



Access to Justice in Texas

All Texans deserve fair and equitable access to our justice system.

- Civil legal aid assures fairness for all in the court system, regardless of income.
- Approximately **5.6 million Texans** qualify for legal aid. Compared to other states, Texas has the second-highest number of poor people in the nation.
- To qualify for legal aid, a person must not earn more than **\$14,713 per year**. A family of four must not earn more than **\$30,313 per year**.
- Many need help with critical civil legal issues impacting their very existence, such as spouses and children of **domestic abuse**; **elderly** wrongly denied life-sustaining prescriptions; **veterans** denied critical medical care, disability and other benefits; and families who have lost their **homes**.

The funding crisis for Texas legal aid continues.

- Since 2007, the Texas Access to Justice Foundation, which is the primary state-based funder of legal aid in Texas, has experienced a **loss of \$99.3 million** due to declines in funding from the state's Interest on Lawyers' Trust Accounts (IOLTA) program.
- **Texas ranks 50th in access to legal aid lawyers**. There is approximately only one legal aid lawyer for every 11,000 Texans who qualify. Due to declines in funding, Texas legal aid providers have been forced to lay off staff and cut services, resulting in thousands of Texans being denied critical, life-changing legal representation.

The Texas Supreme Court, Texas Legislature and Texas lawyers have helped fill the gap in funding for civil legal services and increase access to justice for all.

- Through a tremendous show of bipartisan support and the outstanding efforts of the Supreme Court of Texas, the **83rd Texas Legislature appropriated \$17.6 million** for civil legal aid for the biennium. In addition, HB 1445, the "Chief Justice Jack Pope Act," will eventually increase the funds dedicated to legal aid for indigent Texans from civil penalties and civil restitution recovered by the Texas Attorney General.
- Texas lawyers provide over 2.3 million hours in **free or indirect legal services to the poor, valued at approximately \$500 million**, annually according to the 2013 State Bar of Texas Pro Bono Survey. Additionally, attorneys have given **millions of dollars in private donations**.

Yet, most Texans still go without the civil legal help they need.

- Legal aid organizations help **more than 104,000 Texas families** each year. Due to a lack of resources, only about **20 percent of the civil legal needs** of disadvantaged Texans are being met. Others continue to suffer or unsuccessfully attempt to represent themselves in our complicated court system.

Please support justice for all through an adequately funded civil legal aid system in Texas.