



Completing the Application for Legal Services - Frequently Asked Questions

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The following are frequently asked questions about the [Application for Legal Services](#). For more FAQs about Community Law Center, please visit www.communitylaw.org/FAQ.

1. How do we ask for Community Law Center's assistance with a legal matter?

Submit a completed Application for Legal Services, along with the application fee and all requested information regarding your case.

2. We have a legal issue that requires immediate assistance. Should we still apply for legal services?

Yes. Note the deadline on the top of the first page of the Application for Legal Services.

3. How long will it take to get an attorney?

While sometimes Community Law Center places cases quickly, it takes an average of 4 weeks after your application for services is complete for Community Law Center to find a pro bono attorney to assign to a case.

4. Why does it take an average of 4 weeks for Community Law Center to place cases with attorneys?

A staff attorney or paralegal reviews the application, creates a file, conducts a conflict of interest analysis, and determines and requests any additional information required from the client. Then, the case either gets assigned to a staff attorney or advertised to potential volunteer attorneys on an every-other-week basis. If a volunteer attorney expresses interest in a case, Community Law Center staff will provide him or her with additional information and a conflict check will be performed by the pro bono attorney before the case is placed with the pro bono attorney.

5. Can we meet with someone at Community Law Center to discuss our legal issue before we submit an Application for Legal Services?

No. Community Law Center's small staff handles a tremendous volume of inquiries every year, which makes it unfeasible for Community Law Center to meet with everyone interested in legal services.

6. If we fill out an Application for Legal Services, will we definitely get an attorney?

No, but Community Law Center has a long history of successfully matching nonprofits with volunteer attorneys.

Starting a Nonprofit

7. We are starting a nonprofit, but do not have a board and/or bylaws yet. How can Community Law Center help us?

Consider attending Community Law Center's [How to Start a Nonprofit workshop](#), offered monthly. Be sure to register in advance, as classes do fill up.

8. We have a board of directors and bylaws, but we are not sure what to do next. How can Community Law Center help us?

Consider attending Community Law Center's [How to Start a Nonprofit workshop](#), offered monthly. Be sure to register in advance, as classes do fill up.

9. What is the [Form 1023](#)?

It is the application for recognition of 501(c)(3) tax-exemption from the IRS. All organizations wishing to obtain 501(c)(3) status must submit this form to the IRS.

10. What can we do before we get 501(c)(3) status, or if we are not prepared or ready to complete the Form 1023? What are our other options?

Consider entering into a written fiscal sponsorship agreement or partnering with an established 501(c)(3) organization.

11. How long will it take to get 501(c)(3) status?

Community Law Center's average client takes about one year to receive 501(c)(3) status from the IRS.

12. Why does it take so long?

It takes an average of 4 weeks for Community Law Center to find a pro bono attorney to assign to a case. Once an attorney is assigned, the attorney will need time to review all the documents, meet with you, and work with you to revise everything before it can be sent to the IRS. The IRS then takes about 3-6 months to process the Form 1023.

13. What is the advantage of working with an attorney on the Form 1023?

While Community Law Center cannot make any guarantees about the outcome of a case, working with an attorney may save time by decreasing the likelihood of follow-up questions from the IRS.

Organizational Information (page 1 of the Application for Legal Services)

14. Can we list two contact people?

No, please only list one contact person. One person improves communication with the attorney and helps to ensure confidentiality.

15. Who should serve as the contact person?

It should be someone who is authorized to act on behalf of the organization; usually the President of the board or Executive Director. This person should be responsive and dependable.

16. What if the contact person changes?

If the contact person for the group changes, please let Community Law Center know how to contact the organization.

17. What is a mission statement, and is one required?

A mission is usually one sentence that describes what the organization does. It is not required to request legal services from CLC, but if you have one, please provide it here.

18. What if we fall under two categories under “Type of Organization”?

Please check only one box that best describes the category of the organization.

19. What is a board of directors?

A board of directors is a group of people with legal duties to govern a nonprofit organization, as defined in the bylaws of the organization.

20. What if we do not have a board of directors?

Community Law Center can only assist organizations with a board of directors tasked with leading the organization.

21. Who are the members of our organization?

The bylaws should explain who qualifies as a member of the organization. Some nonprofit organizations do not have any members other than the board of directors.

Assistance Needed (page 2 of the Application for Legal Services)

22. My nonprofit is dealing with several legal issues. Can I put all of them in one application?

Yes, but be sure to include an application fee for each issue and attachments relating to each issue. If you are not sure how many issues are involved or what attachments may be required, please contact Ingrid Hitchens at 410.366.0922 ext. 13 or IngridH@communitylaw.org.

23. Why does Community Law Center require an application fee for each issue?

The application fee covers the administrative costs of placing one case (one issue) with an attorney. Attorneys often specialize in specific areas of law, so we may need to assign different pro bono attorneys to handle different legal issues.

Organizational Documents and Attachments (page 3 of the Application for Legal Services)

24. We do not have a budget. Can we still get help?

To qualify for CLC services, an organization must have a budget in place. While Community Law Center cannot provide accounting help, there are [sample budgets online](#), as well as [courses about budgeting](#) offered by other organizations.

25. We do not have bylaws. Can we still get help?

Yes, but Community Law Center will require that you work on your bylaws with an assigned attorney either prior to or alongside any other case being handled by Community Law Center.

