

Legal resources in Bellingham and Washington State

page

Agencies in Bellingham that provide free 2
or low-fee-legal assistance

Agencies in Washington that have legal 6
resources for the public

Starting points for frequently asked legal questions

Finding a lawyer	9
Researching a law	9
Finding legal forms	10
Resources on wills and probate	11
Resources on divorce.....	11
Resources on landlord tenant issues.....	12
Resources on bankruptcy.....	13
Resources for Small Claims Court	14

Agencies in Bellingham that provide free or low-fee legal assistance

Northwest Justice Project

www.nwjustice.org

1814 Cornwall Avenue, Bellingham, WA 98225

360-734-8680 1-800-562-8836

free

A statewide, publicly funded, nonprofit law firm that employs lawyers and paralegals working in locations throughout Washington. NJP provides critical civil (non-criminal) legal assistance and representation to low-income people in cases affecting basic human needs such as family safety and security, housing preservation, protection of income, access to health care, education, and other basic needs. NJP operates a toll-free intake and online referral hotline called CLEAR (see below) and maintains WashingtonLawHelp (see page 7). You can also access a variety of NJP videos on YouTube. Go to youtube.com and type 'Northwest Justice Project' in the search bar.

CLEAR Coordinated Legal Education, Advice & Referral

1-888-201-1014 9:15 a.m. to 12:15 p.m. weekdays

1-888-387-7111 Clear*Sr for seniors age 60 or over, leave a message, or call the regular CLEAR number

1-888-833-6384 Deaf or hard of hearing, 9:15 a.m. to 12:15 p.m. weekdays

free

Call to determine if you qualify for free legal assistance for civil problems. Services are targeted to problems that affect basic needs such as housing, income, medical care, and family safety.

Please anticipate waiting time on the phone and have papers or documents concerning your problem ready when you call. Based on the information you give, NJP staff may do one or more of the following:

- Give you verbal or written advice that may help you to solve your problem on your own.
- Send you written legal information and/or forms to help you solve the problem on your own.
- Try to resolve your problem through negotiation.
- Refer you to another provider of legal aid.

CLEAR online

www.nwjustice.org/apply-online

free

Completing the online form will help determine if you qualify for free legal assistance for civil problems, and if you should call CLEAR. If you do end up calling CLEAR after applying online, the phone call will be shorter because of the information you have already provided. Also, the online service provides links to legal resources related to your problem that may be helpful.

waweblawyer.org

www.waweblawyer.org

free

Website for low-income people who have a civil legal problem in Washington State. You can get free legal advice from volunteer attorneys by creating an account and logging in to post your legal questions. Website includes links to access pro bono and low cost attorneys in Washington State.

LAW Advocates (Legal Assistance by Whatcom Advocates)

www.lawadvocates.org

P.O. Box 937, Bellingham, WA 98227

1415 Commercial Street, Bellingham

360-671-6079

Office hours: 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. telephone only, no walk ins. Call CLEAR (above) to arrange for an appointment.

Email: lawadvocates@lawadvocates.org

LAW Advocates provide free legal help including advice, representation, and other assistance for low income individuals and families facing urgent non-criminal legal problems. LAW Advocates help is provided in a variety of programs:

free

- **Street Law** a free, drop-in, legal advice clinic. Held at the Bellingham Public Library on one or two Saturdays a month from 1:00-4:00 p.m. This clinic allows you to address your legal issues in one-on-one consultations with volunteer lawyers. Call the library for dates, 778-7323.
- **Access ID** a free resource provided by non attorney volunteers who provide assistance to homeless or at-risk individuals to navigate the process to obtain state-issued ID. Occurs in conjunction with Street Law.
- **Other programs** provide help for tenants, domestic violence victims, those in debt, with disabilities, facing discrimination, or civil rights violations.

Whatcom County Superior Court-Court Facilitators

www.co.whatcom.wa.us/426/court-facilitators

311 Grand Avenue, 5th Floor, Room 507, Bellingham, WA 98225
360-738-2459

Court Facilitators are available by appointment only. Fees are cash only, payable to the County Clerk, prior to scheduling an appointment.

Facilitators help people without attorneys in Whatcom Superior Court family law cases. They help identify which family law forms are needed, review forms you've prepared for completeness, help schedule court hearings, explain court hearings and court procedures, and make referrals to other agencies. Court Facilitators cannot give legal advice or provide legal representation.

