



JUSTICEGUIDE



FREE Resources for the Public

Online Info on a Wide Variety of Legal Issues

PAGES 4 & 5

All About Wills and Advance Directives

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IMMPAV (Immigration Pathways for Victims)

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Special Projects Spotlight: Veterans Assistance
and Disaster Relief

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Get Legal Help



APPLY ONLINE
legalaidnc.org/apply



Toll-Free HELPLINE
1.866.219.LANC (5262)

Legal Aid NC

Our services are **FREE** to low-income people. To find out if you qualify, apply online or call our helpline.

We can help you with civil legal issues related to

**Housing | Consumer | Employment | Public Benefits
Domestic Violence & Sexual Assault**

We do not handle criminal cases.

Facebook Live Streams & Zoom Clinics

**See pages 4 & 5 for more information
on our FREE, online legal clinics.**

Algunos videos, materiales y eventos en línea están disponibles en español.

CONTACT

PO BOX 28741
RALEIGH, NC 27611







DEVELOPMENT
& DONATIONS
919.436.2340

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GIVE

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Your gift allows us to provide essential legal services to our clients throughout the state. As an LSC-funded organization, all grants and contributions made to us are subject to the Legal Services Corporation Act, 42 U.S.C. 2996 et seq. and LSC's appropriations. These regulations have been followed by our program since 1976 and ensure that all our funding will be used to meet the most critical legal needs of the most vulnerable North Carolinians.

Please contact us for more information. See lsc.gov.

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Visit legallaidnc.org/clinics for self-help materials that can help citizens address some legal problems without assistance from an attorney.

See pages 4 & 5 for details.

Visit legallaidnc.org/get-help or call **1.866.219.LANC (5262)** to apply for brief service and advice on your individual case, as well as to apply for more extensive services.

eCourts Guide & File can help you prepare your own court documents!

This free online service helps users prepare court documents to file for certain case types in some North Carolina counties: Absolute Divorce; Adult Guardianship; Adult Name Change; Application for Certificate of Verification of Prior Expunction; Domestic Violence Protective Order; Motion to Claim Exempt Property; Petition to Proceed as an Indigent; Probate (Year's Allowance, Summary Administration, and Small Estate Administration); Request for Dismissal or Speeding Reduction for Traffic Citations; Request for Relief from Fines, Fees, and Other Monetary Obligations; Small Claims (Money Owed and Repossession of Personal Property); and Summary Ejectment (Eviction).



Use eCourts to:

1. Answer online questions to prepare the case filing.
2. Automatically create legal documents for free.
3. Print documents to file with the clerk of court.

Visit www.nccourts.gov/services and scroll down to access this tool.

ONLINE LISTEN & LEARN SESSIONS

Sessions are **FREE** to the public and offered on a regular basis to provide you with the latest info.



**Criminal Record
Expunction**

**Social Security
Disability**



**SNAP
101**

**Medicaid
Eligibility**



Health Care Power of Attorney & Living Wills

You can learn how to handle certain basic legal issues without hiring an attorney. Our regularly scheduled Listen & Learn sessions and intermittent clinics provide guidance, support, and necessary paperwork. Webinars and clinics provide general information only.

If you need help specific to your case, call us toll-free at 1.866.219.LANC (5262) to apply for services.

Facebook Live Streams & Zoom Clinics

Facebook.com/LegalAidNC

Detailed information on Facebook Live streams and Zoom clinics on the topics of interest to you.

Facebook.com/LegalAidNC/live

Recordings of past Facebook Live clinics.

Tinyurl.com/LegalAidNCEvents

Info on upcoming Facebook Live clinics.



LISTEN & LEARN
LEGAL AID OF NORTH CAROLINA



To learn more and register for a webinar, visit: legalaidnc.org/listen&learn.

Or, scan the QR code above with your smart device to register.



100+ Videos on Legal Topics Available

Our videos are maintained in two archives:

YouTube.com/LegalAidNC

Find playlists of videos on certain topics.

LegalAidNC.org/Self-Help-Library

Access an alphabetical list of the legal topics on which detailed information is available.

In addition to our online clinics, we offer more than 100 videos on a wide variety of legal topics, such as foreclosure and consumer rights.

Algunos recursos están disponibles en español.



