

MICHIGAN LEGAL HELP

Helping Michigan residents solve their legal problems.

New Tools for Self-Represented Persons in Michigan

Angela Tripp

Michigan Legal Help Program Manager

Michigan Poverty Law Program



What is the Michigan Legal Help (MLH) Program?

Two Parts of the MLH Program:

Interactive website with information & forms

Affiliated local staffed **self-help centers**

Two Goals of the MLH Program:

Free and accurate **legal information**

Help and **referrals** for Michigan residents



The Need for Self-Help Assistance

High number of Self-Represented Litigants

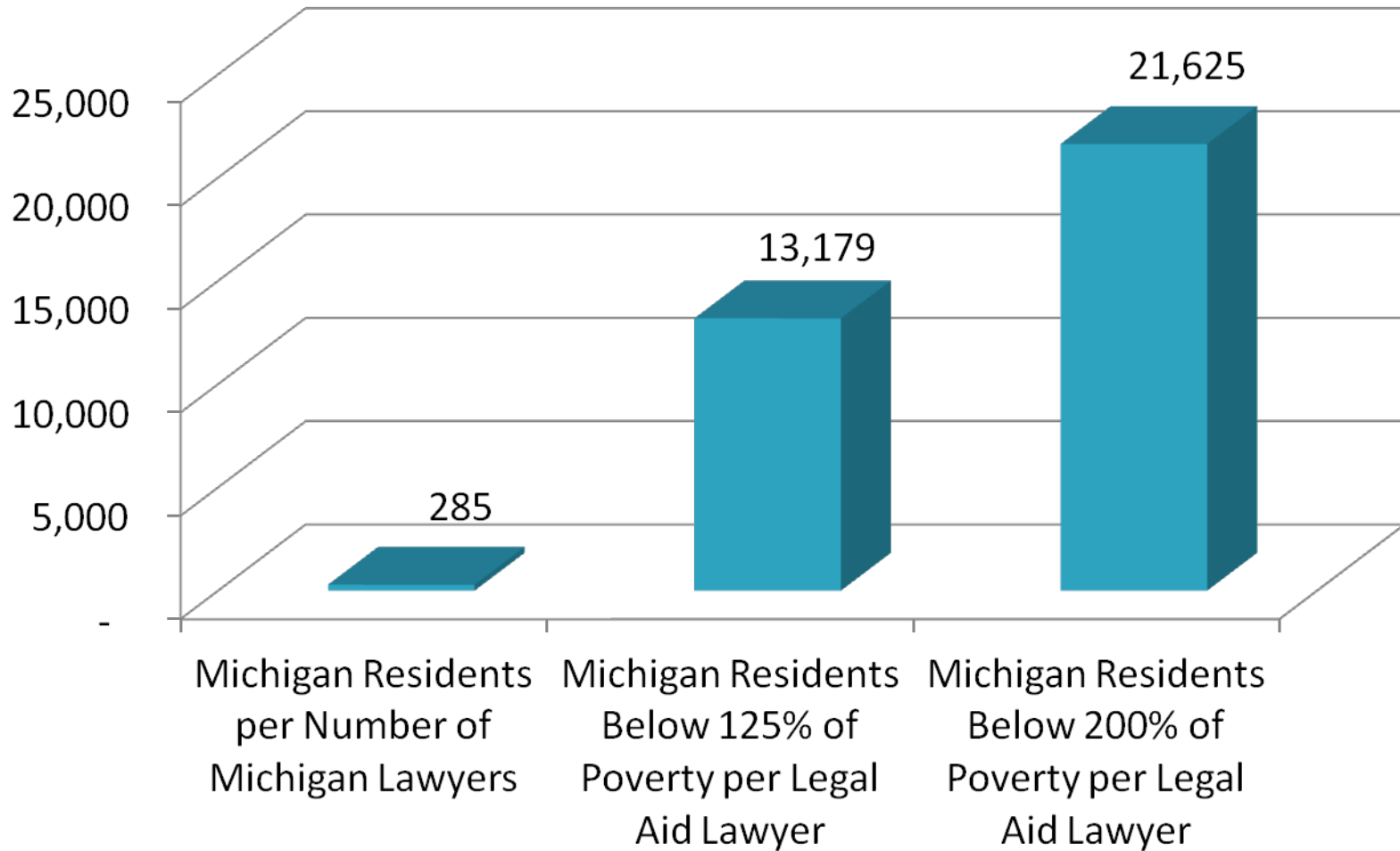
- 2010 Berrien County divorce study: in 80% of cases, one party representing self; in 50%, both parties representing selves
- Lack of centralization means gaps, duplications, and uneven quality of self-help resources

