

Family Law Ask-A-Lawyer Program

Volunteer Manual

Every Thursday, 2:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Outside of Courtroom 8, Second Floor
Clark County Family Courts and Services Building
601 N. Pecos Road
Las Vegas, NV 89101

Co-Sponsored by:



Family Law Ask-A-Lawyer Program

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What is the Family Law Ask-A-Lawyer Program?

The Family Law Ask-A-Lawyer Program (Ask-A-Lawyer) is a program developed in partnership by the Family Law Self-Help Center (SHC) and Legal Aid Center of Southern Nevada (Legal Aid Center). The goal of Ask-A-Lawyer is to expand access to justice in the State and Nevada by providing a free, fifteen minute consultation with a volunteer attorney to pro se litigants with family law questions and/or legal issues.

When and where does the Family Law Ask-A-Lawyer Program take place?

The Family Law Ask-A-Lawyer occurs every Thursday from 2:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. on the second floor of the Family Courts and Services Building at 601 N. Pecos Rd. Las Vegas, Nevada 89101.

What do I do when I get there?

Attorneys should check in on the second floor outside of courtroom 8. When you arrive, please identify yourself to the Legal Aid Center staff member as a pro bono Ask-A-Lawyer volunteer. You should be asked to sign-in and will then be directed to a court ante room where you will meet with litigants.

What should I know about the litigants I will see?

Litigants sign up for the Program in advance by calling the Ask-A-Lawyer hotline at 386-1070 ext. 1731 and leaving a message or in person at the Family Law Self-Help Center. The hotline opens every week starting Monday at 8:30 a.m. and ending Tuesday at 5:00 p.m. As the program only has room for 50 participants, some litigants have waited more than one week to sign up for the program. Additionally, they have all been asked to identify their legal problem in an attempt to assure that it is actually a family law matter.

The Program was initially designed to provide assistance to customers of the SHC who are representing themselves because they cannot afford to hire an attorney. However, some litigants may be able to hire counsel. Others are very capable of representing themselves with just a little coaching and guidance.

Each litigant seeking to meet with an advocate will complete a Questionnaire. Review this form at the start of each meeting with a litigant to help assess the litigant's needs. Also, be sure each litigant you interview has signed the Disclaimer on the bottom of the Questionnaire. It is important for your protection and the continuation of the Program that all litigants sign the Disclaimer before receiving a consultation. The Disclaimer states the following:

”Participation in the Ask-A-Lawyer program does not establish an Attorney/Client relationship. The advocate is not offering or agreeing to represent you in any legal matter. Assistance is based only on a brief review of the facts disclosed. Additional facts may result in different legal information being provided. Neither Legal Aid Center of Southern Nevada, Nevada Legal Services, nor the Family Law Self-Help Center is responsible for the outcome of your case, which is decided by a judge, based on the facts and the law. We recommend that you consult with a private attorney concerning the facts of your case prior to filing any document.”

How do I get started?

Legal Aid Center staff will provide you with the Questionnaire for the litigant you will see and will escort the litigant back to your designated meeting space to begin the interview.

What kind of assistance may I provide?

1. Legal Information – Advocates may provide legal information to litigants about court papers and procedure. They may assist litigants with step-by-step information and instructions regarding the filing of papers and service on the opposing party. They may walk the litigant through the process, provide the litigant with a checklist, and even accompany the litigant to the clerk’s filing window.
2. Legal Strategy/Advice – Advocates may provide litigants with legal advice and assist litigants in developing legal strategy and preparing to present a case to the Court.
3. Review of Forms – Advocates can review litigant forms for form choice and content. They can check forms for completion and for necessary attachments, such as Financial Disclosure Forms, UCCJEA Declarations, etc. They can assist litigants in completing forms.
4. Referral to Other Resources –
 - a) To Community Legal Education Classes -- Advocates may refer litigants to Family Law (Divorce), Paternity/Custody, and Guardianship classes offered as a joint project through Legal Aid Center of Southern Nevada and the UNLV William S. Boyd School of Law. Please note these classes are ordinarily the first step in the application process for additional services through the Pro Bono Project at Legal Aid Center of Southern Nevada. Litigants can call Legal Aid Center at 386-1070 or visit www.lacsn.org for a current class schedule.
 - b) Legal Aid Center of Southern Nevada -- For routine matters, please refer litigants to the free community legal education classes described above, as a way of beginning the application process for further assistance from Legal Aid Center’s Pro Bono Project. If the litigant is low-income, appears to have a meritorious case, and the matter seems to be urgent, refer the litigant to Legal Aid Center for a walk-in intake. Walk-in hours are every Tuesday through Thursday, 9:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. Legal Aid Center is located at 725 E. Charleston Boulevard (Corner of 8th & Charleston) and applicants must present photo ID and proof of ALL household income.

