

Legal Aid Services and Access to Justice in the Digital Age

The Legal Aid Society
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**THE
LEGAL AID
SOCIETY**



Overview of The United States of America

333.2M

Population of The United States of America

37.9M

Population Living Below The Poverty Line in U.S.A.

\$26.14T

Gross Domestic Product (GDP)

19.6M

Population of New York State

2.7M

Population Living Below The Poverty Line in New York State

1.3M

Total No. of Practicing Lawyers Within The United States of America

Overview of The Legal Aid Society and New York

2182

Total No. Of Employees at LAS

1055

Total No. of LAS Lawyers

183K+

Individual legal matters handled by LAS.

8.3M

Population of New York City

1.2M

Population Living Below The Poverty Line in New York City

187,246

Total No. of Practicing Lawyers Within New York State

Legal services in the digital age have the potential to significantly improve access to justice, particularly for those who face geographic, economic, or physical barriers to traditional legal services. However, it's essential to address the challenges related to the digital divide, access to technology, data security, information quality, and ethical considerations to ensure that these technological advancements truly enhance access to justice for all.

| OPPORTUNITIES

- + **Online Legal Information and Resources:** The internet has made legal information more accessible to the general public. Websites, blogs, and legal databases provide a wealth of information on various legal topics, enabling individuals to better understand their rights and legal issues.
- + **Legal Services Portals, Helplines, and Online Chat:** Legal services organizations have created online platforms and resources to assist low-income individuals and those in underserved communities. These portals provide information, self-help tools, information video, and guidance on legal matters.

| OPPORTUNITIES (CONTINUED)

- + **Virtual Legal Consultations:** Many legal services organizations offer virtual consultations and advice, making it easier for individuals to seek legal guidance without having to physically visit an office.
- + **Document Assembly and E-Filing:** The digital age has enabled the development of document assembly tools and electronic filing systems, simplifying legal processes and reducing paperwork for individuals and attorneys.
- + **Legal Tech Solutions:** There has developed tools and software to streamline legal services, including case management, document automation, and online dispute resolution platforms. Flat contract model for decades

| CHALLENGES

- + **Digital Divide:** Not everyone has equal access to technology and the internet, the digital divide limits access to online legal resources and services. This can disproportionately affect marginalized, low-income, and often people of color populations.
- + **Privacy and Security:** Online legal services raise concerns about data privacy and security, especially when dealing with sensitive legal matters. Protecting client confidentiality is crucial.
- + **Quality and Accuracy of Information:** The abundance of online legal information can be overwhelming, and there is a risk that individuals may rely on inaccurate or outdated information. Ensuring that the information is reliable is a challenge.

| CHALLENGES (CONTINUED)

- + **Limited Human Interaction:** Virtual consultations and digital platforms can lack the interpersonal connection that in-person legal consultations provide. Some legal matters may benefit from the personal touch of an attorney.
- + **Legal Ethics and Regulation:** The use of technology in the legal field brings up questions about professional ethics and the need for regulation to ensure that legal practitioners maintain high standards in the digital age.
- + **Digital Accessibility and Inclusivity:** Legal technology should be designed with consideration for accessibility standards to accommodate individuals with disabilities and ensure inclusivity.
- + **Online Dispute Resolution (ODR):** While ODR platforms can provide efficient resolution of disputes, they raise issues related to due process, fairness, and the potential for automation bias.

