



FREE LEGAL ANSWERS

offers help for people who need civil legal assistance.



What is Free Legal Answers?

The website ms.freelegalanswers.org is an online civil legal advice site intended to help people who cannot afford to pay for an attorney. The website is a cooperative effort of the Mississippi Access to Justice Commission and the Mississippi Volunteer Lawyers Project.

The American Bar Association's Standing Committee on Pro Bono and Public Service worked to expand the program nationwide, utilizing a model developed in Tennessee.

How does Free Legal Answers work?

People who qualify for assistance will sign up for an account, then post a question privately to the website. A volunteer attorney will anonymously answer the question through the website. The User will receive an e-mail when the question receives a response. The User may ask follow-up questions through the website.

Who qualifies for free assistance?

Free Legal Answers is designed to help low-income people. People seeking assistance are screened by income. Qualifications include:

- annual household income below 200 percent of Federal Poverty Guidelines — for example, an individual annual income of less than \$23,760, or less than \$47,520 for a family of four.
- having less than \$5,000 in total assets;
- at least 18 years old;
- not incarcerated.

What kinds of cases can I ask about?

The service answers questions about civil law. Topics may include family law matters such as divorce, custody, child support, visitation, guardianship, emancipation, adoption, name change and birth certificate correction as well as domestic violence, bankruptcy, consumer issues, education, employment, housing, workers compensation, wills and estate planning.

HOW IT WORKS



See if you qualify.



Ask a question.



Check your e-mail.



Ask follow-up questions.

What are the limitations?

Free Legal Answers does not deal with criminal law.

Free Legal Answers is intended to give brief, basic legal advice. Volunteer attorneys will not write letters, make phone calls or file documents for the users, and will not represent them in court. The service is intended to help people determine whether they have a legal issue, and give them advice on how to proceed.

Persons with complex legal issues would be better served by contacting a qualified private attorney.

Are forms available to help?

The Mississippi Access to Justice Commission offers free forms online to low-income Mississippians seeking irreconcilable differences divorce, emancipation and adult name change. Go to the Mississippi Access to Justice website at this link: <http://www.msatjc.org/need-legal-assistance/>.

Victims of Domestic Violence may obtain free forms from the office of the Mississippi Attorney General at: <http://www.ago.state.ms.us/divisions/domestic-violence/>.

Beware of the numerous forms offered for sale on the Internet. Many of the forms offered for sale will not be accepted for filing in Mississippi courts.

What is the mission of Free Legal Answers?

Free Legal Answers was created out of necessity to provide legal services to people who have no other way to deal with their legal problems. The program is not an effort to generate more lawsuits. It is intended to address the unmet civil legal needs of low-income people who cannot afford to hire a lawyer.

Can I talk to someone?

For more information about Free Legal Answers (ms.freelegalanswers.org), contact Nicole McLaughlin at nmclaughlin@msbar.org or contact Gayla Carpenter-Sanders at gsanders@mvlp.org.

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