

# A the ALERT



The Legal Aid Society  
of Cleveland  
Since 1905

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## Legal Aid Resources are Available Online

By Sanjana Kulkarni

Legal Aid wants you to know your rights! Information can be found online at [www.lasclev.org](http://www.lasclev.org) and on YouTube at [youtube.com/legalaidcleveland](https://youtube.com/legalaidcleveland).

On our website [www.lasclev.org](http://www.lasclev.org), every page has a banner with the options: "Get Help", "Volunteer", "Donate" and "Contact Us," along with a search feature. If you are not sure where to look, enter a few key words in the search box and any related content will be listed for you.

The "Get Help" section provides information about all of Legal Aid's services. Once you select a topic, scroll to the bottom of the page where you can find "Resources" such as frequently asked questions (FAQs), Self Help, and Brochures. The FAQs can be helpful for general concerns or queries. The self-help section provides help if you seek to act by yourself without the representation of a lawyer. If Legal Aid has brochures on your topic of interest, you'll find them under "Brochures." You can email requests for brochures to [outreach@lasclev.org](mailto:outreach@lasclev.org).

Legal Aid also offers "Community Education" events - find these by clicking on the "Events" tab at the top of any page. Most are free and open to the public. You can also email [outreach@lasclev.org](mailto:outreach@lasclev.org) with any specific requests or questions.

Cleveland Legal Aid's YouTube channel provides lots of similar content in video format! At [youtube.com/legalaidcleveland](https://youtube.com/legalaidcleveland), you'll find FAQ videos.

We have a lot of FAQ videos available on our YouTube that can answer any quick questions, such as what to do if you receive a 3-day eviction notice. More information can always be found on our website, but these videos give the run-down of the most important factors to consider.

The Legal Aid Society of Cleveland and Cleveland Public Library's 2021 Facebook LIVE series features legal and "know your rights" information through interviews with our own Legal Aid attorneys, Cleveland librarians, and occasional special guests.

Provider trainings are virtual trainings that our attorneys have provided to other professionals who serve low-income populations. Topics include child-care, domestic abuse, and housing rights. You can find them here <https://tinyurl.com/2021LegalAidTraining>

We also have radio show recordings. Burten Bell Carr's radio station, WOYU 95.9 FM, has partnered with Legal Aid to present a monthly radio called Life & The Law - Conversations About Your Rights. Legal Aid attorneys join Our Voices Today, WOYU's signature community affairs program, for a conversation with host and Production Director T.C. Lewis. Topics have included education rights, housing law, domestic violence protections, and more. Check out Legal Aid's YouTube Channel for past WOYU shows.

From the Legal Aid website, you can apply for free legal help by clicking on "Apply for Free Legal Help" at the bottom right corner of any page (in English or Spanish). You will then see "Contact Us." Scroll down to "Apply Online" and click "Apply Now." Then, a new page will open for you to start an application. If you apply online, a Legal Aid intake specialist will call you to finish the process.

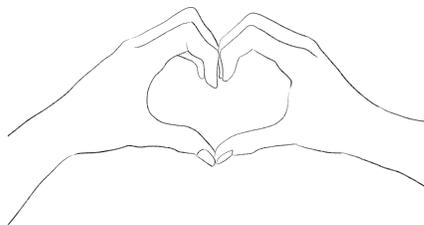
If you need to leave the website discreetly and quickly to protect your safety, click on the small exit symbol at the center-right of the screen.

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

Hunter Butkovic, Erica Druvva, Erykah Gandy, Komal Hans, Cristina Jamba, Francesca Joseph, Allison Kreiner, Sanjana Kulkarni, Nasir Martin, Molly Schmidt, Sarah Shaw, and Luke Trinko

# What you need to know about Public Benefits during COVID-19

By Molly Schmidt



**If you currently receive Medicaid**, you are covered until the national public health emergency ends. The public health emergency will probably continue through the end of the year. When the public health emergency ends, Medicaid

will re-determine your eligibility. At that time, your coverage may end if you no longer qualify.