- c) To Family Violence Intervention Program (“TPO Office”) -- Litigants in need of assistance in obtaining Temporary Protective Orders (TPOs) can be referred to the Family Violence Intervention Program, located in the courthouse. The TPO Office is on the right-hand side as you enter the open-air walkway from the security checkpoint at the court entrance. Office hours are Monday-Thursday 8:00 a.m. -5:00 p.m. and Friday 9:00 a.m. – 5 p.m. Applicants must arrive by 3:00 to apply.
- d) To DA Family Support Division -- Litigants in need of assistance with child support matters can be referred to the DA Family Support Division, 702-671-9200. DA Family Support Division conducts a Q&A Session on Child Support. To sign up for a Q & A Session, stop by the Family Law Self-Help Center or call 702-455-1505.
- e) To a Private Attorney -- Litigants who are able to hire an attorney can be directed on how to do so. Litigants should be given the phone number for the State Bar’s Lawyer Referral and Information Services (LRIS), 702-382-0504. (Self-referrals or referrals to specific colleagues should not be given.)
- f) To the Family Law Self Help Center -- If litigants need a simple court form, you may complete the SHC referral sheet, identifying what form is needed, and send the person with the referral sheet to the Self Help Center. Please keep in mind that the SHC does not have forms that fit every situation. Many litigants have already been to the SHC, and are taking part in the Ask A Lawyer program because the SHC did not have the appropriate form for their needs. Only refer litigants back to the SHC if you know the SHC has a form that will apply.

What shouldn’t I do?

Volunteer attorneys are not permitted to distribute business cards, nor to solicit business for themselves or others. Volunteers are not permitted to make referrals other than to court services, a legal aid provider, or to LRIS.

Volunteer attorneys should not meet with both parties regarding Joint Petitions, due to potential conflicts of interest. Often times the Joint Petition will greatly favor one party over the other or leave out extensive property or debt, which results in an advantage to one party over the other. The best practice is for one advocate to see the husband and a different advocate to see the wife. The advocates should not be from the same office. Parties should be encouraged to seek independent legal advice, not to create disagreements, but to avoid unintentional results and conflicts in the future.

Try not to get behind schedule. Litigants are told they will get a consultation with an attorney that will last approximately 15 minutes. If a litigant presents a relatively simple issue and the consultation only requires 5 minutes of your attention, explain to the litigant that there are many additional litigants waiting to be seen. Additionally, try not to spend longer than 15 minutes with a litigant. Try to keep litigants focused on their specific family law problem. There are typically

30-50 litigants waiting to be seen and we would like to give everyone assistance in a timely manner.

Volunteer attorneys should not meet with a litigant if they believe they have a conflict of interest. If you determine that you have a conflict, request that one of the other legal advocates meet with that particular litigant. If after speaking briefly with a party, you recognize the facts and believe there is a conflict, excuse yourself and request that one of the other legal advocates meet with that particular litigant. There is no need to disclose that you have had a consultation with the opposing party, as disclosure could be deemed a breach of confidentiality. [NOTE: **NRPC 6.5. Nonprofit and Court-Annexed Limited Legal Services Programs** essentially says that when a lawyer is participating in a program like this, the conflict rules (i.e. NRPC 1.7, 1.9 and 1.10) only apply if the lawyer knows there is a conflict.]

Volunteer attorneys should not refer litigants to the judicial law clerks and JEAs if at all possible. Judicial staff cannot give legal advice, and are usually unable to respond to litigants' questions. If the litigant needs to know about documents filed in their case, applicable dates, etc., they should be referred to Court Records where they can obtain copies of filed documents and can obtain procedural information about their case.

What do I do at the end of each interview?

Once the consultation is concluded, please complete the back of the Questionnaire, noting the date, your name, the type of referrals made, and whether a conflicts check was completed and legal advice given. Also, please briefly describe the advice given/services provided. This information is vital for your malpractice insurance coverage through Legal Aid Center's Pro Bono Project during Ask-A-Lawyer.

These forms will be maintained at Legal Aid Center for reference in the event of complaints, or subsequent requests for assistance, as well as for statistical information. As a result, it is important that this form is filled out completely and accurately. Thank you for your anticipated cooperation.

What do I do at the end of the program?

Once the program is concluded (i.e. all litigants have been seen), **please return all questionnaires to Legal Aid Center staff.**

Will I get Pro Bono "Credit" for the time I spend at Ask- A-Lawyer?

Yes. As long as you sign-in each time you participate in the Program, three hours will be reported back to the Pro Bono Project at Legal Aid Center and those hours will be considered just like the pro bono hours attorneys donate on pro bono cases.

Please keep track of the hours you spend at the Program, as you will be required to report your pro bono hours to the State Bar of Nevada pursuant to Rule 6.1 of the Rules of Professional Conduct at the beginning of each year (i.e. in early 2018 for the 2017 reporting period). The Pro Bono Project and Legal Aid Center do not report pro bono hours to the State Bar of Nevada.

How do I sign up to volunteer?

You may contact the Pro Bono Project at 386-1070, ext. 1444 or probono@lacsnsn.org for a list of available shifts.

THANK YOU SO MUCH FOR VOLUNTEERING FOR THE ASK-A-LAWYER PROGRAM!!!

Please contact us if you have any questions, problems, or suggestions as to how we might improve the Family Law Ask-A-Lawyer Program.

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