

# What is the Law?

The law allows people to resolve disagreements in an orderly way. This tip sheet offers tips on sources of law and where to find those laws.

## Types of Laws

- There are local laws, state laws, federal law, and international law. These laws sometimes overlap.
- State law covers topics such as divorce, custody, landlord-tenant, wills and estates, and some contract matters.
- Federal law covers topics such as interstate commerce, patent and copyright, stocks, and bankruptcy.
- Federal and state laws both cover topics such as employment issues, consumer matters, and criminal behavior.

## Watch the Video



## Maryland Statutes

- The legislature creates statutes. Statutes are a type of law. The legislature in Maryland is the General Assembly.
- Maryland statutes are organized by subject. Each subject is in an article and has smaller topics called titles. For example, the Family Law Article of the Maryland Code has a title on marriage.
- View the Maryland Code on the Maryland State Law Library website at [mdcourts.gov/lawlib](http://mdcourts.gov/lawlib). Click on Gateway to Maryland Law.

## Maryland Regulations

- Regulations are rules. State agencies create regulations. An example of a state agency is the Maryland Motor Vehicle Administration.
- Regulations are more specific than statutes. For example, a statute may state that all electricians must have a license, but the regulation may state how the licensing process works.
- You can view Maryland regulations in the Code of Maryland Regulations, or COMAR. Visit [www.dsd.state.md.us](http://www.dsd.state.md.us).

## Maryland Court Rules

- The Maryland Rules of Court govern how Maryland's state courts operate.
- If you have a case in a Maryland court, you should familiarize yourself with the Maryland Rules.
- View the Rules on the State Law Library website at [mdcourts.gov/lawlib](http://mdcourts.gov/lawlib). Click on Gateway to Maryland Law.

## Maryland Case Law

- Case law refers to the court's interpretation of statutes and regulations.
- Appellate judges make case law. They apply the law to the factual situation of a case and report their decisions.
- The judge's reported decision is called an opinion.
- The opinions of appellate courts are binding on lower courts.
- View opinions at a law library; on the Maryland Judiciary's website, [mdcourts.gov](http://mdcourts.gov); and on Google Scholar.

## Resources

- Find Maryland law library locations at [mdcourts.gov/ccll](http://mdcourts.gov/ccll).



# Maryland Court Help

Free. Online. In Person. By Phone.

- You can get free legal help at the [Maryland Court Help Center](#) at 410-260-1392 or at [mdcourts.gov/helpcenter](http://mdcourts.gov/helpcenter).
- View the full Court Help Video Library on the Maryland Judiciary's website at [mdcourts.gov/reference/videolibrary](http://mdcourts.gov/reference/videolibrary).