

Accessing Legal Assistance & Representation in Rhode Island



The content of this guide is not legal advice and is meant for informational purposes only.

This resource list may help people access appropriate and affordable legal assistance for a variety of situations, like evictions, discrimination, expungement, public benefits, and more.



Rhode Island Legal Services—(401) 274-2652

Rhode Island Legal Services (RILS) provides legal assistance and representation to low-income individuals in a variety of civil cases. RILS maintains several programs focused on different issues. Visit www.rils.org to learn more about each.

- Public Benefits Group
- Foreclosure Prevention Project
- Safe Family Project
- Responsible Parent Project
- Volunteer Lawyer Program
- Elder Protection Project
- Housing Law Center
- Low Income Taxpayer Clinic
- Family Preservation Project
- Consumer Debt Group
- Employment Opportunity Legal Corps
- Holistic Legal Assistance Network

Who can receive Free Legal Assistance?

Generally, RILS will provide free civil legal services to those with a household income up to **125%** of the federal poverty guidelines, though it may vary by RILS program or the person's age.

Offices:

56 Pine Street, 4th Floor
Providence, RI 02903

50 Washington Square #4
Newport, RI 02840

Rhode Island Center for Justice—(401) 491-1101

The Rhode Island Center for Justice is an independent non-profit law center created in cooperation with the Roger Williams University School of Law. CFL's legal practice areas include housing, immigration, workers' rights, criminal justice, education, and utility shutoffs.

Prospective Clients seeking legal advice or assistance **must first** meet with an attorney who will perform an intake interview to determine if CFL can offer representation.

Call **(401) 491-1101** or visit centerforjustice.org/contact/

The CDC and RI District Court have extended Eviction Protections through June 30, 2021 for qualified tenants.

Qualified tenants must complete a declaration to receive this protection:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/covid-eviction-declaration.html>

If your household is being illegally evicted, contact one of the legal services above for assistance.

Looking for rental assistance? Visit www.rihousing.com/rentreliefri

Use this referral tool to find and connect guests, families, and yourself to helpful resources.

Many resources, programs, and events are now accessible online and virtually.

If you are using a browser to view this guide, **click the blue text or an image** to visit the mentioned webpage.

*Updated
June 2021*



RHODE ISLAND COMMUNITY
FOOD BANK

Esta guía esta disponible en Español
esta nuestra página de internet:

<https://rifoodbank.org/agency-resources/community-resources/>

Rhode Island Fair Housing Practices Act—Source of Income Protections

Rhode Island's fair housing law prohibits housing discrimination on the basis of: age, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, marital status, veteran or military status, status as a victim of domestic violence, **and now, source of income.**

Housing discrimination prevents low-income people from living in neighborhoods of their choice, including areas with access to jobs that pay decent wages, high performing schools, healthcare, and transit. Prohibiting source of income discrimination will make it easier for households to use federal housing assistance.

Source of income discrimination is when a person seeking housing is discriminated against on the basis of the legal source of income they will be relying on to pay for their housing costs.

If you feel you have been discriminated against...

Contact the [Rhode Island Commission for Human Rights](#)

(401) 222-2661 | RICHR.housing@richr.ri.gov

How to file a charge: http://www.richr.ri.gov/filecharge/index.php?blm_aid=280581

For more information visit:

[SouthCoast Fair Housing](#) | [RI Center for Justice](#)

This information is courtesy of the [RI Coalition to End Homelessness](#).



Signs of Possible Source of Income Discrimination

- You see an advertisement that says "No Section 8" for an apartment.
- A housing provider refuses to accept your housing voucher because it requires them to have their unit inspected.
- You are told the unit is no longer available after you explain that your income/benefits include a lawful source of income.

DARE—Tenant and Homeowner Association Campaign

DARE's Tenant and Homeowner Association is a group of low-income tenants and homeowners who work collectively to prevent foreclosure, individual evictions, and address unsafe housing conditions with the support of free, non-profit legal services of the RI Center for Justice.

Depending on the circumstances, the attorneys may be able to offer free legal counsel and services for tenants that have unsafe, unhealthy conditions or problems in their apartment or tenants who are facing an eviction for non-payment of rent, landlord retaliation, or other reasons.

Contact: (401) 351-6960 | dare@daretowin.org

Homeless Legal Clinic—Rhode Island Coalition to End Homelessness

The Legal Clinic provides direct legal services to people who cannot afford an attorney or may be apprehensive or unable to visit a lawyer's office. The Legal Clinic offers legal services by area lawyers pro-bono (free to client).