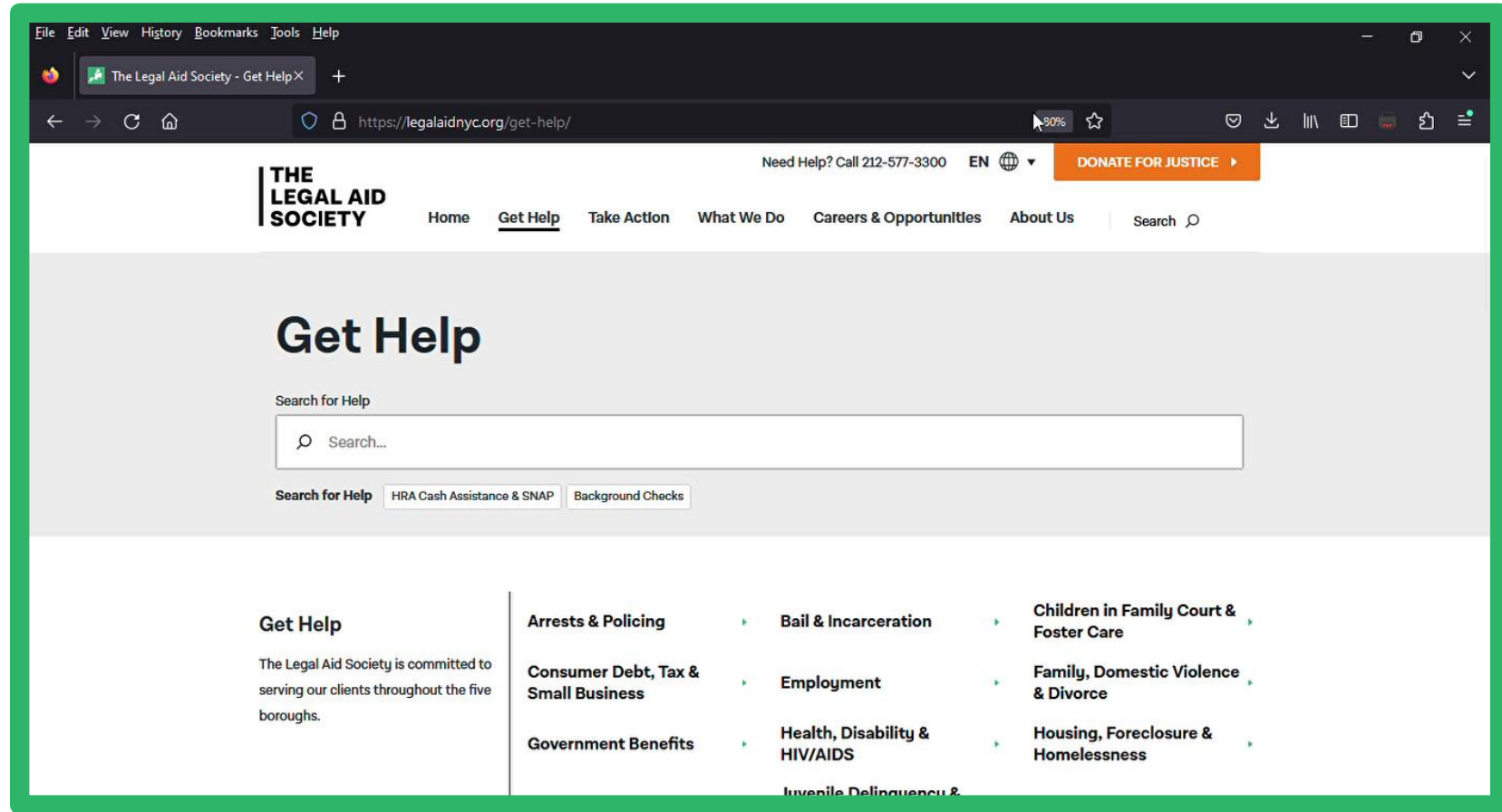
Online Get Help

Visitors can find more information on their rights and get help at <https://legalaidnyc.org/get-help/>.

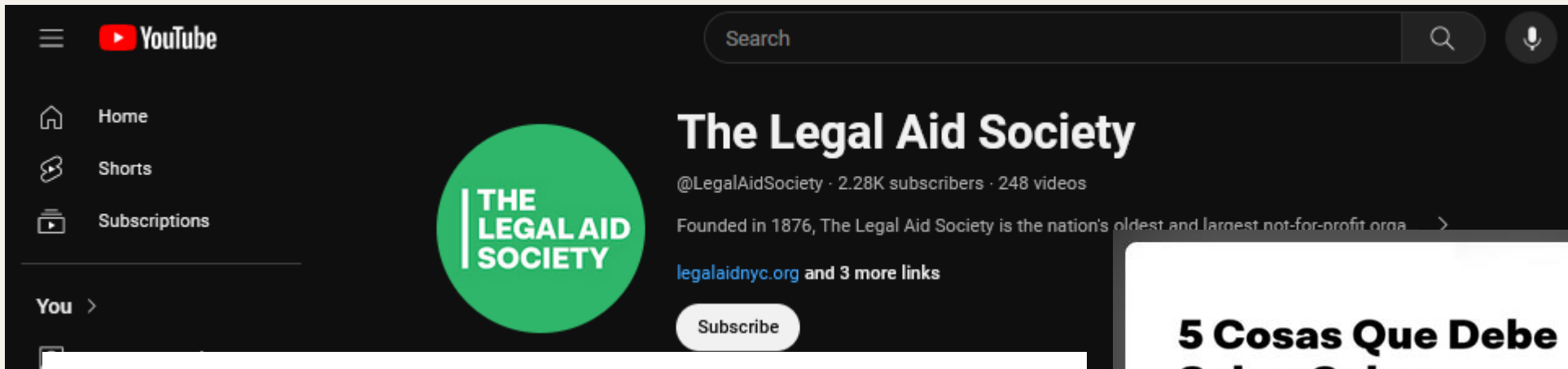
We also have the following helplines to assist low-income New Yorkers:

