

## Highlights from Our 40+ Years of Service

- 1977** With seed funding from the American Bar Association, the Mental Health Advocacy Project of the Los Angeles County and Beverly Hills Bar Associations began providing patients' rights protection to people with mental and developmental disabilities at state hospitals.
- 1979** Mental Health Advocacy Services was incorporated as an independent, nonprofit organization and added the Mental Health Association in California as a sponsor. The focus of MHAS' advocacy shifted from patients in state hospitals to individuals living in the community.
- 1983** As a result of *Lopez v. Heckler*, a federal class action in which MHAS acted as co-counsel, the Social Security Administration ceased arbitrary terminations of disability benefits for people with mental disabilities. This litigation restored benefits to thousands of people who had been wrongly disenrolled.
- 1986** MHAS and co-counsel filed *Rensch v. Board of Supervisors*, a class action lawsuit that forced Los Angeles County to create a special assistance program that helped thousands of homeless people with mental and developmental disabilities obtain the General Relief benefits they needed to survive.
- 1988** MHAS and co-counsel negotiated a consent decree in *Butterfield v. Honig* that resulted in timely provision of assessment and mental health services to thousands of special education students in Los Angeles County whose needs were previously not met.
- 1993** MHAS launched the Foster Care Special Education Project which trained hundreds of foster parents about special education laws and effective strategies to obtain services for their children with disabilities.
- 1997** In *Family Alliance for the Mentally Ill v. City of Fresno*, MHAS and co-counsel successfully challenged attempts to block development of housing for people with mental disabilities. MHAS also worked to identify cities and counties whose land use and zoning practices discriminated against people with disabilities.
- 1999** In the Education Initiative Training Project, a joint project of MHAS and the L.A. County Department of Children & Family Services, MHAS trained social workers in how to obtain appropriate educational services for the County's 70,000 foster children.
- 2000** As a result of *Emily Q. v. Belshe*, a class action lawsuit in which MHAS acted as co-counsel, thousands of children were entitled to additional individualized mental health services designed to prevent placement in highly restrictive group homes or mental health facilities.
- 2004** MHAS' "Getting It Built" project expanded to provide fair housing training and technical assistance to non-profit housing developers, local governments and advocates in seven California counties.
- 2006** MHAS' Homeless SSI Outreach Project completed its first 10 years, having helped more than 3,000 homeless and at-risk individuals throughout L.A. County obtain SSI and Medi-Cal benefits needed to pay for housing, food, clothing and mental health treatment.
- 2015** Co-counseling with the ACLU in *Franco v. Holder*, MHAS won the right to legal representation for all immigration detainees with a serious mental disorder that renders them unable to represent themselves. The victory represented the first time any court has ruled that a class of non-citizens are entitled to legal representation.
- 2018** MHAS joins as a partner in LA County's Medical-Legal Community Partnership (MLCP), a project administered by the Department of Health Services. Through the MLCP, MHAS assists participants with legal issues to ensure that they have the resources and support needed to achieve better health outcomes and overall well-being.
- 2019** In partnership with Painted Brain and with funding from the Governor's Office of Business and Economic Development, MHAS launched Project New Start, a comprehensive job placement, mental health, and legal services program for formerly incarcerated individuals with mental health issues in Los Angeles.