

**Q: What is legal assistance?**

**A:** Legal assistance enhances the readiness and welfare of eligible members by providing quality legal services regarding personal civil legal matters to eligible persons; and by educating eligible persons regarding their personal legal rights and responsibilities.

**Q: Who is eligible for legal assistance?**

**A:** Subject to the availability of legal staff resources, legal assistance may be provided to:

1. Members of the armed forces who are on active duty (including reservists on active duty or scheduled for deployment).
2. Members and former members entitled to retired or retainer pay or equivalent pay.
3. Officers of the commissioned corps of the Public Health Service who are on active duty or entitled to retired or equivalent pay.
4. Dependents of members and former members described in (1), (2), and (3) above.
5. Generally legal assistance is not provided to civilian employees except in conjunction with income tax filing assistance and civil notary services.

**Q: What is a legal assistance attorney?**

**A:** A legal assistance attorney is a military judge advocate or civilian attorney who is duly licensed to practice law before the courts of one or more state and federal jurisdictions, and is authorized by the Judge Advocate General, to perform legal assistance functions. He or she represents the interests of the individual client concerning personal legal matters.

**Q: If I see a legal assistance attorney, will my information remain confidential?**

**A:** Yes. The information and documents contained in a client's file will not be disclosed to anyone, except upon the express specific permission of the client or when the attorney determines that disclosure is authorized or required by law or applicable rules of professional conduct.

**Q: Can the Academy legal assistance attorney represent me in court?**

**A:** No. The Academy legal assistance attorney cannot provide in-court representation of members.

**Q: How much will it cost to see a legal assistance attorney?**

**A:** The services provided through the Legal Assistance Program are free to eligible personnel. However, clients are required to pay for all costs associated with their case, such as court costs or agency fees if applicable.

**Q: How can I locate the nearest legal assistance attorney?**

**A:** If you are located near the Academy, directions can be found listed in the Section Links on the right side of this page. Eligible Coast Guard members can receive legal assistance from attorneys of the other Armed Forces. A link for a Legal Assistance Locator is found on the main page for this site.

**Q: What type of services can the legal assistance office provide?**

**A:** Advice and/or service regarding the following matters are available at the legal assistance office:

1. Wills, testamentary trusts, and estate planning.
2. Domestic relations, including divorce, legal separation, annulment, custody, and paternity.
3. Adoption and name changes.
4. Immigration and naturalization.
5. Nonsupport and indebtedness including, communication, correspondence, negotiations with another party or lawyer.
6. Taxes, including basic advice and assistance on Federal, State, and local taxes.
7. Landlord-tenant relations, including review of personal leases and communication and correspondence.

8. Civil suits, including preparation of correspondence, documents and in limited cases pleadings, except that advice and document preparation will not be provided in cases where civilian counsel has been retained. However, in-court representation is precluded, except through the expanded legal assistance program, the availability of which varies in each service.
9. Servicemembers Civil Relief Act advice and assistance.
10. Civilian criminal matters, limited to general advice regarding minor (misdemeanor) criminal matters and traffic offenses within the jurisdiction of the civilian courts.

Other services include advice and assistance on powers of attorney, real estate, bankruptcy, contracts, consumer affairs, and insurance.

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**Q: What services are not available from the legal assistance office?**

**A:** Legal assistance attorneys are prohibited from the following acts:

1. Advising opposing parties on the same issue; (Representation of opposing parties or interests: If two or more eligible persons with conflicting interests seek advice from the same legal assistance office on the same matter, the party first establishing an attorney-client relationship will be provided representation. This rule applies even if the conflicted party who will not be able to receive legal assistance is the military service member. Every effort will be made to refer the party with a conflicting interest to another source of free legal assistance or, if no such source is available, to a civilian attorney.)
2. Providing advice on personal business matters;
3. Providing advice on issues or interests in conflict with or opposed to the interests of the United States; (Proceedings involving the United States: Legal assistance attorneys shall not represent or assist an individual in a matter in which the United States has a direct and substantial interest, whether or not the Government's position is adverse to that of the individual.  
Advice or assistance in official military matters: Legal assistance duties are separate and apart from responsibilities of trial counsel, defense counsel, or others involved in processing courts-martial, nonjudicial punishments, administrative boards or proceedings, and investigations. Members accused or suspected of offenses or conduct that may result in disciplinary or judicial proceedings under the Uniform Code of Military Justice, or processing for administrative discharges, will be referred to a defense counsel.)
4. Providing advice over the telephone or via e-mail; (Telephone inquiries and e-mail: Legal assistance ordinarily will not be provided over the telephone or via the Internet except in unusual or compelling circumstances.)
5. Providing advice on military justice matters; and
6. Providing advice to third parties (Advice to third parties: The privileged attorney-client relationship requires personal and private communication. Except when the client is unable to communicate adequately, advice or assistance will not be provided through third parties. For example, each individual client requesting a will must be interviewed personally by a legal assistance attorney prior to execution of the will. When command representatives seek information or assistance on behalf of service members, they shall normally be instructed to have the service member obtain a legal assistance appointment. Bona fide requests for command services shall be referred to the judge advocate charged with providing advice and assistance to the command concerned.)

**Disclaimer:** *The information displayed on this website is meant for the sole use of Active Duty service members, retirees, their families, and other personnel eligible for assistance through the Legal Assistance Program. The information is general in nature and presented to assist those eligible persons prepare for an appointment with a professional in the legal office. Rights and responsibilities vary widely according to the particular set of circumstances in each case. Laws can vary across states, services and civilian jurisdictions and laws are changed from time to time. Do not rely upon the general restatement of background information presented here without discussing your specific situation with a legal professional.*