Washington State Office of the Attorney General— Safeguarding Consumers

www.atg.wa.gov/safeguarding-consumers

Local office: 103 E Holly street, Suite 310, Bellingham, WA 98225
360-676-2037

Consumer Hotline 1-800-551-4636

Link to email available on website

One of the roles of the Attorney General's Office is to protect the public by upholding the Consumer Protection Act. They also conduct education campaigns on identity theft and senior fraud prevention. They offer an informal complaint resolution service to Washington state residents and to consumers with complaints about businesses located in Washington state. You can file online or by mail. If your complaint is not within their area of responsibility, they will refer you to the correct agency. The website includes information on a wide variety of consumer issues.

free

Whatcom County Law Library

www.co.whatcom.wa.us/306/Law-Library

Whatcom County Courthouse, Suite B-03, 311 Grand Avenue,
Bellingham, WA 98225
360-676-6556

Office hours for the public vary, phone the library for current hours.

Library staff cannot give legal advice or interpret materials, but can assist you in locating and using legal research materials in the law library in print or electronic format. The library

free

maintains a small collection of 15,000 volumes containing the fundamental Washington laws and practice guides; Federal laws; U.S. Supreme Court reports; regional case law; legal encyclopedias, digests, and law reports; and a small collection of reference materials. The website has a list of helpful legal research links.

Whatcom Dispute Resolution Center

www.whatcomdrc.org

13 Prospect Street, Suite 201, Bellingham, WA 98225

360-676-0122 email wdrd@whatcomdrc.org

Office hours: 10:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m., Tuesday through Friday

Fees are arranged on a sliding scale.

The Center provides conflict prevention and intervention services for businesses, organizations, individuals and families. They offer training for adults and youth as well as impartial mediation, facilitation, and coaching services. WDRC mediates divorce issues, parenting plan creation, parent/teen issues, foreclosures, small claims, landlord/tenant issues, and in many other subject areas.

VSS Victim Support Services

www.victimsupportservices.org

360-756-1780

Crisis line 1-888-288-9221

Link to email available on website

free

Victim advocates are trained to support victims of crime. They offer emotional support, victims' rights information, help in finding needed resources and assistance in filling out crime victim related forms. Advocates frequently accompany victims and their family members through the criminal justice proceedings. Advocates work with other organizations, such as criminal justice or social service agencies, to get help or information for the victims they serve.

Agencies in Washington that have legal resources for the public

Public Law Library of King County

www.kcll.org

King County Courthouse, 516 3rd Avenue, Suite W-621, Seattle, WA 98104

206-477-1305

Link to email available on website

free

Staff at the Law Library will answer your legal questions by guiding you to different legal resources. The Washington State Law Library **www.courts.wa.gov/library** offers this service as well. You can phone or email both agencies. In addition, the Public Law Library of King County has created concise research guides on popular legal topics. Their website includes many recommended links for additional legal services, information and research.

Legal Voice (formerly known as Northwest Women's Law Center)

www.legalvoice.org

907 Pine Street, Suite 500, Seattle, WA 98101

206-682-9552 email info@legalvoice.org

free

Staff at the Center answer legal questions over the phone by giving people information about their legal rights. They do not provide legal advice. Their website has a wide variety of legal self help publications covering subjects from family law, LGBT rights, employment rights, and consumer issues.

Northwest Immigrant Rights Project

www.nwirp.org

Western Washington Office

206-587-4009, toll free 1-800-445-5771

Northwest Immigrant Rights Project (NWIRP) provides high-quality legal representation at little or no cost to those in immigration and deportation proceedings. Their priority is the representation of low-income immigrants, people impacted by the criminal legal system, and people who face other forms of oppression. Special attention is paid to survivors of domestic violence, those seeking asylum, family services, children and

youth, and those seeking citizenship. The website provides links to forms, publications, and the latest immigration updates.

Unemployment Law Project

unemploymentlawproject.org

1904 3rd Avenue, Suite 604

Seattle, WA 98101

free helpline 206-441-9178 ext 10, or 1-888-441-9178 ext 10

The Unemployment Law Project provides legal assistance and information to people in Washington State who have been denied unemployment benefits or whose award of benefits is being challenged. Services are offered to anyone with a Washington State claim. Links to self-help materials and a FAQ list are available on the website.

WashingtonLawHelp

washingtonlawhelp.org

free

Maintained by the Northwest Justice Project this website provides free legal information for all, as well as a guide to free and low-cost legal help to low-income persons and seniors in Washington. Legal information is available in printable resources, links, and sometimes in videos or interactive court forms. Many topic areas are covered including family law, debt, immigration, housing, domestic violence, health, and employment.

Washington State Bar Association

www.wsba.org

1325 Fourth Avenue, Suite 600, Seattle, WA 98101

Toll Free 1-800-945-9722

In addition to licensing attorneys in the State of Washington, the Bar provides helpful information on legal topics (click on 'Resources for the Public' on their website). The website has both a directory of lawyers as well as information on how to file a complaint against a lawyer.