**If you receive food stamps or Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits and are under 50 without dependents (Able-Bodied Adult Without Dependents), SNAP employment and training (E&T) requirements continue.** You will be asked to complete a work and training assessment after you apply for SNAP. You can now complete the assessment by phone at 1.844.640.6446. Ohio increased SNAP benefits for many households during the pandemic with emergency additions. When the public health emergency ends, your monthly SNAP amount may change based on eligibility requirements.

**If you have children who were eligible for free or reduced lunches, Ohio approved the Pandemic Electronic Benefits Transfer (P-EBT) Program.** Your eligible school-age children will receive P-EBT through Summer 2021. You should receive your final payment by the end of July 2021. Your P-EBT benefits will be available on your card for 12 months.

If you receive SNAP benefits, the P-EBT benefits are added to your Ohio Direction card. If you do not receive SNAP benefits, you got a P-EBT card in the mail for each child in the household.

## **What action should you take? What should you lookout for?**

Read all notices sent by agencies, such as your County Department of Job and Family Services, the Social Security Administration, and the Ohio Department of Medicaid. Contact the agency with any questions you have about the notices.

**If you receive Medicaid or SNAP benefits**, contact your local County Department of Job and Family Services to report changes in household size, income, and expenses. Changes to your expenses may include changes in rent or mortgage payments, utilities, medical expenses, childcare expenses, and child support payments. You can determine your eligibility for Medicaid or SNAP by calling Ohio Benefits at 1.844.640.6446 or visit their website at [benefits.ohio.gov](https://benefits.ohio.gov).

**If you receive P-EBT benefits or think you should receive them**, contact Ohio Department of Job and Family Services hotline at 1.866-244.0071. You can also call the hotline if you have moved or need a replacement card. More information about P-EBT can be found at [ohiopebt.org](https://ohiopebt.org).

If you think there is a problem with your public benefits, you can apply to The Legal Aid Society of Cleveland for help online ([www.lasclev.org](https://www.lasclev.org)) or by calling 1.888.817.3777 during most business hours.

## Information Lines Available for Workers and Tenants of Ohio

By Francesca Joseph

### **Are you a worker in Ohio? Are you a tenant in Ohio? Legal Aid wants you to know your rights!**

Legal Aid's Worker Info Line can help with Ohio employment laws, unemployment benefits, and more. Call 216.861.5899 in Cuyahoga County. Call 440.210.4532 in Ashtabula, Geauga, Lake, and Lorain Counties.

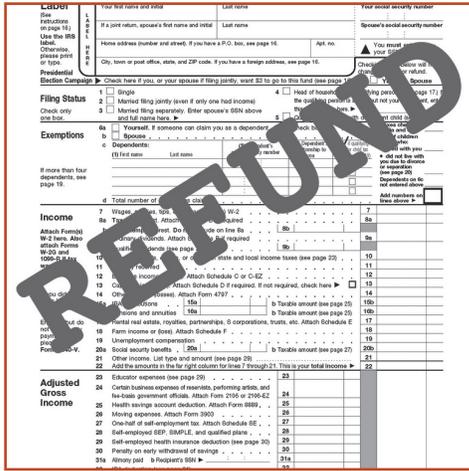
Legal Aid's Tenant Info Line can help with questions about landlord duties, late fees, eviction, and more. Call 216.861.5955 in Cuyahoga County. Call 440.210.4533 in Ashtabula, Geauga, Lake, and Lorain Counties.

Please leave a clear message with your name, phone number, and question. You will get a call back within 1-2 business days of your message. Please remember that these lines are for information only. If you need more help, you may be referred to Legal Aid's intake or another organization. If you are a Spanish speaker, you can call 216.586.319 and leave your message.

For more information visit <https://lasclev.org/get-help/> or check out Cleveland Legal Aid on [YouTube.com](https://www.youtube.com).

