

The ALERT



The Legal Aid Society
of Cleveland
Since 1905

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Healthy Food Access in Northeast Ohio

By Megan Goedeker

Healthy food access improves individual and community health. Programs are available to provide fruits and vegetables to all. Everyone can support these vital programs by shopping at farmers markets and grocery stores to support local farmers and businesses offering these vital services.

SNAP and Produce Perks

By using SNAP benefits, you can receive Produce Perks to spend on fruits and vegetables! When you spend \$10 using your EBT card, you will get \$10 in Produce Perks to spend on fruits and vegetables, up to \$20 a day. All SNAP users are able to get Produce Perks. Grocery stores and farmers markets that accept SNAP offer Produce Perks! Learn more about Produce Perks at produceperks.org.

Learn more about SNAP benefits at odjfsbenefits.ohio.gov/.

"Good Food Here"



Look for the "Good Food Here" logo at your local corner store! The program, supported by the Ohio Department of Health, shows the community that the store is selling fresh fruits and vegetables, cereals, whole grains, low-fat

dairy products, and fresh meats! By shopping there, you can support your community and get the fresh produce that you and your family need to stay healthy!

Produce Prescriptions and the Food Pharmacy – Cuyahoga County

Community clinics write Produce Prescriptions for pregnant women or people at risk for heart disease. The prescriptions are for \$10 to spend on healthy food. Clinics participating are the Northeast Ohio Neighborhood Health Services (NEON) in Hough, Collinwood, and East Cleveland; Care Alliance Health Center and St. Vincent in Central; and Stephanie Tubbs Jones in East Cleveland. This program runs July-October. Check with your clinic in the spring to see if you qualify!

The Centers for Families and Children also prescribe clients healthy food. The prescription is then used at their food pharmacy for small produce bundles. Call 216.325.9355 to learn how to become a client and about their food pharmacy!

If you believe your SNAP benefits have been wrongfully reduced or terminated, or if you do not have access to healthcare, call the Legal Aid Society of Cleveland at 1.888.817.3777 to apply for help.

Special thanks

to Legal Aid's volunteers, especially summer associates and interns for their help creating this issue!

Eman Haj Alkhdaier, Megan Goedeker, Megan Hobart, Kathryn Killeen, Rachel Maver, Gerry Meader, Allison Meyer, Victoria Zanooudakis

Marsy's Law: Expanding Rights for Victims of Crime

By: Victoria Zanoudakis and Alexandria Ruden

In November 2017, Ohio voters passed Marsy's Law. Marsy's Law gives Ohio's crime victims specific constitutional rights in the criminal justice process. This amendment to the Ohio Constitution ensures that all crime victims know their rights including the right to enforce those rights if they are violated.

A victim is a person who is harmed by the criminal act. The parents, children or another close relative who were harmed by the criminal act may also be victims.

Marsy's Law gives you, as a person who was a victim of a crime, the following rights¹:

- a. The right to be informed, in writing, of Marsy's Law;
- b. The right to assert these rights yourself, through a representative, or by asking the prosecuting attorney. If the relief is denied, you may appeal to your local district court of appeals;
- c. The right to be treated with fairness and respect for your safety, dignity and privacy throughout the criminal justice process;
- d. The right to reasonable and timely notice of all public proceedings and the right to be present at those proceedings;
- e. The right to speak in public proceedings involving the accused's

release, plea, sentencing, disposition or parole and any other hearing that involves your rights ;

- f. The right to confer with the prosecutor, upon request;
- g. The right to proceedings free from unreasonable delay and a prompt conclusion of the case;
- h. The right to refuse an interview, deposition, or other discovery request by an accused, except as otherwise set forth in Ohio's Constitution;
- i. The right to full and timely restitution from the offender for harm caused;
- j. The right to reasonable protection from the accused or any person acting on behalf of the accused (if you are being threatened by the accused or another acting on behalf of the accused, law enforcement, an advocate, or the prosecutor can provide information on available protection options);
- k. The right to request a Victim's Representative, and
- l. The right to notice of the escape or release of the offender, upon request.

