

LEGAL AID PROVIDERS IN NEVADA



NEVADA LEGAL SERVICES

**Anna Marie Johnson,
Executive Director, Nevada
Legal Services**

Nevada Legal Services (NLS) is in its 32nd year as the only statewide provider of legal assistance to low-income Nevadans. The organization has offices in Las Vegas, Reno, Elko, Yerington and Carson City.

NLS is the historical recipient of federal Legal Services Corporation funding, an annual appropriation grant from Congress. The federal funding is limited to assisting only clients whose income falls below 200 percent of the Federal Poverty Guidelines. The funding is also limited to assisting only U.S. citizens or Legally Permanent Residents (there are some exceptions to this rule, however, allowing NLS to help some undocumented individuals). Over the years, NLS has been able to expand its funding from other sources, allowing it to assist a greater number of Nevadans.

NLS provides the full range of assistance for clients, from advice only, to representation in administrative hearings and representation in litigation, as well as community education and clinics for pro se litigants. The areas of law that the general litigation units in the NLS offices cover are: consumer law, employment law, education, family law, housing law, income maintenance (all public benefits, including social security, welfare, veteran's benefits and unemployment benefits), health law, individual rights and miscellaneous other topics.

In addition to the general litigation units handling the matters mentioned above, NLS has a number of special projects that provide specialized assistance. The Indian Law Project serves the 23 reservations in Nevada, providing assistance to tribal members in civil and criminal matters in tribal courts and providing assistance to the tribes themselves. The Low Income Taxpayer Clinic helps individuals with issues involving the IRS or the U.S. Tax Court. Nevada Legal Services' Senior Law Project serves all seniors in Washoe County, regardless of income or assets. The Senior Legal Helpline provides advice and extended service to all seniors living in the rural counties, regardless of income or assets. Finally, the Consumer Action Advocates help homeowners facing the loss of their homes, through foreclosure or other means, and residents of rural Nevada with all consumer law issues.

If you are interested in volunteering, NLS has many opportunities available. If you live in Clark, Nye, Lincoln or Esmeralda Counties, contact Carmela Reed: 530 S. 6th Street, Las Vegas, NV, 89101, (702) 386-0404 x140, creed@nlslaw.net. Those living in any of the other counties may contact Renee Kelly: 204 Marsh Ave., Ste. 101, Reno, NV, 89509, (775) 284-3491 x218, rkelly@nlslaw.net.

LEGAL AID CENTER Since 1958 of Southern Nevada

LEGAL AID CENTER OF SOUTHERN NEVADA

**Barbara Buckley, Executive
Director of Legal Aid Center of
Southern Nevada**

Legal Aid Center of Southern Nevada is a private, nonprofit 501(c)(3) corporation dedicated to providing free community legal services to those in need, since 1958. The organization's Consumer Rights Project handles a wide variety of consumer-related matters, including unfair debt collection, used car scams, deceptive trade practices, payday loans, bankruptcy and foreclosure. The Children's Attorneys Project gives children who have been abused and/or neglected their own voice in court through legal representation. Legal Aid Center also helps parents fight for the rights of special-needs children who have been denied the educational accommodations guaranteed under federal law. The Domestic Violence Project represents victims of violence and crime, and helps them obtain protective orders against their abusers, divorce and custody orders, and child support payments.

Since 1999, in conjunction with the William S. Boyd School of Law, Legal Aid Center has provided free legal information on topics such as divorce, paternity/custody, small claims, bankruptcy, guardianship, collection proof and foreclosure. The center also teaches family law, small claims and bankruptcy in Spanish.

The Pro Bono Project supplements the efforts of each of Legal Aid Center of Southern Nevada's programs through local attorneys, who volunteer their time representing individuals, especially on cases that Legal Aid Center is not able to handle. The Pro Bono Project also administers seven Ask-A-Lawyer programs, during which attorneys donate their time to provide free counseling and advice in areas including family law, landlord/tenant, small claims and federal issues, as well as through its Small Business Project, Homeless Assistance Project and its new Veteran's Ask-A-Lawyer program.

Finally, Legal Aid Center operates both the Civil Law Self-Help Center and the Family Law Self-Help Center, where pro se litigants can get assistance with legal information and court forms.





For further information about our programs and services offered, visit our website at www.lacsn.org or call (702) 386-1070. Lawyers wishing to volunteer may contact Pro Bono Project Director Melanie Kushnir at (702) 386-1070 ext. 1429 or mkushnir@lacsn.org or probono@lacsn.org.



VOLUNTEER ATTORNEYS FOR RURAL NEVADANS (VARN)

Benjamin Albers, Executive Director, Volunteer Attorneys for Rural Nevadans

Volunteer Attorneys for Rural Nevadans (VARN) believes that all people, regardless of income, should have access to the civil justice system. VARN recognizes that many low-income Nevadans living in the rural areas of the state are not afforded this right. VARN's mission is to provide free civil legal assistance to low-income people and victims of domestic violence in Nevada's rural communities.

VARN was founded in 1996 and provides free legal services in 15 rural Nevada counties. The Pro Bono Project was VARN's first program; its goal is to offer free legal services from volunteer attorneys

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in uncontested civil matters, including family law, guardianship, wills, probate and real property.

In 2002, VARN established the Domestic Violence Victim's Assistance Project (DVVAP). This program serves victims of domestic violence by assisting them with crisis intervention, emergency legal services, safety planning, assistance with victims of crime compensation and direct legal representation in civil legal matters, such as protection orders, divorce, custody and guardianship.