YouTube.com/LegalAidNC

Videos of online presentations are posted to our YouTube Channel, so you can view them 24/7. Videos provide information on both your legal rights and Legal Aid NC services. You can access 20 videos on housing alone; other topics include the following:

- Senior Law
- Tribal Law
- Motor Vehicle Law
- Medicaid Appeals
- COVID-19
- Racial Inequality

Algunos videos están disponibles en español.



LegalAidNC.org/Self-Help-Library

The library provides access to self-help videos with extensive information on the following topics:

- Advance Child Tax Credit Payments
- Consumer Rights
- Criminal Record Expunction
- Disaster Relief
- Domestic Violence
- Sexual Assault
- Education
- Employment
- Health Insurance
- Housing

Also available in the library is **"A Guide to Small Claims Court,"** a 57-page downloadable booklet that explains how to fill out the right forms, prepare for trial, handle the trial, and follow through on the judge's decision.



**LANC
AT A
GLANCE**

**WE ARE THE
3RD LARGEST LAW FIRM
IN NORTH CAROLINA**

**The 25K+ cases we
handled in 2023
generated \$23 million+
in benefits, awards,
and savings for our clients.**



**587 volunteers
helped us close
945 cases.**



**76% of our
clients identify
as female.**



**2,837
of our
clients
in 2023 had
special needs.**



**The Child's Advocate celebrated
10 years as a Legal Aid NC
special project.**

All statistics are for 2023.

Legal Aid NC's DV Documentary *Beyond Fear* Wins Silver at 45th Annual Telly Awards

Our domestic violence (DV) documentary *Beyond Fear* was honored earlier this year with a Silver Telly. This prestigious award recognizes excellence in video and television across all screens and is judged by industry leaders from top video platforms, television networks, streaming services, and production companies. To watch *Beyond Fear*, please visit: legalaidnc.org/beyond-fear.



Affecting tens of thousands of North Carolinians each year, DV may involve physical, sexual, emotional, or economic abuse. DV occurs when one individual in an intimate relationship uses a pattern of coercion and control against the other person. Domestic violence occurs in all kinds of families and relationships, and the abuse may occur during the relationship and/or after the relationship has ended.

Research shows legal intervention is the most important factor in breaking the cycle of violence. "One of Legal Aid NC's largest practice areas is DV, and we help survivors navigate the complexities of the legal system and obtain safety for themselves and their children," says Helen Hobson, Chief Communications Officer. "Services we offer include filing for protective orders in court and providing advice or representation at hearings."

Our deepest appreciation to the three courageous survivors who shared the stories of their paths to healing in this documentary.

HELP IS AVAILABLE

Call the Legal Aid NC Helpline **toll-free at 1.866.219.LANC (5262)** to apply for free assistance. There are no income restrictions for survivors, and all North Carolinians are eligible regardless of immigration status.

Visit tinyurl.com/legalaidncevents for info on FREE Facebook Live clinics.

Visit legalaidnc.org/topic/domestic-violence-and-sexual-assault for information including videos.

Our Innovation Lab develops cost-effective ways to deliver effective legal help with a focus on rural areas. Last fall, the lab launched a pilot program in partnership with the Wilson County Library with plans to expand the effort across the state. The goal is to empower communities through equal access to legal resources by using local libraries to disseminate vital information broadly and organically.



“There are hundreds of public libraries across the state,” says Scheree Gilchrist, Chief Innovation Officer at Legal Aid NC. “The library is a known purveyor and disseminator of information that provides citizens with consistent access to computers and the internet.”

In addition to their role in literacy and lifelong learning, libraries are critical to community building. They provide a place for workshops, meetings, and gatherings that bring diverse people together. By ensuring equitable access to information and resources, regardless of socioeconomic status, libraries contribute to the overall social and intellectual enrichment of the communities they serve.

Since its inception, Legal Aid NC has worked with the public library system to host education and outreach events. More recently, we partnered with libraries to provide access via Zoom to web-based learning sessions. We’re expanding this long history of collaboration by providing library staff with information to assist community members with locating and applying for legal help.

Accomplishments of the pilot program since fall 2023 include the following:

- Installation of a shortcut to Legal Aid’s Online Application on all library computers.
- Providing legal materials to be disseminated through the library. Vital information for the public on divorce, eviction, child custody, and more is now available, as well as instructions regarding how to access legal help.
- Training library staff regarding Legal Aid NC’s work, providing them with additional resources to continue being advocates, and establishing best practices for disseminating *pro se* (how to help yourself) legal information.
- Introducing library staff to Legal Aid NC’s free online Listen & Learns (see p. 4 for more information).
- Established a “point person” at the local library to notify us when they need more resources at the main library, the local branches, or the bookmobile.