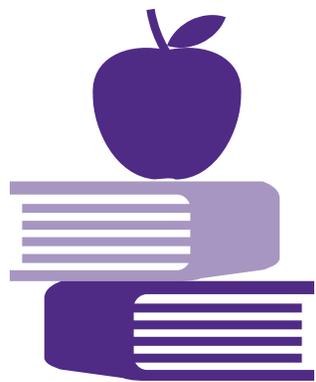
Law enforcement, the prosecutor and the court will be required to inform you of your rights.

Marsy's Law does not make the victim a party to the case and does not impact the rights of the accused.

¹Ohio Crime Victim Justice Center Marsy's Law Summary at <https://ocvjc.org/marsys-law/summary>

An Opportunity to Limit Suspensions and Expulsions for Young Students in Ohio

By Rachel Maver



More than 34,000 students in pre-kindergarten through third grade were suspended or expelled in Ohio in the last two years.¹ Over half of those punishments were for non-violent or disruptive behavior.² These suspensions and expulsions have negative, long-term effects on a student's success in school. Studies show that students who are expelled or suspended at a young age are ten times more likely to have bad grades, dislike school, not graduate, and face jail time.³

In response to this issue, Ohio State Senator Peggy Lehner introduced the Supporting Alternatives for Fair Education (SAFE) Act in November 2017.⁴

The goal of the SAFE Act is to bring down the number of suspensions and expulsions for young students, create a safer school environment, and help students get better grades. Under the SAFE Act, suspensions and expulsions for non-violent and disruptive behavior would be limited for students in third grade and younger.

Instead of suspending or expelling a student for non-violent or disruptive behavior, schools will have to teach students how to behave better both before and after problems occur.⁵ More mental health support will be offered in the schools, and teachers will be given tools that help students receive good grades and have good behavior.⁶

¹<http://www.ohiosenate.gov/senators/lehner/news/lehner-announces-unanimous-senate-passage-of-safe-act>

²<http://www.ohiosenate.gov/senators/lehner/news/lehner-announces-unanimous-senate-passage-of-safe-act>

³<http://www.ohiosenate.gov/senators/lehner/news/lehner-announces-unanimous-senate-passage-of-safe-act>

⁴https://www.cleveland.com/metro/index.ssf/2017/11/bill_would_ban_suspensions_of_non-violent_young_students_to_keep_them_in_class.html

⁵https://www.cleveland.com/metro/index.ssf/2017/11/bill_would_ban_suspensions_of_non-violent_young_students_to_keep_them_in_class.html

⁶<http://schubert.case.edu/2018/03/sb-246-the-safe-act-aims-to-provide-tools-for-building-positive-school-climates>

Housing Rights for Domestic Violence Survivors

By Megan Hobart



Survivors of domestic violence often struggle to find and keep housing where they are safe from abusers. Sometimes they need to leave a home quickly in an emergency and have no place to go. Sometimes they are evicted because of property damage caused by the abuser. Sometimes they cannot afford private housing because they have limited or no income.

Survivors of domestic violence can protect their rights with respect to housing in some circumstances. First, public housing providers may not deny survivors housing because of domestic violence. The survivor may request the public housing authority review a denial of their application.

Second, survivors can also take steps to prevent denials. Survivors may provide landlords with proof that they were abused. They may also show

landlords that the relationship with the abuser is over. Sometimes letters from past landlords could be helpful.

Third, survivors may have a discrimination claim under the Fair Housing Act if a landlord denies them housing because of the violence. Landlords may not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, familial status, or disability. Discrimination against survivors of domestic violence may be sex discrimination in certain situations. A person who believes they have experienced this kind of discrimination should contact their local fair housing agency or file a complaint with the Ohio Civil Rights Commission (OCRC). Information about OCRC is at <http://crc.ohio.gov/>.

