

## Home Is Where the Heart Is

*Celebrate Fair Housing Month in April*

It's been more than 40 years since President Lyndon Johnson signed the Fair Housing Act, but people with disabilities were not added to the protected classes until 1988. Since that time, Mental Health Advocacy Services has worked to ensure that people with mental disabilities are treated fairly as tenants and granted the accommodations that enable them to live independently and thrive.



*See page 4 to read about how MHAS helped one woman with a housing dilemma that threatened to tear her family apart.*

In the past three years alone, MHAS has assisted more than 900 individuals and families with housing matters ranging from challenging discriminatory evictions to helping clients with severe depression negotiate with their landlords for permission to keep a therapeutic companion animal.

**DID YOU KNOW:**  
*Fair housing laws require that housing providers make an exception to rules when the exception is both reasonable and necessary to allow a person with a disability to live in housing.*

This year, MHAS is the proud recipient of a grant awarded by the U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development's highly competitive Fair Housing Initiatives Program. This award will

allow us to continue our popular Fair Housing Tip of the Month program and to provide additional trainings, outreach and materials to limited-English communities.

**Visit [mhas-la.org/FairHousingIndex.htm](http://mhas-la.org/FairHousingIndex.htm) to see past Fair Housing tips and to sign up for our Fair Housing email list.**

## Keeping up the Good Fight

*An Update on AB 3632 Litigation*

Thanks to tremendous efforts on the part of MHAS and our legal partners, our litigation has prevented a disruption of critical mental health services for thousands of children in special education programs in California.

When former Governor Schwarzenegger vetoed the funding for AB 3632 services last October, he unleashed chaos in the lives of families and service providers around the state. Federal laws mandate these essential mental health services that enable students with mental disabilities to achieve full participation in their schools.



*Appropriate mental health services can enable severely troubled children to succeed in school and thrive.*

But in the midst of the Governor's veto and ongoing budget crises at all levels of government, the continuity of services was threatened.

MHAS joined Public Counsel, Disability Rights California, the Disability Rights Legal Center, and Gibson, Dunn & Crutcher in litigation that led many counties and school districts to negotiate agreements that would provide for the continuation of these critical services. In Los Angeles County, the Department of Mental Health has entered into agreements with over 90% of the school districts to continue to provide these essential services.

MHAS and our litigation partners will continue to focus on statewide relief to guarantee that all students receive the services to which they are entitled.

# Leave a Legacy of Justice



*Special tax benefits for charitable contributions have been extended through 2011. There has never been a better time to consider making a legacy gift to Mental Health Advocacy Services.*

Anyone and everyone can leave a legacy of protecting the rights of people with mental

disabilities for years to come. When you make a gift to MHAS, your “return on investment” is the transformation of lives - and the satisfaction of knowing that your support played a part. Now, you can enjoy a more tangible reward, thanks to MHAS’s new Legacy Planning Program.

MHAS’s Legacy Planning Program offers you the opportunity to financially benefit from your support while leaving an enriching legacy. A few of these benefits include but are not limited to:

- Transferring more assets and property to your heirs
- Getting charitable tax deductions now for giving later
- Liquidating real estate in a tax-advantaged way
- Securing a lifetime income
- Minimizing income, capital gain and wealth transfer tax

To offer the planning options that can produce these types of benefits, MHAS has partnered with The GenRich Program, an organization dedicated to creating a richer society one generation at a time. Their experts can help you create a plan that will mutually benefit you and MHAS for years to come.

Please call Nicole Roberts at (213) 389-2077, ext. 25, or email [nroberts@mhas-la.org](mailto:nroberts@mhas-la.org) to find out how easy it is for you to make a resounding impact today.

Mental Health Advocacy Services, Inc. is a private non-profit 501(c)(3) corporation. The mission of MHAS is to protect and advance the legal rights of children and adults with mental disabilities, in order to maximize autonomy, promote equality, and secure the resources needed to thrive in the community.



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Advocates Award Recipient Kimberly Wong, Esq., and her daughter, Marley

# At Home Together

*MHAS helps a mother keep her home – and her children*

A simple postal error nearly cost “Lisa” her family. A recovering addict with many years of sobriety behind her, Lisa had lost her Section 8 housing voucher because she never received her annual recertification packet in the mail. Evicted from her home, Lisa was forced to send her two older children to stay with relatives, and she and her new baby were living in a van.

As if being homeless weren’t bad enough, at the same time, the father of Lisa’s baby passed away, causing her to experience severe depression. This stressful situation led Lisa to have a relapse, and she was arrested and convicted on a misdemeanor drug charge. After she reestablished her sobriety and sought treatment for her depression, an erroneous accusation led the Department of Children and Family Services to take Lisa’s children away.

As part of her battle to regain custody, Lisa participated in a drug education program and was told that her criminal record would be expunged. But when she was finally reunited with her children, her Section 8 voucher was suddenly terminated again. Without a stable home, Lisa feared she would lose her children again. Lisa was referred to MHAS, and her attorney was able to establish that the Housing Authority had received incorrect information regarding Lisa’s criminal record.

Lisa’s MHAS attorney wrote a letter to the Housing Authority that clarified the facts of the case, resulting in the reinstatement of her housing voucher. MHAS also negotiated with her current landlord to drop the eviction proceedings, and referred her to a homelessness prevention program that provided her with the temporary funds needed in order for Lisa and her children to stay in their home.



*Without intervention from her MHAS attorney, Lisa is certain that she would have lost her children and been forced to live on the streets.*



*A nonprofit organization protecting and advancing the legal rights of people with mental disabilities.*

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