Legal Aid In Florida



LEGAL SERVICE - LEGAL AID

The American Constitution guarantees equal justice under the law, but those words mean little unless everyone has access to our legal system.

If you have a civil legal problem but cannot afford to hire a private lawyer, you still may have access to the legal system through your local legal services-legal aid organization which provides free or low cost legal services to persons with low incomes.

WHAT IS THE HISTORY OF LEGAL AID?

Providing legal representation to those in need has been a tradition in this country. Earlier programs operated by volunteer lawyers from local bar associations were called Legal Aid societies.

Later, a federal effort to provide funds for legal counsel to the needy began in the mid-1960s. The federal government established, within the Office of Economic Opportunity, an Office of Legal Services to distribute federal money to local programs called Legal Services Organizations. These programs were transferred to the Legal Services Corporation, created by Congress in 1975.

In Florida, the attempt to provide legal services for those who could not afford a lawyer was given statewide support during the early 1970s when The Florida Bar, along with the governor's office, set up a nonprofit organization in Tallahassee to promote the expansion of legal services in Florida. That organization is Florida Legal Services, Inc.

HOW IS LEGAL AID FINANCED?

Today, in Florida and other parts of the U.S., legal aid societies and legal services organizations in various counties are multi-sponsored and funded by federal, state, and local governments, The Florida Bar Foundation, The Florida Bar, local bar associations, and special grants. Legal service/legal aid offices have expanded in number, in the size of paid staff lawyers and paraprofessionals, and in the number of volunteer lawyers who donate their time. They are working toward the common goal of equal justice and legal representation for all under the legal system.

WHAT ARE THE STANDARDS FOR LEGAL SERVICES OFFICES?

The Florida Bar has established as a guide several minimum standards for legal services organizations. Among the several standards developed, two are of prime importance to the public. First, every legal services organization should have a board of directors which represents the community as a whole. This means you, along with the lawyers in your community, have a voice in running the legal services program. Second, The Florida Bar encourages every legal services organization to have a full-time staff. Eventually, it is hoped that every community in Florida will have lawyers working full time to provide legal services to those in need.

WHAT DO LEGAL SERVICES LAWYERS DO?

Lawyers in a legal services office provide the same legal services as any other attorney. They can advise and represent you in most areas of civil law, although each program has priorities for the type of cases they will take.

Because the number of people demanding legal services exceeds the amount of staff and money available to handle cases, legal services offices limit the types of cases taken.

Criminal cases are not handled because the state provides public defenders to represent persons accused of criminal actions who cannot afford private attorneys.

Also, the legal services offices generally do not deal with cases where a person is seeking money as a settlement. In such cases a private attorney will usually represent a client without any initial charge, collecting a fee only if the client's case is won. Then the attorney's fee is a percentage of the client's settlement. This is called a contingency fee.

You should check with the office in your community if you have questions about the types of cases handled.

WHAT CASES ARE HANDLED BY LEGAL SERVICES OFFICES?

The following are only a few examples of the types of cases usually handled.

- Civil Issues
- Consumer Housing
- Divorce
- Domestic Violence
- Education
- Employment Discrimination
- Family Law
- Health Welfare
- Immigration Issues
- Landlord/Tenant
- Public Benefits
- Senior Benefits
- Social Security

WHAT WILL THE LEGAL SERVICES COST?

Most legal services offices offer their assistance free of charge to people who qualify. Some areas have Low-Fee Panels for persons with low fixed incomes.

WHO CAN APPLY FOR LEGAL SERVICES?

Free legal services are meant for persons of low income

who cannot afford the services of an attorney. Many programs have different standards and you will have to check with your community office to find out if you qualify. Some offices base their eligibility only on income, while others will consider ownership of property and size of family. It is important that you call your legal assistance provider to learn whether or not you qualify.

WHERE ARE LEGAL SERVICES OFFICES LOCATED?

It is difficult to keep the list up to date, so if you should have a problem in contacting an office, consult your telephone directory, information or local bar association, which is usually listed by county.