Financial help with housing is also available for survivors. The Crime Victim Compensation Fund, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, and Homeless Prevention and Rapid Rehousing Program provide financial help to survivors. For information and assistance applying to these programs, and referrals to domestic violence shelters, call 2-1-1.

Legal Aid provides help to low-income survivors of domestic violence in some cases. Call Legal Aid at 888.817.3777 to apply for help.

Bankruptcy By-Pass

By Allison Meyer



file bankruptcy and you do not have to fear that your money or assets will be taken by creditors.

You are eligible for the Bankruptcy By-Pass program if your only income is from a protected source and you do not own your home or plan to work full time again. Types of protected income include social security, SSI,

Creditors often give people wrong information about what they can collect. Creditors frequently call and send notices, causing many people to fear they will be charged criminally for not paying their bills. Legal Aid can help people, often seniors and persons with disabilities, deal with these types of creditors through its Bankruptcy-Bypass Program. If you are eligible for the Bankruptcy By-Pass Program you do not need to

file bankruptcy and you do not have to fear that your money or assets will be taken by creditors.

SSDI, and veterans' benefits. These income sources cannot be taken out of a bank account by a creditor. If your only income is from a protected source, you are considered "judgment proof." "Judgment proof" means that creditors cannot take your income under the law. For eligible clients, Legal Aid will notify creditors that you are "judgment proof." Often, when the creditors are notified, they stop calling and they stop trying to collect. Many clients say that it feels as if a weight is lifted once the creditors stop calling and stop trying to collect.

Additionally, federal law protects individuals who make less than minimum wage by limiting the amount of earnings that may be taken in any workweek. In Ohio, the first \$217.50 from each weekly paycheck cannot be taken by a creditor, even if they have a judgment from the court. Therefore, if you have debt, but earn very little money, filing for bankruptcy may not be the best choice. People can only file a personal bankruptcy once every eight years and you should only do so when it will be to your greatest advantage.

In the last year alone, Legal Aid has helped over 70 clients through the Bankruptcy By-Pass Program. If you think the Bankruptcy By-Pass Program can help you, call Legal Aid at 888.817.3777 to apply for help.

Help For Refugees

International Refugee Assistance Project (IRAP)

By Eman Haj Alkhdaire and
Lisa Splawinski



IRAP provides refugees with free legal representation throughout the resettlement process. IRAP also provides refugees with guides that outline their rights and explain current issues that can affect them such as the travel ban. IRAP provides the guide in various languages, such as Arabic, Farsi, and Somali. These resources are available at <https://refugeerights.org/know-your-rights/>.

IRAP has offices in many countries. If refugees have a family member in another country that is at risk of violence, they can look for an IRAP office to help them explore legal options. If refugees have a family member whose refugee application has been denied by the United States Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP), IRAP provides a Request for Review Self-Help Guide at <https://refugeerights.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/Pro-Se-Manual-English-Dec-17.pdf>. This guide describes what happens after an application is denied, and explains how to request another review of the refugee application.

IRAP is not a part of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) or the International Organization for Migration (IOM) so IRAP cannot grant refugee status, issue visas, or speed up cases.

Migration and Refugee Services (MRS), Catholic Charities

MRS resettles approximately 230 refugees annually and helps them with adapting to a new country by providing English language classes and assistance with finding employment.

Four levels of English classes are taught at Cuyahoga County Community College. Participants are encouraged to start at elementary levels if they had no previous exposure to the language. The English language training is supplemented by English tutoring groups, population-specific cultural orientation groups, parenting classes, and nutrition and pharmacy classes. MRS also provides vocational classes aimed at training refugees on specific trade jobs, including sewing and computer training. All of these classes are free for refugees.

In northeast Ohio, contact IRAP via Email at info@refugeerights.org or MRS at 216.281.7005. Some immigrant victims of violence may be eligible for help from Legal Aid and can call 888.817.3777 to apply.

