

*Investing in Access to Justice*

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## Legal Aid is Open and Ready to Help

In addition to health and economic concerns, the COVID-19 pandemic has increased and caused hardships related to stable housing, access to benefits, consumer debt collection and safety from domestic violence. Michigan's legal aid attorneys are working extremely hard to respond to the immediate needs, while also trying to prepare for a significant increase in the demand for legal help in the coming weeks and months.

Legal aid programs throughout Michigan remain open to help, whether the problem is related to the current pandemic or not. While the legal aid buildings are closed and in-person meetings have been canceled to comply with the Stat-At-Home Orders, legal aid attorneys are busy working remotely and representing clients in court through virtual hearings. Even outside of court, legal aid programs continue to help clients through technology such as video conferencing, phone calls and emails. In the past month, approximately 18,500 individuals each day have visited the Michigan Legal Help website to access legal help and information.

Michigan's nonprofit civil legal aid programs have a long history of coordination which has strengthened their ability to collectively respond to this pandemic. Legal aid programs throughout Michigan encourage Michiganders who need help legal information, legal help, or referrals to reach out to:

**Michigan Legal Help Program** – created a COVID-19 response [page](#) that provides helpful up- to- date information and direct links to resources. In addition, the MLH website also includes a triage and referral function through the [Guide to Legal Help](#) that provides information and referrals tailored to an individual's legal problem.

**Counsel and Advocacy Law Line** – offers an attorney-staffed telephone advice, brief service, and referrals to low- income individuals and older adults. CALL can be reached at 888-783-8190.

These programs work closely with the legal aid programs throughout Michigan to provide timely, relevant and helpful referrals. Individuals who need assistance may also call their local legal aid office directly. Each county in Michigan is served by one of the following regional legal aid programs:

Lakeshore Legal Aid - <https://lakeshorelegalaid.org/>

Legal Aid of Western Michigan - <https://lawestmi.org/>

Legal Services of Eastern Michigan - <http://www.lsem-mi.org/>

Legal Services of Northern Michigan - <http://lsnm.org/>

Michigan Advocacy Program - <https://miadvocacy.org/>

The Michigan State Bar Foundation provides leadership and funding to improve the justice system. Nonprofit civil legal aid programs receive the largest share of the Foundation's grants to help assure access to justice for all. Civil legal aid assures fairness in the justice system. The legal aid programs funded by the Foundation complete approximately 45,000 cases annually for low-income persons in Michigan.