The United States legal system has many private attorneys or lawyers and very few non-profit attorneys who help people of low or moderate income. Finding a lawyer in any area of law can be frustrating for immigrants who have the additional barriers of
   a) Understanding a complicated new legal system,
   b) Living in a new country,
   c) Learning a new language.

Below are some tips on how to gain access to a free or affordable lawyer.

If I am low-income and have few resources, can I find a free attorney who will help me?

There are legal services organization listed in this guide that may be able to help you depending upon the type of legal issue that you have and the eligibility requirements of the organization. Usually there is no fee to receive help from these organizations.

Some of the areas of law offered by organizations include:
   - Immigration
   - Citizenship
   - Employment
   - Landlord/tenant
   - Public Benefits
   - Domestic violence and other areas.

See the specific listings for areas of law and eligibility requirements. Separate section is created for agencies with primary focus in immigration law.

What if I am low-income and need help with a criminal matter?

If you are very low income and have a problem in the area of criminal law, you may qualify for the Public Defenders Office. Ask the Judge to refer you to the Public Defenders Office at your first court date.

What if the legal services organizations do not practice the area of law that I need help with, but I am low-income?

The Modest Means Panel of the Santa Clara County Bar Association may be able to help you if your legal problem falls into one of seven areas of law - Bankruptcy, Consumer, Criminal Law, Family, Immigration, Juvenile and Landlord/Tenant. If you meet the income eligibility requirements, you will be matched with an attorney and charged an administrative fee for a 30 minute consultation. If your legal problem requires further legal assistance and you choose to hire the attorney, you will be charged reduced hourly fees that have been established by the Modest Means Panel.

What if I earn too much to qualify for the Modest Means Panel?

You may call the Lawyer Referral Service for assistance. You will have to explain your problem. A half-hour consultation will be arranged for you with a lawyer who is experienced in that area of law. The Lawyer Referral Service will charge you a $40 administrative fee. The attorney will not charge you for the first 30 minutes of the consultation. You and the attorney are not obligated to go beyond consultation. If you require further legal assistance, you can negotiate an arrangement for attorney’s fees during the consultation.
Need to get somewhere? For VTA (bus) information on how to get to an agency, call (408) 321-2300. Give the operator facts about where you are coming from and where you would like to go.

Asian Law Alliance
991 West Hedding Street # 202, San Jose, CA 95126
Tel: (408) 287-9710
Website: www.asianlawalliance.org

Language(s): Cantonese, Korean, Mandarin, Vietnamese, Spanish
Services: Civil rights, consumer, domestic violence, employment, family law, housing, immigration, public benefits, senior/elder law.

Bay Area Legal Aid
2 W. Santa Clara St., 8th Floor, San, Jose, CA 95113
Tel: (408) 283-3700 x 313
Website: www.baylegal.org

Language(s): English, Spanish
Services: Community economic development, consumer, domestic violence, employment, health, housing, public benefits.

California Rural Legal Assistance, Inc.
Administrative Office.

1430 Franklin Street, Suite 103
Oakland, CA 94612.
Tel. (510) 267-0762
Website: www.crla.org

Language(s): English, Spanish
Services: Civil rights, community economic development, education, employment, health, housing, public benefits, seniors/elder law.

Katharine and George Alexander Law Center
Santa Clara University School of Law
1030 The Alameda, San Jose, CA 95126
Tel.: (408) 288-7030
Website: http://law.scu.edu/kgacle

Language(s): Spanish, Vietnamese, others by arrangement
Services: Bankruptcy, immigration, community economic development, consumer, employment, immigration, workers’ rights, community workshops.

Legal Aid Society of Santa Clara County
480 North First Street, San Jose, CA 95112
Tel: (408) 998-5200
Housing discrimination: (408) 283-1535 x 237
Immigration issues: (408) 998-5200, extension 231
Website: www.legalaidsc.com

Language(s): English, Spanish
Services: Provides legal representation for the indigent community in civil matters including domestic violence, health access advocacy, housing law, individual rights, fair housing, landlord-tenant mediation, immigration, quality education, and special education. Self-help clinics are offered in the areas of evictions, domestic violence, restraining orders, and establishing paternity (for custody and/or visitation).

Law Foundation - Silicon Valley
152 North Third Street, 3rd Floor, San Jose, CA 95112
Tel.: (408) 293-4790
TDD (408) 294-5667
Website: http://www.lawfoundation.org

Language(s): English, Spanish, Vietnamese
Services: AIDS/HIV, children’s rights, civil rights, consumer, disability, domestic violence, education, employment, family law, health, housing, public benefits, veterans.

Pro Bono Project Silicon Valley
480 North First Street, Suite 219
Tel.: (408) 998-5298
Website: www.probonoproject.org
Languages: English, Spanish
Services:
• Family Law Clinics – Divorce, Paternity Issues, Domestic Violence, Custody Matters
• Federal Legal Assistance Self Help (FLASH) Program
• Lawyers in the Library Clinics
• Virtual Lawyers in the Library (Coming Soon)
• Limited Scope & Full Representation
Finding a Lawyer

• Debtors’ Rights Clinics
• General Administrative Support – Client Intake, Translation, Form Completion

Santa Clara County Bar Association
Lawyer Referral Service
31 North 2nd Street, San Jose, CA 95113
Tel: (408) 287-2557
Tel: (408) 971-6822 for Lawyer Referral Service
www.sccba.com/displaycommon.cfm

Language(s): English, Spanish
Services: Provides a referral service for persons in need of consultation with a lawyer. A one-half hour evaluative appointment is provided for a minimal fee and referral is made to counsel experienced in the appropriate legal area. Modest Means Program provides referral for persons that cannot afford standard attorney’s fees. Each person must be screened for income eligibility.

Senior Adults Legal Assistance (SALA)
160 East Virginia Street, Suite 260, San Jose, CA 95112
Tel: (408) 295-5991
Website: www.sala.org

Language(s): English, Spanish

YWCA Silicon Valley
375 S. Third Street, San Jose, CA 95112
Tel: (408) 295-4011
Website: http://ywca-sv.org

Language (s): English, Spanish
Services: Counseling, domestic violence, human trafficking, rape crisis. Restraining orders, divorce, child support and child custody, civil and criminal cases, mediation.