



Access to
Civil Legal
Justice

Public Libraries as Partners in Access to Justice

Public libraries make great partners with law libraries in increasing access to justice. As local anchor institutions, public libraries help patrons find information to address their civil legal needs and can connect them to appropriate organizations.

Learn how to partner with public libraries to extend the reach and impact of your law library and improve access to civil legal justice.

Why public libraries?

REACH: There are **17,000 library locations** across the country that often are open past traditional business hours.

PROGRAM DELIVERY: Public libraries host **1.3 billion visits** and offer **5.4 million public programs** each year.

COMMUNITY TRUST: Public libraries are familiar institutions to turn to for reliable information, making them a natural partner for the development and delivery of pragmatic solutions to pressing issues.

BRIDGING THE DIGITAL DIVIDE: For many—especially in rural areas—public libraries can provide the most consistent and reliable internet connection.

Partner with public libraries

As law librarians, you have expertise that can help public library staff provide helpful information to their patrons. Services might include:

Providing tip sheets for common patron problems.

- **King County Law Library** has sample infographics you can use to get started: <https://kcll.org/research/research-guides/>

Offering training for public library staff on legal reference or legal information. Below are some helpful models that could be used as a template.

- U of South Carolina School of Law Circuit Riders: <https://guides.law.sc.edu/CircuitRiders>
- Louisiana State Bar Association and Law Library of Louisiana Legal Education and Assistance Program (LEAP) LibGuides: <https://lasc.libguides.com/LEAP-resources>
- Thurgood Marshall State Law Library (Maryland) Law on the Frontlines: <https://bit.ly/2TfQhLn>

Sharing WebJunction's civil legal justice courses with your public library colleagues.

- **Creating Pathways to Civil Legal Justice** is a series of four free self-paced courses to help library staff develop civil legal reference and resource skills: <https://bit.ly/civil-legal-course>

Organizing a learning group to augment learning for public library staff taking the WebJunction self-paced courses.

- WebJunction offers a **Learning Group Facilitation Guide** to help you convene library staff to explore these courses together. <https://bit.ly/civil-legal-learning-group>

Experimenting with on-site pop-up reference.

- The Minnesota State Law Library partners with the St. Paul Public Library to bring the law library's services directly to the public, eliminating barriers to access: <http://bit.ly/minn-library-legal-reference>

GETTING STARTED

Partnership possibilities begin with building a relationship.

In **large public library systems**, you might start with contacting the director, research librarian, or outreach coordinator.

Small and rural public libraries tend to have fewer staff, making it easier to find the right person who can help you.

Be bold and make the first move! This can be as simple as dropping off bookmarks or fliers with your contact information or picking up the phone to introduce your organization.

Together, law libraries and public libraries make great partners in helping close the justice gap in our communities.

Visit oclc.org/legal-justice to learn more.

OCLC's WebJunction and the nonprofit Legal Services Corporation have partnered to design and deliver free, national online training to strengthen access to civil legal justice through public libraries.

This project is made possible in part thanks to financial support from these organizations:

