

Need More Help?

There is help available for the parts of the case that you don't have a lawyer for.

The Courts Self-Help center at <https://www.mass.gov/topics/courts-self-help>, has helpful information such as:

- How the courts work
- A glossary that explains legal terms
- How to find a lawyer
- How to prepare for court and how to represent yourself.
- How to file for different processes, such as abuse and harassment orders, guardianship, and divorce.

Still Have Questions?

Contact the court where your case is for more information:
<https://www.mass.gov/orgs/massachusetts-court-system/locations>

This information and more is available online at:
<https://www.mass.gov/legal-assistance>

Massachusetts Trial Court

www.mass.gov/courts



Need a Lawyer?

Limited Assistance Representation (LAR) is one way to get legal help.

What is LAR?

You and a lawyer agree what parts of a case you will handle and what parts the lawyer will handle. You can use LAR for any part of a non-criminal case. An LAR lawyer can help you file a case in court or help you with any parts of a case that is already filed in court.



Why choose LAR?

LAR can save you money in legal fees. It also may be easier to get a volunteer lawyer. Why? Because LAR allows a lawyer to help you without committing to represent you for the whole case.

What can a certified LAR lawyer help with?

- Advise you if LAR is right for you.
- Explain what parts of the case you may be able to do by yourself and which parts would be better for a lawyer to handle.
- Evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of your case and figure out the steps you should take.
- Review legal documents, explain them to you and advise you how to respond.
- Coach you on how to represent yourself in court.
- Represent you at a negotiation, mediation, hearing or trial.
- Help you put evidence together.
- Do legal research and explain it to you.
- Prepare court documents for you to file yourself.

How do I find a certified LAR lawyer?

Take a look at the lists of some certified LAR lawyers available online:

<https://www.mass.gov/info-details/finding-a-lawyer>

You also may ask any lawyer if they provide LAR. Even if they are not yet certified, the process is easy and can be found online.

If I don't have a lawyer, will someone in the court help me?

Courts can't give you legal advice. The courts can:

- Provide information
- Help you understand the court procedures
- Tell you what documents are required

Is LAR available in all cases and all courts?

In any non-criminal cases in Superior Court, Probate & Family Court, Housing Court, District Court, Boston Municipal Court, and Land Court. Not in Juvenile Court.

Will I have to pay for LAR?

It depends. Some lawyers will charge for LAR. Other lawyers may represent you at no charge, for example, lawyers from legal aid organizations, Lawyer for the Day programs, and pro bono (volunteer lawyer) programs.

When you're speaking with lawyers about your case, ask about fees. Make sure all fee information is included in your written agreement with the lawyer.

How will I know what I have to do and what the lawyer has to do?

You and the lawyer must agree to what each of you will do. Then the lawyer puts your agreement into writing. The lawyer must review the agreement with you to make sure you understand it. You both sign the agreement. Make sure you get a copy of the agreement.

Ask the lawyer:

- What should you do, and what should your lawyer do?
- Will there be a fee or will the legal help be free?
- What is the lawyer's fee?
- If the lawyer is going to charge fees, what is the best way to save money?
- Which court proceedings, if any, will the lawyer go to with you?
- Who will negotiate with the other side to try to settle out of court?
- Who will draft documents for the court?

Does my agreement with the lawyer have to be in writing?

Yes. Make sure you get a copy of your agreement.

What if I need more help but I've already signed an agreement?

You and your lawyer must write and sign a new agreement.