# Changes to Tax Credits Help Families Coming Out of the Pandemic

By Cristina Jamba and Erykah Gandy



The American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (ARPA) should lift millions of Americans from poverty. The Advanced Child Tax Credit and Earned Income Tax Credit are two sections of the ARPA that will provide families with money. This year, the Child Tax Credit is available regardless of income. Families with little or no income now qualify.

tax returns. For people who did not have to file, the IRS website offers a simple option to file a tax return to get the tax credit: <https://www.irs.gov/credits-deductions/child-tax-credit-non-filer-sign-up-tool>.

The IRS also has a tool on their website to check eligibility for the child tax credit. See: <https://www.irs.gov/credits-deductions/advance-child-tax-credit-eligibility-assistant>.

The Child Tax Credit Update Portal is another tool from the IRS. It allows people to update their bank account information, opt out of the credit, and check their enrollment status. See: <https://www.irs.gov/credits-deductions/child-tax-credit-update-portal>.

The Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) will be available to more workers who don't have children. Workers can claim and receive the EITC at the age of 19 starting this year. Foster youth can receive it starting at the age of 18. The amount that can be claimed tripled from \$538 to \$1,502. Married households without children filing jointly can claim the EITC if they have a maximum total income of \$27,380. Households could use their 2019 income for the EITC if they earned more in 2019 than 2020. To see if you qualify, the IRS has an eligibility tool on their [website: https://www.irs.gov/credits-deductions/individuals/earned-income-tax-credit/use-the-eitc-assistant](https://www.irs.gov/credits-deductions/individuals/earned-income-tax-credit/use-the-eitc-assistant).

Eligible families will receive half of the tax credit in monthly payments from July to December 2021. The rest of their credit will be deposited after 2021 taxes are filed. This year, the amount paid per child is higher. For children 5 and under, payments will total \$3,600 per child. For children ages 6 through 17, payments will total \$3,000.

Payments will be sent automatically to those who filed 2020 or 2019

# "Pay to Stay" Offers New Protection for Tenants Coming Out of COVID-19

By Hunter Butkovic

The eviction crisis in the United States escalated during the pandemic. According to the National Housing Law Project, as many as 30 to 40 million Americans currently face eviction. Increased tenant rights and protections are needed nationwide. City-wide "pay to stay" ordinances could help tenants who are facing eviction for non-payment of rent to stay in their homes.

Ohio is one of five states that allows landlords to file for eviction almost right after a tenant misses a rent payment. The landlords must give a tenant a three-day notice to vacate the property for non-payment. Then, the landlord is not required to accept rent. According to the Cleveland Eviction Study, around 9,000 evictions are filed each year in Cleveland. Of those, about 80% are for non-payment of rent. In most cases, tenants only missed one to two months of rent.

"Pay to stay" ordinances give tenants facing eviction the chance to pay their rent in full, including late fees, up until their eviction hearing.

If tenants can make these payments to their landlord before going to

court, the tenant has the right to remain in their homes according to "pay to stay" ordinances.

Under most "pay to stay" ordinances, if a landlord sends a three-day notice to vacate but has not filed an eviction yet, the tenant may offer all back rent and late fees to their landlord. If the landlord refuses the payment, the tenant can use that as a defense if the landlord files an eviction. If an eviction was already filed, the tenant should ask the court to hold their payments in escrow until their eviction hearing. This means the tenant would pay rent to the court and the court would hold the money until the case was resolved.

Ohio cities that have passed pay to stay ordinances are Yellow Springs, Toledo, Dayton, Cincinnati, Lakewood, and Euclid.

Cleveland, Cleveland Heights, South Euclid, Maple Heights, Newburgh Heights, and Akron have all introduced "pay to stay" legislation, but no laws have been passed yet.

# Tips for Immigrant Communities to Stay Safe

By Allison Kreiner

During the pandemic, the number of noncitizens detained by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (“ICE”) went down. When COVID case numbers go down, ICE might start to detain more noncitizens. Noncitizens should be careful during their daily routines to lower the risk of encountering ICE. Also, know your rights during a stop by ICE just in case.

