THE DeKalb CHRONICLE

DEKALB COUNTY GEORGIA

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Local News. A Stronger DeKalb.

FREE & LOW-COST LEGAL HELP

IN DEKALB COUNTY

by Noah Sanders



FREE GUIDE • dekalbchronicle.com • 678-789-7252

How to Use This Booklet

If you need a lawyer and cannot afford one, this booklet lists the free and low-cost legal help DeKalb County residents can actually use — legal aid offices, pro bono programs, law-school clinics, the public defender, and referral lines. Every listing was checked on November 24, 2026.

KNOW THE DIFFERENCE

- **Legal aid is FREE** — but you must qualify on income and case type, and they cannot take every case. Atlanta Legal Aid and DeKalb Pro Bono are the two big ones in DeKalb.
- **A lawyer referral service is free to call** — it matches you with a private lawyer. The lawyer charges after an initial consultation (about $45 for 30 minutes through the Atlanta Bar). Ask about free or reduced-fee consultations.
- **Charged with a crime?** Ask the judge for the public defender at your first court appearance. That is how you get one.
- **Do NOT call Georgia Legal Services Program or Atlanta Volunteer Lawyers Foundation for a DeKalb case** — they do not serve DeKalb County. See the last section before you waste a call.

BEFORE YOU CALL — HAVE THESE READY

- Your case number and any court papers (eviction notice, divorce papers, charge sheet, denial letter) — with the dates on them.
- Proof of income (pay stubs, benefits letter, tax return) — most free programs check income before they take a case.
- Your ID, and for family cases, the children’s birth certificates if you have them.
- A short version of what happened, in order, with dates. Lead with the deadline (court date, eviction date) if you have one.

In DeKalb County

Atlanta Legal Aid Society — DeKalb Office

246 Sycamore St, Suite 120, Decatur, GA 30030 — (404) 377-0701. Apply online at atlantalegalaid.org/apply. Free for low-income people in the five-county metro area. Family law, housing, eviction, public benefits, Social Security, education, bankruptcy, consumer issues, wills, health care, domestic violence. Does NOT handle criminal or personal injury cases. Spanish-speaking applicants: (404) 377-5381.

DeKalb Pro Bono (DeKalb Volunteer Lawyers Foundation)

(404) 373-0865 — intake Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday 9 a.m.–12 p.m. dekalbprobono.org — you MUST complete the online application to begin screening; they do not give legal answers over the phone. Free for DeKalb residents who cannot afford an attorney, civil cases only. Divorce, custody, child support, protective orders, landlord/tenant, consumer debt, bankruptcy, probate, wills. No criminal cases. Clinics by appointment: Probate Information Center (every other Thursday), Debt Clinic (every other Tuesday), Family Law Clinic (every other Tuesday).

DeKalb County Public Defender’s Office

320 Church St, Decatur, GA 30030 — (404) 371-2222. For people charged with a crime in DeKalb County who cannot afford a lawyer. Felony, misdemeanor, and juvenile cases — not civil or family law. Free if the court finds you indigent. Ask the judge for appointed counsel at your first court appearance and fill out an affidavit of assets and liabilities. A $50 application fee may apply unless a judge waives it.

DeKalb County Law Library

556 N. McDonough St, Room 400, Decatur, GA 30030 (inside the courthouse) — (404) 371-2441. Open to the public, Monday–Friday 8:30 a.m.–4:30 p.m. A law library, not a lawyer. Librarians help you find and use legal materials. Free Westlaw and Lexis legal research. Links to court forms and self-help resources. Free to use.

DeKalb County Family Law Information Center (FLIC)

DeKalb County Courthouse, 556 N. McDonough St, Decatur — (404) 687-3990. Family law forms, attorney consultations, and self-help resources for people handling family law matters. A court information center, not a law firm — it does not represent you. Call to confirm hours and fees.

