

Legal Sources

In its broadest sense the law permeates most aspects of our public lives. For instance, buying even the most mundane item involves entering into a legal contract. Thankfully, even in this litigious society, we don't ordinarily have to spend time doing legal research or seeking out professional legal advice to accomplish most things. Sooner or later, however, events such as the purchase of a house or a legal dispute will make this necessary. In those cases this guide may be helpful. There are two main sections: 1) *Finding the Law* and 2) *Finding a Lawyer*.

1. Finding the Law

Determining the actual letter of the law can be a complicated business. First of all, in our federal system, there are both federal and state (including local) law sources. Secondly, we often have to look at law as expressed in constitutions, statutes/ordinances, court cases, and administrative regulations. Even when we have successfully done this, we need to correctly interpret the usually arcane language of these *primary sources*. In most instances, for the layman, the most valuable sources are *secondary sources*, those written by experts who digest all of these primary sources of the law and lay it out for us in an understandable way.

Secondary Sources

Books

The library has many circulating self-help legal books in the Non-fiction collection (Dewey Decimal classification: 340s). More non-circulating sources can be found in the Legal Reference collection (R340s). Below are two publishers well-represented in the library collection. Their corresponding Web sites provide some supplemental information.

[Nolo Press Books](#) (340s in Reference and Non-fiction sections; www.nolo.com)

This "do-it-yourself" legal publisher puts out books and electronic works designed to help the layman deal with just about any routine legal problem. Of course, their products also help inform those who will need professional help anyway. There are some helpful articles available for free at their website, along with an online catalog of titles for purchase.

[Sphinx Publishing](#) (340s in Reference and Non-fiction sections; www.sphinxlegal.com)

Much like *Nolo*, Sphinx offers a comprehensive series of self-help books, though with more state-specific titles, which helps when researching something covered primarily by state law, such as family law, business organization, or estate law. These books are also found in the 340s in both the Reference and Non-fiction collections. The *Sphinx* Web site has some free content, but less than [Nolo](#)

Web Sites

[Illinois Legal Aid Online](#) (<http://www.illinoislegalaidonline.org>)

This is a non-profit organization that, in conjunction with groups like the Chicago Bar Foundation, offers self-help legal information, as well as contact information for organizations that provide pro bono legal representation to low-income people.

[Findlaw](#) (<http://www.findlaw.com>)

Findlaw is a good starting point for legal research of any type on the open Web. There is a section for the public with articles on all types of legal issues written for the layman. There are also comprehensive lists of links to primary sources, like statutes, regulations, and court cases. Also included is a lawyer directory.

[Self-Help Legal Center of Southern Illinois](#) (<http://www.law.siu.edu/selfhelp>)

This organization, sponsored by Southern Illinois University provides online and hard-copy self-help legal information.

[USA.gov](#) (usa.gov)

This is the "home page" of the U.S. government and as such includes links to federal agencies. These agency Web sites often have secondary, as well as primary, legal information.

[Nolo.com](#) (nolo.com)

See [Nolo Press Books](#) above

[Sphinx Publishing](#) (www.sphinxlegal.com)

See [Sphinx Publishing](#) above.

Primary Sources

Books

[Illinois Compiled Statutes](#) (R 348.773 ILL; <http://www.ilga.gov/legislation/ilcs/ilcs.asp>)

This is the collection of laws passed by the Illinois state legislature organized by subject. The online version is updated more often than the print. Still, you may want to check the most recent collection of [Public Acts](#), which contains new laws that may not yet have been incorporated into *Illinois Compiled Statutes*.

International residential Code 2009 (R 690 INT 2009)

Along with the following work, this book constitutes part of the Burbank Building Code. References to it are contained in the [Municipal Code of Burbank](#), below.

International Building Code 2009 (R 690 INT 2009)

See entry immediately above and [Municipal Code of Burbank](#), below.

Web Sites

[Illinois Compiled Statutes](#) (<http://www.ilga.gov/legislation/ilcs/ilcs.asp>)

See above for description.

[Illinois Administrative Code](#) (<http://www.ilga.gov/commission/jcar/admincode/titles.html>)

Here can be found the regulations issued by state agencies in pursuance of statutes passed by the General Assembly.

[Municipal Code of Burbank](#) (<http://library.municode.com/index.aspx?clientID=10988&stateID=13&statename=Illinois>)

The municipal code of Burbank is now online. Use this site to access the local law of the city.

[Legal Information Institute](#) (www.law.cornell.edu)

This site has a comprehensive set of constitutions, statutes, regulations, and court cases (or links to them) at the federal and state levels. From the home page select *Constitutions and Codes* or *Law by source or jurisdiction*.

2. Finding a Lawyer

[Martindale-Hubbell Attorney Directory](#) (<http://www.martindale.com>)

For over 140 years this directory has been providing not just bare contact information for lawyers and law firms, but evaluative information, in the form of client and peer reviews. As a last check use the [Attorney Registration and Disciplinary Commission](#) (below) for the most current licensing and malpractice insurance status.

[Illinois Lawyer Finder](#) (<http://www.illinoislawyerfinder.com>)

This is the Illinois Bar Association's directory of its members in good standing. All entries must have malpractice insurance and have a valid license to be included. Searching is limited to practice area and location, but a link is provided to the [Attorney Registration and Disciplinary Commission](#) (below) for name searches.

[Attorney Registration and Disciplinary Commission](#) (www.iardc.org/index.html)

This is the agency mentioned in the previous two entries that, under the aegis of the Illinois Supreme Court, licenses and disciplines attorneys. Complaints can be filed here, but just as importantly, a lawyer's history with the commission can be looked up on this Web site. This site has the most up-to-date, complete **such** information.

[American Bar Association Directory of Pro Bono Programs](#) (apps.americanbar.org/legalservices/probono/directory/illinois.html)

These programs provide free legal services for people (usually those earning less than 125% of federal poverty level).

[Illinois Legal Aid Online](#)

See entry above in previous section.

[Southwest Bar Association Pro-Bono Program/Advisory Services](#) (http://www.southwestbar.org/quick_find.html, 708-371-4930)

The local Southwest Bar Association also administers a pro bono program. Pro-Bono duties are scheduled for every Tuesday of each month beginning at 9:00 a.m. until 12:00 p.m. in the Fifth Municipal District Courthouse located at 10220 S. 76th Avenue, Bridgeview, IL.