

Vermont Legal Aid

Free Civil Legal Services to Vermont Residents

Vermont Legal Aid (VLA) and the Legal Services Law Line of Vermont (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.

Attorneys at Vermont Law Help, a joint project of VLA and Law Line, answer the 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 a Law Line attorney over the phone, or representation by an attorney at VLA. Clients should call VLA on one of two statewide toll-free numbers to access services from any of the VLA offices or from Law Line.

(800) 889-2047

or

(800) 917-7787*

(*for health insurance and health care calls)

Our areas of expertise include -

- Access to Health Care
- Family Law
- Welfare Benefits
- Special Education Law
- Government Benefits
- Disability Rights and Benefits
- Consumer Rights
- Employment Law
- Housing Issues
- Long Term Care Issues
- Elderly Issues
- Mental Health Law
- Individual Rights
- Medicare and Medicaid Benefits
- Commercial Health Insurance
- Foreclosures

Vermont Legal Aid is organized into five 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 six regional offices.

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

Each VLA project has different eligibility requirements and different case priorities summarized on the reverse of this page.

Legal Services Law Line provides low-income Vermonters with telephone advice, coaching on how to represent themselves in court, help with pleadings and memos, family law clinics, and other limited assistance on a wide range of civil legal problems. Law Line also refers cases to *pro bono* attorneys through the Vermont Volunteer Lawyers Project (VVLP).

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

Eligibility for services is limited to clients whose incomes are below 200% of the federal poverty level (or \$48,600 for a family of 4).

Vermont Legal Aid Projects

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 \$48,600 for a family of 4).* Sandy Paritz, Director, (800) 789-4195, sparitz@vtlegalaid.org

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, mvenuto@vtlegalaid.org

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

Long Term Care Ombudsman Project represents individuals who live 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

Housing Discrimination Law Project represents Vermonters who have been discriminated against when seeking to buy or rent housing, as well as testing for systemic patterns of discrimination in housing. *Eligibility is not based on income level but on the claim of housing discrimination.* Rachel Batterson, Director, (800) 889-2047, rbatterson@vtlegalaid.org