DeKalb Legal Clinic (Commissioner Nicole Massiah)

DeKalb County Courthouse Law Library, 556 N. McDonough St, Room 400, Decatur. FREE monthly clinics, 10 a.m.–2 p.m. — Friday, December 18, 2026; Friday, January 22, 2027; Friday, February 26, 2027; Friday, March 26, 2027; Friday, April 23, 2027. Limited-scope consultations on civil matters — landlord/tenant, divorces, name changes, protective orders. No adoptions, criminal matters, real estate, personal injury, probate, or appeals. Fill out the intake form at dekalbgasuperiorcourt.gov/dekalb-legal-clinic/ — appointments are limited and the form does not guarantee one.

DeKalb Bar Association — Lawyer Referral Service

(404) 373-2580. Matches you with a lawyer in DeKalb County. Call to ask about referral fees and consultation terms before you go.

Atlanta-Based — Criminal Justice

These programs are based in Atlanta but serve DeKalb County residents.

Georgia Justice Project

438 Edgewood Ave SE, Atlanta, GA 30312 — (404) 827-0027; apply at gjp.org/get-help. Free criminal defense with social-service support for some people charged with a misdemeanor or felony in Fulton or DeKalb County — you apply, and they cannot take everyone. Also record restriction (expungement), pardons, early termination of felony probation, voting-rights questions, and housing denials based on a record. Free online “First Fridays” info sessions, first Friday of each month, 10–11:30 a.m. (register first).

Georgia Innocence Project

(404) 373-4433 — gip@georgiainnocence.org; apply at georgiainnocenceproject.org/cases/apply-for-help/. Free, for people convicted in Georgia of serious crimes they did not commit, where innocence can be proven through DNA testing or other newly available evidence. Very strict case-acceptance criteria and very few cases taken. Requests must be made IN WRITING by the convicted person. Has helped free or exonerate 15 people as of January 2025.

Southern Center for Human Rights

60 Walton St NW, Atlanta, GA 30303 — (404) 688-1202. Free. Full legal representation ONLY for people facing the death penalty in Georgia and Alabama. Pro se legal help for people in Georgia and Alabama prisons and jails, and class-action challenges to unconstitutional conditions of confinement.

Atlanta’s John Marshall Law School — Veterans Legal Assistance Program

245 Peachtree Center Ave NE, Suite 1900, Atlanta, GA 30303 — (678) 916-2645; vetclinic@johnmarshall.edu. Free for veterans who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, statewide. Misdemeanor charges, warrants, fines, suspended licenses, and expungement / record sealing. Walk-in and phone consultations Tuesdays and Wednesdays 10 a.m.–2 p.m., and the second Friday of each month 1–3 p.m.

Atlanta-Based — Referrals, Seniors & Consumer Help

Atlanta Bar Association — Lawyer Referral and Information Service

(404) 521-0777 — atlantabar.org. Referrals are free. A consultation fee of $45 may apply for up to 30 minutes with the referred attorney. Staff will tell you whether your situation qualifies for a free or reduced-fee consultation. Modest Means program — reduced-fee help for people who earn too much for legal aid but cannot afford a regular lawyer: (404) 969-0162. Note: as of the latest check, Modest Means offers probate / estate planning attorneys only — not bankruptcy or family law.

State Bar of Georgia

104 Marietta St NW, Suite 100, Atlanta, GA 30303 — (404) 527-8700; toll-free 1-800-334-6865. The State Bar does NOT run its own lawyer referral service and does not refer individual lawyers. Call for the referral service in your area, or use the Bar's online Lawyer Referral Network. The Bar also publishes free consumer pamphlets, including "How to Choose a Lawyer."

Georgia Senior Legal Aid (for people 60 and older)

(404) 389-9992; toll-free 1-888-257-9519. Free, statewide, including DeKalb County. Advice, brief services, and referrals on income and health benefits, home preservation, probate, long-term-care rights, abuse or exploitation, and consumer issues. Attorneys give legal advice over the phone. Calling does not guarantee representation.

