

Legal resources in Bellingham and Washington State

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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, legal aid program 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 Washington Law Help (see page 8). 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

1-877-211-9274 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 of low income people 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

The online intake only works on computers, not on mobile devices. CLEAR online works for cases involving government benefits or loss of housing other than foreclosure. For other issues, you can start online but you will need to call the CLEAR Hotline to finish. However, your phone call will be shorter because of the information you have already provided online.

LAW Advocates (Legal Assistance by Whatcom Advocates)

www.lawadvocates.org

P.O. Box 937, Bellingham, WA 98227

1415 Commercial Street, Bellingham

360-671-6079

1-800-833-6384 Deaf or hard of hearing

Office hours: 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 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:

- 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, or check the LAW Advocates website.
- 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.
- Will Program serves low income people age 60 and older, people living with a disability and people facing a terminal illness with wills or estate documents.
- Other programs provide help for tenants, domestic violence victims, those in debt, with disabilities, facing discrimination, or civil rights violations, Veterans, or Kinship custody.

free

VSS Victim Support Services

www.victimsupportservices.org

Whatcom/Skagit County Office

360-756-1780

24 Hour hotline 1-888-288-9221

Link to email available on website

VSS is a nonprofit agency with their main office in Snohomish County, and satellite offices located in King, Island, Skagit, and Whatcom County. 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 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.

free

DVSAS Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Services

www.dvsas.org

1407 Commercial St, Bellingham, WA 98227

360-671-5714 Helpline 360-715-1563

DVSAS is a nonprofit that supports individuals affected by domestic violence, sexual assault, and sexual exploitations. It offers immediate help and ongoing support. Their support is client centered and offers the full spectrum of services including safe, confidential shelter and a variety of support groups.

free

Whatcom County Superior Court-Court Facilitators

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

311 Grand Avenue, 3rd Floor, Room 304, Bellingham, WA 98225

360-778-5563

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

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.

Whatcom Civil Rights Project

www.whatcomcivilrightsproject.org

P.O. Box 2444, Bellingham, WA 98227

360-746-2745 email is whatcomcivilrights@gmail.com

The Civil Rights Project is a joint collaboration of LAW Advocates and the Whatcom Peace & Justice Center. Working in conjunction with a network of local attorneys, WCRP provides legal assistance and advocacy to victims of discrimination and civil rights abuse in Whatcom County. The website has resources to report hate crimes, or to report racial profiling by local law enforcement. They also maintain a calendar of racial justice events.

free

Washington State Office of the Attorney General— Safeguarding Consumers

www.atg.wa.gov/safeguarding-consumers

Local office: 2211 Rimland Dr, Suite 325, Bellingham, WA 98226

360-676-2037

Consumer Resource Center 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

360-778-5790

Office hours for the public vary, call 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 maintains a collection of 15,000 reference volumes containing

free

fundamental Washington laws and practice guides; Federal laws; U.S. Supreme Court reports; Washington State case law; legal encyclopedias, digests, and law reports. The website contains a link to search the Law Library catalog online, and a list of helpful legal research links.

Whatcom Dispute Resolution Center

www.whatcomdrc.org

206 Prospect Street, Bellingham, WA 98225

360-676-0122

1-800-833-6388 Deaf or hard of hearing

email wdrdc@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 and separation, parenting plan creation, parent/teen conflict, foreclosures, small claims, landlord/tenant problems, and many other issues.

Agencies in Washington that have legal resources for the public

Disability Rights Washington

www.disabilityrightswa.org

315 5th Avenue S, Suite 850

Seattle, WA 98104

206-324-1524 800-562-2702 email is: info@dr-wa.org

A nonprofit that protects the rights of people with disabilities statewide. Their mission is to advance the dignity, equality, and self-determination of people with disabilities. They work to pursue justice on matters related to human and legal rights. The website includes information sheets and videos on a wide variety of subjects to empower individuals with disabilities to better advocate for themselves.

King County Law Library

www.kcll.org

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

206-477-1305 or 206-477-1316 email is: services@kcll.org

The Law Library has created concise research guides on popular legal topics. They also sell a variety of form packets to purchase in person or online. The Law Library offers free workshops for people representing themselves (Self-Represented Litigants Workshops) at local libraries or community centers. Their website includes a directory of free and low cost legal help.

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 is: info@legalvoice.org

Legal Voice defends and protects the civil rights of women and LGBTQ people in the Northwest through litigation, legislative advocacy and legal rights education. They do not provide legal advice or referrals to lawyers. But their website has a wide variety of legal self help publications covering subjects from family law, gender based violence, LGBT rights, civil rights and

discrimination, finding and working with lawyers, employment rights, and legal rights and resources for seniors.

Northwest Immigrant Rights Project

www.nwirp.org

Seattle Office

615 2nd Avenue, Suite 400, Seattle, WA 98104

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, other agencies offering legal help to immigrants, and the latest immigration updates. Also, check www.immigrationlawhelp.org for additional resources.

Unemployment Law Project

unemploymentlawproject.org

1904 3rd Avenue, Suite 604

Seattle, WA 98101

free helpline 206-441-9178 or 1-888-441-9178

The Unemployment Law Project provides low-cost representation, and free advice, and counsel 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.