Alachua

Florida Institutional Legal Services, Inc. - Gainesville, (352) 375-2494, fils@bellsouth.net

Florida Justice Institute - Miami, (305) 358-2081

Three Rivers Legal Services, Inc. - Gainesville, (352) 372-0519, www.trls.org

Baker (see Alachua or Duval Counties)

Bay

Florida Institutional Legal Services, Inc. - Gainesville, (352) 375-2494, fils@bellsouth.net

Florida Justice Institute - Miami, (305) 358-2081

Legal Services of North Florida, Inc. - Panama City, (850) 769-3581, www.lsnf.org

Bradford (see Alachua County)

Brevard

Bay Area Legal Services, Inc. - Tampa, (813) 232-1343, www.bals.org

Brevard County Legal Aid, Inc. - Rockledge, (321) 631-2500, www.brevardcountylegalaid.org

- Florida Immigrant Advocacy Center Fort Pierce, (772) 489-4660, www.fiacfla.org
- Florida Institutional Legal Services, Inc. Gainesville, (352) 375-2494, fils@bellsouth.net

Florida Justice Institute - Miami, (305) 358-2081

Broward

Coast to Coast Legal Aid of South Florida, Inc. - Plantation, (954) 736–2400, www.legalaid.org

FIU College of Law Educational Advocacy Clinic – Miami, (305) 348-7541, www.fiu.edu

Florida Immigrant Advocacy Center - Miami Office - Miami, (305) 573-1106, www.fiacfla.org Florida Institutional Legal Services, Inc. - Gainesville, (352) 375-2494, fils@bellsouth.net

Florida Justice Institute - Miami, (305) 358-2081

Legal Aid Service of Broward County, Inc. - Plantation, (954) 765-8950

Calhoun

Florida Institutional Legal Services, Inc. - Gainesville, (352) 375-2494, fils@bellsouth.net

Florida Justice Institute - Miami, (305) 358-2081

Legal Services of North Florida, Inc. - Quincy, (850) 875-9881, www.lsnf.org

Charlotte

Florida Institutional Legal Services, Inc. - Gainesville, (352) 375-2494, fils@bellsouth.net

Florida Justice Institute - Miami, (305) 358-2081

Florida Rural Legal Services - Fort Myers, (239) 334-4554, www.frls.org

Florida Rural Legal Services - Punta Gorda, (941) 505-9007, www.frls.org

Citrus

Community Legal Services of Mid-Florida, Inc. - Inverness, (352) 726-8512, www.clsmf.org

Florida Institutional Legal Services, Inc. - Gainesville, (352) 375-2494, fils@bellsouth.net

Florida Justice Institute - Miami, (305) 358-2081

Clay

Florida Institutional Legal Services, Inc. - Gainesville, (352) 375-2494, fils@bellsouth.net

Florida Justice Institute - Miami, (305) 358-2081

Jacksonville Area Legal Aid, Inc. - Green Cove Springs, (904) 284-8410, www.jaxlegalaid.org

Jacksonville Area Legal Aid, Inc. - Jacksonville, (904) 356-8371, www.jaxlegalaid.org

Three Rivers Legal Services, Inc. - Jacksonville, (904) 394-7450, www.trls.org

Collier

Florida Institutional Legal Services, Inc. - Gainesville, (352) 375-2494, fils@bellsouth.net

Florida Justice Institute - Miami, (305) 358-2081

Florida Rural Legal Services - Fort Myers, (239) 334-4554, www.frls.org

- Florida Rural Legal Services Immokalee, (239) 657-3681, www.frls.org
- Legal Aid Society of Collier County, Inc. Immokalee, (239) 657-7442

Legal Aid Society of Collier County, Inc. - Naples, (239) 775-4555

Columbia

Florida Institutional Legal Services, Inc. - Gainesville, (352) 375-2494, fils@bellsouth.net

Florida Justice Institute - Miami, (305) 358-2081

Three Rivers Legal Services, Inc. - Lake City, (386) 752-5960, www.trls.org

DeSoto

Florida Institutional Legal Services, Inc. - Gainesville, (352) 375-2494, fils@bellsouth.net

