



# Clark County Law Library

## Legal Research



Legal research can help you find information needed to answer a legal question or deal with a legal issue. To research a legal matter, it is helpful to determine whether it is a **criminal matter** (resulting in incarceration or fines) or a **civil matter** (resulting in payment to someone).

### Primary Sources – Laws and Cases

A **primary source of law** provides a direct statement of the law or reference to a legal situation by a government entity. Some examples of primary sources of law are Federal Laws, State Laws and Case Books.

**Federal 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 of law 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.ClarkCountyNV.Gov/LawLibrary](http://www.ClarkCountyNV.Gov/LawLibrary). 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, you can research cases to demonstrate how laws have been applied. This information may be used to strengthen arguments or demonstrate legal points.

Information about 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 maintains several print digests and provides free access to WestlawNext<sup>®</sup> and LexisAdvance<sup>®</sup> databases.

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

A **secondary source** typically contains analysis or interpretation of a case, law, or legal topic. Some examples of secondary sources are encyclopedias, treatises, legal journals and law reviews.

After researching laws and locating related cases, you can research books that provide additional information concerning your topic.

**Legal encyclopedias** can be used to look up a topic, such as Forgery, to provide information about the topic and references to other resources containing additional information.

**Treatises** are books about specific legal topics. These books 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.ClarkCountyNV.Gov/LawLibrary](http://www.ClarkCountyNV.Gov/LawLibrary).

**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 search the Heinonline<sup>®</sup> database.