All people living in the U.S. have rights protected by the Constitution, no matter their immigration status. One of those rights is freedom from unlawful searches. Any person, including a noncitizen, can refuse to open the door for an ICE officer if they do not have a valid search warrant.



Without opening the door, a person should ask the ICE agent to slide their identification and the warrant under the door.

Tips for how to figure out if a warrant is valid can be found at: <https://cliniclegal.org/file-download/download/public/1443>.

If the warrant is not valid, a person does not have to open the door for the ICE officer. Even if ICE

has a valid warrant, a noncitizen can open the door but assert their constitutional rights by telling ICE, “I do not consent to this search.”

Another right that belongs to all people living in the United States is the right to remain silent if arrested. A person does not have to give any information about their immigration status or where they were born. If an officer asks other questions, a person may tell the officer, “I choose to remain silent and want an attorney.”

Any encounter with ICE is stressful. Many people forget their rights in the moment. By remembering just a few of these tips, a person may have a better chance of release from jail and avoiding deportation. Try not to resist a pat-down search or run away. Ask the officer, “Am I free to go?” before walking away.

If a noncitizen is detained, they have the right to:

- NOT sign anything they do not understand, especially if it is not written in a language they speak;
- remain silent; and
- request an attorney.

Finally, noncitizens should keep copies of important documents (birth certificate, passport, immigration paperwork) for all members of their family in a safe place. Also, the noncitizen should tell a friend or family member who does not live with them where to find the documents or give them a copy.

# Eviction Moratoriums During COVID-19

By Nasir Martin



Many Americans face eviction due to COVID-19’s economic impact. In response, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) paused evictions until October 3, 2021. This “moratorium” applies in areas with high COVID-19 spread. The order helps to limit COVID-19’s spread since people can stay in their homes. It also prevents living in group settings such as shelters.

A person facing eviction for not paying rent could be protected by the CDC order. They must show that they tried to get rental assistance. Also, they must not have earned more than \$99,000 or \$198,000 if filing jointly in Calendar Year 2020 or 2021.

Ohio gave rental assistance money to all 88 counties to help tenants. The U.S. Department of Justice encouraged state courts to give landlords and tenants more time to seek rental assistance. The DOJ recommended that courts require landlords to apply for rental assistance before filing an eviction. In Cuyahoga County, see [www.FreeEvictionHelp.org](http://www.FreeEvictionHelp.org). In other counties, apply to Legal Aid online at [www.lasclev.org](http://www.lasclev.org) or by calling 1.888.817.3777.

# Technology Access Options to Attend Virtual Meetings During COVID-19

By Erica Drufva and Sarah Shaw

Do you need technology for a virtual appointment or court hearing? Job interview or school conference?

Libraries across Northeast Ohio have study rooms where you can use their technology for virtual meetings. Users can access Zoom, MS Teams, WebEx, and more. The libraries listed have virtual meeting services.



## Ashtabula County

- **Andover Public Library:** Call 440.293.6792. Tell the librarian you are interested in reserving a room. Let them know that you want to schedule an in-person library visit. Once the reservation is complete, you will have access to virtual meeting options when visiting the library. The Andover Public Library has recently added a video conferencing station.

## Lake County

- **Madison Public Library:** This library has 13 Chromebooks and 6 Windows laptops available for use on a first-come, first-serve basis. Any library member can use them after signing an equipment waiver.
- **Mentor Libraries:** To reserve a virtual meeting space, fill out their online application at [www.mentorpl.org/machform/view.php?id=72258](http://www.mentorpl.org/machform/view.php?id=72258). The rooms are available for two-hour time slots. The rooms must be reserved by an adult. Once you fill out the application, you will receive meeting information for a Zoom room.
- **Willoughby-Eastlake Libraries:** Adult members can check out a Chromebook computer and internet hotspot for 14 days with a library card and photo ID.