Florida Justice Institute - Miami, (305) 358-2081

Florida Rural Legal Services - Fort Myers, (239) 334-4554, www.frls.org

Florida Rural Legal Services - Lakeland, (863) 688-7376, www.frls.org

Dixie (see Columbia County)

Duval

Florida Institutional Legal Services, Inc. - Gainesville, (352) 375-2494, fils@bellsouth.net

Florida Justice Institute - Miami, (305) 358-2081

Jacksonville Area Legal Aid, Inc. - Jacksonville, (904) 356-8371, www.jaxlegalaid.org

Three Rivers Legal Services, Inc. - Jacksonville, (904) 394-7450, www.trls.org

Escambia

Florida Institutional Legal Services, Inc. - Gainesville, (352) 375-2494, fils@bellsouth.net

Florida Justice Institute - Miami, (305) 358-2081

Legal Services of North Florida, Inc. - Pensacola, (850) 432-8222, www.lsnf.org

Northwest Florida Legal Services, Inc. - Pensacola, (850) 432-2336, www.nwfls.org

Flagler

Community Legal Services of Mid-Florida, Inc. - Bunnell, (386) 437-8485, www.clsmf.org

Community Legal Services of Mid-Florida, Inc. - Daytona Beach, (386) 255-6573, www.clsmf.org

Community Legal Services of Mid-Florida, Inc. - Palatka, (386) 328-8361, www.clsmf.org

Florida Institutional Legal Services, Inc. - Gainesville, (352) 375-2494, fils@bellsouth.net

Florida Justice Institute - Miami, (305) 358-2081

Franklin

Florida Institutional Legal Services, Inc. - Gainesville, (352) 375-2494, fils@bellsouth.net

Florida Justice Institute - Miami, (305) 358-2081

Legal Services of North Florida, Inc. - Tallahassee, (850) 385-9007, www.lsnf.org

Gadsden

Florida Institutional Legal Services, Inc. - Gainesville, (352) 375-2494, fils@bellsouth.net Florida Justice Institute - Miami, (305) 358-2081

Legal Services of North Florida, Inc. - Quincy, (850) 875-9881, www.lsnf.org

Gilchrist (see Alachua County)

Glades

Florida Institutional Legal Services, Inc. - Gainesville, (352) 375-2494, fils@bellsouth.net

Florida Justice Institute - Miami, (305) 358-2081

Florida Rural Legal Services - Fort Myers, (239) 334-4554, www.frls.org

Florida Rural Legal Services - Immokalee, (239) 657-3681, www.frls.org

Gulf (see Bay County)

Hamilton (see Columbia County)

Hardee

Florida Institutional Legal Services, Inc. - Gainesville, (352) 375-2494, fils@bellsouth.net

Florida Justice Institute - Miami, (305) 358-2081

Florida Rural Legal Services - Lakeland, (863) 688-7376, www.frls.org

Heart of Florida Legal Aid Society, Inc. - Bartow, (863) 519-5663

Hendry

Florida Institutional Legal Services, Inc. - Gainesville, (352) 375-2494, fils@bellsouth.net

Florida Justice Institute - Miami, (305) 358-2081

Florida Rural Legal Services - Belle Glade, (561) 993-0003, www.frls.org

Florida Rural Legal Services - Fort Myers, (239) 334-4554, www.frls.org

Florida Rural Legal Services - Immokalee, (239) 657-3681, www.frls.org

Hernando

Community Legal Services of Mid-Florida, Inc. - Brooksville, (352) 796-7238, www.clsmf.org

Florida Institutional Legal Services, Inc. - Gainesville, (352) 375-2494, fils@bellsouth.net

Florida Justice Institute - Miami, (305) 358-2081

Highlands

Florida Institutional Legal Services, Inc. - Gainesville, (352) 375-2494, fils@bellsouth.net

Florida Justice Institute - Miami, (305) 358-2081

- Florida Rural Legal Services Lakeland, (863) 688-7376, www.frls.org
- Heart of Florida Legal Aid Society, Inc. Sebring, (863) 519-5663

Hillsborough

Bay Area Legal Services, Inc. - Tampa, (813) 864-2280, www.bals.org

- Bay Area Legal Services, Inc. Plant City, (813) 752-1335, www.bals.org
- Florida Institutional Legal Services, Inc. Gainesville, (352) 375-2494, fils@bellsouth.net

