Legal Assistance When You Can't Afford a Lawyer (Civil Matters)

Categories : Criminal Justice System, Legal and Protective Services

What Legal Assistance is Available in Connecticut? There are several options for legal assistance in civil matters for people who cannot afford a lawyer. These include the Legal Services Network, law clinics associated with Connecticut's three law schools, and a variety of other agencies offering legal assistance, often to special populations. **What is the Legal Services Network?** The Legal Services Network in Connecticut is a collaborative of five non-profit legal aid agencies which provide legal assistance in civil matters to low-income individuals and families. Some of the funding for these programs comes from the Legal Services Corporation (LSC), an agency established by the federal government to provide funding to state legal aid agencies. Other funding for the Legal Services Network comes from local agencies like United Ways and from special trusts established by local bar associations. The members of this network in Connecticut are:

- Statewide Legal Services of Connecticut (SLS) is the entry point for the legal services network in Connecticut. People who call SLS will be screened for eligibility, and if they qualify, they will be referred for legal assistance to the non-profit law firm that serves their community. SLS is the only agency that receives funding from the Legal Services Corporation.
- Connecticut Legal Services (CLS) provides legal representation to low-income persons throughout the state, except those living in the greater Hartford or New Haven areas.
- Greater Hartford Legal Aid (GHLA) provides legal representation to low-income persons who live in the greater Hartford area.
- New Haven Legal Assistance Association (LAA) provides legal services to low-income persons in the greater New Haven and lower Naugatuck Valley areas.

What are Legal Clinics? Each of Connecticut's three law schools has a legal clinic, which provides legal assistance to people who cannot afford a lawyer. Under Connecticut's student practice rules, law students are permitted to represent clients in civil and criminal cases in all courts and administrative agencies in the jurisdiction. The clinics are:

- The Jerome N. Frank Legal Services Organization at Yale Law School links law students with individuals in need of legal help who cannot afford private attorneys. Students, supervised by Law School faculty members and participating attorneys, interview clients, write briefs, prepare witnesses, try cases, negotiate settlements, and argue appeals in state and federal courts.
- The UConn School of Law Clinic offers legal assistance in tax, civil and criminal matters to people who cannot afford an attorney, primarily to the Greater Hartford community.
    - Connecticut Community Law Center –Lawyers who establish solo law practices in collaboration with UConn's Connecticut Community Law Center, on UConn's Law School campus, help to provide affordable legal services on civil matters to clients who could not otherwise afford private counsel and representation.
- The Quinnipiac University School of Law legal clinics provide legal assistance in civil matters, to low-income residents of the judicial districts for New Haven and Milford. The clinics provide assistance in cases relating to federal tax issues, Social Security Disability and certain other health benefit claims, and for certain civil and family matters. People who cannot afford their own attorney are eligible to apply for clinic services. The clinics operate year-round but may limit intake of new cases during the summer months.

Additional Legal Service Agencies Other agencies offering legal assistance in civil matters, for special populations, are:

- Center for Children's Advocacy
- Center for Medicare Advocacy
- Children's Law Center
- CTLawHelp.org – Legal Assistance for Elders in Connecticut
- Connecticut Legal Rights Project

To Find Application Sites in Connecticut's Community Resources Database:

- Search by service name: Legal Representation

SOURCES: Legal Services Corporation; Jerome N. Frank Legal Services Organization; Quinnipiac University School of Law; University of Connecticut School of Law
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