

What the Attorney General Can Do For You



By **Greg Abbott**
Attorney General of Texas

Each year, thousands of people write to the Attorney General requesting information and assistance on a wide range of topics. They also offer their comments, observations, and suggestions on many public policy issues.

The Office of the Attorney General provides a wealth of valuable services to the public. We provide direct assistance to Texans in areas ranging from child support to consumer protection to help for victims of violent crime.

We are the designated agency responsible for collecting child support on behalf of children whose parents have separated, were never married, or are divorced. Texas law requires non-custodial parents to contribute to their children's financial and medical well being according to the parents' means.

While many parents honor their obligations to support their children, not all do. Our Child Support Division provides free child support services to ensure that children receive the financial and medical assistance required by law. It is also part of our mission to

promote healthy families and to encourage non-custodial parents to maintain strong relationships with their children.

The Office of the Attorney General works to protect consumers by enforcing the Deceptive Trade Practices Act. Our agency also provides an informal complaint resolution service between consumers and businesses. If you have a dispute with a business, you can submit a consumer complaint form to our office.

The complaint process is voluntary for both the individual and the business, and we do not represent either side. However, most respectable businesses are anxious to maintain their good reputations with the public, and more than half of the complaints filed with our office are resolved to the satisfaction of both parties.

Consumer complaints that cannot be resolved through the usual process are kept on file. Often, it is complaints from individual consumers that alert us to serious and persistent violators of Texas consumer protection laws. This may result in our filing a lawsuit and obtaining restitution for victims of unfair or deceptive practices.

Victims of violent crime can apply for Crime Victims' Compensation through our Crime Victims' Compensation Program. Texas

law allows for eligible victims of violent crime and their family members to receive financial assistance from the Fund. The Fund can help pay for crime-related expenses such as medical, funeral and counseling bills as well as other expenses not covered by other sources.

Our agency can also help citizens seeking access to information held by governmental bodies. Texas law provides that all governmental bodies are subject to the Public Information and Open Meetings Act. We publish several useful handbooks that answer frequently asked questions about these Acts, and we also have staff available to answer questions about open government from both the public and government officials.

Many people come to us with questions and problems that fall outside our agency's authority. In those cases, we try to provide the best possible referrals to other sources of assistance and information. We ask you to please understand that we cannot provide legal advice or representation to private individuals.

For those of you who write simply to voice your comments on important issues, I assure you that I appreciate knowing your thoughts and concerns. We look forward to hearing from you.

Information on this and other topics is available on the Attorney General's Web site at www.oag.state.tx.us.

POINTS TO REMEMBER

OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL

To apply for child support services, call (800) 252-8014 or visit our Web site or look for the nearest local child support office in your telephone directory.

For a consumer complaint form, call our Consumer Protection Division at (800) 621-0508 or file a consumer complaint online by visiting our Web site.

To apply for crime victims benefits, call the Crime Victim's Services Division at (800) 983-9933.

For information on open government, call our Open Government Hotline at (887) 673-6839.

Write to:
Office of the Attorney General
Box 12546
Austin, TX 78711-2548
(800) 252-8011
www.oag.state.tx.us

Attorney General brochures can be obtained free of charge by calling (800) 252-8011.



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS
GREG ABBOTT

