

# **Report: Washington State Civil Legal Needs Study (Washington State Supreme Court 2015)**

A Washington Supreme Court commissioned statewide survey of more than 1,600 low-income Washingtonians discovered that seven of ten low-income individuals and families in Washington State face at least one significant civil legal problem each year, and the average number of problems per low-income household has tripled over the last decade. More than three-quarters of those with civil legal problems struggle without a lawyer or any type of legal help.

The survey, conducted by Washington State University, indicates that nearly a half million Washington residents who live in poverty suffer because they are unable to find help with their civil legal problems such as access to healthcare, consumer finance and debt collection, and employment related issues. Low-income persons of color, victims of domestic violence or sexual assault, persons with disabilities and youth experience substantially higher rates of legal problems than the general low income population.

The 2015 Washington State Civil Legal Needs Study Update follows a similar study published by a Washington State Supreme Court task force in 2003. In response to the 2003 study, the Washington State Legislature increased capacity to address the civil legal problems of low-income Washingtonians by devoting more resources and establishing an agency to administer and oversee the state investment in civil legal aid.

Find the full 32-page 2015 Washington State Civil Legal Needs Study Update on the Office of Civil Legal Aid website: <http://ocla.wa.gov/final-report-2015-civil-legal-needs-study-update/>

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