Washington Law Help

www.washingtonlawhelp.org

Maintained by the Northwest Justice Project, Washington LawHelp is a guide to free civil legal services for low-income persons and seniors in Washington. This site provides legal education materials and tools that give you basic information on a number of legal problems, and in some cases, detailed instructions and forms to help you represent yourself in court.

You can also locate information on free legal aid programs in Washington, including basic eligibility and contact information. The legal education materials include short videos, some interactive forms, and instructions for how to proceed. Many topic areas are covered including family law, debt, immigration, housing, domestic violence, health, tenant rights, public benefits, 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 a directory of lawyers in the state. Their website also contains information on:

Moderate Means Program is available for people facing a family, housing, or consumer law issue and have a household income that falls between 200-400% of the federal poverty level. This referral program uses lawyers and Limited License Legal Technicians. Applying online is the fastest way to process your request (link available on website), though you can call 855-741-6930. A law student volunteer will call you within three to five business days. The Moderate Means Program does not provide immediate assistance. It can take up to three weeks to place a case and the program cannot guarantee a referral.

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, click 'Get Legal Help'**. **You will be asked** to choose your location and then your legal issue. This results in a list of programs providing legal assistance in your geographic area.

Lawyer locators

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

- www.wsba.org Washington State Bar Association website, **click 'Legal Directory'**
- For Moderate Means Program, go to www.wsba.org and **type in 'moderate means' in the search bar. Check for eligibility.**
- martindale.com has a directory of lawyers or law firms
- www.whatcomlocallaw.com has a directory of local lawyers

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'.**

For Native American tribal codes go to National Indian Law Library <https://www.narf.org/nill> **Click 'Tribal Law'**

Gateway' to find tribal law materials by tribe.

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 5). Their website also has links to other online case law resources. Go to www.whatcomlawlibrary.org and click **'Case Law—Free'**.

Online resources

Try the King County Law Library www.kccl.org whose website has a variety of research guides. Click **'Guides'**.

3. How do I find legal forms?

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

The King County Law Library www.kccl.org/forms has links to form packets (for a fee) and link arranged by subject to free forms available online.

Washington Law Help also provides links to legal forms. Click **'Get Legal Info', and choose your subject. The results often** contain advice and forms. Go to www.washingtonlawhelp.org

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?

Local help

The LAW Advocates has a Will Program, which is a cooperative project between LAW Advocates and Senior Information and Assistance. The program serves low-income people age 60 and older, people living with a disability, and people facing a terminal illness who need a will or other estate document.

www.lawadvocates.org/senior-wills

Online information

Washington Wills has information and an interactive tool to create a simple will. They also provide legal advice for a fee.

<https://wa-wills.com>

Washington Law Help has a section on Health Care Directives (or Living Will) with both information and forms, as well as forms and information on Affidavit for Small Estates.

www.washingtonlawhelp.org

Washington State Probate is a nonprofit that has forms and instructions for dealing with probate, including small estates.

www.wa-probate.com

5. How do I find legal information on divorce?

Local help

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

Online forms and information

You may want to start at the Washington Law Help website which has a whole range of instructions and access to forms (some interactive) for all aspects of divorce in Washington State. Go to www.washingtonlawhelp.org

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

The King County Law Library has a detailed guide on Divorce in Washington. Go to www.kccl.org and click **'Guides'**

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

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

Local help

The LAW Advocates provide help through the Tenant Clinic. At

this drop-in clinic, lawyers consult with low income renters on a first-come, first-serve basis. The clinic serves those who are in danger of losing their housing. The free consultation service can include: information about Landlord Tenant Laws, document review and advice, representation, or negotiation with the **landlord's attorney**. Go to www.lawadvocates.org and click **'Need Legal Help?'**

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 provides links to other city programs on housing and renting. Go to www.cob.org/services/housing/landlord-tenant

Washington Law Help also has information on landlord/tenant topics. Go to www.washingtonlawhelp.org, click **'Get Legal Info'**, then **'House & Apartment'** and then **'Tenant's rights'**. There is a series of short videos on all aspects of being a tenant. There are also publications that cover subjects such as repairs, being locked out, security deposits, public housing, and eviction.

Solid Ground is Seattle based, but will work with tenants throughout the state. Their website www.solid-ground.org has information on the Landlord Tenant law, best practices for renters, researching your landlord, and other information.

Tenants Union of Washington State's 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.
www.tenantsunion.org/rights

If you are renting space for a mobile home in a mobile home park the Attorney General of Washington may be able to help. **There is a link to the 'Manufactured Housing Dispute Resolution Program' on their website as well as information on the law.**
www.atg.wa.gov/manufactured-housing-dispute-resolution-program

7. How do I find information on bankruptcy?

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 www.kcll.org click **'Guides'** and then **'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 www.washingtonlawhelp.org Click **'Money & Debt'** and then **'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?

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 360-778-5400 for more details. Their website has forms and a link to the Washington State Courts website which has information on small claims. Go to www.co.whatcom.wa.us/453/Small-Claims

Online resources

Go to the Washington Courts website www.courts.wa.gov **Type 'Small Claims Court' in the search box. This will lead you to several guides on how to represent yourself without a lawyer in various courts.**

Washington Law Help has information about how to represent yourself in Small Claims Court. Go to

www.washingtonlawhelp.org and type 'Small claims court' in the search box.

The King County Law Library has a page on their website with Small Claims Court information. Go to

www.kcll.org click '**Guides**' and then '**Small Claims Court**'.

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