

## **Frequently Asked Questions from Site Users:**

### **How does VT Free Legal Answers work?**

VT Free Legal Answers lets you request brief advice and counsel about a specific civil legal issue from a volunteer lawyer. Once you register and set up your account, you may ask up to three legal questions each year. Each question must be in a different legal area. When you post your questions, volunteer lawyers in Vermont will be able to see your question. Once a volunteer lawyer chooses to answer your question, you will get an e-mail with an answer, or an e-mail asking you for more information.

The volunteer lawyers only provide information and basic legal advice. There is no expectation of long-term representation. If you meet eligibility criteria, you must sign the use agreement, and create a username and password. You can then post a request for legal advice or information and provide facts about your case that will help the lawyer answer the question. You will be asked to select a category (such as "housing" or "debt") that best describes your question. The lawyer may ask you for additional information before responding to your request; you can choose to respond to that request or not. Only your name and county, but no other identifying information, will be shared with the volunteer lawyer.

There is no guarantee that a question will be answered. If a question is not answered within 30 days, you will receive an email from the website administrator directing you to other legal resources. If a lawyer answers your question, you may be able to ask follow-up questions, though the volunteer lawyer is not required to answer them. You will not see the name of the volunteer lawyer unless the lawyer chooses to give it to you.

### **Who is eligible to use VT Free Legal Answers?**

Eligibility for use of VT Free Legal Answers is limited to the following:

- You must have household income less than 250% of the federal poverty level;
- You may not have liquid assets exceeding \$5,000 in value (this includes checking and savings account balances, as well as the value of any stocks or bonds);
- You may not be incarcerated;
- You may not request assistance with criminal law matters.

You must provide your name, county, and zip code in order to request advice. You must agree to post no more than 3 legal questions per year on 3 different topics. You can follow-up with an attorney on each question as many times as the attorney and you choose to do so; the follow-up questions do not count toward your total of three questions.

### **What happens if a lawyer can't answer my question?**

A lawyer might be unable to answer your question for a number of reasons. Some examples might be a conflict of interest, your failure to respond to the lawyer's request for additional information, or the question may fall outside the lawyer's area of expertise. If a lawyer determines that she cannot answer a question, the lawyer may place the question back into the queue so that another volunteer lawyer may try to

assist you. If a lawyer takes a question and doesn't respond within 3 days, the question will automatically return to the open questions queue.

### **Is the volunteer lawyer who answers my question representing me?**

When you submit a question and receive an answer from a volunteer lawyer, there is a lawyer/client relationship formed between you and the lawyer who responds. That relationship, however, is limited in scope and duration as described in the use agreement that you sign when you register. The representation is limited to answering your question and does not involve any continuing representation beyond providing the answer. There is no expectation that the lawyer will provide continuing representation to you. Both you and the lawyer must consent to the limited nature of this relationship both as to scope and duration as indicated when you accept the terms of the use agreement. If you do not accept the terms of the use agreement you will not be allowed access to the site.

### **Are my questions confidential?**

This site is designed to insure client privacy. The web program is administered via email through a platform that limits access based on a screening. Confidentiality will be maintained since only the website administrator has access to content between a client and a lawyer. Information available to the website administrator and the lawyer responding to a client request shall remain confidential, subject to the limitations of the Privacy/Confidentiality Policy. Requests for information and the response of the lawyers participating in VT Free Legal Answers may be maintained in a database for review in order to measure the effectiveness of the project. Steps will be taken to maintain the security of this database and it will only be utilized by the administrator, but an absolute guarantee of security is not possible when using the internet and internet based systems. Information may be disclosed when legally required at the request of government authorities conducting an investigation, to verify or enforce compliance with the policies governing our website and applicable laws or to protect against misuses or unauthorized use of our website.

### **My question says it is marked as closed. Why?**

Questions can be marked as closed for mulitple reasons:

1. The attorney who responded marked the question as closed after responding;
2. The site administrator had to close the question and listed why it was closed;
3. You never answered the attorney's response, so the question automatically closed.

Please remember, you cannot ask a more than 1 question per legal area, so if a question is closed, please do not re-post it to the general queue or it will be closed by the site administrator.

### **I have asked all 3 questions. What do I do now?**

As you agreed in the use agreement, each user may only ask three (3) total questions per year and each one must be on a different legal issue. You can look at our page for [other places to find help](#) to see if there are other resources that might be able to help you.

### **I need site technical help. Who do I ask?**

You may [e-mail the site administrator](#) with questions about using the site. The site administrator will not respond to requests for legal help.