## Cuyahoga County

- **Cleveland Public Library:** Select Cleveland Library branches will soon have virtual meeting rooms thanks to support from the NFL Foundation. Check [www.cpl.org](http://www.cpl.org) for more information coming soon.
- **Cuyahoga County Public Library:** 19 branches have study rooms available. Each room can be reserved 1 week in advance for up to 2 hours during regular library hours. Each room has a computer, speakers, microphone, webcam, and keyboard. You need to have a library account to use this equipment. For more information and a complete list of library branches offering conferencing rooms visit [laslev.org/wp-content/uploads/Video-Conference-Rooms-at-CCPL.pdf](http://laslev.org/wp-content/uploads/Video-Conference-Rooms-at-CCPL.pdf). CCPL also has virtual Zoom Rooms. If you have a computer

and internet connection, but not a Zoom license, you can book a virtual Zoom "room" using the Cuyahoga County Library license. For more information visit [www.cuyahogalibrary.org/Services/Meeting-Spaces/Zoom-Rooms.aspx](http://www.cuyahogalibrary.org/Services/Meeting-Spaces/Zoom-Rooms.aspx)

- **Lakewood Public Library – Main Branch:** To reserve a virtual meeting space, first call 216.226.8275. Ask to speak with the reference desk, and then a supervisor. From there, you will be able to reserve a room. Once you make the reservation, you will have access to virtual meeting technology when you go to the room at your reservation time.
- **Westlake Porter Public Library:** To reserve a virtual meeting space, first call 440.871.2600. Ask to speak with adult services. Let them know you would like to register to reserve a room. Once the reservation is complete, you will have access to virtual meeting technology when you enter the room at your assigned time. Walk-in reservations are also available, but space may be limited.

## Geauga County Public Library

- **Bainbridge Branch:** Call 440.543.5611. Ask to speak with the reference desk. From there, you can reserve a room. Once the reservation is complete, you can use virtual meeting technology at the library.
- **Chardon Branch:** Call 440.285.7601 and ask to speak with the reference desk. From there, you can reserve a room. Once the reservation is complete, you can use virtual meeting technology at the library.
- **Geauga West Branch:** Call 440.729.4250. Ask to speak with the reference desk. From there, you can reserve a room. Once you make the reservation, you can use virtual meeting technology at the library.
- **Middlefield Branch and Thompson Station Branch:** Call 440.632.1961. Ask to speak with the reference desk. From there, you can reserve a room. Once you make the reservation, you can use virtual meeting technology at the library.

## Lorain Public Library System

- The **Lorain Public Library System** has meeting rooms available. These rooms can be reserved up to three months in advance. To reserve a room, go to the Reserve a Meeting room page on the library's website ([www.lorainpubliclibrary.org](http://www.lorainpubliclibrary.org) under "Using the Library.") You can also call 440.244.1192. You must be 18 or older. You must agree to the meeting room policy to reserve a space. Walk-in reservations are available as well, but space may be limited.
- **Main Branch:** For individuals who have a personal device to have their meeting on, conference rooms with Wi-Fi connection and privacy are available.
- **North Ridgeville Branch:** Meeting room C has a laptop with a built-in webcam and microphone for virtual meetings.
- **South Branch:** Meeting rooms A and B have a laptop with a built-in webcam and microphone to use for virtual meetings. There is also a conference room available for people who have their own electronic device but need WIFI and privacy. There are two laptops available to be used in meeting rooms on a first come first serve basis.

# Ohio Helps Drivers Get Their Licenses Back

By Luke Trinko

The Ohio Bureau of Motor Vehicles (BMV) started the Reinstatement Fee Debt Reduction and Amnesty Program on December 13, 2020. The program helps people get their driver's licenses back by reducing fees.

