

Finding Legal Help in a Civil Case

Sometimes it is difficult to get legal help if you cannot afford it in a civil matter. In most civil cases, you do not have a right to a lawyer. Here are some options to consider in Maryland.

1. Hire a Private Lawyer

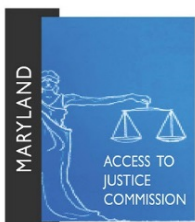
- Many local bar associations provide lawyer referral services. Many offer a free or low-cost initial consultation.
- To find a lawyer referral service, visit: www.peoples-law.org/referrals. The Maryland State Bar Association has a directory of members, which you can access at: www.msba.org.
- What fees will they charge?
 - Hourly: Usually you pay a retainer up front. The lawyer will use the retainer money first. If the retainer is depleted, you may have to pay more.
 - Flat Fee: Pay one fee, agreed upon in advance.
 - Contingency Fee: Usually pay nothing up front. The lawyer takes part of the award at trial or settlement. Not allowed in family law cases or criminal cases.
- Consider Limited Scope Representation.
 - Hire the lawyer to do part of the work. For example, the lawyer might draft a settlement agreement for you while you handle the rest of the case.

2. Find a Free or Low-Cost Lawyer through a Legal Services Program

- Usually you must qualify based on your income. Organizations may have limited resources, so seek help early.
- To find a legal services program, visit: www.probonomd.org/docs/2014gls.pdf or www.peoples-law.org/directory.

3. Represent Yourself

- Court-based self-help centers can help you represent yourself. Often you can meet with a lawyer for free who can help you prepare to handle your case on your own. Visit: www.courts.state.md.us/legalhelp/districtctselfhelpctr.html for District Court cases or www.courts.state.md.us/family/localcontacts.html for family law cases.
- For basic legal information, visit: www.peoples-law.org or Maryland State Law Library: mdcourts.gov/lawlib.



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Maryland Access to Justice Commission
mdcourts.gov/mdatjc