For more information about the Lab, visit legalaidnc.org/innovation-lab. We want to hear from people who are directly impacted by our work. Please email your questions and comments to Lancinnovates@legalaidnc.org.

New AI Tool Expands Civil Legal Services for Those in Need

Legal Aid NC launched LIA in early July to expand access to justice across our state. LIA stands for “Legal Information Assistant,” and LawDroid powers the technology. Keep reading for how we’re using this form of artificial intelligence (AI) to help North Carolinians with civil legal problems.



Q: What is LIA?

A: LIA (Legal Information Assistant) is an AI-powered virtual assistant. It’s designed to deliver concise, accessible information, with a focus on reaching underserved communities. This technology allows you to interact with digital devices as if you were communicating with a real person. LIA was developed utilizing GPT-4, which is one of the most widely known generative AI technologies. You’ve probably already talked with a chatbot whether you knew it or not. The windows that pop up to offer assistance when you visit a company’s website are one example, and LIA offers a similar experience.

Q: What types of problems can LIA help with?

A: LIA can answer questions about domestic violence, child custody, landlord/tenant problems, consumer issues, and what to expect in court. It also provides general information about Legal Aid NC. We’re continuing to expand LIA’s capacity to assist with additional legal issues, and eventually LIA will be able to guide people through our intake process.

Q: How do I use LIA to get information about civil legal issues?

A: Visit legalaidnc.org/get-help. Click on the blue bar that says “Ask LIA, our Virtual Assistant, a Question!” Type in a brief, specific question like “What should I do if my landlord won’t fix things?” or “What are the rules for child custody in North Carolina?” Continue to follow the prompts on your screen as LIA provides you with the requested information.

Q: What are some of the advantages of using LIA?

A: You can access LIA any time from any device with an internet connection. LIA gives answers to general civil legal questions in both English and Spanish, and more languages are coming soon! LIA provides referrals to additional resources as well.

Q: What is LIA unable to do?


A: LIA does not provide legal advice. LIA cannot answer specific questions related to your case; it can only respond to general inquiries about the law in North Carolina.

You should consult with an attorney for any specific legal questions. Call our helpline at 1.866.219.LANC (5262) or contact a private attorney for information specific to your case, as well as representation.

You can also sign up for one of our **FREE** clinics and visit our online self-help library **(see pages 4 and 5 for details).**

Wills and Advance Directives: Get 'em before you need 'em

Wills and advance directives are legal instructions regarding your property, finances, and medical care if you die or become unable to make decisions for yourself. Getting them before you need them—while you're still mentally able—gives you the maximum options available and can prevent abuse and exploitation. If you're aging and can still make decisions for yourself, think about preparing your will and advance directives now. Keep reading to learn more.



A will, AKA a “last will and testament,” states who gets your property and who handles your affairs after you die. If you die without a will, your property will pass through intestacy, the process set forth by the state that determines who will inherit it.

A financial power of attorney, AKA a “durable power of attorney,” designates an agent to handle your finances and make related decisions for you. This document is valid even if you become incapacitated, but it only applies while you're alive. Without one, your loved ones may not have the authority to manage your finances for you.

A health care power of attorney allows another person to make medical decisions for you if you can't. If you become incapacitated without one, the state designates the order of the people who will make decisions for you.

A living will describes when you would want certain life prolonging measures withheld if you can't speak for yourself. Without one, you may ultimately be given life prolonging measures you don't want to receive.

When should you get your will and advance directives? Before you need them! You must be able to understand and make decisions for yourself to sign a legal document. Don't wait until it's too late! Prepare your will and advanced directives while you still can.

Learn more: legallaidnc.org/topic/for-seniors.

Immigrants Have Rights

For more than 20 years, Legal Aid NC's Immigration Pathways for Victims (IMMPAV) Project has provided critical legal assistance to immigrants suffering from domestic abuse, sexual assault, and human trafficking. Services are free for those who qualify. Our immigration law services help victims become self-sufficient and rebuild their lives. Our team also refers clients to collaborative partners for other services like counseling, case management, housing, and public benefits.



