

Keep it Legal, Volume 6
Legal Assistance Program: Air Force Attorneys Can Help!

Since 1943, base legal offices have been providing legal assistance in connection with personal civil legal matters to support and sustain command effectiveness and readiness. Some even perceive these services as one of the benefits of military service. This article provides a few basic points on the oftentimes unfamiliar, yet valuable Legal Assistance Program.

Eligibility: The following categories of personnel, amongst others, are eligible for legal assistance:

- Air Force personnel who need mobilization- or deployment-related legal assistance, regardless of status;
- Members of the armed forces who are on active duty, including Reservists and National Guard members while on Title 10 orders and for a period after active duty orders have ended;
- Air Reserve Component members performing Active Guard/Reserve (AGR) tours;
- Former members entitled to retired pay; and
- Dependents of members and former members who are entitled to an identification card.

Scope: Not surprisingly, the Air Force is the main client of Air Force attorneys. This, combined with the purpose of the Program -- to support readiness, means that Air Force attorneys providing legal assistance *cannot* enter into an attorney-client relationship in the following areas, amongst others:

- Official matters in which the Air Force has an interest;
- Criminal issues;
- Law of Armed Conflict issues;
- Issues involving personal commercial enterprises;
- Legal issues or concerns raised on behalf of third parties;
- Issues related to the sale of real estate;
- Preparation of separation agreements or divorce decrees;
- Preparation of pleadings or motions; and
- Representation in court or administrative proceedings.

Services: Subject to the availability of legal staff resources and expertise, the following is a non-exhaustive list of subjects on which eligible clients may receive legal assistance:

- Wills;
- Powers of attorney -- both special and general;
- Advance medical directives, including living wills and medical powers of attorney;
- Notary services;
- Documents related to making Air-Force-mandated “family care plans” and arrangements;

- Assistance related to providing Air-Force-mandated “adequate” assistance to family members, including responding to paternity allegations;
- Assistance to military members’ next of kin related to benefits and privileges after a casualty;
- Veterans’ reemployments rights under the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA);
- Managing civil obligations under the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act (SCRA);
- Certain consumer issues, such as bankruptcy, consumer fraud, identify theft, retail purchases, and vehicle leases;
- Certain landlord-tenant issues, including reviewing lease agreements prior to signing and resolving disputes;
- Certain federal, state, and local tax problems, including reviewing IRS letters and advising on responding to audits; and
- General information regarding adoption, marriage, dissolution of marriage or divorce, child support, child custody, property distribution, and related family law matters (but not separation agreements and divorce decrees themselves).

Preventive Law Program: Finally, you might have noticed the recent flurry of articles regarding legal matters. These articles are meant to educate the base population about legal issues most relevant to servicemembers.

To schedule a legal assistance appointment at Grissom Air Reserve Base, please call (765) 688-2190. Legal assistance by a Judge Advocate is available, by appointment only, every Tuesday from 0900-1100 and Thursday from 1300-1500; notary services and powers of attorney are available on a walk-in basis. Legal assistance is also available on a walk-in basis during UTA weekends from 1330-1530 on Saturdays and 0900-1100 on Sundays. Please note that legal assistance cannot be given over the phone (because we cannot confirm your eligibility).

The information provided in this article is for educational and general information purposes only. It is not legal advice. We recommend speaking with a licensed attorney before relying on the information contained within to make a decision or take any action.