- Access to Benefits (A2B) Helpline
- Housing Justice Helpline
- Immigration Helpline

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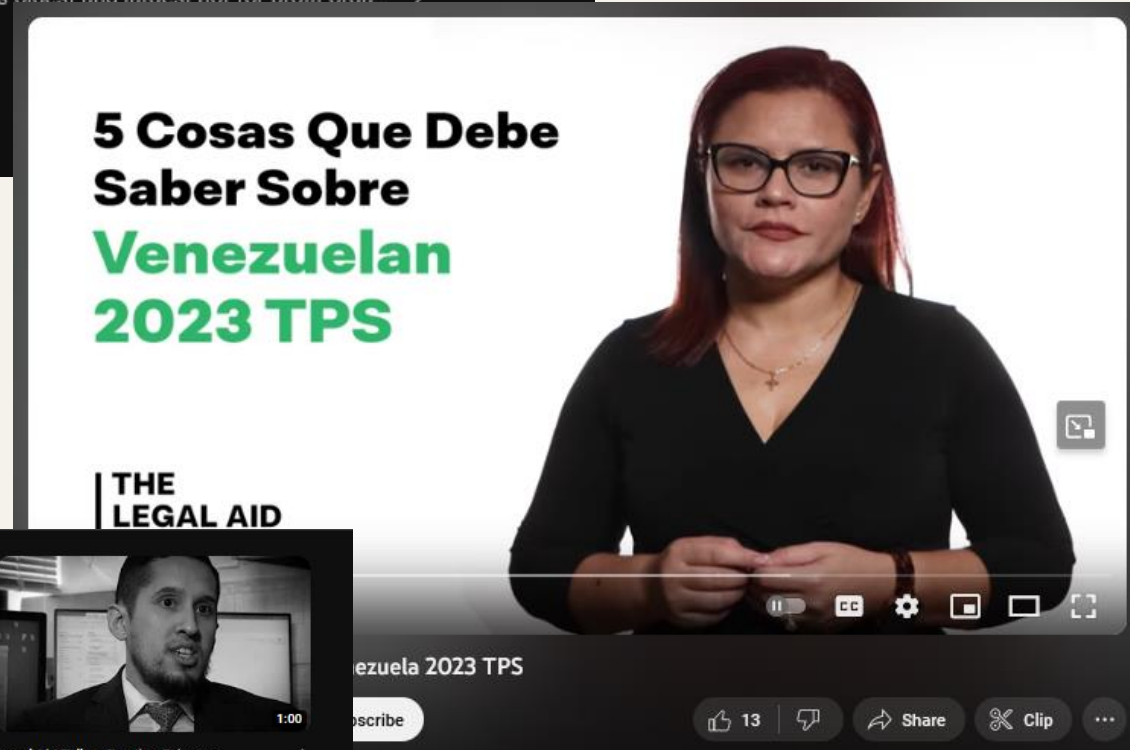
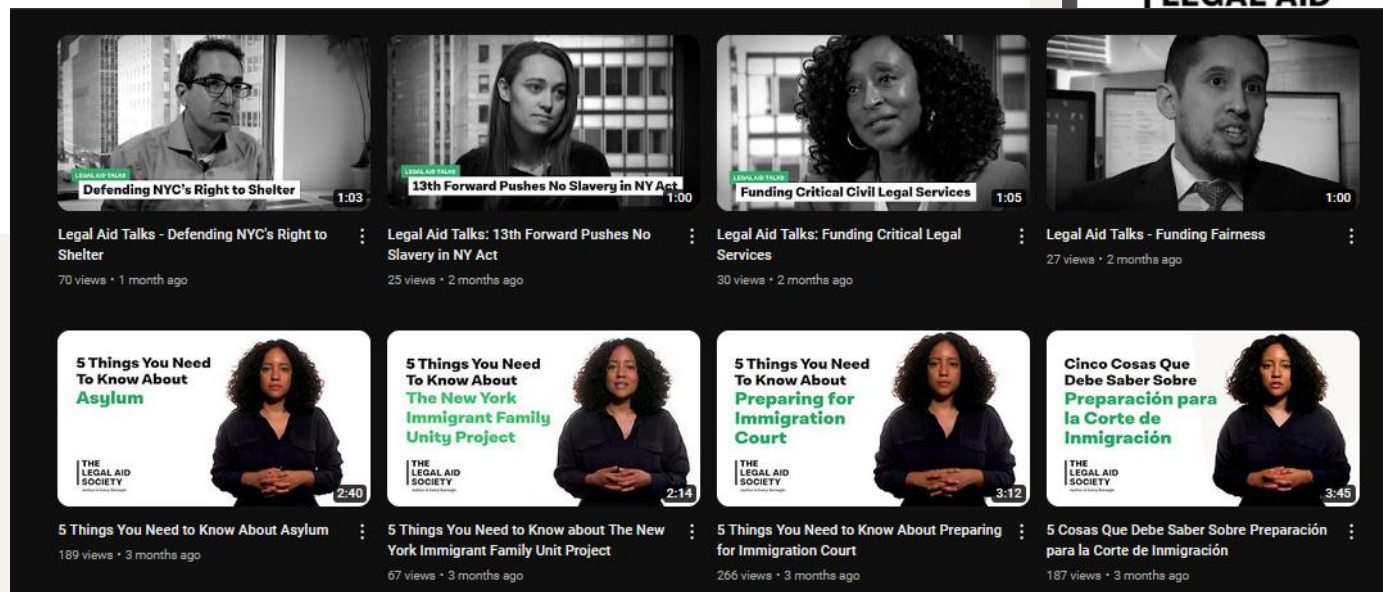


