

## COVID-19 affects more than health...

### *Introducing COVID HELP, a free online tool to help Illinoisans get legal help during the COVID crisis*

Nearly half a million Illinoisans are unemployed and thousands more face an abrupt and significant loss of income after the illness or death of a family member due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Since the pandemic began eight months ago, there have been efforts to provide relief to those who have lost their income (federal stimulus checks, eviction moratoriums, and limits on debt collection). As several of those relief efforts end in Illinois on Dec. 14, legal professionals are anticipating a record number of evictions, foreclosures, and debt lawsuits.

**COVID HELP** (Housing and Economic Loss Prevention) is a statewide initiative to provide no-cost legal guidance and representation to Illinoisans experiencing common legal problems due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Illinois residents can access free legal assistance 24/7 at [COVIDhelpillinois.org](https://COVIDhelpillinois.org).

**COVID HELP's** virtual legal assistants provide users with accurate and reliable legal information, direct them to appropriate legal resources, and connect them with legal aid programs in their area. **COVID HELP's** virtual legal assistants were created by legal aid attorneys to address the most common issues Illinoisans have faced during the pandemic:

- Personal debt and bankruptcy
- Housing (landlord/tenant, eviction, and foreclosure)
- Employment
- Unemployment
- Wills, estates and guardianship

Many legal problems are not simple and with the law changing often, people need up-to-date information. **COVID HELP** provides reliable, accurate information on COVID-19 related legal problems and is available 24/7 from a computer or smartphone. Virtual legal assistants provide information that is curated by legal aid attorneys and available for free to all Illinoisans.

**COVID HELP** and its virtual legal assistants were created by a collaboration of CARPLS, the Lawyers Trust Fund, the Lawyers' Committee for Better Housing, The Chicago Bar Foundation, the Westside Justice Center, Illinois Legal Aid Online, and many other organizations providing free legal services around the state. **COVID HELP** and its virtual legal assistants are maintained by CARPLS Legal Aid, which has run Cook County's legal aid hotline since 1993. Learn more at [CARPLS.org](https://CARPLS.org).