
FILING A GRIEVANCE

If you have complaints or questions regarding the services provided by Western Michigan Legal Services, you should contact the managing attorney of your local office. If you are not satisfied with the response, you should contact the Executive Director in writing or by telephone.

DOES LEGAL SERVICES REPRESENT GROUPS?

Our offices are interested in representing groups and organizations because this allows us to serve a greater number of people more effectively. A group or organization is eligible for our services if it mainly contains low-income people or if it services the interests of the low-income community. Such groups might include community organizations or organizations of welfare recipients.

CAN LEGAL SERVICES REFER ME TO A PRIVATE ATTORNEY?

If Legal Services cannot assist you, you should call the State Bar Lawyer Referral Services at 1-800-968-0738 for the names of private attorneys in your area.

LOCATIONS

Kent, Ionia & Montcalm Counties

89 Ionia NW Suite 400
Grand Rapids, MI 49503
(616) 774-0672
Toll Free: (800) 442-2777
Fax: (616) 774-2412

Lake, Mecosta, Newaygo & Osceola Counties

203 S. Third, Suite B
Big Rapids, MI 49307
(231) 796-4878
Toll Free: (800) 968-4878
Fax: (231) 796-2191

Cass, Kalamazoo, St. Joseph & Van Buren Counties

201 W. Kalamazoo Ave., Room 30E
Kalamazoo, MI 49007
(269) 344-8113
Fax: (269) 388-5235

Mason, Muskegon & Oceana Counties

450 Morris, Suite 302
Muskegon, MI 49443
(231) 726-4887
Toll Free: (800) 968-4887
Fax: (231) 728-5217

Allegan & Ottawa Counties

636 Hastings
Holland, MI 49423
(616) 394-1380
Toll Free: (800) 681-8016
Fax: (616) 394-1383

Berrien County

901 Port Street
St. Joseph, MI 49085
(269) 983-6363
Toll Free: (888) 418-13
Fax: (269) 983-1916

1109 Bell Rd.
Niles, MI 49120
(269) 684-2920
Fax (269) 684-1089

Western Michigan Legal Services



*Providing free legal services
in non-criminal cases to low
income and elderly residents
of Western Michigan*



A United Way Agency

Also funded by
The Michigan State Bar Foundation
The Area Agency on Aging, Regions IIIA, IV, VIII, XIV
Kent County Senior Millage

 LSC

www.wmichls.org

WHAT IS LEGAL SERVICES?

Western Michigan Legal Services (Legal Aid) provides free legal services in non-criminal cases to low income and elderly residents in 17 counties in Western Michigan.

WHO IS ELIGIBLE FOR LEGAL SERVICES?

Applicants must qualify for our services under financial guidelines. These guidelines are based on household size, income and assets. Most families who receive government benefits or who have minimum wage jobs are eligible for our services.

WHAT KIND OF CASES DOES LEGAL SERVICES HANDLE?

Legal Services considers cases in most areas of civil law. The most common are:

Government Benefits:

This includes problems with Welfare (FIP), Food Stamps, Medicaid, Medicare, Social Security, Supplemental Security Income, Unemployment Compensation and Veteran's Benefits. You may have been recently denied or terminated from one of these programs, or had the amount of your grant reduced. If you don't understand the reason for the action or if you believe the action was incorrect, you should contact Legal Services.

Consumer Problems:

This includes a wide variety of cases including loans, bill collection, problems with utility companies, repossession and garnishment. For example, if your creditors are harassing you or if you have been sued by a creditor, you should consider contacting Legal Services to discuss the problem. Legal Services may also be able to assist you with filing bankruptcy if

your wages are being garnished or you are in danger of losing your home.

Housing - Landlord/Tenant:

Legal problems may occur when a landlord evicts his/her tenants, raises the rent, shuts off utilities, fails to make needed repairs, or refuses to return a security deposit. Legal Services may be able to assist you with these problems. We can also help homeowners with land contracts, faulty home improvements, financing scams, title problems and mortgage foreclosures.

Family Law:

Legal Services represents clients who need a divorce because of domestic violence and represents clients who are defending custody cases.

Other Matters:

Each office handles a limited number of other cases. If you do not see your problem listed here, contact the office that serves your county to see if it can assist you with your legal problem.

We cannot handle any criminal cases: If you have been charged with a crime and cannot afford an attorney, you should ask the court to appoint an attorney for you.

HOW CAN I SEE AN ATTORNEY?

You should call the office which serves your county. The locations are listed on the back of this brochure. The person who answers the phone can tell you the procedure for seeing someone. You should be prepared to answer questions about your household income and the nature of your legal problem. Please do not ask

the person answering the phone for legal advice. You may have to wait a week or two to see someone, so you should call as soon as you think you may have a legal problem.

WHAT HAPPENS AT THE APPOINTMENT?

After taking information about your income and assets, an attorney or paralegal will talk to you about your problem. It is important that you bring all papers you may have concerning your problem so we can look at them. Do not throw any papers away.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

Most of the time, the attorney or paralegal will not be able to tell you right away if we will be able to accept your case. After your interview, the attorney or paralegal will discuss your case with the legal staff at their office and then they will make a decision. The attorney or paralegal will notify you within a week after your initial meeting to let you know if we can accept your case. If we cannot represent you in court, we will try to advise you and recommend other ways to deal with the situation.

HOW DO WE DECIDE TO ACCEPT A CASE?

Our offices do not have the resources to represent everyone who needs our services. Because of this, we have to make decisions on which cases take priority. In each case, we will consider whether the person will suffer serious harm if we don't represent them; what, if anything, we can do to help them; and whether the service they need can be provided by a private attorney for a low fee. We also consider the effect that the case will have on the low-income community as a whole.
