses, teaching about legal information is an inherent part of a law librarian's responsibilities. As the proportion of court filings by SRLs has risen, law librarians across the country have responded with a growing body of educational resources for SRLs and public library staff.

Maryland is part of a national movement to train public library staff in legal reference. Programming and materials to train public library staff in legal reference and research are designed and executed locally in at least 29 of the 50 states. Most commonly, however, programs are local and finite rather than statewide and continuous.

Examples of other states' activities:

Circuit Riders

South Carolina has what is considered the first program to train public library staff on a statewide basis. The Circuit Riders Outreach Program,¹⁵ established in 2007 and run by the University of South Carolina School of Law's Law Library, originally provided all-day workshops to teach basic legal research skills to public and academic librarians. More recently, the Circuit Riders created an online guide to the training materials and videos for ready access by librarians in need.

LEAP

Louisiana's program, Legal Education Assistance Program (LEAP),¹⁶ is a partnership of the Louisiana State Bar Association, Louisiana State University Law Library, the Law Library of Louisiana, the Louisiana Library Association, Southeast Louisiana Legal Services, the State Library of Louisiana, and public libraries across the state. LEAP includes Lawyers in Libraries events and a Law Talks series of virtual presentations on key legal topics. Information on the LEAP site is linked through tiles marked For Public, For Lawyers, and For Librarians, guiding the user to the most appropriate material for their background and need. A LEAP LibGuide¹⁷ provides guides to law, legal forms, and referrals, and provides direct contact information for the Law Library of Louisiana.

WebJunction

In response to the ever-growing volume of SRLs, the Legal Services Corporation (LSC) partnered with OCLC, a non-profit global library organization, on a Public Library Initiative¹⁸ to provide online learning about legal information to the library community. WebJunction, OCLC's online learning center, introduced Creating Pathways to Civil Legal Justice¹⁹ (CLJ) in 2020 with free webinars on civil legal information and services for public library staff and a resource page for Legal Reference.²⁰ The initial CLJ course consisted of four sessions, two of which were taught by Catherine McGuire, a Frontlines founder, and included the curriculum already established in Maryland.



¹⁵ Circuit Riders Outreach Program: <https://guides.law.sc.edu/CircuitRiders#:~:text=To%20promote%20access%20to%20legal,Research%20for%20Non%2DLaw%20Librarians.>

¹⁶ Legal Education Assistance Program: <https://www.lsb.org/LouisianaLawyersinLibraries/LouisianaLawyersLibraries.aspx>.

¹⁷ LEAP LibGuide: <https://lasc.libguides.com/leap-resources>.

¹⁸ LSC's Public Library Initiative: <https://www.lsc.gov/initiatives/public-library-initiative>.

¹⁹ WebJunction's Creating Pathways to Civil Justice: <https://learn.webjunction.org/course/index.php?categoryid=60>.

²⁰ WebJunction's website for legal reference: <https://www.webjunction.org/explore-topics/access-civil-legal-justice.html>.

Frontlines Adds Value to a Public Library Partnership Ecosystem in Maryland

Frontlines is part of a robust ecosystem of organizations, projects and services that guide assistance to those in need of civil legal information. Maryland's approach to the increased need for legal information comes from many directions, but all have the same basic purpose – connecting people to the information they need in order to pursue justice.

Organizations, Projects and Services include:

- [Thurgood Marshall State Law Library](#)²¹ provides legal reference services to the public, attorneys, government staff, and the Maryland Judiciary via email, standard mail, telephone, and in-person;
- [Circuit Court Law Libraries](#)²² are law libraries located in circuit courthouses in Maryland; they provide legal reference services to the public, attorneys, government staff, Judiciary staff, and the bar as well;
- Lawyer in the Library programs and clinics established and run by law libraries, including the [Anne Arundel County Public Law Library](#)²³ and the Howard County Law Library;
- Lawyer in the Library programs and clinics established and run by civil legal aid organizations, including in-person clinics at [Maryland Legal Aid](#)²⁴ and remote clinics established by the Maryland Volunteer Lawyers Service;
- [The People's Law Library of Maryland](#)²⁵ website, a project of the Thurgood Marshall State Law Library, which provides legal information in plain language on civil legal topics litigated in state courts;
- [Maryland Judiciary Access to Justice Department's Help Toolkit](#),²⁶ which includes website content, videos, and webinars;
- [Maryland Judiciary Department's Help Centers](#),²⁷ which provide in-person and remote legal assistance;
- Maryland Access to Justice Commission's previous partnership with [Libraries without Borders](#)²⁸ to develop a mobile immigration legal resource bank;
- Efforts of the almost 50 civil legal aid organizations across the state to provide know-your-rights training and legal information.

Frontlines joined these existing efforts in Maryland and attempted to meet an unaddressed need, while complementing the other programs without duplicating them.

Though there are many options for someone seeking redress of a legal problem in Maryland, Frontlines identified a larger challenge: connecting those in need with the necessary assistance. Further, the growing number of Lawyer in the Library programs across the state created a new expectation among public library patrons, that the public library was a place to get legal information. However, when confronted with legal reference questions in between the intermittent

Lawyer in the Library programs, public library staff were challenged because they lacked the knowledge and tools to provide legal information or reference.

The Frontlines project contributed to the wider legal assistance landscape by creating a direct bridge between reference staff at public libraries – the “frontline” of information – and the resources about law needed to inform library users. All Frontlines training included a discussion about identifying appropriate referrals for the questions asked and strengthening the ability of people to connect to appropriate legal assistance.

21 Thurgood Marshall State Law Library: <https://www.mdcourts.gov/lawlib>.

22 Circuit Court Law Libraries: <https://mdcourts.gov/lawlib/using-library/for-librarians/maryland-law-libraries>.

23 Anne Arundel County Public Law Library: <https://www.circuitcourt.org/legal-help/lawyer-in-the-library#:~:text=22Ask%20a%20Lawyer%20in%20the,last%20two%20weeks%20in%20December>.

24 Maryland Legal Aid Lawyer in the Library: <https://www.mdlib.org/free-legal-clinics/>.

25 The People's Law Library of Maryland: <https://www.peoples-law.org/>.

26 Maryland Judiciary's Court Help Toolkit: <https://www.mdcourts.gov/courthelp>.

27 Maryland Judiciary's Court Help Centers: <https://www.mdcourts.gov/helpcenter>.

28 Libraries without Borders: <https://www.librarieswithoutborders.org/countries/us/>.

Frontlines Project Details

Early Project Development

Early in development, the project reached out to stakeholders and leaders in public libraries and civil legal assistance organizations around the state. The Maryland Library Association²⁹ (MLA), Maryland State Library Agency,³⁰ Maryland Association of Public Library Administrators³¹ (MAPLA), the Maryland State Library Resource Center³² (SLRC), Maryland Legal Aid,³³ Maryland Volunteer Lawyers Service,³⁴ the Pro Bono Resource Center of Maryland,³⁵ and the Maryland State Bar Association³⁶ all participated in wider discussions about the need for legal information training. The input from this range of stakeholders refined the goals of the curriculum development and expanded the referral resources included in class presentations and handouts.

Reena Shah, Executive Director of the Maryland Access to Justice Commission, attended MAPLA meetings to raise awareness of both the access to justice need and the Frontlines curriculum. The MAPLA network connected her to Staff Development Coordinators in the public library systems statewide. Through these Coordinators, the project was able to alert the wider public library community to the availability of classes and, importantly, to confirm the availability of Continuing Education Units (CEUs) for participants.

In Maryland, public library staff are required to be certified.