In response to a recognized need in the community, VARN created the Domestic Violence Rural Immigrant Integration Project (DVRIIP) in 2011. DVRIIP provides legal services to undocumented victims of domestic violence who are seeking to gain legal status in the U.S. Bilingual staff assist victims with legal processes, such as the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) Self-Petition, U & T Visas and Deferred Action Against Childhood Arrivals (DACA).

Finally, twice a month VARN hosts a Lawyer in the Lobby program, during which volunteer attorneys provide 15 to 20-minute consultations to people seeking legal advice on a variety of topics, ranging from family law to landlord-tenant issues and bankruptcy matters.

VARN is located in Carson City at 904 N. Nevada Street, 89703. The main office contact number is (775) 883-8278 and its website is at www.varn.org.



WASHOE LEGAL SERVICES

**Paul Elcano, Executive Director,
Washoe Legal Services**

Washoe Legal Services is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) corporation dedicated to providing free legal services to those in need since 1965. The consumer rights division handles a variety of consumer-related matters, including private housing, landlord-tenant, unfair debt collection, used car scams, deceptive trade practices, payday loans, bankruptcy and foreclosure. The Child Advocacy Division gives children who have been abused and neglected their own voice in court during NRS 432B proceedings. The domestic violence division represents victims of domestic violence and crime, and helps them obtain protection orders against their abusers, custody and divorce orders, and child support payments. The immigration division assists clients who are lawfully in the United States with U-Visas, VAWA, self-petitions, adjustments of status and work permits.

Washoe Legal Services also provides legal services to seniors in guardianships, estate planning, elder abuse cases, housing and consumer issues, and in the preparation of powers of attorney and advanced medical directives.

Washoe Legal Services currently provides services along the I-80 corridor in Lyon, Pershing, Humboldt and Elko Counties. These services include representation of abused and neglected children, and the representation of seniors. Washoe Legal Services' Pro Bono Project supplements the efforts of in-house attorneys through local attorneys who volunteer their time on cases that cannot be handled in house.

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For further information about Washoe Legal Services' programs and services, visit the organization's website at www.washoelegalservices.org or call Paul Elcano at (775) 287-0329.



SOUTHERN NEVADA SENIOR LAW PROGRAM

Sugar Vogel, Executive Director of Southern Nevada Senior Law Program

Most of us were brought up to respect our elders. Unfortunately, these days the golden years are all too often tarnished for the elderly in this country. Seniors face a myriad of legal issues, often framed by declining health, limited income and uncertainty.

The Southern Nevada Senior Law Program provides free legal services to Clark County residents of 60 years and older. The organization got its start in 1978 as a City of Las Vegas program and remained a governmental entity until July 1,

2012, when the City of Las Vegas was forced to suspend its sponsorship due to budget cuts. Recognizing the critical need for a legal service program devoted exclusively to serving the rapidly-growing senior population, the city helped the program become its own 501(c)(3) nonprofit, in order to continue its valuable work.

Many members of the community stepped up to assist: among them, Tony Hsieh, with The Downtown Project, who relocated The Southern Nevada Senior Law Program to its offices at 530 Las Vegas Boulevard South, Suite 530 (office space formerly occupied by the law firm of Beckley, Singleton), and is graciously paying the rent in order to reduce administrative costs so that the program can focus on direct client services.

Since its inception in 1978, the Senior Law Program has provided free legal services to more than 100,000 seniors in Clark County, including:

- An 80-year-old woman whose 86-year-old spouse was recently diagnosed with dementia. She needed a medical durable power of attorney and simple will;
- A 66-year-old Social Security recipient, whose checks stopped coming due to an overpayment that occurred because he took a part-time job to try to make ends meet;

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- A 90-year-old widow whose daughter drained her bank account;
- An 85-year-old proposed ward, concerned his rights will be stripped if his son becomes his guardian.

Through the program, seniors receive free legal assistance with simple estate planning, wills, probate, advance directives, consumer matters, asset protection, guardianship, elder abuse prevention, public entitlements and document preparation. Its dedicated staff also visits seniors in adult daycare facilities, nursing homes and in the homes of disabled seniors.

The Southern Nevada Senior Law Program works closely with Nevada Legal Services and Legal Aid Center of Southern Nevada, in order to avoid a duplication of services and to maximize resources. Unfortunately, there are so many seniors in our community in need of legal assistance that, notwithstanding the programs' best efforts, southern Nevada still has an unserved population desperately in need of help.

Sugar Vogel is the executive director of the Southern Nevada Senior Law Program. She can be contacted at svogel@snsnlp.org or (702) 229-6644.



THE PUBLIC INTEREST LAW ASSOCIATION

The Public Interest Law Association (PILA) at Boyd School of Law is a student organization dedicated to community service, expanding the definition of public interest and fostering an early commitment to pro bono legal work. PILA volunteers with nonprofit legal organizations throughout Las Vegas and hosts events to educate UNLV Boyd Law School students on the importance of pro bono work and how it can be incorporated into any legal career.

Each year PILA coordinates an auction to raise money for summer grants that allow Boyd law students to work in public interest. The 2015 PILA Auction will take place on Thursday, February 19, in the Reynolds Hall Lobby of the Smith Center for the Performing Arts. The 2015 Silver Staircase Honoree is Judge Elizabeth Gonzalez. ■

For more information on PILA e-mail Shaina Plaksin or Bailey Bortolin at pila.unlv@gmail.com.