

Pro Bono Week continues with free legal aid

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CLEVELAND -- Those who find themselves facing criminal charges have the legal right to an attorney. But there are tens of thousands people here in Greater Cleveland who need legal help for civil proceedings like foreclosure, child support and [bankruptcy](#).

Often times, their needs fall between the cracks. But this week, local lawyers are lining up to help.

James Donahue is one of the people whose benefited from pro bono through an organization called Towards Employment.

"I feel a great [deal](#) of accomplishment...I thought that maybe the system had forgotten about me no matter what I was trying to do," Donahue.

Forty years ago, he was convicted of a misdemeanor. He was told if he enlisted in the military, his record would be

cleaned. Donahue served four years but his record was never expunged.

"I went on in life trying to get them expunged but the [cost](#) was so high I couldn't afford it," Donahue.

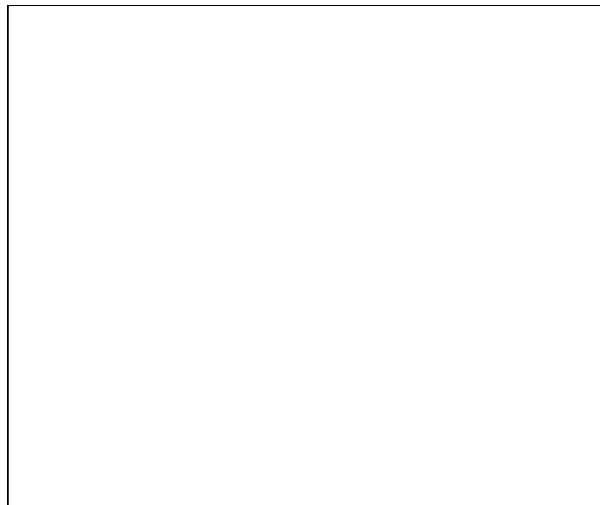
Cleveland's Legal Aid [service](#) is flooded with more than 100,000 calls each year.

Founded in 1905, The **Legal Aid Society of Cleveland** is the fifth oldest legal aid organization in the United States. Legal Aid's 55 staff attorneys, 90 staff members, and 1,400 volunteer lawyers ensure access to justice for low [income](#) people.

Legal Aid has four offices and serves clients in Ashtabula, Cuyahoga, Geauga, Lake and Lorain counties in Cleveland, Elyria, Jefferson and Painesville.

Cuyahoga County Common Pleas Judge Joan Synenberg says studies show that 80 percent of low-income people in need of legal aid don't get it.

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Cleveland, OH

She hopes that Pro Bono Week will make those people aware of the opportunities out there. "Regardless of means, people are entitled to get the type of help that they need," Synenberg said.

On Thursday, there will be a free legal advice and referral clinic at Fatima Family Center on Lexington Avenue in Cleveland. The event is first come, first served.

If you can't [afford](#) to hire an attorney on your own, you may qualify. There are other resources within the Cleveland area as well.

If you contact the numbers below, they can help find an attorney or organization that is best suited to address your needs.

Legal Aid of Cleveland (216) 687-1900

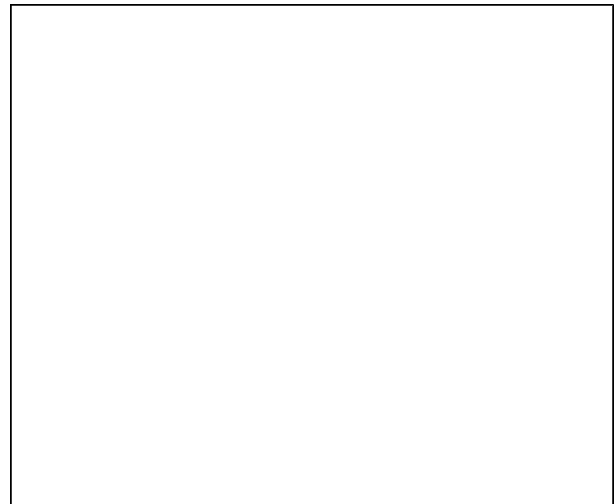
Cleveland Metropolitan Bar Association
(216) 696-3532

Towards Employment (216) 696-5750

Call 211

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