

Who Can Help

A law librarian can help but cannot give legal advice. Check with local courts, bar associations or law schools. Call your local public library for a listing of area law libraries. You may want to ask your local law librarian for assistance using those electronic tools.

Like the law librarian, the staff at the resource center can give information about legal research, but CANNOT give legal advice. There are computer's available for use for those that meet certain income standards.

Know When to Stop

It may be time to stop your research if...

You'll keep reading the same legal rule.

You seem to be seeing the same statutes, cases, and regulations over and over again. When you start noticing that all of the sources you look at keep referring you back to the same statutes or the same cases, you may be ready to stop your research. You can usually take this as confirmation that your research has been complete enough to give a reliable answer to your legal question.

If you have found statutes, cases, or regulations that seem to directly fit your situation, you have to check to make sure those laws and cases are still current and valid. Your local law librarian or staff at the resource center (if you meet certain income standards) can help you with this.



DO YOU HAVE QUESTIONS?

The FCMC Self Help Resource Center is a free walk-in service to help you represent yourself in court without a lawyer. We cannot offer legal advice, but can point you to helpful resources. The Center is open on a walk-in basis – no appointment necessary.

About the Franklin County Municipal Court Self Help Resource Center

The FCMC Self Help Resource Center is a free walk-in service to help you represent yourself in court without a lawyer. We cannot offer legal advice, but can point you to helpful resources. The Center is open on a walk-in basis – no appointment necessary.

WALK IN

375 S. High St., 6th Floor
Columbus, OH 43215
Monday – Friday, 9:00 AM – 3:00 PM
(last visitors accepted at 2:30 PM)

VISIT OUR WEBSITE

www.fcmcselfhelpcenter.org

Includes helpful legal and research resources and materials on various legal issues.

This guide is for informational purposes only and should not be relied on for legal advice. If you need legal advice, contact an attorney.

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Franklin County Municipal Court (FCMC)
Self Help Resource Center



It is important to know your “question.”

Beginning legal research can be a little scary. There are thousands of laws and regulations, and they are not always easy to find. That is why it is important that you know what you are seeking

Start with clearly and simply stating the question you need to answer. That question is your legal issue. It is the question you are hoping your research will answer. It may be as simple as, "Is it legal for my neighbor to dump trash in my yard?" Or it may be more complicated like, "How much air pollution can a company put into the air?"

Where You Can Search

Public libraries will have at least some of the codes, texts and self-help materials mentioned here, as well as facilities for Internet access.

The Franklin County Law Library is free, open to the public, and contains all the resources discussed here. The Franklin County Law Library is located at 369 South High St., 10th floor, Columbus, Ohio 43215.

Phone: (614) 525-4971

Email: FCLL-Info@franklincountyohio.gov

Hours of Operation: Mon-Fri 8 a.m. - 5 p.m.

Sat & Sun Closed

The Internet is not a complete and total source for legal material, but it is a good place to start.

What to Research

Federal, state, county, and city governments all have their own laws. These laws are called “jurisdictions.” Focus on one "jurisdictions" at a time.

Which jurisdiction or laws should you look at? To get an idea of where to look, think about the nature of your problem. Is it something the federal government might be involved in (like labor law or taxes)? How about the state government or a local government? For example, if your legal issue is that your neighbor is dumping trash in your yard, that is probably governed by a local county or city ordinance.

Types of Laws to Research

• Statutes

Statutes are laws that the court must follow. There are statutes for each of the different “jurisdictions.” Meaning there are Ohio specific statutes and national or federal statutes. To find if there is a statute related to your case think of as many words as you can that might apply to your case. Then look in the index at the back of the Ohio Revised Code book or search the phrase online at codes.ohio.gov/orc/. For example, if you are having an issue with your landlord, you could look in the index for the words "landlord," "tenant," "eviction," "housing," "leases," and so on.

• Cases

You may be able to find the names of one or two cases dealing with your legal issue by looking at the statutes (there might be a case referenced or "annotated" at the end of a statute that relates to your issue), legal encyclopedias, law reviews, or

treatises. Once you find the case names and citations, you can find the actual written cases at your law library. You can also try finding cases on the Internet or on an electronic service such as Westlaw or Lexis . To find if there is a case related to your case think of as many words as you can that might apply to your case. Be careful, though. When you type in a search term, your search might turn up hundreds or even thousands of cases, most of which will not be relevant to your situation. You may want to ask the librarian for assistance using those electronic tools.

What to Look At

Sources:

- Legal Encyclopedia
- Codes
 - Codes contain legal rules known as statutes, regulations or ordinances, which are mandatory, meaning that courts must follow them. Ohio’s “code” is the Ohio Revised Code or ORC.
- The internet:
 - Free Legal sites: For example—The Legal Information Institute, www.law.cornell.edu; FindLaw, www.findlaw.com; WashLaw: Legal Research on the Web, www.washlaw.ed; The American Bar Association, www.abalawinfo.com
 - Paid Legal Sites: Access to WestLaw and LexisAdvance is available at the Law Library.
 - Google or other search engines

These resources and more can be found at the law library.