Moderate Means Program

www.moderatemeanswa.org

The Bar offers this program which connects clients who are middle-income earners with lawyers who offer legal assistance

at a reduced cost. To be eligible you must be facing a family, housing, or consumer law issue and your household income must fall between 200-400% of the Federal Poverty level. You can apply online or call their intake line **855-741-6930**, and a law student will refer you to a participating lawyer. The whole process may take several weeks.

Starting points for frequently asked legal questions

1. How do I find a lawyer?

If you are low income or a senior contact CLEAR (see page 2 for details).

You can also go to **www.washingtonlawhelp.org** to help find a lawyer. First, search for your particular legal problem under 'Understand your legal issue.' Then, on the results page, click on 'Find Legal Help'. Type in your zip code to find low-income legal help in your geographic area.

Lawyer locators

If you are not low income, these websites may be helpful:

- **lawforwa.org** click on the 'Find Legal Help' tab
- **wsba.org** Washington State Bar Association website, click on 'Lawyer Directory'
- **www.moderatemeanswa.org** the Washington State Bar program that connects clients to lawyers at a reduced cost. Check the website for eligibility.
- **martindale.com** has a directory of lawyers or law firms

Other online resource

The Washington State Bar Association has several consumer information pamphlets on working with lawyers, including one on consulting a lawyer, and one on legal fees. Go to **www.wsba.org** click on 'Resources for the Public' and then on 'Consumer Information'.

2. How do I research a law?

Legislative law

The **Library** has a small collection of legislative law:

Revised Code of Washington the laws of Washington State

Bellingham Municipal Code the laws of the City of Bellingham

Whatcom County Code the laws of Whatcom County

These resources have subject indexes. They are also all online and can be searched by keyword. The easiest way to access all of the above online is to go to **www.mrsc.org** and 'Research Tools', then 'Legal Research' and then down to 'City

Codes', 'County Codes', 'RCW', and 'WAC'.

Case law and other help

If you are looking for case law or annotated guides to legislative law, you may want to visit the Whatcom County Law Library (page 4). Their website also has links to other online resources. Go to www.co.whatcom.wa.us/306/Law-Library

Online resources

Try the Public Law Library of King County www.kcll.org whose website has a variety of research guides. Click on 'Guides', and then on 'Research Guides'.

3. How do I find legal forms?

If you are looking for samples of general legal forms; the **Library** has books on this topic. Ask for assistance at the Help Desk or check the Library catalog, using these subjects:

- Forms (Law)
- Wills forms
- Power of Attorney forms
- Landlord and Tenant

Forms online

If you are looking for court forms, a good place to start is The Washington State Court website www.courts.wa.gov/forms for forms used statewide in Washington Courts. You can find forms by category, or use the search function for a particular form.

For local court forms, check out the Whatcom County Superior Court website at www.co.whatcom.wa.us/428/Local-Forms

Check out the Internet Legal Research Group's website for a large collection of sample legal forms. Go to www.ilrg.com/forms

The Public Law Library of King County [kcll.org](http://www.kcll.org) has a long list of linked web content which include forms of some types. Click on 'Forms' on the website. Some can be completed online, others printed out, and some are model forms to be used as guides.

Or try Nolo, a publisher of legal self help books. They want to

sell you their products, but their website has a wide variety of free information about legal forms. Go to www.nolo.com

4. How do I write a will or deal with probate issues?

The **Library** has books on wills and probate. Ask for assistance at the Help Desk or check the Library catalog, using these subjects:

- Estate planning
- Living trusts
- Probate law
- Wills popular works
- Wills forms

Online resources

The Public Law Library of King County kcll.org has a webpage on 'Probate Law Guide' with informative links.

Washington State Probate www.wa-probate.com is written by a lawyer. This website has information specific to Washington State on probate and wills, and has many forms.

The Washington State Bar Association has pamphlets on wills and trusts. Go to www.wsba.org, click on 'Resources for the Public' and then on 'Consumer Information'.

5. How do I find legal information on divorce (dissolution)?

The **Library** has books on divorce. Ask for assistance at the Help Desk or check the Library catalog, using these subjects:

- Divorce
- Divorce forms
- Divorce mediation
- Divorce popular works
- Custody of children

Local help

The Whatcom County Courthouse Facilitators may also be able to help you with dissolution forms. Go to page 4 for details.

Online forms and information

You may want to start at the WashingtonLawHelp website

which has a whole range of instructions and access to forms (some interactive) for all aspects of dissolution in Washington State. Go to: www.washingtonlawhelp.org and click on 'Family law'.

The Washington State Courts website also has dissolution forms. Go to www.courts.wa.gov/forms.

The Legal Voice also has helpful information on marriage, partnerships, and dissolution. Go to www.legalvoice.org, click on 'Tools and Resources' and then on 'Family law'.