Limited Resources for Legal Aid

- Nationally, < 20% of civil legal needs of low income persons are met
- From 2000-2012, 56% increase in number of low-income persons who qualify for free legal aid in Michigan



Number of Michigan Residents Per Lawyer in 2012





Why Michigan Legal Help Works

1. Target resources to create and maintain **accurate and accessible information** for self-represented litigants.
2. **Centralized resources** are time- and cost-efficient - improvements and innovations benefit all users, funders and courts.
3. MLH is built on a **foundation of partnerships** with a broad range of stakeholders, and collaboration remains strong.



MLH and Civil Right to Counsel

- MLH is part of a continuum - **self-help** to **limited assistance** to **full representation**
- Absent civil right to counsel, need to use a **variety of techniques** to provide access as a broader responsibility of the justice system



What is MichiganLegalHelp.org?

Legal Information Content

- Toolkits containing Articles, Common Questions, Interactive Forms and Procedural Instructions
- Videos
- LiveHelp

Referral Content

- Referrals to Attorneys, Self-Help Centers, Courts, and Community Organizations



MLH at a Glance

- Since launch on 8/17/12, 1,843,475 page views & 480,638 visits
- Since 1/2014 weekly visit rates over 9,000; now over 13,000
- In 2013, 55,911 interviews started; 30,994 sets of forms created – 85/day
- MLH-Affiliated Self-Help Centers open in Allegan, Oscoda, Oakland (2 sites), Muskegon, Monroe, and Marquette and Wayne counties

Welcome to Michigan Legal Help

The Michigan Legal Help website was created to help people who have to handle simple civil legal problems without a lawyer. There are articles you can read to learn about a specific area of the law and toolkits to help you prepare to represent yourself in court. Some forms are completed automatically once you answer simple questions. The Michigan Legal Help website does not provide legal advice, and it is not a substitute for having a lawyer. If you need more help, you can search the website for a lawyer or community services in your area. The website does not cover all areas of law, but we are adding more information all the time. Please [tell us what you think](#) and let us know if we helped and how we can improve this site. For more information, watch the welcome video or read the [help instructions](#).

Welcome to

MICHIGAN LEGAL HELP

Self-Help Tools

- Family**
Divorce, Custody, Parenting Time, Child Support, Annulment, Separate Maintenance, Paternity.
- Protection from Abuse**
Domestic Violence, Stalking, Personal Protection Orders (PPO).
- Housing**
Leases, Landlord/Tenant matters; Mobile Homes; Eviction; Security Deposits; Subsidized Housing.
- Consumer**
Debts and Debt Collection; Garnishment; Small Claims; Installment Payment Plans.
- Expungement**
Setting Aside an Adult Criminal Conviction; Setting Aside a Juvenile Adjudication.
- Public Benefits**
Food Stamps, Cash Assistance, Medicaid, Disability Benefits, Social Security, and others.

Organizations and Courts

- Find A Lawyer**
Find a lawyer in your area to help you with your legal matter.
- Self-Help Centers**
Find a Self Help Center near you to get additional help representing yourself in court.
- Community Services**
Find a local community service organization for other assistance.
- Court Information**
Contact information and what you need to know before you go to court.

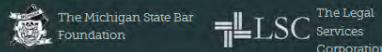
Latest News

- Divorce Answer and Counterclaim Toolkits Now Available**
Did your spouse recently file for divorce? If so, you may want to file an answer and possibly a counterclaim in order to stay involved in the case. The new toolkits on Michigan Legal Help... [read more >](#)
January 15, 2013
 - Small Claims Toolkit Now Available**
Do you have a legal claim that is less than \$5,000? If so, you may be able to handle this matter on your own in Small Claims Court. In small claims court, the parties cannot be represented by... [read more >](#)
January 14, 2013
- [News Archive >](#)

[Subscribe to MLH News](#)

The Michigan Legal Help web site and affiliated local self-help centers are part of the [United Way](#) of the [Ballston Commons Self-Help Task Force](#) to promote coordinated and quality assistance for persons representing themselves in civil legal matters in Michigan. The Task Force is a statewide collaboration of judges, courts, lawyers, bar associations, nonprofit legal aid agencies, legal self-help centers, libraries and many others.

