

# LEGAL RESEARCH

Often legal problems can be difficult to deal with. What seems like a simple question may require a good deal of thought and information to answer. Legal research can help you gain the knowledge you need to answer a legal question or deal with a legal issue. To begin researching a legal issue, you must decide whether it is a **criminal matter** (resulting in incarceration or fines) or a **civil matter** (resulting in payment to someone).

Who has to pay?

Can you go to jail for this?

What is the Statute of Limitations?



Is this legal?

Can they fire me?

Can I sue them?

## Primary Sources – Laws and Cases

A **primary source** document provides a first hand account of an event or situation. Some examples of primary source documents are the Federal Laws, State Laws and Case Books.

Does your issue involve **Federal laws** or **State laws**?

Federal laws often deal with issues handled by government agencies such as Social Security, Internal Revenue Service, and the United States Patent Office. State laws deal with other issues effecting everyday life, such as family law, evictions, traffic, most lawsuits, and most criminal convictions. In addition, cities and counties have codes that may apply to these topics.

The Clark County Law Library maintains a variety of primary sources in print and provides legal research links online. Links to state, county, city and other legal resources

are available on our Nevada Legal Research page at [www.accessclarkcounty.com/law\\_library](http://www.accessclarkcounty.com/law_library). Links to Federal codes, agencies, and laws for other states can be found on our General Legal Research page.

Once you have researched the laws and determined whether or not they are favorable, you can research **cases** to find out how the laws have been applied. This information may be used to strengthen arguments or demonstrate points.

Information regarding specific cases may, or may not, be available over the Internet. To look for cases that relate to legal issues, digests (books) or databases may be used. The Clark County Law Library has several digests and provides free access to Westlaw and Fastcase databases.

## Secondary Sources – Encyclopedias, Treatises, Journals and Law Reviews

A **secondary source** document is created after the initial event has occurred. This type of document is a secondhand account of the event or situation. Secondary sources typically contain analysis or interpretation of the event or situation. Some examples of secondary sources are encyclopedias, treatises, legal journals and law reviews.

After researching the laws and locating the cases related to them, you may want to locate books that provide additional information concerning your topic.

A **legal encyclopedia** may be used to look up a topic, such as Forgery, and provides information about the topic as well as references to other resources containing additional information. The Clark County Law library has legal encyclopedias and our staff can assist you in locating information relating to legal issues.

**Treatises** are books about specific legal topics. These books can range from complex discussions geared toward attorneys to self-help books written for people with no legal training. Our catalog can be searched from our webpage at [www.accessclarkcounty.com/law\\_library](http://www.accessclarkcounty.com/law_library).

Universities, Law Schools, and other institutions encourage students, faculty, and members to publish articles concerning legal issues. These **Law Reviews** and **Legal Journals** can provide valuable insights into many legal topics. You may find references to law reviews and journals while researching other sources or you may look for a specific topic in the Current Law Index.

The following grid can help to determine where to look for information to research legal issues.

Sources of Law			
	Local	State	Federal
<b>Statutes/Laws</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• City Codes</li> <li>• County Codes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nevada Revised Statutes (NRS)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• USCA</li> <li>• USCS</li> <li>• U.S. Code</li> </ul>
<b>Regulations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Departmental Regulations (Clark County Social Services, Metro, etc.)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nevada Administrative Code (NAC)</li> <li>• Nevada Prison Manual</li> <li>• Gaming Regulations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Code of Federal Regulations (CFR)</li> </ul>
<b>Cases</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not reported at the local level</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nevada Reports</li> <li>• Pacific Reporter</li> <li>• Other Regional Reporters</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Federal Supplement</li> <li>• Federal Reporter</li> <li>• Supreme Court Reporter</li> </ul>