<https://legalaidnyc.org/get-help/>



The Legal Aid Society's YouTube Page

<https://www.youtube.com/@LegalAidSociety>



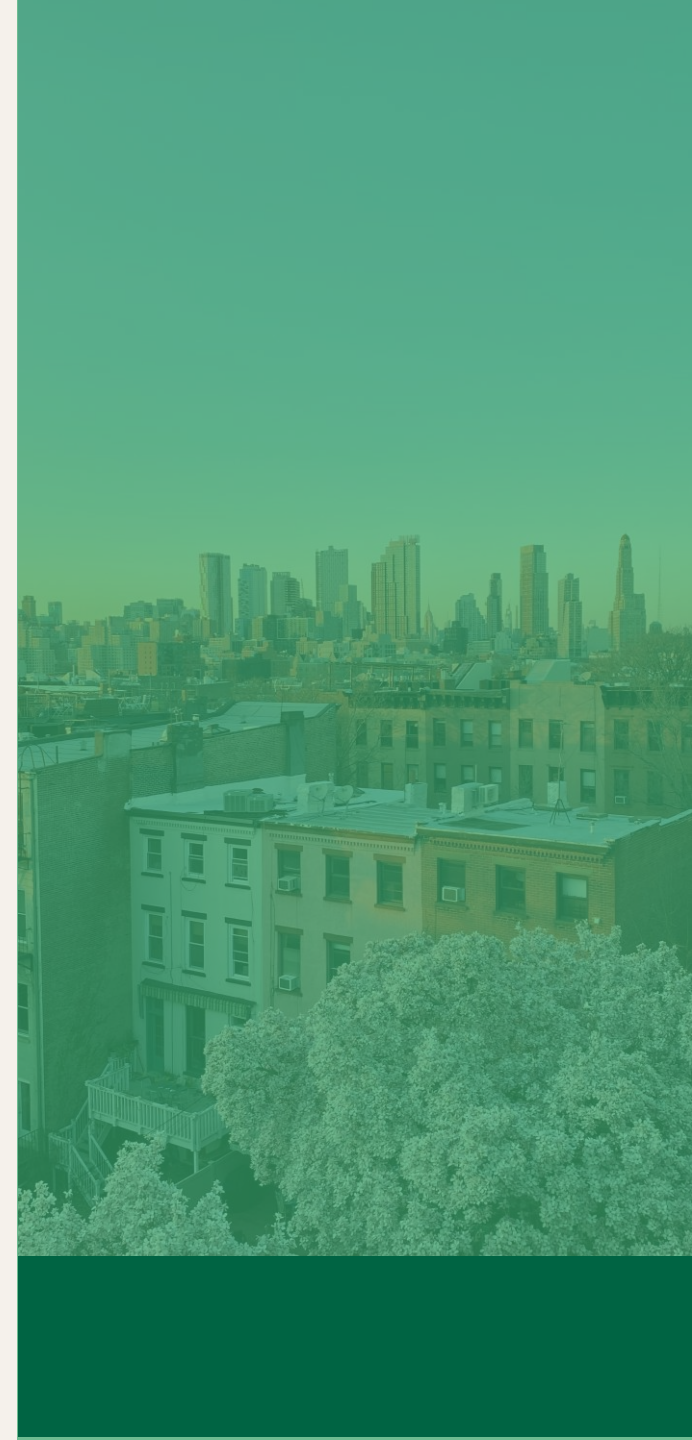
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Tech Equipment to Ensure Client Access

“Justice Tablet” project pioneered by Professor Johnson’s Lawyering in the Digital Age Clinic at Columbia University Law School, in partnership with the Legal Aid Society of New York City.