Services of the Homeless Legal Clinic are currently offered at:

Harrington Hall | 30 Howard Ave., Cranston | (401) 462-0724

Crossroads RI | 160 Broad St., Providence | (401) 521-2255

Learn more about the RI Coalition to End Homelessness at rihomeless.org

If you are homeless, or at risk of becoming homeless, get assistance finding shelter:

Call: **(401) 277-4316**

Or complete this form: ri.hmis.cc

Open Doors RI

Have you recently come home from jail or prison? Do you have a loved one who will be coming home soon? Have you been out for a while but still having trouble betting on your feet? ***Open Doors can help.***

Open Doors can help you:

- Find work
- Find stable and affordable housing
- Begin or continue Substance Abuse Treatment
- Handle financial commitments such as court fines and child support
- File your taxes
- Register to vote
- Apply for IDs, public benefits, and other programs
- Connect with people with similar experiences
- Get involved and influence decisions that affect you

Open Doors Resource Center can help individuals access these services and programs that are designed for people with criminal records.

Contact ***Open Doors*** at
(401) 781-5808
or visit [Opendoorsri.org](https://opendoorsri.org)

Expungement Information—Office of the Attorney General

Expungement is the process by which a record of criminal conviction is destroyed or sealed from the court record. An expungement order directs the court to treat the criminal conviction as if it had never occurred, essentially removing it from your criminal record.

Expungement can help provide relief from the adverse effects of a criminal record on ones ability to obtain employment, housing, or other necessities of life.

Eligibility: Only certain criminal arrests or convictions, including some misdemeanor crimes and certain non-violent felonies, may be eligible for expungement. Eligibility is dependent on a variety of factors.

Determine your eligibility for expungement by submitting this online form from the Attorney General's office:
https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfl-ySNQNHbTTZafe7z2qEbPABU9snzwepc_acGYlwEjUNrOw/viewform

Please contact CommunityOffice@riag.ri.gov or **(401) 274-4400** if you have any questions about the process.

Immigration Legal Services

Progreso Latino—Immigration Legal Services

Progreso Latino's immigration services are offered on a nominal fee basis—consultations are free.

Visit progresolatino.org/immigration to learn more.

Contact: Jessica Vasquez, Director of Immigration Services & BIA Accredited Representative
jvasquez@progresolatino.org | **(401) 728-5920 ext. 319**

Dorcas International Institute of Rhode Island—Citizenship & Immigration

Dorcas' Citizenship & Immigration Services staff members provide advice and representation on citizenship and immigration processes to immigrants and refugees and their families. Consultations are available by phone.

Call **(401) 784-8607** to be connected to an attorney or legal representative.

Learn more: <https://diiri.org/citizenship-immigration/>

AMOR RI—Support Line: (401) 675-1414

AMOR's Legal Support teams can provide legal and court support to community members under threats from ICE. The Immigration Team provides Free or low-cost consultation or referral to an immigration lawyer.

Learn more: amorri.org/services.

Domestic Violence Legal Support—24 hour helpline: 1-800-494-8100

RI Coalition Against Domestic Violence—ricadv.org/en/get-help

Domestic Violence Court Advocates work in every district court in RI to assist victims in Domestic Violence cases.

Call the courthouse in your area for more information and to reach a court advocate.

Garrahy Judicial Complex (Providence)
(401) 458-3372

McGrath Judicial Complex (Wakefield)
(401) 782-4174

Noel Judicial Complex (Kent)
(401) 822-6680

Murray Judicial Complex (Newport)
(401) 619-2555
(401) 619-2865

The following organizations also have Court Advocacy programs:

Women's Resource Center: wrcnbc.org/programs-services/client-services | (401) 846-5263

Blackstone Valley Advocacy Center: bvadvocacycenter.org/en/services/court-program | 723-3057

Day One: dayoneri.org/node/15 | 1-800-494-8100

Legal Assistance for other needs

Disability Rights Rhode Island—drri.org

Disability Rights RI provides free legal assistance to persons with disabilities. Services include individual representation to protect rights or to secure benefits and services; self-help information; educational programs; and legislative advocacy. Learn about their programs: drri.org/federally-funded-programs

Contact: info@drri.org | **Voice:** (401) 831-3150 | **TTY:** (401) 831-5335

Office of Healthy Aging—Legal Assistance

The Office of Healthy Aging created this webpage to help older adults connect with legal assistance, information, and resources to help Rhode Islanders age strong. Visit: oha.ri.gov/what-we-do/connect/legal-assistance

Contact the Office of Healthy Aging: **(401) 462-3000** | **TTY: (401) 462-0740**

The Office of the Mental Health Advocate

The Office of the Mental Health Advocate is an independent State agency staffed by attorneys who provide an array of free legal, investigative, and advocacy services, regardless of age, to:

- prevent inappropriate admissions to psychiatric facilities
- to protect the rights and enhance the dignity of persons in mental health treatment and inpatient substance abuse treatment
- reduce the stigma associated with mental illness

Office of the Mental Health Advocate

John O. Pastore Campus
57 Howard Avenue 4th Floor, Cranston

401-462-2003

TTY: 401-462-6018