Georgia Attorney General — Consumer Protection Division

40 Capitol Square SW, Atlanta, GA 30334 — (404) 651-8600; toll-free in Georgia 1-800-869-1123; file a complaint at consumer.georgia.gov. Free to file. Complaints about unfair or deceptive business practices, scams, and price gouging. The division reviews complaints and can take enforcement action, but it is NOT your lawyer and cannot force a business to reimburse you.

Pro Bono Partnership of Atlanta

(404) 618-0900 — pbpatl.org. Free business legal help for 501(c)(3) NONPROFITS only — not individuals. Bylaws, employee handbooks, board policies, trademarks, contracts, governance. Does not help with criminal or litigation matters.

Georgia Appleseed Center for Law & Justice

1600 Parkwood Circle SE, Suite 200, Atlanta, GA 30339 — (678) 426-4640. Free. Does NOT represent individuals. Works on school discipline, juvenile justice, healthy housing, and heirs' property. Its FAIR Project helps parents of children facing long-term suspension or expulsion with free coaching, training, and sometimes a lawyer. Publishes free toolkits.

Law-School Clinics (Free)

Law students work under faculty supervision. Intake varies by clinic — call the law school main number and ask for the clinic.

Emory University School of Law Clinics

1301 Clifton Rd NE, Atlanta, GA 30322 — (404) 727-6816. Barton Juvenile Defender Clinic (children in delinquency, education, and status-offense cases); Barton Appeal for Youth Clinic; Turner Environmental Law Clinic; Emory Immigrant Legal Assistance (brief advice and referrals, second Wednesday evening each month — lawcommunityclinic@emory.edu); Volunteer Clinic for Veterans; Emory LGBTQ Legal Services; International Refugee Assistance Project.

Georgia State University College of Law Clinics

85 Park Place NE, Atlanta, GA 30303 — (404) 413-9000. HeLP Legal Services Clinic — free help for low-income families whose child is receiving or has received care from Children’s Healthcare of Atlanta (income at or below 200% of the federal poverty level; housing, education, family law, SSI and other benefits). Philip C. Cook Low-Income Taxpayer Clinic — free help with federal tax disputes with the IRS. Bankruptcy Assistance and Practice Program (with Atlanta Legal Aid). Heirs’ Property Law Clinic — free help for families to keep property and resolve title issues; begins accepting clients in 2027. Also: Investor Advocacy Clinic, Olmstead Disability Rights Clinic, Landlord-Tenant Mediation Clinic.

Immigration Legal Help

Catholic Charities Atlanta — Immigration Legal Services

2305 Parklake Dr NE, Suite 150, Building 9, Atlanta, GA 30345 — (678) 222-3920. Low-cost immigration help for metro Atlanta, including DeKalb. Family petitions, asylum, DACA, TPS, U visas, T visas, VAWA petitions, naturalization, adjustment of status, employment authorization, removal hearings, Special Immigrant Juvenile Status. Pro bono representation for victims of violence, domestic abuse, and human trafficking. By appointment only — call for intake and current fees.

Georgia Asylum & Immigration Network (GAIN)

(678) 335-6040 — info@georgiaasylum.org; georgiaasylum.org. Free immigration legal services — asylum, T visas, U visas, VAWA petitions, adjustment of status, TPS, employment authorization, removal hearings. Email or leave a voicemail to ask about becoming a client. No walk-in office. Do not send private documents by email.

Latin American Association — Immigration Legal Services

2750 Buford Hwy NE, Atlanta, GA 30324 — main (404) 638-1800; immigration legal services (404) 471-1889. Immigration legal services for metro Atlanta, including DeKalb. Call to ask about case types and fees.

Tahirih Justice Center — Atlanta

1-866-575-0071. Free, private legal help for immigrants who faced violence — domestic violence, sexual assault, forced marriage, or human trafficking. Call Monday–Friday 9 a.m.–5 p.m. No walk-ins.

