

# Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)



Listed below are answers to questions about us and our web site. If you have a question not answered below, please [Contact Us](#).

## **Who is Legal Services Corporation of Delaware, Inc. (LSCD)?**

LSCD is one of the three main legal aid providers in the State of Delaware. The mission of Legal Services Corporation of Delaware, Inc., is to use the practice of law to help low-income families in Delaware. LSCD emphasizes protection of those rights that are crucial to the viability of a stable family. We strive to meet this goal by working to protect families' rights in the areas of safe and affordable housing, financial stability, and consumer protection.

## **What do *Pro Bono* and *Pro Se* mean?**

*Pro Bono* organizations pair people with lawyers who volunteer their services for free. *Pro Se* organizations/clinics help people represent themselves. This is sometimes also called "self-help." Many legal services programs operate *pro bono* and/or *pro se* programs within the counties they serve.

## **What's the difference between Civil and Criminal legal services?**

Civil cases are where people have a disagreement with other people or businesses, or where people think the government is doing something wrong. Civil cases usually involve disputes about money, services, or rights. Civil cases include landlord/tenant issues, used car issues, divorce and custody, domestic violence, unemployment compensation, public benefits, etc.

Criminal cases are where the government charges a person with a crime, such as speeding, robbery, trespass, shoplifting, assault, murder, etc. Criminal cases may carry the risk of jail or a prison sentence. The Office of the Public Defender represents low income people on criminal cases.

## **What kind of cases do the various legal services programs in Delaware handle?**

Each legal services program sets its own priorities, meaning that each program determines how it can best serve clients with the limited funding it has. Each legal services program in Delaware has a set of priorities which determine which types of cases they can handle.

Most legal services programs handle civil cases including family law, housing (evictions, lockouts, utility shutoffs), mobile homes, consumer (used cars, predatory lending, payday loans, bankruptcies), public benefits (Delaware's A Better Chance, food stamps, Medicaid, etc.), access to health care, special education, tax problems, unemployment compensation, and other areas. To see which agency handles your problem, click here: [Community Legal Aid](#), [Delaware Volunteer Legal Services](#), or

[LSCD](#).

## **What is the difference between a legal services/legal aid program and the public defender program?**

Legal aid and legal services programs handle only civil cases, not criminal. The Office of the Public Defender provides free representation to those who cannot afford a lawyer for criminal cases. The Federal Public Defender provides free representation to those who cannot afford a lawyer for criminal cases filed in the Federal Court in Delaware.

## **What are the eligibility requirements for legal services programs in Delaware?**

Generally, potential clients must have income below 125% of the current official Federal Poverty Guideline. Additional income requirements vary among programs. Also, there may be exceptions to the income limit. The best way to find out if you are eligible for services is to call or visit your local legal services office and complete an application for services.

## **How can I find out if I need a lawyer?**

Although this web site does not provide legal advice, it provides information about common legal problems facing low income Delawareans and a listing of legal assistance organizations which may be able to help. Go to our [Legal Information Library](#) for more information about common legal problems. Go to the [DE Legal Help](#) to look for more legal help in your area. Contact the organizations listed to see if they can help. If they cannot help, many organizations will provide some brief advice, referral or educational materials to assist you with your problem.

## **How do I find a lawyer?**

To find a lawyer in Delaware to help you with your specific problem, fill out the DE Legal Help [online form](#). They will refer you to the legal service provider that handles your type of case if you are financially eligible for legal services. If you are not eligible, or no agency handles your type of case, Legal HelpLink can also assist you with a referral to a private attorney for an half hour consultation for \$35.00 through the Delaware State Bar Association (DSBA).

## **What if a legal services program will not help me?**

Working together, the legal services providers in Delaware have tried to make sure that as many different problems are handled as possible, but due to limited resources and funding, there may not be any free legal services for your type of legal problem. Also, because of restrictions from some funding sources, there are certain types of cases that some legal services providers are not allowed to handle. Sometimes the legal services providers may have to limit their number or type of cases to those which are the most serious, or to those cases in which having a lawyer will do the most good, even when they normally would accept a specific type of problem. Because of a lack of funding and limited resources, they simply cannot handle every case for every person.

If one of the legal services providers cannot handle your case, you can go the Self Help Center at the New Castle County Courthouse, to use the resource materials that they have available, and/or use the materials on this website for assistance in representing yourself. If you still think you need a lawyer, you can contact the [Legal HelpLink](#) for a referral to a private attorney who will meet with you for an half hour consultation for \$35.00, and with whom you can arrange for further representation, at an agreed upon rate, between you and the lawyer, if you need further help.

## **When should I seek legal advice?**

It is impossible to list all of the situations in which you should get legal advice, so we have listed some common situations when you should get legal advice. This list is not complete, and if you have a question you think a lawyer might be able to help you with, contact the programs that serve your county and ask if they can help. You should not hesitate to ask for advice.

You should contact a lawyer if:

- You have been sued, or threatened with a lawsuit;
- You have a dispute over legal documents such as a loan agreement, lease or other contract;
- You need a divorce or help with custody of your children;
- You have been abused by a family member;
- You disagree with someone about how much you owe them or how much they owe you;
- You think a government agency is not treating you fairly or you are not getting the public benefits (welfare, Medicaid, food stamps, child care, SSI, etc.) you deserve;
- More generally, you cannot settle a disagreement and you are at risk of losing money or property;
- If you have been charged with a crime, you should contact your local public defender office.

It is much better to ask for legal advice first and find out that you do not need it, than to not ask and find out later that you needed a lawyer.

## **Why can't I ask legal questions through this web site?**

The host of this web site, Legal Services Corporation of Delaware, Inc., cannot give legal advice or answer individual legal questions through this web site. No one should give legal advice without interviewing a person to understand the whole situation facing the person.

This web site acts as a "portal," which is a central place for information about the law and legal services. This web site does not give legal advice nor does it endorse

any particular legal services or other legal assistance organization listed in our directory.

## How do I find out more about legal services programs?

For further information about each program, click below:

[Go to Community Legal Aid](#)

[Go to Delaware Volunteer Legal Services](#)

[About Us](#)

## How do I send suggestions for adding items to this web site?

Complete the evaluation form below. We welcome suggestions for improving this web site.

Last updated on March 07, 2024.

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