If you or your child has been abused, trafficked, or sexually assaulted, you may be able to file an immigration application and eventually get lawful immigration status. Two common scenarios in which IMMPAV may be able to help:

- John, a U.S. citizen, is married to Maria, an undocumented immigrant. John and Maria have a child together. John is abusive to Maria and threatens her with deportation and keeping the child from her whenever she considers calling the police or leaving him. Because she is undocumented, Maria does not know how she will support herself or get custody of her child if she leaves John, so she stays.
- An undocumented person has a child who is sexually abused by someone else but is afraid of reporting it because of their immigration status.

Types of applications we file for clients include:

- **U Visas** for victims of domestic violence and sexual assault and qualifying family members.
- **T Visas** for victims of human trafficking and qualifying family members.
- **VAWA** (Violence Against Women Act) self-petitions and petitions to remove conditions for abused spouses and children of US citizens and lawful permanent residents.
- **Applications for employment authorization** for victims and their qualifying family members who are applying for U Visas, T Visas, and VAWA Self-petitions.
- **Applications for lawful permanent residence** for victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, and human trafficking and their qualifying family members.

"Applying for U Visas is our most common case type, and obtaining one can be life changing for clients," says Rona Karacaova, IMMPAV Managing Attorney. "Without this visa, our clients typically couldn't get a driver's license or social security number, open a bank account, or apply for a loan to start a small business like a food truck."

Services are confidential. If you or someone you know needs help, **call our tollfree IMMPAV helpline at 1.866.204.7612**, Tuesdays from 3:30–7:30 PM and Thursdays from 9:00 AM–1:00 PM. Assistance is available in all languages.

This statewide project serves all 100 counties and was formerly known as the **Battered Immigrant Project**. For more information, **visit www.legalaidnc.org/immigration**.

Legal Aid NC Helps Veterans with a Wide Range of Issues

The team that staffs our Veterans Law Project (VLP) serves hundreds of veterans each year. They focus on veterans who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. "We're working hard for vets in all spaces," says Charlisa Powell, a VLP attorney who has been advocating for veterans since 2003. Common case types the team handles for veterans include:

- Disability compensation.
- Military discharge upgrades/military records corrections.
- Criminal records expunctions.
- Referrals to other Legal Aid services, as well as community agencies that assist with food, clothing, and medical care.

"We partner with many community agencies around the state to help veterans receive holistic, wraparound services," Charlisa says. "We make calls for them so they aren't walking the journey alone, and we open many case types in addition to those related to veterans' benefits."

To request assistance, send an email to veterans@legalaidnc.org or call the VLP hotline at **919.850.5959**. Numerous pro bono opportunities are available for attorneys who would like to support our veterans.

Disaster Relief Project Uses LANCMobile to Reach People in Need

Legal issues may not be the first concern that comes to mind when a natural disaster strikes, but many people need urgent legal assistance after securing shelter, food, and water. After a hurricane or other disaster, residents of rural areas are more likely to be without transportation and electricity. They may lack access to computers and the internet for extended periods of time.

Legal Aid NC launched our LANCMobile project earlier this year so our advocates can meet people where they are after a disaster. "We have two fully equipped offices on our customized LANCMobile bus," says Alicia Edwards, Director of our Disaster Relief Project. "We're prepared to respond this hurricane season. As soon as it's safe to drive to any affected areas in North Carolina, we'll be there to provide legal services," says Alicia.

Legal services offered include:

- Helping people apply to FEMA, state agencies, and local organizations for disaster assistance when their homes have been damaged or destroyed.
- Reviewing insurance policies for homeowners and renters and assisting with claims.
- Advocating for people affected by fraudulent contractors offering repairs.
- Assisting with matters related to titles and deeds.
- Addressing heir property issues.

If you are affected by a natural disaster, contact the **Disaster Relief Project** as soon as possible at **1.866.219.LANC (5262)**.

Helping North Carolinians after Natural Disasters

After losing her home in a natural disaster, Jenny had to live in her car and stay with friends. Her unemployment benefits and occasional work were not enough to pay for housing and basic needs when she lost her job.

Jenny had few resources and lived in a rural community. When she contacted Legal Aid, she was connected with a social worker who advocated for her to receive \$1,700 in financial assistance with rent, security deposits, and travel-related expenses. Once she was able to get a full-time job, Jenny was approved for an apartment and was able to move in right before the holiday season at the end of 2023.



When Jenny lost her job, her unemployment benefits and occasional work were not enough to cover housing costs and basic needs.

Protecting the Rights of Homeowners

Robert and Patty had lived in their home for over 20 years and loved it dearly. With their last mortgage payment approaching, they were excited to officially own it. However, shortly after making their last payment, they were harassed by their lender for an additional payment. This payment was tens of thousands of dollars they didn't have. Soon, their home was being foreclosed on, and they were at risk of losing everything they had worked for.



Worried about their future, they called Legal Aid for help. Almost immediately, our advocates discovered that the problem was due to a balloon payment Robert and Patty had unknowingly accepted in the terms of their mortgage. We were able to halt the foreclosure process and help them get started with a repayment plan.

Thanks to the quick action of our advocates, Robert and Patty now own their home, and no longer have to worry about their future.

Shortly after making what they believed to be their last payment, Robert and Patty were harassed by their lender for an additional payment.

Pro Bono: What does it mean for me?

First things first: Every single client of Legal Aid NC never has to pay for our help—not a single penny! That’s true whether you receive help from our staff or from our pro bono volunteers. What’s the difference between the two? Our staff work for Legal Aid NC and only handle our cases. Pro bono volunteers work somewhere else, like a law firm, but agree to handle our cases for free. Here we answer some other common questions about pro bono at Legal Aid NC.



Why does Legal Aid NC need pro bono volunteers?

Unfortunately, we don’t have enough staff to help everyone who needs us. Pro bono volunteers step in to help our clients when we can’t. Thanks to our volunteers, we help many more clients than we could without them.

How will I know if I’m working with a pro bono volunteer?

We’ll tell you! If we refer you to a pro bono volunteer, we’ll notify you of the volunteer’s name and contact information. You’ll also have a staff member at Legal Aid NC who will remain a point of contact on your case.

What legal problems do pro bono volunteers handle?

Pro bono volunteers handle a wide variety of legal problems, including housing conditions and repairs, wills and power of attorney documents, criminal record expunction, immigration, child custody, and so much more.

Can I ask for a pro bono volunteer?

If we can give you legal help, we decide whether to refer you to a pro bono attorney based on your legal needs. This is to ensure you get the best service possible, since our volunteers only handle certain types of legal problems.

Why do our volunteers do pro bono work?

Because they care! They care about making a difference in their communities and they care about helping people who can’t afford a lawyer. Pro bono is an important part of the legal profession. The NC State Bar, an organization that regulates North Carolina’s legal industry, urges every lawyer to do at least 50 hours of pro bono work every year. Legal Aid NC—and our clients—are lucky that so many choose to do pro bono work with us.

Need legal help? Call our helpline at **866-219-5262** or apply online at legalaidnc.org/apply.
Want to be a pro bono volunteer? Visit legalaidnc.org/pro-bono to get started.

Make a Difference!

Your support helps open opportunities for our clients to access justice and move beyond their current hardships, focused on a better tomorrow.



\$6K assists survivors of sexual assault and human trafficking with complex, lengthy processes like obtaining visas, jobs, and child custody.

\$3K prevents homelessness and substandard housing conditions through legal advocacy in eviction court.

\$1K helps domestic violence survivors obtain Orders of Protection, child custody, and divorce settlements.

\$500 protects seniors and veterans from the impacts of mortgage and benefits scams that target the vulnerable.

\$250 helps the parents of children with disabilities secure equitable education services.

\$80 provides legal advice to a family in crisis.

**Thank you
for your
support!**

Visit legalaidnc.org/donate to give securely online. You can make a one-time or monthly donation. If you prefer to mail a check, the address is Legal Aid NC, PO Box 28741, Raleigh, NC, 27611.

Contact Development Director Missy Hatley at missyh@legalaidnc.org for information about planned giving, giving stock, or donating via your IRA. We can also provide detailed information regarding *cy pres* funds.

Legal Aid NC
PO Box 28741
Raleigh, NC 27611

IF YOU NEED LEGAL ASSISTANCE with one of the following, Legal Aid NC may be able to help:



Eviction | Utilities | Food Stamps |
Unemployment Benefits | Domestic Violence |
Mortgages and Foreclosure |
Health Insurance Enrollment |

NEED LEGAL HELP?

If you need help, call us toll-free:
1.866.219.LANC (5262)
legalaidnc.org

SUPPORT OUR WORK

If you are in a position to support
our work, please visit:
legalaidnc.org/donate