

# Virginia Judicial System Court Self-Help

Resources for Self-Represented Litigants

[selfhelp.vacourts.gov](http://selfhelp.vacourts.gov)

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## Find a Lawyer

### Who is a Lawyer?

A lawyer, also called an attorney, is someone who is licensed to practice law. Only a lawyer licensed to practice law in Virginia can provide you legal advice about a legal issue in Virginia.

### How do I find a lawyer?

The Virginia State Bar, the organization that licenses attorneys, offers information for the public, as well as a Lawyer Referral Service, through which you may consult an attorney for a limited time at a reduced fee. The toll-free telephone number is **1-800-552-7977**. The Lawyer Referral video explains more, and other public information videos can be found on the Virginia State Bar's YouTube channel.

Some county bar associations also offer lawyer referral services that can be found through an internet search, your local court or your local law library.

### How do I find a free lawyer?

Low-income persons may be eligible for legal assistance in civil matters through their local legal aid office. Visit <http://www.valegalaid.org/> for more information or you can call **1-866-LEGLAID (1-866-534-5243)** to reach your local legal aid office.

The disAbility Law Center of Virginia helps people with disabilities obtain services and treatment for disability-related problems like abuse, neglect, and discrimination. Individuals with problems covered by the Center's Program Goals, may receive advocacy services and/or legal representation. Visit <http://dlcv.org/> or call **804-225-2042** or **800-552-3962** for more information.

In November 2016, the Virginia State Bar Special Committee on Access to Legal Services sponsored a free public information webinar titled “**What to Do When You Can’t Afford an Attorney**” (there is no charge to access the recording; however, you must register before you can view it). A copy of the slides for this webinar is available at the Virginia State Bar's website.

The Virginia State Bar's Access Committtee also offers a guide to **Free and Low Cost Legal Resources in Virginia**

In criminal cases, persons charged with criminal offenses that carry jail time may be eligible for a public defender or court appointed lawyer, if they cannot afford a lawyer.

## **Who else can help me?**

Other people may give you information, but **ONLY** a lawyer licensed in Virginia can give you legal advice, file documents for you, or represent you in court.

### Court Staff

Your local court must be neutral and impartial. Court staff cannot give you advice, but they can give you legal information, such as instructions about procedure, and forms. [Learn more about what courts can and cannot do.](#)

### Mediators

People often find a mediator to be very helpful in resolving their matter, but a mediator is a neutral person, often a non-lawyer, and cannot give you legal advice. Only a lawyer licensed to practice law in Virginia can give you legal advice. It is entirely appropriate to get some legal advice from an attorney while working with a mediator. Visit our [Find a Mediator](#) page to learn more.

### Notarios

Notarios are not lawyers, cannot give you legal advice, and cannot represent you in court. [See the Virginia State Bar for more information about notarios and immigration fraud.](#)

### Friends

Friends who are not lawyers cannot give you legal advice. Friends cannot represent you in court. Friends can give you moral support and may be a good source of professional referrals, but they are not allowed to help you in the courtroom.

**REMEMBER:** Only a lawyer can represent you in court.

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