26. We do not have a copy of our Articles of Incorporation; how do we get a copy of them?

Order Articles of Incorporation from the [State Department of Assessments and Taxation \(SDAT\)](#). To order them online, [search for the organization's name](#), click on "Amendments," then click on the pieces of paper icon under "Order Copies" across from the Articles of Incorporation.

27. Our charter is forfeited. What do we do?

Usually a charter is forfeited as the result of failing to file tax forms, and the organization should file the missing years' forms and articles of revival as soon as possible. Community Law Center requires that the charter of a nonprofit be revived prior to, or in conjunction with, any other legal issue being handled.

28. Our organization is not yet incorporated and/or is not yet a 501(c)(3). What do we do?

Note on the application that the Articles of Incorporation and/or IRS 501(c)(3) Determination Letter are unavailable because the organization is not incorporated.

29. We are a 501(c)(3) but cannot locate our IRS determination letter. What do we do?

[Request a new copy of the determination letter from the IRS](#). Attach a copy of the Form 4506-A or letter sent to the IRS with the Application for Legal Services. Before requesting a new determination letter, make sure the IRS has the organization's correct address on file; submit [Form 8822-B](#) to change the organization's address.

30. We are a recent client of Community Law Center. Do we need to re-submit all of our attachments?

You must submit a new Application for Legal Services for a new issue, but if the organization's paperwork is on file and has not changed, simply note that in the application. Community Law Center will require a new copy if anything changed since the last case.

31. Our request for legal services is for starting a nonprofit; what should we include with our Application for Legal Services?

Please provide the information requested on the Application for Legal Services: A board list, draft bylaws (unless the group needs assistance with those), articles of incorporation (if already incorporated), a draft of the Form 1023 (including all supplemental information), and information about who attended the required *How to Start a Nonprofit* workshop.

32. What other documents should we submit with an application?

Please submit as much relevant information about your case as possible. For example, if the case involves a liquor license or zoning issue and you have a copy of the file from the Zoning Board or the Liquor Board, notes from discussions with the licensee or owner, or pictures or logs relating to the issue, include those with the application. If the legal issue involves a court case, include a copy of anything received from the court. If the case involves a lease or a contract, include a copy of the agreement in question.

Affidavit of Eligibility (page 4 of the Application for Legal Services)

33. Which box should we check?

Check only one box, and check the first box that applies to the nonprofit. [Census maps](#) that show median income may be helpful in determining which box to check. Most Baltimore City communities qualify as low-income.

34. We can only check “e.” Do we still qualify for legal services?

Yes, but please include a brief explanation in the space provided as to why the organization cannot afford an attorney.

Application Fee (page 5 of the Application for Legal Services)

35. We cannot afford the application fee. Can we still get help?

Yes. The application fee is not meant to be a barrier to legal representation. If the organization cannot afford the full application fee, please contact us.

36. Can Community Law Center waive the application fee?

While Community Law Center cannot waive the fee altogether in most cases, we often accept a reduced amount.

37. What does the application fee cover?

Upon receipt of an Application for Legal Services, a staff attorney or paralegal reviews the application, creates a file, answers initial application questions, conducts a conflict of interest analysis, determines additional information required, requests the additional information, follows up on those requests, and packages the case for a volunteer to be able to quickly and efficiently start work on the case. Once a case is ready for placement, Community Law Center advertises the case to a list of volunteer attorneys, provides information to the volunteer to run a conflict of interest analysis, transmits the file to the volunteer, and regularly checks in with the volunteer about the case. In addition to recruiting volunteers, Community Law Center supports to its pro bono attorneys by providing training materials, mentoring, and malpractice insurance coverage.

38. Why is the application fee nonrefundable?

The fee is nonrefundable because Community Law Center conducts the activities described above even when a client later decides not to pursue a case, finds another attorney, or on the rare occasion when Community Law Center cannot represent the organization.

39. How much is the application fee?

The application fee is determined by a sliding scale, based on the organization’s budget. See the chart on page 5 of the application to determine the amount of the application fee.

40. How do we pay the application fee?

Pay by phone by calling 410.366.0922 ext. 10 or ext. 13, [online](#), or via mail. Checks or money orders should be made out and submitted to Community Law Center, Inc. 3355 Keswick Road, Suite 200 Baltimore, MD 21211. Please note in the memo field of the check the organization’s name and

“Application Fee.” If the fee is paid online, please forward a copy of the email receipt, along with the organization’s name to IngridH@communitylaw.org.

Submitting the Application (page 5 of the Application for Legal Services)

41. How do we submit the application?

Submit the application by mail, email, or fax.

Return completed application to: Community Law Center, Inc.

3355 Keswick Road, Suite 200

Baltimore, MD 21211.

Fax: 410.366.7763

Email: IngridH@communitylaw.org. If you email the Application for Legal Services and attachments, please do not send attachments over 35M.

42. We would like to drop off the application. Can we do that?

Yes, during normal business hours. Please, however, always call 410.366.0922 ext. 10 or ext. 13 before coming to the office to make sure someone will be available to accept your documents.

Community Law Center offices are closed on holidays and also on Fridays in August.

43. Can we meet with you about the application?

No, our small staff is not available to meet with each applicant individually. Please see the answer to question 15.

44. We submitted an application. What happens next?

See the final page of the Application for Legal Services for a description of Community Law Center’s intake process. To find out the status of your application or confirm receipt of the application, please contact Ingrid Hitchens at 410.366.0922 ext. 13 or IngridH@communitylaw.org.