

Federal Court Pro Se Page

Welcome

Welcome to the United States District Court, District of Nevada. The information on this page is intended for “pro se” (a Latin word meaning “for oneself”) litigants, or those individuals who are representing themselves in a court case without the assistance of an attorney. This page and the [Pro Se Assistance Packet](#) will provide you information regarding federal procedure, but it is not a substitute for legal advice from an experienced attorney.

Representing Yourself

Anyone has the right to appear in a civil case in federal court without an attorney, or appear “pro se.” 28 USC § 1654. However, there are some exceptions such as:

- A. Corporations and partnerships must be represented by an attorney.
- B. A pro se litigant cannot represent a class in a class action.
- C. A non-attorney parent cannot appear pro se on behalf of a child, except to appeal the denial of the child’s social security benefits.

This right to appear in a civil case without an attorney is different from a criminal case. Criminal cases are cases that are initiated by government officials. Generally, civil cases can result in money damages or other similar relief. Criminal cases can result in prison time or monetary fines. In some criminal cases, defendants have the right to have a lawyer appointed to represent them at no cost. You do not have that right in a civil case. If you want to begin a civil action in federal court, but you do not have an attorney to represent you, then you are deciding to move forward with your case “pro se.”

If you decide to proceed “pro se,” you will need to be prepared to carry out your case to completion. You will be expected to know and understand the law and follow the proper procedure, just like any lawyer.

Finding a Lawyer

This page and the [Pro Se Assistance Packet](#) are not substitutes for having a lawyer represent you. An experienced lawyer will understand the laws that apply to your case, the court procedures, and litigation strategies.

If you can afford an attorney, you can visit the [State Bar of Nevada Referral Service](#) to find an experienced lawyer to handle your case. Some lawyers may take your case without a fee being paid by you in the beginning of the case.

If you cannot afford a lawyer, and no attorney will accept your case without a fee being paid by you at the beginning of the case, you may apply to legal aid to see if they can accept your case. The entities where you can apply are: (1) [Legal Aid Center of Southern Nevada](#), 725 E. Charleston Blvd., Las Vegas, NV, 702-386-1070 (Clark County); (2) [Nevada Legal Services](#), 530 S. Sixth St., Las Vegas, NV, 702-386-0404 or 204 Marsh St., Ste. 101, Reno, NV, 775-284-3491 (statewide); and (3) [Washoe Legal Services](#), 299 S. Arlington Ave., Reno, NV, 775-329-2727 (Washoe County).

If you are unable to afford an attorney and exhausted all of these avenues, in appropriate circumstances the Court may refer your case to the Federal Court Pro Bono Program where legal aid organizations seek to find volunteers to represent you in your case. This program is limited. To learn more, you can visit the District of Nevada's Pro Se Page.

Legal Aid Center of Southern Nevada also offers a quarterly Ask-A-Lawyer program, where pro se litigants sit down for 15 minutes with a lawyer at no cost. Pro se litigants can ask questions before filing a case in federal court or get advice regarding their existing case. Advance registration is required. To find out when the next Federal Ask-A-Lawyer is and to register, visit [here](#).

Washoe Legal Services will provide a Federal Ask-A-Lawyer clinic on February 1, 2017, May 3, 2017, August 2, 2017, and November 1, 2017. Pro se litigants are required to register the Friday before the scheduled clinic. For more information and to register, visit [here](#).

Things to Know

When you appear as a pro se litigant, you are still held to the same standard as lawyers. You should become familiar with the rules, procedures, and substantive law that affect your case.

The [Federal Rules of Civil Procedure](#) govern civil lawsuits that are filed in United States federal courts. These rules apply to every federal court in the country. You will need to refer to these rules for deadlines, formatting, and procedural information. You will also need to be familiar with the [Local Rules of Practice for the District of Nevada](#). These rules are particular to the District of Nevada courts only, but they build on the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure. The [Federal Rules of Evidence](#) are also important because they define what evidence a federal court sees as "admissible," or evidence that is allowed to be introduced in court.

You will also need to know the substantive law regarding your lawsuit. Substantive law is what you need to prove in order to establish your claims. They are also the laws that govern your reasons for suing the other side. Each subject of a claim has a different set of laws. For example, employment discrimination has a different set of laws from a real estate case. You can visit a law library to research the specific laws that you need for your case.

Clark County Law Library
309 S. Third St., Suite 400
Las Vegas, NV 89155
(702) 455-4696

UNLV Law Library
4505 Maryland Pkwy.
Las Vegas, NV 89154
(702) 895-2400

Washoe County Law Library
75 Court St. Room 101
Reno, NV 89520
(775) 328-3250

Nevada Supreme Court Law Library
201 S. Carson St., #100
Carson City, NV 89701
(775) 684-1640

Tips for Pro Se Litigants

There is so much to know when representing yourself in federal court, but use these tips to get started:

- 1) Know and meet your deadlines. Deadlines are very important in a court case. If you miss a deadline, you could lose your case. If you need more time to do something, ask the court in writing for more time as soon as possible and before the deadline passes.
- 2) Read everything you get from the court and the opposing party. The clerk will send you information regarding your case, and you will need to thoroughly review that information to make sure you get all the deadlines the clerk might set for you. Also, if the other side files something, you will need to know what they are asking the judge for, so that you can decide if you want to oppose it.
- 3) Be organized. When you file something at the clerk's office, come prepared with all your documents in the order that you want them filed. The clerk's office cannot put things in order for you. When you get before a judge, have your papers organized so you aren't fishing around for a document during a hearing.
- 4) Make sure the court has your correct mailing and e-mail addresses and phone number. The clerk and court might need to contact you, so make sure they have your correct and current information.
- 5) Know your courthouse. The Southern Division of the District of Nevada covers Clark, Esmeralda, Lincoln, and Nye Counties. If you are in one of these counties, your District of Nevada courthouse is the Lloyd D. George U.S. Courthouse at 333 Las Vegas Blvd. South, Las Vegas, NV, 702-464-5400. The Northern Division covers Carson City, Churchill, Douglas, Elko, Eureka, Humboldt, Lander, Lyon, Mineral, Pershing, Storey, Washoe, and White Pine Counties. Cases filed in the Northern Division should be filed at the Bruce R. Thompson U.S. Courthouse at 400 S. Virginia St., Reno, NV, 775-686-5800.