Fees will be reduced for drivers who:

- **Have an "eligible offense."** Most driver's license suspensions that do NOT involve alcohol, drugs, or deadly weapons qualify. For example: operating a vehicle without proof of insurance, and failure to appear or failure to pay a fine related to vehicle-related violations.
- **Owe driver's license reinstatement fees.** Court fines and fees aren't covered.
- **Wait the required time.** 18 months must have passed since the end of the suspension period for at least one of your eligible offenses.
- **Be new to the program.** You may only participate in this program one time.

The BMV will send eligible drivers an email or a letter. The notice will show the fees reduced and the fees still owed. It will also ask for proof of insurance. Proof of insurance may be provided with an insurance card, declaration page, or policy.

Drivers who receive any of the benefits listed below may not have to pay any eligible fees. Complete BMV Form 2829 (this form may be found online at <https://publicsafety.ohio.gov/static/bmv2829.pdf>) to apply for a complete removal of fees. You must show that you get any of these benefits:

- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)
- Medicaid
- Ohio Works First Program (OWF)
- Supplemental Security Income Program (SSI)
- Veteran's Affairs Pension Benefit Program

You can get information on your SNAP, OWF, and/or Medicaid

participation from your county Department of Job and Family Services. You can create an account on the Self-Service Portal Homepage and print out the information yourself. Find the Self-Service Portal Homepage here: <https://ssp.benefits.ohio.gov/apspspp/ssp.portal>.

Proof of benefits should include your name and the status or month.

Drivers who qualify for the program but did NOT receive a notice from the BMV can still apply. Complete BMV Form 2829. Provide current proof of insurance. Prove you get any of the benefits listed above. Deliver the completed application to the BMV by:

- Email: [amnesty@dps.ohio.gov](mailto:amnesty@dps.ohio.gov)
- Fax: 614.308.5110
- In person at a BMV Deputy Registrar License Office. You may be charged a service fee.
- Mail:  
OhioBMV  
Attn: ALS/Points  
PO Box 16521, Columbus, OH 43216-6521

The BMV may say you do not qualify for the program. If you disagree, you can apply for help from Legal Aid online at [www.lasclev.org](http://www.lasclev.org) or call 1.888.817.3777.

For further information: Find the closest BMV office: <https://publicsafety.ohio.gov/wps/portal/gov/odps/local-office>

Application for BMV Reinstatement Fee Debt Reduction and Amnesty Program: <https://publicsafety.ohio.gov/static/bmv2829.pdf>

Learn more about the Reinstatement Fee Debt Reduction and Amnesty Program: <https://lasclev.org/what-is-the-ohio-bmv-reinstatement-fee-debt-reduction-and-amnesty-program/>

## How the Pandemic Affected Domestic Violence Survivors

By Komal Hans

Rates of domestic violence increased during the COVID-19 lockdowns. Resources and funding for survivors plunged, however. The Ohio Domestic Violence Network reports fatalities were 14% higher in the first few months of the pandemic than in the same period in 2019. Calls to The National Domestic Violence Hotline went down from 2,000 calls per day to 951 calls from March 10 to 24, 2020. Survivors probably couldn't access help from providers, like hospitals, shelters, and legal offices, because of the spike in illness and deaths.

Many providers shut down in-person services during COVID-19 and only provided phone and internet services. Many low-income families can't access the internet. These families couldn't easily get medical help, hotlines, and emotional support. Survivors may not have sought shelter because of potential COVID-19 exposure. Lockdowns made it hard to escape. Staying at home increased instances of violence. Without in-person support, people's mental health worsened.

Ohio's federal Victim of Crime Acts funds were cut by over \$20 million between 2020 and 2021. COVID-19 restrictions have started to lift, but many resources are still closed or online. Shelters are still limited. Mental health services are in high demand. People still need help escaping abusive relationships while communities are still coping with COVID-19. A person experiencing domestic violence may qualify for help from Legal Aid to obtain a protection order. Applications can be made online at [www.lasclev.org](http://www.lasclev.org) or by phone at 1.888.817.3777.

