

LEGAL SERVICES

Many laws affect persons with HIV and other disabilities.

As a person living with HIV, you should know your legal rights and responsibilities. Knowing these laws will help protect you in situations where your rights may be challenged.

The federal Americans with Disabilities Act and California's Fair Employment and Housing Act (FEHA) are two important laws protecting persons with disabilities in California. Providers can help you understand your protections under these laws, as well as others.

What Kinds of Services Are Available?

Many providers in Los Angeles County serve people with HIV, and offer legal resources and referrals. Providers that offer legal aid for the general population are also important resources for people with HIV and other disabilities.

Areas where people with HIV or other disabilities may encounter legal issues include:

- > **Confidentiality.** Providers can help you understand when you have to disclose your HIV status and when you do not.
- > **California's Willful Exposure Law.** "Willfully exposing" another person to HIV through unprotected sex in California is a felony with a sentence of up to 8 years in prison. If you are sexually active, you must be aware of your responsibilities and rights.
- > **Access to treatment.** Laws in California ensure fair and equal access to HIV treatment. Providers can help you get access to treatment.
- > **HIV-related discrimination.** In many situations, including employment and housing, discrimination against persons with HIV is illegal. If you believe that you are a victim of discrimination, providers can assess your situation.
- > **Immigration and citizenship.**
- > **Permanency planning services.** Providers can help you with custody issues for legal dependents, including guardianship, joint custody or adoption.
- > **Wills.** You should consider having a will to protect your estate in the event of your death. Providers can help you draft a will.
- > **Powers of attorney.** As a person with HIV, you should be prepared to transfer power of attorney to another person in the event that you can no longer make decisions for yourself. Providers can help you with this process.
- > **Grievances.** If you receive sub-standard care from a hospital, insurance provider or community organization, you can pursue an action against the institution. Providers can help you pursue a grievance.

Visit www.hivla.org for the most up-to-date Legal Services listing.

If legal services are not delivered appropriately, please contact OAPP's warmline @ (800) 260-8787.