Michigan Legal Help is funded by:



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Subject Area Landing Page

MICHIGAN LEGAL HELP

Helping Michigan residents solve their legal problems.

Please Tell Us What You Think

[Home](#) [Welcome](#) [Self-Help Tools](#) [Organizations & Courts](#)

[Home](#) » [Self-Help Tools](#)

Family

Displaying 1 - 10 of 31

- My Spouse Filed for Divorce, and We Do Not Have Minor Children**
This toolkit tells you what you need to know if your spouse has filed for divorce, and you and your spouse have no minor children together.
- I Need a Divorce and I Do Not Have Minor Children**
This toolkit tells you what you need to know about getting a divorce when you and your spouse have no minor children together.
- I Need to Change or Get a Child Support Order**
This toolkit tells you what you need to know about changing your child support order or getting a support order if you already have a divorce, custody, separate maintenance, or paternity case pending.
- My Spouse Filed for Divorce, and We Have Minor Children**
This toolkit tells you what you need to know if your spouse has filed for divorce, and you and your spouse have minor children together.
- I Need a Divorce and I Have Children**
This toolkit tells you what you need to know about getting a divorce when you and your spouse have minor children together.

Filter by Content Type

- Toolkits (7)
- Forms (4)
- Articles (20)

Filter by Legal Issue

- Divorce (29)
- Child Support (11)
- Child Custody (10)
- Protection from Abuse (3)



Top portion of a toolkit

I have an Adult Criminal Conviction that I would like to Set Aside (expunge)

This toolkit tells you what you need to know if you would like to ask a court to set aside an adult **criminal** conviction from your past. If your conviction is set aside, it cannot be seen by the public. Your employers and landlords will not know that you were once convicted of a crime. This toolkit is **only** for you if you were convicted as an adult. For general information about setting aside a conviction, read the **Articles** on this page. Review the **Common Questions** if you have a specific question. If you want to ask the court to set aside your conviction, use the **Court Forms** links for help preparing the forms you will need. Use the **Checklist** below to make sure you followed all the steps in the process. The links under **Court Information** will tell you about the court that will handle your case.

*If you don't think you can handle this problem on your own, you can search for an attorney using **Find A Lawyer** on this page. If you need something else related to your problem, an agency listed under **Community Services** may be able to help you.*

Common Questions

- What does it mean to set aside a conviction?
- What is a conviction?
- How can I search my criminal records?
- Are there some convictions that cannot be set aside?
- What is a Minor Offense?
- How long do I have to wait before I can ask the court to set aside a conviction?
- How do I get a conviction set aside?
- What does it cost to set aside a conviction?



Articles

- [Setting Aside an Adult Conviction in Michigan](#)

Court Forms

- [Automated Online Application to Set Aside Conviction Forms](#)

Find A Lawyer

[Legal Aid of Western Michigan - Grand Rapids](#)
[Grand Rapids Bar Association - Lawyer Referral and Information Service](#)
[State Bar of Michigan Lawyer Referral and Information Service](#)

Self-Help Centers

[Legal Assistance Center](#)

Court Information

[63rd District Court](#)
[62B District Court](#)
[62A District Court](#)
[61st District Court](#)



Interviews: A2J Interface

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BACK NEXT MY PROGRESS 23 Based on your answer, you are not eli... SEND FEEDBACK EXIT AA A

a2j Access To Justice
AT CHICAGO-KENT COLLEGE OF LAW

Based on your answer, you are not eligible to apply to set aside a conviction at this time. You cannot complete this interview.

You must wait until five years have passed since you were convicted or since you were released from imprisonment, whichever happens later. After this five year time period is over, you can file an application to set aside your conviction.