## HAVE A PROBLEM WITH:

*Tienes un problema con:*



Money  
*Dinero*



Housing  
*Alojamiento*



Work  
*Trabaja*



Health  
*Salud*



Family  
*Familia*



Access to Justice  
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**contact Legal Aid for FREE assistance!**

***...comuníquese con Legal Aid para obtener asistencia GRATUITA***

**Legal Aid serves people and groups with low-income in Ashtabula, Cuyahoga, Geauga, Lake and Lorain Counties.**

*Legal Aid atiende a personas de bajos ingresos en los condados de Ashtabula, Cuyahoga, Geauga, Lake y Lorain en el noreste de Ohio.*

## Information and Intake 24/7 online

*Información y admisión 24 horas al día, 7 días a la semana en línea*



**[www.lasclev.org](http://www.lasclev.org)**

## Apply by phone during most business hours

*Solicite por teléfono durante la mayoría del horario comercial*



**888.817.3777**

**Have a quick question? *¿Tienes una pregunta rápida?***

**Tenant Info Line 440.210.4533 or 216.861.5955**

for questions related to tenant's rights and rental housing

*para preguntas relacionadas con los derechos del inquilino y la vivienda de alquiler*

**Worker Info Line 440.210.4532 or 216.861.5899**

for questions related to employment, benefits, and unemployment

*para preguntas relacionadas con empleo, beneficios y desempleo*

Legal Aid provides interpreters and translation. *Legal Aid proporciona intérpretes y traducción.*



Legal Aid uses Ohio Relay Service (800.750.0750) to support people who have a communication limitation.  
*Legal Aid utilizó el servicio de retransmisión de Ohio (800.750.0750) para ayudar a las personas que tienen una limitación de comunicación.*

Request an outreach/education event or materials for your community group by email: [outreach@lasclev.org](mailto:outreach@lasclev.org).

*Solicite un evento o materiales de divulgación / educación para su grupo comunitario por correo electrónico: [outreach@lasclev.org](mailto:outreach@lasclev.org).*



The  
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*Since 1905*

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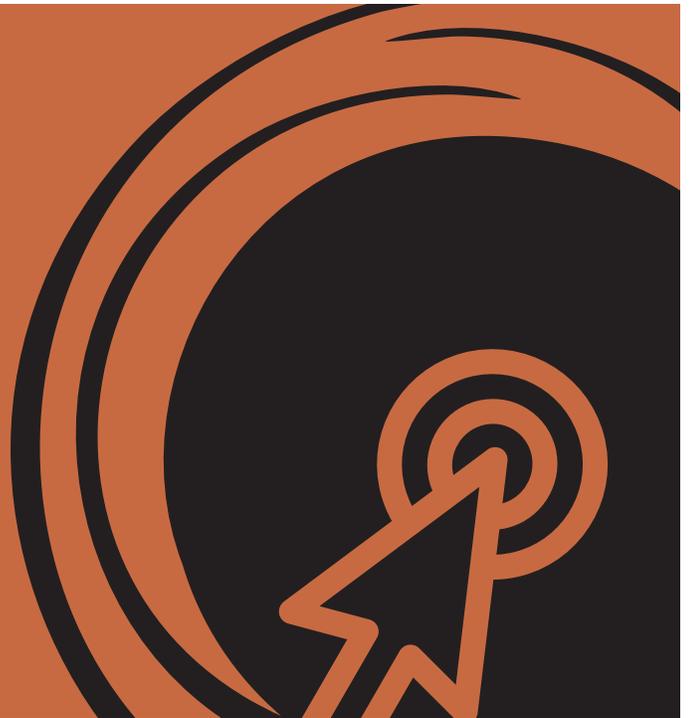
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Money or Work Problems?  
Need quick legal info?  
Want to know your rights?**

*Browse online Legal Aid  
information and resources*



**[www.tinyurl.com/  
InfoAndResources](http://www.tinyurl.com/InfoAndResources)**



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***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.***

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