Florida Justice Institute - Miami, 305-358-2081

Holmes (see Bay County)

Indian River

Florida Immigrant Advocacy Center - Fort Pierce, (772) 489-4660, www.fiacfla.org

Florida Institutional Legal Services, Inc. - Gainesville, (352) 375-2494, fils@bellsouth.net

Florida Justice Institute - Miami, (305) 358-2081

Florida Rural Legal Services - Fort Pierce, (772) 466-4766, www.frls.org

Jackson (see Gadsden County)

Jefferson

Florida Institutional Legal Services, Inc. - Gainesville, (352) 375-2494, fils@bellsouth.net Florida Justice Institute - Miami, (305) 358-2081 Legal Services of North Florida, Inc. - Tallahassee, (850) 385-9007, www.lsnf.org

Lafayette (see Columbia County)

Lake

Community Legal Services of Mid-Florida, Inc. - Tavares,

(352) 343-0815, www.clsmf.org

Florida Institutional Legal Services, Inc. - Gainesville, (352) 375-2494, fils@bellsouth.net

Florida Justice Institute - Miami, (305) 358-2081

Lee

- Florida Institutional Legal Services, Inc. Gainesville, (352) 375-2494, fils@bellsouth.net
- Florida Justice Institute Miami, (305) 358-2081
- Florida Rural Legal Services Fort Myers, (239) 334-4554, www.frls.org

Lee County Legal Aid Society, Inc. - Fort Myers, (239) 334-6118

Leon

Florida Institutional Legal Services, Inc. - Gainesville, (352) 375-2494, fils@bellsouth.net

Florida Justice Institute - Miami, (305) 358-2081

Legal Aid Foundation of the Tallahassee Bar Association, Inc. - Tallahassee, (850) 222-3004

Legal Services of North Florida, Inc. - Tallahassee, (850) 385-9007, www.lsnf.org

Levy (see Alachua County)

Liberty (see Gadsden County)

Madison (see Columbia County)

Manatee

Florida Institutional Legal Services, Inc. - Gainesville, (352) 375-2494, fils@bellsouth.net

Florida Justice Institute - Miami, 305-358-2081

Gulfcoast Legal Services, Inc. - Bradenton, (941) 746-6151, www.gulfcoastlegal.org

Legal Aid of Manasota, Inc. - Bradenton, (941) 747-1628

Marion

Community Legal Services of Mid-Florida, Inc. - Ocala, (352) 629-0105, www.clsmf.org

Florida Institutional Legal Services, Inc. - Gainesville, (352) 375-2494, fils@bellsouth.net

Florida Justice Institute - Miami, (305) 358-2081

Legal Advocacy Center of Central Florida - Ocala, (352) 629-0105

Martin

Florida Immigrant Advocacy Center - Fort Pierce, (772) 489-4660, www.fiacfla.org

Florida Institutional Legal Services, Inc. - Gainesville, (352)

375-2494, fils@bellsouth.net

Florida Justice Institute - Miami, (305) 358-2081

Florida Rural Legal Services - Fort Pierce, (772) 466-4766, www.frls.org

Miami Dade

- FIU College of Law Educational Advocacy Clinic Miami, (305) 348-7541, www.fiu.edu
- Florida Immigrant Advocacy Center Miami, (305) 573-1106, www.fiacfla.org
- Florida Institutional Legal Services, Inc. Gainesville, (352) 375-2494, fils@bellsouth.net

Florida Justice Institute - Miami, (305) 358-2081

- Guardianship Program for Dade County, Inc. Miami, (305) 592-7642, www.guardianshipprogram.org
- Legal Aid Society of Dade County Bar Association Miami, (305) 579-5733, www.DadeCountyBar.org
- Legal Aid Society of Dade County Bar Association Florida City, (305) 247-3353, www.DadeCountyBar.org

Legal Aid Society of Dade County Bar Association - Homestead, (305) 247-9562, www.Dadecountybar.org