If you think you made a mistake, click the "Back" button below. This will return you to the prior screen and you can change your answer. Otherwise, click the "Exit" button below to return to the Michigan Legal Help website for more

4 PROBLEMS

Back **Exit**

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Answer interview, continued

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← BACK ← NEXT MY PROGRESS 6 Enter your current address and phone n SEND FEEDBACK AA A

a2j Access To Justice
AT CHICAGO-KENT COLLEGE OF LAW

Enter your current address and phone number.

Street address

City, State and Zip Code

Phone number

Continue

1 BASIC INFORMATION

2 ANSWERING THE COMPLAINT

3 CHOOSE

4 REVIEW



Answer form

Approved, SCAO

Original – Court
1st copy – Plaintiff

2nd copy – Defendant
3rd copy – Proof of service

STATE OF MICHIGAN
88th JUDICIAL DISTRICT
JUDICIAL CIRCUIT

ANSWER, CIVIL
(PAGE 1 OF 3)

CASE NO.
12-3245-GC
Hon. Justice

Court address
719 Chisholm St.
Alpena, MI 49707

Court telephone no.
(989)354-9678

Plaintiff name(s), address(es), and telephone no(s).

E-Z-boy
1412 W. Maple Street
Alpena, MI 49707
(123) 123-1234

Plaintiff's attorney, bar no., address, and telephone no.

Bob Loblaw (P23412)
12 First Street
Alpena, MI 49707
(123) 123-4123

Defendant name(s), address(es), and telephone no(s).

Harvey Hall
345 Main Street
Alpena, MI 49707
(213) 423-4123

Defendant's attorney, bar no., address, and telephone no.

Defendant.

Attorney for defendant in answer to the complaint states:

(Paragraph numbers in the answer must correspond to paragraphs in the complaint. Attach additional sheets if necessary.)

1. I agree with the statements in paragraph 1.
 disagree with the statements in paragraph 1 because _____
 do not know if the statements in paragraph 1 are true.
2. I agree with the statements in paragraph 2.
 disagree with the statements in paragraph 2 because I think they are wrong and this is not how much money I owe. I can't believe they are saying I owe this much money. I paid for this already.
 do not know if the statements in paragraph 2 are true.
3. I agree with the statements in paragraph 3.
 disagree with the statements in paragraph 3 because _____
 do not know if the statements in paragraph 3 are true.

continued on page 2.

_____ Date

_____ Defendant/Attorney signature

Harvey Hall
Name (Type or print)

IMPORTANT: If you have affirmative defenses, you must state them now using the last page of this form. If you do not, the court may prohibit you from raising them later. An affirmative defense is a defense claiming that the plaintiff is not entitled to a judgment because other facts exist that create a lawful defense. Affirmative defenses allow you to provide information to the court that is not stated in the plaintiff's complaint.

CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I certify that on this date I served a copy of this answer on the plaintiff(s) or their attorney(s) by


personal service first-class mail addressed to their last-known address(es) as defined in MCR 2.1 07(C)(3).




_____ Signature



Interviews: Hotdocs Interface



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Divorce With or Without Children

Interview Outline

- Is this interview right for you? Part 1
- Is this interview right for you? Part 2

Is this interview right for you? Part 1

*Do you have a pending divorce case with this spouse in any court?

Yes No

Michigan law requires you to testify that there has been a breakdown of the marriage to the extent that the objects of matrimony have been destroyed and there remains no reasonable likelihood that your marriage can be preserved. This means that there has been a serious, permanent, marital breakdown. It means that it is very unlikely that you and your spouse can work things out.

*Has there been a breakdown of the marriage to the extent that the objects of matrimony have been destroyed and there remains no reasonable likelihood that the marriage can be preserved?

Yes No

*Is your spouse currently in the United States armed forces?

Yes
 No
 I don't know

*To the best of your knowledge, has a court found your spouse to be legally incompetent?

Yes No [?]

Click the **Next** button below to continue.

If your spouse does not file an answer to your divorce complaint, you may be entering a default judgment of divorce against him or her. You may not enter a default judgment against a person who is not legally competent to understand the divorce proceedings



Interviews: Hotdocs Interface



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Divorce With or Without Children

Interview Outline

- Is this interview right for you? Part 1
- Is this interview right for you? Part 2
- Is this interview right for you? Part 3**

Is this interview right for you? Part 3

*Do you plan to ask the court to order your spouse to support you financially, other than child support?

