

VERMONT LEGAL AID, INC.

Free Civil Legal Services to Vermont Residents

Vermont Legal Aid (VLA) and Legal Services Vermont (LSV, formerly Law Line) work together to provide free civil legal services to people throughout Vermont who are poor, elderly, who have disabilities, or who have problems with health care.

Advocates at VLA and LSV answer web inquiries (https://vtlawhelp.org/triage/vt_triage) and hotline calls directly and determine how we can best help by providing legal advice at the time of the initial call, additional legal services by LSV staff over the phone, help from a Health Care Advocate, or representation by VLA. Clients should call VLA on one of two statewide toll-free numbers to access services from any of the VLA offices or from Legal Services Vermont.

(800) 889-2047

(800) 917-7787

(for health insurance and health care calls)

Our areas of legal practice include:

- **Consumer Rights**
- **Discrimination**
- **Family Law**
- **Housing**
- **Public and Government Benefits**
- **Victim's Rights**
- **Disability Rights and Benefits**
- **Elder Rights**
- **Health Care and Health Insurance**
- **Mental Health**
- **Taxes**

Vermont Legal Aid is organized into specialized projects handling a wide range of legal issues. These projects are based on the legal problems of its clients, and staff are located across the state in five regional offices. *Each VLA project has different eligibility requirements and different case priorities summarized on the reverse of this page.*

Eric Avildsen, Executive Director, (800) 889-2047, eavildsen@vtlegalaid.org

Legal Services Vermont (formerly Law Line) provides low-income Vermonters with telephone advice, coaching on how to represent themselves in court, help with pleadings and memos, clinics, and other limited assistance on a wide range of civil legal problems. LSV also refers cases to *pro bono* attorneys through the Vermont Volunteer Lawyers Project (VVLV). *Eligibility for services is limited to clients whose incomes are below 200% of the federal poverty level (or \$41,560 for a family of three (3)).*

Sam Abel-Palmer, Executive Director, (800) 639-8857, sabel-palmer@lawlinevt.org

Vermont Legal Aid Projects

Disability Law Project represents Vermonters with physical and developmental disabilities where their legal problem arises from their disability. Cases include guardianship, special education, discrimination in employment and housing, access to health care, and Social Security Disability-related benefits problems. *Eligibility is not based on income level, but on the type of case and the connection between the legal issue and the client's disability.* Nancy Breiden, Director, (800) 769-7459, nbreiden@vtlegalaid.org

Elder Law Project includes both our Senior Citizens Law Project and our Medicare Advocacy Project and represents people over 60 years of age in general civil legal matters. Areas of priority include: housing, financial exploitation, Social Security, Medicaid, and guardianship. *Eligibility is not restricted by income level, but case priority is given to clients in the greatest social and economic need.* Michael Benvenuto, Director, (800) 889-2047, mbenvenuto@vtlegalaid.org

Housing Discrimination Law Project represents Vermonters who have been discriminated against in housing, conducts discrimination testing, and advocates for planning and zoning that promotes integration. *Eligibility is not based on income level, but on the claim of housing discrimination.* Rachel Batterson, Director, (800) 889-2047, rbatterson@vtlegalaid.org

Long-Term Care Ombudsman Project represents individuals who receive long term care services in nursing homes, residential care homes, assisted living residences, or in their own homes through the Choices for Care Program. Issues addressed include quality of care, quality of life, and residents' rights. The project also advocates for systemic change that will improve the well-being of individuals who receive long term care services. *The project provides services to all long-term care residents in Vermont without regard to income or resources.* Sean Londergan, State Long-Term Care Ombudsman, (800) 889-2047, slondergan@vtlegalaid.org

Mental Health Law Project represents clients facing involuntary commitment and/or involuntary medication proceedings. No direct client intake is accepted. Clients with mental illness needing general legal assistance should call **Vermont Protection and Advocacy** at **800-834-7890**. *Eligibility for representation by the MHLP is solely pursuant to court appointment.* Jack McCullough, Director, (800) 265-0660, jmccullough@vtlegalaid.org

Office of the Health Care Advocate operates a hotline providing advocacy on problems involving health care and health insurance. Case types include access to health care, billing, eligibility, and insurance plan coverage issues. The project also recommends needed health care policy changes to the Legislature and administrative agencies. New case intake is handled directly on a separate toll-free number, **(800) 917-7787**. *Any resident in the State of Vermont is eligible without regard to income level.* Michael Fisher, Chief Health Care Advocate, (800) 917-7787, mfisher@vtlegalaid.org

Poverty Law Project represents low-income Vermonters with civil legal problems including: housing, family law, consumer, employment, and problems with government benefits programs. Emphasis is on cases in which the opposing party is represented and which protect essential services (housing, income) or where the health or safety of the client is at risk. *Eligibility for services is limited to clients whose incomes are below 200% of the federal poverty level (or \$41,566 for a family of three (3)).* Sandy Paritz, Director, (800) 789-4195, sparitz@vtlegalaid.org

Other Initiatives

Vermont Legal Aid has special projects helping Victims of Crime, Low-Income Tax Payers, and Vermonters receiving Vocational Rehabilitation Services, and partners with the University of Vermont Medical Center and others to address health-harming legal problems.