Legal Aid Society of Dade County Bar Association - Miami Beach, (305) 673-7426, www.Dadecountybar.org

Legal Aid Society of Dade County Bar Association - Miami, (305) 349-6013, www.DadeCountyBar.org

Legal Services of Greater Miami, Inc. - Miami, (305) 232-9680, www.lsgmi.org

Legal Services of Greater Miami, Inc. - Florida City, (305) 576-0080, www.lsgmi.org

Monroe

Florida Immigrant Advocacy Center - Miami, (305) 573-1106, www.fiacfla.org

Florida Institutional Legal Services, Inc. - Gainesville, (352) 375-2494, fils@bellsouth.net

Florida Justice Institute - Miami, (305) 358-2081

- Legal Services of Greater Miami, Inc. Key West, (305) 292-3566, www.lsgmi.org
- Legal Services of Greater Miami, Inc. Miami, (305) 576-0080, www.lsgmi.org

Nassau

Florida Institutional Legal Services, Inc. - Gainesville, (352) 375-2494, fils@bellsouth.net

Florida Justice Institute - Miami, (305) 358-2081

Jacksonville Area Legal Aid, Inc. – Jacksonville, (904) 356-8371, www.jaxlegalaid.org

Three Rivers Legal Services, Inc. - Jacksonville, (904) 394-7450, www.trls.org

Okaloosa

Florida Institutional Legal Services, Inc. - Gainesville, (352) 375-2494, fils@bellsouth.net

Florida Justice Institute - Miami, 305-358-2081

Legal Services of North Florida, Inc. - Fort Walton Beach, (850) 862-3279, www.lsnf.org

Okeechobee

Florida Immigrant Advocacy Center - Fort Pierce, (772) 489-4660, www.fiacfla.org

Florida Institutional Legal Services, Inc. - Gainesville, (352) 375-2494, fils@bellsouth.net

Florida Justice Institute - Miami, 305-358-2081

Florida Rural Legal Services - Fort Pierce, (772) 466-4766, www.frls.org

Orange

Community Legal Services of Mid-Florida, Inc. - Orlando, (407) 841-7777, www.clsmf.org

Florida Institutional Legal Services, Inc. - Gainesville, (352) 375-2494, fils@bellsouth.net

Florida Justice Institute - Miami, (305) 358-2081

Legal Aid Society of the Orange County Bar Association, Inc.

- Orlando, (407) 841-8310, www.legalaidocba.org

Osceola

Community Legal Services of Mid-Florida, Inc. - Kissimmee, (407) 847-0053, www.clsmf.org

Florida Institutional Legal Services, Inc. - Gainesville, (352) 375-2494, fils@bellsouth.net

Florida Justice Institute - Miami, (305) 358-2081

Palm Beach

Florida Institutional Legal Services, Inc. - Gainesville, (352) 375-2494, fils@bellsouth.net

Florida Justice Institute - Miami, (305) 358-2081

- Florida Rural Legal Services Belle Glade, (561) 993-0003, www.frls.org
- Florida Rural Legal Services West Palm Beach, (561) 820-8902, www.frls.org

Legal Aid Society of Palm Beach County, Inc. - West Palm Beach, (561) 655-8944, www.legalaidpbc.org

Legal Aid Society of Palm Beach County, Inc. - Belle Glade, (561) 993-3836, www.legalaidpbc.org

Legal Aid Society of Palm Beach County, Inc. - West Palm Beach, (561) 833-5787, www.legalaidpbc.org

Pasco

Bay Area Legal Services, Inc. - Dade City, (352) 567-9044, www.bals.org

Bay Area Legal Services, Inc. - New Port Richey, (727) 847-5494, www.bals.org

Bay Area Legal Services, Inc. - Tampa, (813) 232-1343, www.bals.org

Florida Institutional Legal Services, Inc. - Gainesville, (352) 375-2494, fils@bellsouth.net

Florida Justice Institute - Miami, 305-358-2081

Pinellas

- Bay Area Legal Services, Inc. St. Petersburg, (727) 490-4040, www.bals.org
- Bay Area Legal Services, Inc. Tampa, (813) 232-1343, www.bals.org
- Community Law Program St. Petersburg, (727) 582-7402, www.lawprogram.org
- Florida Institutional Legal Services, Inc. Gainesville, (352) 375-2494, fils@bellsouth.net