Yes No

***Warning! This interview may not be right for you. Requesting spousal support is not a simple process. Neither this interview nor the Michigan Legal Help website will calculate spousal support. You can still complete this interview to prepare your forms and begin the divorce process. Your divorce complaint will state that you are asking for spousal support, but the Judgment of Divorce that is produced after this interview will not give you spousal support. Consider hiring a lawyer to help you ask the court to calculate spousal support and complete the spousal support section of your Judgment of Divorce.**

If you wish to hire a lawyer to help you ask for spousal support and finish your case, you can find referral information in the Find a Lawyer section of the Michigan Legal Help website.

Do you wish to continue with the interview now?

Yes No



Divorce Complaint

Approved for Pilot Use Only, SCAO

Original - Court
1st copy - Defendant

2nd copy - Plaintiff
3rd copy - Return

STATE OF MICHIGAN 11th JUDICIAL CIRCUIT ALGER COUNTY	COMPLAINT FOR DIVORCE (NO CHILDREN)	CASE NO.
Court address 101 Court St. Munising, MI 49862		Court telephone no. (906)387-2076
Plaintiff's name Angela Tripp Plaintiff's name before marriage	<input type="checkbox"/> husband <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> wife	v
		Defendant's name Joe Louis Defendant's name before marriage
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> husband <input type="checkbox"/> wife

Form MC 01 SUMMONS AND COMPLAINT must be completed and filed with this form.

I state:

1. The plaintiff or defendant has resided at least 180 days in Michigan immediately before the filing of this complaint.
2. The plaintiff or defendant has resided in this county at least 10 days immediately before the filing of this complaint.
3. The marriage took place on May 1, 2000 in Ann Arbor, Washtenaw County, Michigan.
Date Location
4. The plaintiff and defendant separated on _____ . still live together.
Date
5. There has been a breakdown of the marriage relationship to the extent that the objects of matrimony have been destroyed and there remains no reasonable likelihood that the marriage can be preserved.
6. The wife is is not pregnant.
7. There are no minor children of the marriage.
8. a. The plaintiff and defendant did not acquire property or debts during the marriage.
 b. The plaintiff and defendant acquired property and/or debts during the marriage that are to be equitably divided between them.
9. The plaintiff is is not requesting spousal support.

IREQUEST:

- a. A judgment of divorce.
- b. An equitable division of property and debts.
- c. Spousal support be awarded.
- d. An equitable division of the costs of this action.
- e. My last name be changed to _____ .
- f. Any other relief that the court deems just and equitable.

I declare that the statements above are true to the best of my information, knowledge, and belief.

Date

Plaintiff signature

Date

Plaintiff's attorney signature



Frequently Asked Questions

- Ayuda Legal de Michigan to launch in 4/14
- MichiganLegalHelp.org open and available to everyone, 24/7
- It's a website, not an app – no download
- No log-in or saving of info or data on the Michigan Legal Help website
- Law Help Interactive – site security; ability to log in and save info
- Can use mobile device to access website



Self-Help Centers

- Staffed by non-lawyer Navigators who give legal information, not legal advice
- Several models:
 - Courthouse, staffed by new or existing staff
 - Public Library, staffed by librarians
 - Law Library, staffed by librarians
 - Community Agency, staffed by existing or new staff
 - Integrate volunteers into any model
- MLHP provides training and ongoing support



Limits of MLH

1. People don't always read/understand what we provide.
2. We don't have everything (yet).
3. We don't have all the answers that people want.
4. We will never have some things.
5. Not every litigant or every case is appropriate for self-representation.



Q: Who can MLH help?

A: *Many* people who will represent themselves in civil legal matters.

Visitor Feedback:

- "Your site made a difficult process much easier. I was able to enter the needed information, print the forms and have everything ready to go!"
- "The automated forms are fantastic - it really demystified all the legal mumbo jumbo. I feel much more confident of a positive outcome in my case."
- "I am very grateful for this site. I found it absolutely helpful! I easily completed the step-by-step application with no problem. Thank you!"



Thank you!

Angela Tripp

Project Manager, Michigan Legal Help Program

Co-Managing Attorney, Michigan Poverty Law
Program

(734) 998-6100 x 152

trippa@lsscm.org