

Indiana Legal Services, Inc

Using the law to fight poverty, empower clients, and improve access to justice.

www.indianalegalservices.org



Frequently Asked Questions

Listed below are answers to questions about us and our web site. If you have a question not answered below, use the Feedback button on this page to contact us. You can also have questions answered by a volunteer lawyer, free of charge by going to [Indiana Free Legal Answers](#).

1. [Who is Indiana Legal Services?](#)
2. [What do Pro Bono and Pro Se mean?](#)
3. [What's the difference between Civil and Criminal cases?](#)
4. [What kind of cases do legal services programs handle?](#)
5. [What is the difference between a legal services/legal aid program and the public defender program?](#)
6. [What are the eligibility requirements for legal services programs?](#)
7. [How can I find out if I need a lawyer?](#)
8. [How do I find a lawyer?](#)
9. [What if a legal services program will not help me?](#)
10. [When should I seek legal advice?](#)
11. [Why can't I ask legal questions through this web site?](#)
12. [How do I find out more about legal services programs?](#)
13. [How do I send suggestions for adding items to this web site?](#)

Detailed Questions and Answers:

Who is *Indiana Legal Services*?

Indiana Legal Services is a not-for-profit law firm that handles civil legal matters for people who cannot afford attorneys.

What do Pro Bono and Pro Se mean?

Pro Bono is when an attorney volunteers to handle a client's case without charging the client any money. A Pro Bono organization is an organization that connects Pro Bono attorneys with clients

who need legal help.

Pro Se is when a person represents him or herself in a legal matter without the help of an attorney. A Pro Se organization/clinic is an organization that helps people represent themselves.

What's the difference between Civil and Criminal cases?

Civil cases are cases that are between two people or agencies such as a divorce case, a landlord-tenant case, etc. Criminal cases are always brought by a prosecutor against a person charged with committing a crime.

What kind of cases do legal services programs handle?

Different programs handle different kinds of cases. You can check with your local program to find out what types of cases it handles. Indiana Legal Services handles only civil cases, not criminal cases. In general, Indiana Legal Services handles cases involving family law, landlord-tenant and other housing, consumer issues, education issues and government benefits.

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

Legal services/legal aid programs generally handle civil cases. A person who wants a lawyer from a legal services/legal aid program generally must apply to that program to request a lawyer. Public defender programs handle criminal matters. In a criminal case, the judge can assign a public defender to represent the person accused of a crime if that person cannot afford to hire an attorney.

What are the eligibility requirements for legal services programs?

Each program will have different eligibility requirements; you need to check with the program to find out its eligibility requirements. At Indiana Legal Services, the person who wants an attorney must meet financial eligibility requirements and some other requirements. Often the financial eligibility requirement is related to the Federal Poverty Guidelines.

How can I find out if I need a lawyer?

If you think you have a legal problem, you should talk with an attorney to see if you need to get an attorney. Many private attorneys will meet with you once without charging you a fee. Before you meet with a private attorney, make sure you understand if the attorney is charging you for that meeting or not. You can also contact your local legal services program.

How do I find a lawyer?

If you are looking for a private attorney, you may want to ask friends or family members what attorney they would recommend. Most local county bar associations have lawyer referral programs; you can contact your [local county bar association](#) to ask for the names of attorneys who handle the type of legal matter you have. These attorneys generally are **not** free or low-cost attorneys. If you cannot afford to hire a private attorney, you can contact your local legal services program. Look on this website in [Finding Legal Help](#) to locate your local programs.

What if a legal services program will not help me?

You should check with all the legal services programs that are in your county to see if any can help you. If the legal services programs cannot help you, you can ask the court where your case is pending to appoint a lawyer to represent you. Some courts are able to appoint an attorney in civil matters to a person who cannot afford to hire an attorney.

When should I seek legal advice?

Any time you think you might have a problem involving a legal matter, you should seek legal advice. This does not necessarily mean you will need to hire an attorney; however, if you don't seek legal advice you can sometimes lose the ability to fix certain legal problems.

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

At Indiana Legal Services, we must first determine if you are eligible for our services before we give legal advice. We cannot make this determination through the website. You can certainly apply for our legal services through your local Indiana Legal Services Program.

How do I find out more about legal services programs?

You can find your local legal services program through the [Finding Legal Help](#) link on this website. You can then contact that program directly to get more information about the program and its eligibility requirements.

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

You can send us comments/suggestions for the website through the Feedback link on our web page.

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