In northeast Ohio, contact IRAP via Email at info@refugeerights.org or MRS at 216.281.7005. Some immigrant victims of violence may be eligible for help from Legal Aid and can call 888.817.3777 to apply.

ChexSystems: An “invisible” barrier to getting banked

By
Kathryn Killeen

Most consumers do not know that banks look at their ChexSystems report to decide whether or not to allow the person to open an account. ChexSystems, a credit reporting agency, is used by 80% of U.S. banks. The banks refer to the ChexSystems report to find out if a person has any negative activity reported. Banks typically refuse accounts to people with negative reports.

“Negative activity” may include minor problems like failing to pay an overdraft fee by the deadline or much more serious infractions such as bank fraud. Banks decide what information is put into ChexSystems, which then gives them control over who can open accounts. The inability to open a bank account makes saving for the future or cashing paychecks difficult and expensive.

Consumers do have the option to request their ChexSystems report. This can

be done by calling ChexSystems at 800.428.9623 or by going on their website (<https://www.chexsystems.com/web/chexsystems/consumerdebit/page/home/>) to the “Request Reports” section and filling out the consumer disclosure form. If any information on the report is wrong, consumers should request a correction in writing. Documents that prove the error, such as bank statements or payment records, should be provided. If the report is accurate, the consumer should try to pay the debts owed or enter into a payment plan with the creditor. Then, they should ask the creditor to remove the information from ChexSystems.

Finally, consumers can also look for a financial institution that does not use ChexSystems. For a list of banks and credit unions in Ohio that do not use ChexSystems, see <http://echeck.org/non-chexsystems-banks-in-ohio/>. Unfortunately, none on this list have locations in northeast Ohio currently.



The Legal Aid Society
of Cleveland
Since 1915

Volunteer Lawyers Program
[vlp]



free
LEGAL ADVICE

2019 Brief Advice and Referral Clinics
Civil Matters Only (*Not Criminal*)

Legal Aid provides services in the areas of consumer rights, disability, domestic violence, education, employment, family law, health, housing, foreclosure, immigration, public benefits, utilities, and tax.

First-come, first-served. Bring important papers with you! Questions? Call 216.687.1900 or visit www.lasclev.org for updated clinic listing.

TUESDAY, JANUARY 8

2:00 P.M. – 3:30 P.M.

Oberlin Depot – Oberlin Community Services
240 South Main Street, Oberlin
Call 440-774-6579 for an appointment

TUESDAY, JANUARY 8

5:15 P.M. – 6:45 P.M.

Boys & Girls Club of Cleveland
6114 Broadway Avenue
Call 216-883-4663 for an appointment or walk in

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 9

2:00 P.M. – 3:30 P.M.

Catholic Charities Ashtabula
4200 Park Avenue, Third Floor
Call 440-992-2121 for an appointment

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 9

2:30 P.M. – 4:00 P.M.

For U.S. Veterans
VA Community Resource and Referral Center
Call 216-391-0264 for an appointment

SATURDAY, JANUARY 12

9:30 A.M. – 11:00 A.M.

Fairhill Partners
12200 Fairhill Road

THURSDAY, JANUARY 17

5:30 P.M. – 7:00 P.M.

For Cleveland Metropolitan School District families
George Washington Carver School
2200 E 55th Street
Call 216-838-1472 for an appointment or walk in

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 23

3:00 P.M. – 4:30 P.M.

CornUcopia @ Burten, Bell, Carr Development, Inc.
7201 Kinsman Road, Suite 103b
Call 216-341-1455 for an appointment or walk in

SATURDAY, JANUARY 26

10:00 A.M. – 11:00 A.M.

Cleveland Public Library – Carnegie West
1900 Fulton Road

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 5

5:15 P.M. – 6:45 P.M.

Boys & Girls Club of Cleveland
6114 Broadway Avenue
Call 216-883-4663 for an appointment or walk in

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 6

2:30 P.M. – 4:00 P.M.

