THE #FKLM FAMILY BLUEPRINT

Free Legal Information for Your State

Legal & Policy Literacy · Find Reliable Help

A national directory of state-specific legal help and self-help materials for civil matters.

IN THIS GUIDE

- What LawHelp.org actually is
- Using it step by step
- What it will and will not do
- Fitting it into a family's plan
- Try it: a real example
- Scripts you can use
- Your checklist

A free guide from My Fairy GodParents — for youth impacted by parental incarceration, justice-impacted youth, and the caregivers and families who support them.
myfairygodparents.org/resources/family-blueprint

Print, write on it, and share it with the people helping your family.

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THE DIFFERENCE THIS MAKES

LawHelp.org is a free, national directory of legal aid programs and self-help resources, organized by state. It is not a law firm and does not give advice itself; it is the front door that points you to the legal aid organization, court self-help center, or plain-language guide relevant to where you live and what you are dealing with.

Many caregivers have never heard of it because it does not advertise and does not come up first in general searches. It is maintained by legal aid organizations rather than a company trying to sell a service, which is part of why it stays reliable — nobody is trying to upsell you once you land on the page.

This lesson is about how to actually use the site efficiently: how to pick your state, how to read what comes back, and how to avoid the common mistake of treating it as a source of legal advice rather than a directory.

WHAT LAWHELP.ORG ACTUALLY IS

It is a directory, organized state by state, of nonprofit legal aid organizations, court self-help materials, and plain-language legal information on common topics — housing, family law, benefits, consumer issues, and more.

Each state's page is run somewhat differently because legal aid is organized differently state to state, but the structure is consistent: a way to search by topic or organization, and a way to see what's available in your area.

It also links to LawHelpInteractive and similar tools in many states, which let you fill out certain court forms online through a guided interview, rather than deciphering blank legal paperwork by yourself.

USING IT STEP BY STEP

Go to LawHelp.org and select your state. This matters — legal aid organizations and self-help materials are state-specific, and looking at the wrong state's page will not help you.

Once on your state's page, search or browse by topic rather than trying to describe your whole situation. Topics are usually broken down by area of law: family, housing, public benefits, consumer, immigration, and

others.

Read the organization listings that come up. Each typically includes what kinds of cases they take, how to apply, and any income or geographic restrictions. This is where you find out quickly whether a program can actually help your household or whether you need a different one.

If a guided form interview is available for what you need, use it before trying to fill out a blank court form from scratch — it will ask you plain-language questions and generate the completed form, which reduces the chance of a clerk rejecting it for an error.

+ WHAT IT WILL AND WILL NOT DO

It will tell you which organizations exist, what they handle, and how to contact them. It will often provide plain-language explanations of legal processes and links to court forms.

It will not tell you what to do in your specific situation, whether you will win a case, or what the outcome of a filing will be. Anything that reads like a guaranteed answer to your specific circumstances is a sign to keep looking, not a sign you found the right page.

It also will not replace direct contact with a program. The listing is a starting point — you still need to call or apply, and wait to hear whether the organization can take your matter given their capacity and eligibility rules.

+ FITTING IT INTO A FAMILY'S PLAN

Use LawHelp.org early, before a deadline is close. Legal aid organizations often have waiting lists, and self-help forms take time to complete correctly, so starting a search the week a hearing is scheduled leaves little room.

Bookmark your state's page rather than searching for it fresh each time — legal needs in families dealing with incarceration tend to recur across custody, guardianship, and benefits issues, and having the page saved saves real time later.

+ FINDING THE RIGHT FORM WITHOUT A LAWYER

A father raising his niece needed to file for legal guardianship so he could make medical decisions for her, but had no idea where to start and could not afford an attorney.

He went to LawHelp.org, selected his state, and searched under family law. The page listed a guided guardianship form interview through LawHelpInteractive, along with two legal aid organizations that handled guardianship cases for households under a certain income.

He completed the guided interview himself over two evenings, then called one of the listed legal aid organizations to ask them to review it before filing. The organization did not charge him and caught one missing attachment before he submitted it to the court.

+ WORDS YOU CAN USE

Searching by topic on your state's page

"I'm looking for information and organizations related to [guardianship / custody / benefits denial / housing] in [state]. What self-help materials or legal aid programs are listed for this topic?"

Calling a legal aid program found through the directory

"I found your organization listed on LawHelp.org under [topic]. I'd like to know if you handle cases like mine and what your income and eligibility guidelines are."

Asking about a guided form interview

"Is there a guided online interview for the [form name] form for my state, or do I need to fill out the paper version directly?"

+ USE LAWHELP.ORG THIS WEEK

- [ ] Go to LawHelp.org and select your state, not a general search result.
- [ ] Search or browse by legal topic rather than by your full story.
- [ ] Read eligibility and case-type details for each organization listed.
- [ ] Check whether a guided form interview exists for the form you need.
- [ ] Call or apply to at least one listed organization rather than stopping at the listing.
- [ ] Ask directly about income and geographic eligibility before a full intake.
- [ ] Bookmark your state's page for future use.
- [ ] Start this process before a deadline is close, not the week of it.

+ REFLECT AND WRITE

What legal topic in my family's situation have I not yet looked up?

Have I been treating a directory listing as if it were advice?

Is there a form I've been avoiding because it looks complicated?

Which organization from the directory will I actually call this week?

YOUR NEXT STEP

Open your state's page and note the intake number and hours.

WHERE THIS COMES FROM

Source: USA.gov — Legal Aid and Legal Services — verified August 2026. Curated and summarized by MFGP.
https://www.usa.gov/legal-aid
This is general information and practice guidance — not legal advice, mental-health treatment, or a statement of any court, agency, or facility's rules. Policies differ by state, county, facility, school, and program, so always confirm details with the office involved.
For decisions with legal, medical, financial, or clinical consequences, work with a licensed professional or the organizations listed with each resource.
The information provided through The #FKLM Family Blueprint is for general educational purposes and is not legal advice. Laws and policies differ by jurisdiction and may change. Families needing advice about their individual circumstances should consult an appropriately qualified attorney or legal-services organization.

You do not have to do this alone.

More free guides, scripts, and checklists:
myfairygodparents.org/resources/family-blueprint