29 Maryland Library Association: <https://www.mdlib.org/>.

30 Maryland State Library Agency: <https://msla.maryland.gov/Pages/home.aspx>.

31 Maryland Association of Public Library Administrators: <https://www.maplaonline.org/>.

32 Maryland State Library Resource Center: <https://www.slrc.info/>.

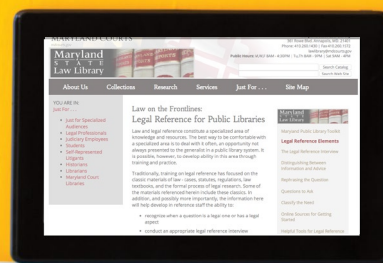
33 Maryland Legal Aid: <https://www.mdlib.org/>.

34 Maryland Volunteer Lawyers Service: <https://mvlslaw.org/>.

35 Pro Bono Resource Center of Maryland: <https://probonomd.org/>.

36 Maryland State Bar Association: <https://www.msba.org/>.

ACCESS TO QUALITY
LEGAL INFORMATION =
**ACCESS TO
JUSTICE**



Ask your public librarian for help.

**We are training public librarians – your local
information experts – in legal reference to help you get
quality legal information and referrals in *your* communities.**

BECOME INFORMED. GET HELP.

CONFERENCE OF MARYLAND
COURT LAW LIBRARY DIRECTORS



**Civil legal aid organizations have lawyer-in-the-library programs
at many public libraries across the state.**

ASK YOUR LIBRARIAN!

**Poster used in public libraries to raise awareness about Frontlines.*

Professional librarians train and certify through their advanced degree programs. Public library associates train and certify through Maryland's Library Associate Training Institute (LATI). The LATI curriculum includes a segment on managing legal information reference requests. Since 2018, the legal information segment has been based on the Frontlines curriculum. Both professionals and associates are required to complete continuing education hours throughout their careers.

Frontlines launched officially on March 14, 2018, at the State Library Resource Center's Spring Conference in Baltimore. Reena Shah was asked to provide the Keynote Speech to start the all-day conference. Her gripping speech illustrating the legal hurdles in people's everyday lives spurred attendance later that day at the first live training. Through 2018, fifteen more sessions were provided across the state, addressing best practices for managing legal reference. Driven by the level of interest, in 2019 the project added "advanced" sessions, with content focused on the common topics of Family Law and Landlord-Tenant Law. These topical sessions laid the foundation for further development in 2020.

During this period, Frontlines also worked with leadership at each public library system in Maryland to update the legal reference pages on their websites to align with the Frontlines curriculum. Frontlines also worked with the public library systems in Maryland to raise awareness among public library patrons through posters that publicized the availability of legal information services from local public library staff (see previous page).

Frontlines Pivots in Response to COVID

The original live training ran for half-day sessions in a face-to-face environment. Sessions were already being scheduled for 2020 when COVID sent everyone into seclusion. The first Frontlines class for 2020 was scheduled for March 24 in Montgomery County, only a week into the shutdown. Rather than cancel a high-demand program, the Montgomery County Public Library (MCPL) offered to host the class online. The Frontlines staff pivoted, practiced briefly, and taught the scheduled class in its first online iteration. The program was so popular that the MCPL asked for a re-run. With no clear end to the shutdown in sight, Frontlines agreed and asked that the



class be offered statewide. The resulting class had over 160 registrants from across the state.

During the summer of 2020, Frontlines re-assessed the content of the classes. Again, with no clear date for a return to in-person training, the decision was made to continue the online format. This had an added advantage: the online format removed the time and cost of traveling to locations, thus freeing both instructors and learners for other duties. As most of the resources provided for legal reference are web-based, online classes allowed for helpful demonstrations. However, the project had to rely on access to the online platforms of the public library systems until, courtesy of the pandemic, Zoom became available to court staff.