For U.S. Veterans
VA Community Resource and Referral Center
Call 216-391-0264 for an appointment

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 9

10:00 A.M. – 11:00 A.M.

Cleveland Public Library – Woodland Branch
5806 Woodland Avenue

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 12

2:00 P.M. – 3:30 P.M.

Oberlin Depot -Oberlin Community Services
240 South Main Street, Oberlin
Call 440-774-6579 for an appointment

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 13

2:00 P.M. – 3:30 P.M.

Catholic Charities Ashtabula
4200 Park Avenue, Third Floor
Call 440-992-2121 for an appointment

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 21

5:30 P.M. – 7:00 P.M.

For Cleveland Metropolitan School District families
George Washington Carver School
2200 E 55th Street
Call 216-838-1472 for an appointment or walk in

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 23

10:30 A.M. – 11:30 A.M.

East Cleveland Public Library
14101 Euclid Avenue

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 26

2:00 P.M. – 3:30 P.M.

El Centro
2800 Pearl Avenue, Lorain
Call 440-277-8235 for an appointment or walk in

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 27

3:00 P.M. – 4:30 P.M.

CornUcopia @ Burten, Bell, Carr Development, Inc.
7201 Kinsman Road, Suite 103b
Call 216-341-1455 for an appointment or walk in

TUESDAY, MARCH 5

5:15 P.M. – 6:45 P.M.

Boys and Girls Club of Cleveland
6114 Broadway Ave
Call 216-883-4663 for an appointment or walk in

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 6

2:30 P.M. – 4:00 P.M.

For U.S. Veterans
VA Community Resource and Referral Center
Call 216-391-0264 for an appointment

SATURDAY, MARCH 9

10:00 A.M. – 11:00 A.M.

Cleveland Public Library – Rockport Branch
4421 West 140th Street

TUESDAY, MARCH 12

2:00 P.M. – 3:30 P.M.

Oberlin Depot – Oberlin Community Services
240 South Main Street, Oberlin
Call 440-774-6579 for an appointment

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 13

2:00 P.M. – 3:30 P.M.

Catholic Charities Ashtabula
4200 Park Avenue, Third Floor
Call 440-992-2121 for an appointment

THURSDAY, MARCH 21

5:30 P.M. – 7:00 P.M.

For Cleveland Metropolitan School District families
George Washington Carver School
2200 E 55th Street
Call 216-838-1472 for an appointment or walk in

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 27

3:00 P.M. – 4:30 P.M.

CornUcopia @ Burten, Bell, Carr Development, Inc.
7201 Kinsman Road, Suite 103b
Call 216-341-1455 for an appointment or walk in

*Attorneys available for brief advice and referral only. Clinic attorneys do NOT represent you. If you need legal representation you may be referred to The Legal Aid Society of Cleveland or another service provider.



The
Legal Aid Society
of Cleveland
Since 1905

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Cleveland, OH 44113

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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Legal Aid has improved its intake system to better serve the Northeast Ohio community.
Please share this information with your constituents:

**If you need legal assistance,
you can contact Legal Aid any weekday for help.**

New intakes are processed via phone:
888-817-3777 (toll-free)

Monday, Wednesday, Friday: 9 a.m. – 4 p.m.

Tuesday, Thursday: 9 a.m. – 2 p.m.

If you prefer an in-person intake application, those are handled:

Tuesday, Thursday: 9 a.m. – 1 p.m.

at any of our four Northeast Ohio offices (Cleveland, Elyria, Jefferson & Painesville).

Visit www.lasclev.org for more information!



This newsletter is meant to give you general information and not to give you specific legal advice. This information cannot take the place of advice from a lawyer. Each case is different and needs individual legal advice. You should contact a lawyer if you need representation or if you have questions.

If you have a communications limitation, contact us through the Ohio Relay Service. Interpretation services are available so that anyone can communicate with us in his or her dominant and/or preferable language.

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