Clients were loaned low-cost computer tablets that are preloaded with essential software programs (e.g., Microsoft Teams to access New York State virtual proceedings, WhatsApp to facilitate communication with counsel, CamScanner to copy documents, and a suite of Google programs, including Google search and Gmail for the duration of their legal representation.

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PARTNER STAKEHOLDERS INNOVATIONS

LawHelp and **LiveHelp** are two online platforms that are closely associated with Pro Bono Net, a nonprofit organization focused on increasing access to justice and connecting underserved communities with legal resources.

LawHelp:

Information and Resources: LawHelp is a national network of websites that provide free legal information and resources to individuals who may not have easy access to legal assistance.

Each LawHelp website is tailored to a specific state or locality and offers a range of legal self-help materials and information on various legal topics.

Legal Referrals: LawHelp websites often include directories of legal aid organizations and pro bono service providers, making it easier for individuals to find legal help in their area.

Education and Outreach: LawHelp provides educational materials and outreach initiatives to help individuals understand their legal rights and navigate the legal system. It serves as a valuable resource for low-income and underserved communities.

PARTNER STAKEHOLDERS INNOVATIONS (CONTINUED)

LiveHelp:

Live Chat Support: LiveHelp is a feature within LawHelp websites that offers live chat support to individuals seeking legal information and assistance. Trained volunteers and legal professionals provide real-time answers to legal questions and help users find relevant resources.

Enhanced Access to Legal Information: LiveHelp enhances access to legal information and guidance, especially for those who may not have easy access to traditional legal services. It's a way to bridge the information gap and provide immediate help.

PARTNER STAKEHOLDERS INNOVATIONS (CONTINUED)

Pro Bono Net: Collaborative Network: Pro Bono Net is the overarching organization that supports and collaborates with LawHelp, LiveHelp, and various other legal aid initiatives. It brings together legal professionals, technology experts, and community partners to create innovative solutions that improve access to justice.

Development of Technology Solutions: Pro Bono Net focuses on developing technology solutions and platforms to aid the delivery of legal services and expand access to justice. It often works in collaboration with legal aid organizations and pro bono attorneys. In summary, LawHelp and LiveHelp are platforms that provide free legal information, resources, and live chat support to individuals seeking assistance with legal issues. They are part of the broader efforts led by Pro Bono Net to harness technology and collaboration in the legal field to enhance access to justice for underserved communities.

Generative AI

- **Legal Information and Self-Help Tools:** Generative AI can be used to develop chatbots and virtual assistants that guide individuals through legal processes and provide information on their rights and responsibilities. These tools can help low-income individuals understand complex legal concepts and navigate the legal system.
- **Legal Document Automation:** Generative AI can automate the creation of legal documents.
- **Translation and Multilingual Support**



| CHALLENGES

- + While generative AI offers significant promise in expanding access to civil legal services, it's essential to address issues related to data security, privacy, and ethical considerations.
- + Attorneys using generative AI must take caution to safeguard client information pursuant to Rule 1.6. Attorneys should review the terms and conditions of any tool used to understand what happens to data—including client information—put into the tool.
- + Generative AI raises the concerns regarding the preservation of client confidentiality and ensuring that AI “hallucinations” do not generate false precedents and other fictional legal authority which, ultimately, could threaten the integrity of our legal system.

| CHALLENGES (CONTINUED)

- + AI should be used as a tool to augment the work of legal professionals rather than replace it, particularly when complex legal issues require human judgment and expertise.
- + Efforts should be made to ensure that AI applications are accessible and designed with a focus on the needs of low-income and vulnerable populations.
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In closing, let's embrace the limitless possibilities that technology offers for civil legal services for low-income individuals. The digital age has provided us with tools to bridge gaps, extend opportunities, and ensure that justice is accessible to all. With the power of online resources, and innovative applications, and the thoughtful and ethical application of generative AI, we have the ability to democratize access to justice, break down barriers, and empower underserved communities to protect their rights and navigate the legal landscape. As we move forward, let's remember that technology is not just a tool; it's a beacon of hope, a gateway to equity, and a means to uphold the fundamental principle that justice knows no economic boundaries. By harnessing the potential of technology, we can make justice a reality for everyone, regardless of income. So, let's embrace the future of civil legal services with enthusiasm, determination, and compassion. Together, we can build a more just, inclusive, and equitable world for all. Thank you.

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Thank you