Online & Self-Help

Georgia Free Legal Answers

georgia.freelegalanswers.org. Free. Post a civil legal question online and a volunteer lawyer answers it. Run by the State Bar of Georgia with Atlanta Legal Aid and Georgia Legal Services Program. It does NOT provide representation in court.

GeorgiaLegalAid.org

georgialegalaid.org. Free legal-education website maintained by Atlanta Legal Aid Society and Georgia Legal Services Program. Plain-language information and court forms on family law, housing, money and debt, benefits, domestic violence, and more, plus a directory of free legal service providers.

Do NOT Waste a Call

These two well-known programs do NOT serve DeKalb County.

Georgia Legal Services Program (GLSP)

104 Marietta St NW, Suite 250, Atlanta — intake 1-833-457-7529; glsp.org. Free civil legal help, generally for income at or below 200% of the federal poverty level or age 60+. BUT it serves only the 154 Georgia counties OUTSIDE metro Atlanta. It does NOT represent people who live in Clayton, Cobb, DeKalb, Fulton, or Gwinnett counties. DeKalb residents should call Atlanta Legal Aid instead.

Atlanta Volunteer Lawyers Foundation (AVLF)

235 Peachtree St, Suite 1750, Atlanta — (404) 521-0790; avlf.org. Free help with evictions, landlord problems, protective orders, and some family law. BUT its programs serve Fulton County and Clayton County only. If your rental or case is in DeKalb County, AVLF cannot represent you — it will refer you to the organizations that serve DeKalb.

One more trap: a “DeKalb County Self-Help Legal Center” listing found online is for DeKalb County, ILLINOIS — not DeKalb County, Georgia. Do not call it.

A Final Word

You do not have to face a court date, an eviction notice, or a charge alone — and you do not have to be rich to get a lawyer. The programs in this booklet exist because the law is supposed to work for everybody, not just the people who can pay for it.

Start with the first call. If one program cannot take your case, ask who can — and try the next one on the list. Share this booklet with someone who needs it. One phone call can change the outcome of a case.

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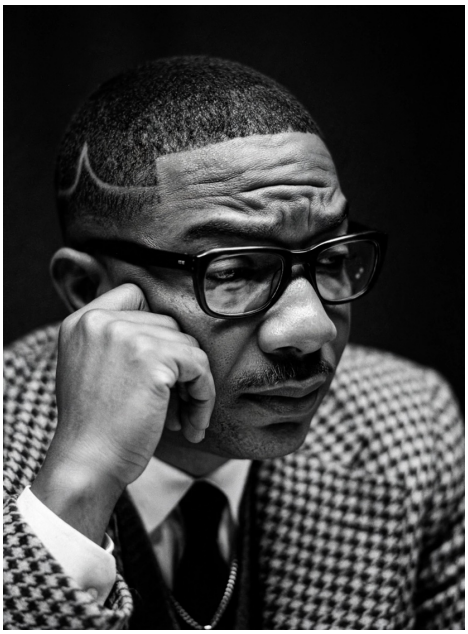
Founder, Noah Sanders

This booklet is general information, not legal advice. The DeKalb Chronicle does not provide legal advice or representation. Hours, fees, and intake rules change — always call before you go. Compiled November 24, 2026, by The DeKalb Chronicle. If any listing here is out of date, tell us so we can fix it for the next person that picks this up.

About the Author



Noah Sanders

Founder, The DeKalb Chronicle

Noah Sanders founded The DeKalb Chronicle to cover DeKalb County the way it deserves to be covered — local news, local businesses, jobs, housing, and resources for the people who live here, across all 13 cities in the county. He also runs Noah Sanders Advocacy and The Black Glow Experience, and he puts this guide together so nobody in DeKalb has to face the legal system alone.

Have a program to add, a correction, or a story to tell? Reach out.

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