

Illinois Free Legal Answers for Civil Appeals



WHAT IS ILLINOIS FREE LEGAL ANSWERS FOR CIVIL APPEALS?

Free Legal Answers, a national initiative of the American Bar Association, operates as a virtual legal advice clinic for civil legal issues. Self-represented litigants (those not represented by a lawyer) can submit a question about their civil appeal and have it answered by a pro bono lawyer. In Illinois, the program is administered by PILI and can be accessed at www.il.freelegalanswers.org. This new initiative allows for questions to be submitted about civil appeals – the first-ever free legal help desk for appeals in Illinois.

WHO CAN USE ILLINOIS FREE LEGAL ANSWERS FOR CIVIL APPEALS?

Lower-income Illinoisans may submit up to 3 legal questions per year after qualifying.

Users must:

- [1] have household income below 250% of the federal poverty line;
- [2] have less than \$10,000 in assets;
- [3] are not incarcerated;
- [4] are at least 18 years old;
- [5] have a civil legal question (not a criminal appeal); and
- [6] not be represented by a lawyer

HOW DOES IT WORK?

Users qualify for the program by answering income questions on the website, signing a user agreement, creating a username and password, and posting their question by providing facts about their civil appeal. The user can attach files or images to their post – if possible, the user should attach a copy of the final order or judgment that they are appealing and should note if they have an upcoming deadline for their appeal. Users should select “Civil Appeals” category so that the question is properly routed to a lawyer.

A lawyer will answer questions through the website—no phone calls or in-person consultations. The lawyer may also respond by posing a question or asking for clarification from the user. If that occurs, the user will have 10 days to reply before the question permanently closes. It is important for users to check their email during this time period and respond within 10 days to any replies from the lawyer. If a lawyer cannot answer the question, an administrator will notify the user.

ILLINOIS FREE LEGAL ANSWERS FOR CIVIL APPEALS CAN:

- Give you an opportunity to ask a lawyer a legal question about your case.
- Answer questions about how Illinois' state appellate courts work, including rules, procedures & terms.
- Provide statewide approved forms and instructions on how to complete them.
- Provide information about court deadlines.
- Give general guidance about your case.

ILLINOIS FREE LEGAL ANSWERS FOR CIVIL APPEALS CANNOT:

- Serve as your lawyer in your case or go to court with you.
- Conduct legal research for you.
- Make calls or attend meetings for you.
- Change an order signed by a judge.
- Give advice about federal appeals or criminal appeals.
- Help you if you already have a lawyer.