

## **About the LegalLine Program**

### **What is LegalLine?**

LegalLine is a public service program of the Houston Bar Association (HBA) that has been serving the community since 1985. LegalLine is held on the first and third Wednesday of each month, from 5 p.m. until 9 p.m. Approximately 24 attorneys volunteer their time during each LegalLine program, answering calls in two-hour shifts. The public can call (713) 759-1133 during LegalLine hours and speak to an attorney over the phone, who will answer legal questions, give brief legal advice, and give them additional resources to try to solve their problem.

In times of disaster or emergency, the HBA may sponsor additional or extended LegalLine programs to serve the public, such as following Hurricane Rita and Hurricane Ike.

### **What types of calls does the program get from the public?**

Callers may ask any type of legal question. Some of the most commonly-asked questions are in the areas of family law, wills and probate, landlord/tenant, consumer law, property law, and employment, but calls also include business questions and criminal law. The HBA Family Law Section provides a family law specialist for each LegalLine program, as 17%-20% of calls are about family law matters.

### **What type of advice can the volunteers give callers?**

Because the volunteers are trying to help as many people as possible, they try to provide basic information and advice, as well as additional resources. They are not able to give detailed legal advice over the phone. Many times, the attorney is able to provide all the information the caller needs. Other times, they can direct the caller to other resources for help or assist them in determining their next step. LegalLine volunteers have access to an extensive list of other local resources.

### **What types of information are volunteers prohibited from giving callers?**

The volunteer attorneys are not allowed to give their names to callers. They are not allowed to refer callers to individual attorneys or firms. If the attorney feels that the caller should speak further with an attorney or hire an attorney, they will give the caller the number for the Houston Lawyer Referral Service, a nonprofit organization that makes referrals at no cost to those using the service. If the caller indicates they cannot afford an attorney, the volunteer will give them the number for the HBA's Houston Volunteer Lawyers, Lone Star Legal Aid or other legal service provider.

### **What is Consejos Legales?**

Consejos Legales is a joint public service program of the Mexican American Bar Association of Houston and the Hispanic Bar Association of Houston that has been serving the Spanish-speaking public since 1986. Consejos Legales is held on the first Thursday of each month, from 6 p.m. until 8 p.m. The public can call (713) 759-1133 (the program uses the facilities of the Houston Bar Association) and speak over the phone

to attorneys who are fluent in Spanish. The attorneys will answer legal questions, give brief legal advice, and give them additional resources to try to solve their problems.

### **LegalLine Statistics**

Number of calls received during LegalLine between July 2016 and June 2017 – 7,415

Average number of calls received during any one LegalLine session – 309

Number of attorneys who volunteered for LegalLine between July 2016 and June 2017 – 964