Florida Justice Institute - Miami, (305) 358-2081

Gulfcoast Legal Services, Inc. - Clearwater, (727) 443-0657, www.gulfcoastlegal.org

Gulfcoast Legal Services, Inc. - St. Petersburg, (727) 821-0726, www.gulfcoastlegal.org

Polk

Florida Institutional Legal Services, Inc. - Gainesville, (352) 375-2494, fils@bellsouth.net

- Florida Justice Institute Miami, 305-358-2081
- Florida Rural Legal Services Lakeland, (863) 688-7376, www.frls.org
- Heart of Florida Legal Aid Society, Inc. Bartow, (863) 519-5663

Putnam (see Flagler County)

Saint Johns

Community Legal Services of Mid-Florida, Inc. - Daytona Beach, (386) 255-6573, www.clsmf.org

Florida Institutional Legal Services, Inc. - Gainesville, (352) 375-2494, fils@bellsouth.net

Florida Justice Institute - Miami, 305-358-2081

- Jacksonville Area Legal Aid, Inc. Jacksonville, (904) 356-8371, www.jaxlegalaid.org
- Jacksonville Area Legal Aid, Inc. St. Augustine, (904) 827-9921, www.jaxlegalaid.org
- Three Rivers Legal Services, Inc. Jacksonville, (904) 394-7450, www.trls.org

Saint Lucie

Florida Immigrant Advocacy Center - Fort Pierce, (772) 489-4660, www.fiacfla.org

Florida Institutional Legal Services, Inc. - Gainesville, (352) 375-2494, fils@bellsouth.net

Florida Justice Institute - Miami, (305) 358-2081

Florida Rural Legal Services - Fort Pierce, (772) 466-4766, www.frls.org

Santa Rosa

Florida Institutional Legal Services, Inc. - Gainesville, (352) 375-2494, fils@bellsouth.net

Florida Justice Institute - Miami, 305-358-2081

Legal Services of North Florida, Inc. - Pensacola, (850) 432-8222, www.lsnf.org

Northwest Florida Legal Šervices, Inc. - Milton, (850) 432-2336, www.nwfls.org

Sarasota

Florida Institutional Legal Services, Inc. - Gainesville, (352) 375-2494, fils@bellsouth.net Florida Justice Institute - Miami, 305-358-2081 Gulfcoast Legal Services, Inc. - Sarasota, (941) 366-1746, www.gulfcoastlegal.org Legal Aid of Manasota, Inc. - Sarasota, (941) 366-0038 Legal Aid of Manasota, Inc. - Venice, (941) 492-4631

Seminole

Community Legal Services of Mid-Florida, Inc. - Sanford, 407-322-8983, www.clsmf.org

Florida Institutional Legal Services, Inc. - Gainesville, (352) 375-2494, fils@bellsouth.net

Florida Justice Institute - Miami, 305-358-2081

Seminole County Bar Association Legal Aid Society, Inc.

- Longwood, 407.834.1660, www.scbalas.org

Sumter (see Citrus County)

Suwanee (see Columbia County)

Taylor (see Columbia County)

Union (see Alachua County)

Volusia

Community Legal Services of Mid-Florida, Inc. - Daytona Beach, (386) 255-6573, www.clsmf.org

Florida Institutional Legal Services, Inc. - Gainesville, (352) 375-2494, fils@bellsouth.net

Florida Justice Institute - Miami, 305-358-2081

Wakulla

Florida Institutional Legal Services, Inc. - Gainesville, (352) 375-2494, fils@bellsouth.net

Florida Justice Institute - Miami, 305-358-2081

Legal Services of North Florida, Inc. - Tallahassee, (850) 385-9007, www.lsnf.org

Walton (see Okaloosa County)

Washington (see Bay County)

The material in this pamphlet represents general legal advice. Since the law is continually changing, some provisions in this pamphlet may be out of date. It is always best to consult an attorney about your legal rights and responsibilities regarding your particular case.

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