With the introduction of Zoom access to court staff, Joan Bellistri (Anne Arundel County Public Law Library) and Catherine McGuire (Maryland Thurgood Marshall State Law Library) were able to assume the management of online sessions. Zoom had the bonus of permitting the collection of statistical data going forward. The data collected shows participating staff locations and systems, what type of staff are attending, and how many are taking more than a single Frontlines class. Zoom also automates the collection of valuable feedback.

In late 2020, additional topic-based classes were introduced, based on the recommendations of the Attorney General's COVID-19 Access to Justice Task



Force.³⁷ The Task Force was co-led by the Office of the Attorney General and the Maryland Access to Justice Commission and focused on key areas within the civil justice system impacted by COVID. The Task Force had substantive law committees on housing security; consumer protection; life and health planning; economic and food security; and surviving abuse, neglect and exploitation. The Frontlines training was able to adapt and add responsive programming that addressed the greatest need in the community during COVID. Sessions addressed Family Law, Landlord-Tenant Law, Consumer Debt, Abuse, Life & Health Planning, and Public Benefits. In addition to the Frontlines training itself, the content of the training, in whole or in part, has been offered at several Annual Maryland Library Association/Delaware Library Association Conferences.

Frontlines Gains National Attention

The early success of the Frontlines program, as well as its precursors, brought Maryland to national attention with the development of OCLC WebJunction's Creating Pathways to Civil Legal Justice. In partnership with the Legal Services Corporation, WebJunction developed a series of learning opportunities to address legal information reference services. Catherine McGuire, developer of the Frontlines curriculum, was invited to teach portions of the series, incorporating into the national curriculum concepts that had been standard in Maryland for some time.

Frontlines Expands

The Project expanded further in fall 2022 to include the first "Lab" sessions, hour-long interactive online open-houses to demonstrate how to respond to real-world legal reference questions. With plans for updating content, developing videos and tip-sheets, and adding to the course catalog, the project was clearly in need of additional contributors. In 2022, the Frontlines Workgroup was formed, adding law librarians, Judiciary personnel, public library staff, and other stakeholders to work on aspects of the project and move it forward.

³⁷ Maryland Attorney General's COVID-19 Access to Justice Task Force: <https://www.marylandattorneygeneral.gov/Pages/A2JC/default.aspx>.

Frontlines Project Future

With the establishment of the Frontlines Workgroup, the project can expand further. Current online content, class curriculums, and live sessions can be expanded and regularly updated. In addition, the development of materials such as tip sheets, brief videos, and more will benefit from the wide expertise and dedication of the Workgroup participants.

Moreover, other innovations dealing with legal information in public libraries and other public spaces are afoot. A2J Kiosks³⁸ is attempting to address digital divide and transportation barriers to legal information by placing “legal kiosks,” i.e. free computers that provide access to legal aid services in public spaces, such as libraries, malls and community organizations. There are currently 319 legal kiosks operating in six states. Libraries Without Borders³⁹ continues to break down barriers to information by meeting people where they are, making legal information accessible in non-traditional spaces, like laundromats and bus stops. There continues to be opportunity for Frontlines to evolve from these models and to consider how technology can complement existing programs and broaden perspectives on providing legal information to vulnerable populations.

We already see a need to go beyond public libraries and public library staff and educate and train more professionals who are on the “frontlines” of information services that address legal and crisis situations. For example, in 2021, Maryland was only the second state in the country to pass a state-wide Access to Counsel in Evictions law.⁴⁰ The implementation of this law has led to the creation of the first coordinated intake system for

Frontlines is proud of the work it has completed and the impact it has had over the last five years and looks forward to growing and expanding to meet the legal information needs of Marylanders – because we know that access to justice starts with quality legal information.

civil legal aid in the state. The system routes Marylanders to legal help through the information experts at the 211 Helpline of the United Way of Central Maryland.⁴¹ Further, the implementation of the law may involve the use of other professionals who are outside the legal profession, but allied in filling the access to justice gap, including intake specialists, court navigators, community organizers, paralegals and more.