6. How do I find information on landlord tenant issues?

The **Library** has books on landlord tenant issues. Ask for assistance at the Help Desk or check the Library catalog, using these subjects:

- Landlord and tenant
- Landlords
- Rental housing

Local help

The **Law Advocates** provide help through the **Tenant Clinic**. The clinic takes place at the Whatcom County Courthouse from 12:30 to 3:00 p.m. on every Friday that the Superior Court is in session. Lawyers meet with renters on a first-come, first served basis. The clinic serves low-income renters who are in danger of losing their housing. The free consultation service can include: information about Landlord Tenant Laws, document review and advice, representation, and negotiation with the landlord's attorney. Go to www.lawadvocates.org and click on 'What we do' and then on 'Tenant Clinic' for more information.

Online resources

The City of Bellingham has a webpage of Landlord/Tenant information and resources. It includes links to the Washington State Residential Landlord-Tenant Act and to city regulations affecting tenants or owners. It provide links to other city programs on housing and renting. Go to www.cob.org/services/housing/pages/landlord-tenant.aspx

WashingtonLawHelp also has information on landlord/tenant topics. Go to www.washingtonlawhelp.org, click on 'Housing'

and then click on 'Tenant's rights'. There is a series of short videos on all aspects of being a tenant. Publications also cover subjects such as repairs, being locked out, security deposits, and eviction.

Solid Ground is Seattle based, but will work with tenants throughout the state. Their website www.solid-ground.org/get-help/housing/for-tenants has information on the Landlord Tenant law, best practices for renters, and other information. You can also call their Tenant Services hotline: 1-206-694-6767. Check their website for hours the hotline is available.

Tenants Union of Washington State www.tenantsunion.org mission is to create housing justice through education, outreach, organizing and advocacy. Their website contains well-organized access points to learning your rights during all stages of being a tenant.

If you are renting space for a mobile home in a mobile home park the Attorney General of Washington may be able to help. Call 1-866-924-6458 or go to www.atg.wa.gov/manufactured-mobile-home-landlord-tenant-act

7. How do I find information on bankruptcy?

The **Library** has books on bankruptcy. Ask for assistance at the Help Desk or check the Library catalog, using these subjects:

Bankruptcy popular works

Debtor and creditor popular works

Online resources

You may want to start with the website of the United States Bankruptcy Court Western District of Washington. This comprehensive website has laws, rules, forms and self help information. Go to www.wawb.uscourts.gov

The King County Law Library has helpful information and links on bankruptcy. Go to kcll.org, click on 'Guides,' and then on 'Research Guides,' then on 'Bankruptcy'.

A non-governmental website, Washington Bankruptcy Law, has helpful information and frequently asked questions. Go to www.washington-bankruptcy.com

Another good starting point is **washingtonlawhelp.org**. Click on 'Consumer and Debt' and then on 'Bankruptcy'. You will find a variety of resources including short videos.

Nolo Press has free information on debt and bankruptcy. Go to **www.nolo.com/legal-encyclopedia/bankruptcy**

8. How do I find information about small claims court or representing myself without a lawyer?

The **Library** has books on representing yourself without a lawyer. Ask for assistance at the Help Desk or check the Library catalog, using these subjects:

Small claims

Pro se

Local help

The **Whatcom County District Court** tries small claims cases. Their address is 311 Grand Avenue, Suite 401, Bellingham. They have daytime and night court hours. Call 360-676-6770 for more details. Their website has forms and a link to the Washington State Courts website with information on small claims. Go to **www.co.whatcom.wa.us/d453/Small-Claims**

Online resources

You may want to check WashingtonLawHelp's website which has information on representing yourself in various legal situations. Go to **www.washingtonlawhelp.org**, type in 'representing yourself' in the search box. You can also type in 'small claims court' in a separate search.

The Public Law Library of King County has a page on their website with Small Claims Court information. Go to **kcll.org** click on 'Guides' and then on 'Research Guides' and then on 'Small Claims Court'

Notes

Bellingham Public Library

Central Library

210 Central Avenue
360-778-7323

Monday-Tuesday 10:00 a.m.—8:00 p.m.

Wednesday-Saturday 10:00 a.m.—6:00 p.m.

Sunday 1:00 p.m.—5 p.m.

Central Library open Sundays during the school year, after Labor Day to Memorial Day

Barkley Branch

3111 Newmarket Street #103
360-778-7290

Monday-Tuesday 10:00 a.m.—2:00 p.m.

Wednesday-Friday 2:00 p.m.—6:00 p.m.

Saturday 10:00 a.m.—6:00 p.m.

Fairhaven Branch

1117 12th Street
360-778-7188

Monday-Tuesday 10:00 a.m.—2:00 p.m.

Wednesday-Friday 2:00 p.m.—6:00 p.m.

Saturday 10:00 a.m.—6:00 p.m.

www.bellinghampubliclibrary.org