

READ THIS PAGE BEFORE YOU ASK FOR HELP

Southwest Center for Equal Justice receives numerous requests for help from people and we are only able to help a few.

ALL complaints must be in writing, either on our online complaint form or sent through the mail. If you need assistance in filling out your request form you may call our office. We do not accept walk-ins.

If you submit a complaint form, it does not mean that SWCEJ has agreed to help you. You will be notified if we are able to accept your case or not, generally within 4 weeks of receipt of your request.

We will **not** give legal advice over the phone, in email, or in person unless we accept your case.

It may take up to 4 weeks or more to look at your complaint and send you a letter. We will not take calls about your case while we are considering your request. We may contact you however if we need more information.

SWCEJ generally does not provide immediate or emergency services unless necessary to prevent manifest injustice.

WHAT WE DO:

SWCEJ usually takes cases against government agencies such as law enforcement and the court system, where law, policy, or practice affects constitutional rights within the criminal justice system- that is, civil liberties and civil rights. We want to make positive changes for a large or significant number of people who have the same, or a similar, issue. We do also take a limited number of cases for indigent individuals whose rights have been violated in the criminal justice system and who have limited options for other legal representation.

What are "civil rights" and "civil liberties"?

Civil liberties and civil rights are personal rights and freedoms that are guaranteed in the Bill of Rights and the Constitution, including the basic rights to be free from unlawful discrimination based on poverty, race, ethnicity, gender, disability, age, religion, or nationality.

Most of our work protecting civil rights and civil liberties is against government agencies and not private organizations or individuals. Our work is exclusively within the criminal justice system and collateral consequences from criminal justice convictions or law enforcement contact.

SOME EXAMPLES OF THE CIVIL RIGHTS AND LIBERTIES WE PROTECT INCLUDE:

Racial Discrimination in the Criminal Justice System and Law Enforcement

Discrimination Against Those Suffering Mental Illness or Developmental Disabilities

Violations of the Americans With Disabilities Act By Law Enforcement or the Criminal Justice System

Excessive Fines, Fees, Assessments-Failure to Pay Sanctions

Wrongful Forfeitures of Property

Anti-Homeless Laws and Anti-Poverty Laws

Unfair Collateral Consequences Such as Driver's License Suspensions

Right to Appointment of Counsel in Criminal Cases

Fourth and Fourteen Amendment -Wrongful Arrest, Wrongful Imprisonment, Due Process

Excessive Force

Restoration of Voting Rights (Please see our self help page for forms available to request the restoration of your rights. If you still need assistance after reviewing the forms please continue with your request.)

Note: SWCEJ is a non-profit organization. We represent indigent persons and do not accept fees for our services from our clients. We operate from donations and attorneys' fees recouped in successful lawsuits. If we accept your case you will not be required to pay any fees or costs for our services.

WHAT SWCEJ DOES NOT DO

SWCEJ is not like legal aid. We do not provide general legal assistance to low-income individuals. We do provide legal assistance to indigent individuals in some misdemeanor cases involving manifest injustice when not entitled to the appointment of counsel or when the right to appointment of counsel has been violated.

SWCEJ does not interfere with the work of other attorneys. We cannot assist you if you already have an attorney. SWCEJ does not represent any individuals in general criminal matters where the individual is entitled to the appointment of counsel or can afford to retain counsel although we may represent persons whose rights are violated after conviction.

SWCEJ does not represent individual prisoners or detainees with complaints about jail or prison conditions, including failure to provide medical care.

TYPES OF CASES WHERE SWCEJ DOES NOT HELP:

Disputes with individuals or private organizations or businesses

Civil disputes that do not involve the criminal justice system.

Employment disputes

Family law/child custody/child support/divorce/orders of protection.

Landlord-Tenant or Homeowner Association disputes.

Denial of government benefits such as worker's compensation, unemployment, social security or food stamps.

Personal injury or negligence actions.

Leases, contracts, business matters

Consumer matters

Cases that are too old (usually older than 2 years)

For assistance with any of the above matters, consider searching for an attorney on the Arizona Bar Association website or contacting a Legal Aid office.

TO ASK US FOR HELP:

After reading the above information if you believe that your case fits within the type that we accept please print the below form, or fill out on-line, and submit to us electronically or by mail. If you need assistance filling out the form you may call our office.

It may take up to 4 weeks from receipt of your request for us to respond. If your situation is time sensitive or urgent, please see our Resources page for other organizations that may be able to help you.

DEADLINES (Statutes of Limitation): All legal claims have time deadlines. SWCEJ will not tell you which time deadlines apply to your situation until and unless we accept your case. You may need to consult an attorney right away to find out what deadlines apply in your case.

LEGAL ADVICE SWCEJ attorneys will not give legal advice regarding your matter over the phone and will not give legal advice at all unless we accept your case or matter. This includes advice as to whether you have a claim or not.