Frontlines has already been approached by Civil Justice, Inc., which is a partner entity for establishing the coordinated intake, and has begun exploring how it can expand and tailor the existing training to educate and train non-library personnel and other allied legal professionals in legal reference. The training is seen as applicable to “frontline” staff at the United Way, in social services organizations and government agencies, community organizations, among allied legal professionals in civil legal aid organizations and more.

38 Legal Kiosks: <https://www.legalkiosks.com/>.

39 LWB, www.librarieswithoutborders.org.

40 Access to Counsel in Evictions Task Force: <https://www.marylandattorneygeneral.gov/Pages/A2C/index.aspx>.

41 United Way of Central Maryland 211 Helpline: <https://www.uwcm.org/211>.

Recognition for Everyone Involved in Moving Frontlines Forward

We would like to take this opportunity to give a special thank you to Irene Padilla, the Maryland State Librarian, for her leadership and collaboration on this Project as well as the County Library Administrators who embraced Frontlines and integrated it into their public library training offerings.

In addition, many other people and organizations contributed to the development and success of the Frontlines Project. Some partners below may have moved on to other organizations or retired, but they were part of the organizations listed below when they contributed to the Frontlines Project. They were integral to the forward movement and success of the Frontlines Project. And while we may not have been able to list everyone associated with the project, we want to appreciate and thank everyone who helped make this project a success. Thank you!

Frontlines Founders:

Joan Bellistri, Anne Arundel County Public Law Library
Catherine McGuire, Thurgood Marshall State Law Library
Reena Shah, Maryland Access to Justice Commission

Frontlines Partners:

Kimberly Alvarez, Maryland Judiciary, Access to Justice Department
Katherine Baer, Thurgood Marshall State Law Library
Tonya Baroudi, Prince George's County Circuit Court Law Library
Nini Beegan, Organizational Learning & Innovation, Maryland State Library
Sandy Brewer, Howard County Law Library & Legal Resource Center
Maurice Coleman, Harford County Public Library
Denise Davis, Maryland Library Association and Cecil County Public Library
Adam Echelman, Libraries without Borders
Susan Francis, Maryland Volunteer Lawyers Service (MVLS)
Katie George, Howard County Library System
Ursula Gorham-Oscilowski, University of Maryland College of Information Studies
Michelle Hamiel, Prince George's County Memorial Library System
Joy Hollerbach, Thurgood Marshall State Law Library
Suzanne Johnson, Maryland Judiciary, Access to Justice Department
Mary Jo Lazun, Charles County Public Law Library
Michael Millemann, University of Maryland Francis King Carey School of Law
Jessica Mundy, Thurgood Marshall State Law Library
Dana Newman, Talbot County Free Library

Ryan O'Grady, LATI Coordinator, Enoch Pratt Free Library
Irene Padilla, Maryland State Librarian, Maryland State Library
David Pantzer, Thurgood Marshall State Law Library
Daria Parry, Harford County Public Library
Amy Petkovsek, Maryland Legal Aid
Julia W. Roberts, Thurgood Marshall State Law Library
Janet Salazar, Charles County Public Library
Jill Schorr, Montgomery County Circuit Court Law Library
Chi Song, Thurgood Marshall State Law Library
Matt Stubenberg, Maryland Volunteer Lawyers Service (MVLS)
Bonnie Sullivan, Maryland Volunteer Lawyers Service (MVLS)
Katherine Tavakolian, Montgomery County Public Libraries
Maria Truskey, Thurgood Marshall State Law Library
S. Hughston Vasil, Thurgood Marshall State Law Library
Julia Viets, Montgomery County Circuit Court Law Library
Thomas Vose, Ruth Enlow Library of Garrett County
Brittany West, Maryland Judiciary, Access to Justice Department
Wesley Wilson, Enoch Pratt Free Library & State Library Resource Center
Vickie Yiannoulou, Prince George's County Circuit Court Law Library
Linda Zuckerman, State Library Resource Center

