



## FACT SHEET

# lawforwa.org: The public's first stop for information on the law and civics

### *The problem:*

Every day, thousands of Washingtonians need information about the law. When they turn to popular web search engines, they receive hundreds or thousands of results – which may not be relevant to Washington state law or even to the user's question. Who has time to sift through this haystack of information to find the single needle they need?

### *The solution:*

The public needs one website it can go to with questions about the law and civics – a website that is reliable, comprehensive and easy to use. **lawforwa.org** fills that need in Washington state by providing users with an easily searchable directory of the best websites on the topics that most affect our lives.

### *What does lawforwa.org cover?*

The **lawforwa.org** directory includes almost 2,000 links to carefully chosen websites that provide reliable and up-to-date information on:

- how our legal system and government function;
- how laws are made and changed, and what role the public can play in this process;
- the role of lawyers, and how to find one;
- legal rights and responsibilities;
- legal information in a wide variety of areas, including family, housing and criminal;
- how to prevent legal problems;
- alternative methods for resolving disputes;
- the role of elected and appointed officials, and how to contact them; and
- how the law and government are portrayed in popular culture.

**In addition, lawforwa.org offers special collections of links for teachers and journalists because of the important role they play in educating the public.**

## Who's behind lawforwa.org?

The website is a partnership of several organizations.

**lawforwa.org is administered** by the Council on Public Legal Education and the Washington State Bar Foundation.

- ◆ The *Council on Public Legal Education*, which was created in 2000, promotes public understanding of the law and civic rights and responsibilities. It pursues this mission by conducting, coordinating, encouraging and publicizing public legal education efforts in Washington State.
- ◆ The *Washington State Bar Foundation* is a charitable organization dedicated to improving access to justice and promoting the study of law and research in the law.
- ◆ The Council on Public Legal Education is an advisory committee of the *Washington State Bar Association*, a nonprofit association that operates as an instrumentality of the Washington State Supreme Court. Authorized to license the state's 29,200 lawyers, the Washington State Bar Association both regulates lawyers under the authority of the Court and serves its members as a professional association — all without public funding. As a regulatory agency, it administers the bar exam, provides record-keeping and licensing functions, and administers the lawyer discipline program. As a professional association, the WSBA provides continuing legal education for attorneys, in addition to numerous other educational and member-service activities.

**lawforwa.org's content** was developed and continues to be expanded with assistance from students at the *Seattle University School of Law* and the *University of Washington's Information School, School of Law and College of Arts and Sciences*.

*The Catalyst Group in the University of Washington's Office and Educational Partnerships and Learning Technologies (EPLT)* created **lawforwa.org's technology** and continues to maintain and improve its functionality. EPLT expands the ways in which the university works with diverse communities and supports the use of technology in teaching and learning.

**lawforwa.org's creation** was made possible with a start-up grant from the *Paul G. Allen Charitable Foundation*. Currently, the website's maintenance is underwritten by a grant from the *Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation*.

# LAWFORWA.ORG'S FEATURES

search engine

reference tools

The screenshot shows the LawforWA.org homepage. At the top left is the logo and tagline "Your gateway to Washington State LAW and GOVERNMENT". A search bar is located below the logo with the text "Search: Type a question, phrase, or keywords and click go" and a "go" button. To the right of the search bar are navigation links: "HELP", "ABOUT US", "GLOSSARY", and "SITE MAP". Below the search bar is a "quick links" dropdown menu. On the left side, there is a vertical red menu with several categories. The main content area features a "Home" section with a mission statement, a "In the news ..." section with two articles, and a "You, the Jury" section with an illustration of a jury box and a quote about the American system of trial by jury.

quick links

menus

This screenshot shows the "Prevent and Solve Legal Problems" page. The left sidebar is identical to the homepage. The main content area has a breadcrumb trail "Home > Prevent and Solve Legal Problems" and a section header "Prevent and Solve Legal Problems". Below this is an introductory paragraph and a "Voting Rights for Ex-Felons" article. A "Subtopics" section lists various legal areas with their respective article counts. On the right, there is a photo of a man and a woman at a table, with a callout pointing to it. Below the photo is a section titled "The Schiavo Case and Living Wills" with a paragraph of text and a bulleted list of links.

current events

focus on select topics

# LAWFORWA.ORG'S FEATURES

search engine

Information is easy to find on **lawforwa.org**. Users can enter words or phrases into the Search box and receive useful results:

## Search Results

You searched for: adoption

**Results**

[show all](#) | pages: [1](#) [2](#) [3](#) [4](#) [5](#) [6](#) [7](#)

Showing items **1 - 5** of 31 < Previous page [Next page](#) >

Resource Description:	Questions answered by the resource:
<p><b>Access to Birth Records</b>  <a href="http://naic.acf.hhs.gov/pubs/l_acestb2.cfm">http://naic.acf.hhs.gov/pubs/l_acestb2.cfm</a>  <b>Source:</b> National Adoption Information Clearinghouse</p> <p>Information on State laws regarding access to adoption records, which can be used as a starting point for further research.  <a href="#">full description</a></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is Washington's law regarding access to adoption records?</li> <li>• What is non-identifying information in adoption records?</li> <li>• What is identifying information in adoption records?</li> <li>• What is a confidential intermediary?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Adoption - Documents for your Adoption Attorney</b>  <a href="http://public.findlaw.com/adoption/life_events/for">http://public.findlaw.com/adoption/life_events/for</a>  <b>Source:</b> Findlaw</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What information will my adoption attorney need from me?</li> </ul>

title  
website address  
website owner

questions answered by the website

brief description of the website

menus

Or users can find information through browsing the topical menus:

## Prevent and Solve Legal Problems

### Family

#### Subtopics

- [General Information](#) (2)
- [Adoption](#) (22)
- [Child Abuse](#) (5)
- [Child Custody](#) (17)
- [Child Support/Alimony](#) (23)
- [Domestic Violence - General Information](#) (16)
- [Domestic Violence - Washington State Law](#) (4)
- [Divorce](#) (21)
- [Gay/Lesbian Families](#) (5)
- [Legal Assistance](#) (2)
- [Marriage](#) (10)
- [Name Change](#) (17)
- [Parentage](#) (8)
- [Vital Records](#) (9)

### Browse all the Lawforwa Resources on Child Abuse

Showing items 1 - 5 of 5

Resource Description:	Questions answered by the resource:
<p><b>Understanding Child Neglect</b>  <a href="http://www.dshs.wa.gov/geninfo/undnegl.html">http://www.dshs.wa.gov/geninfo/undnegl.html</a>  <b>Source:</b> Washington State Department of Social and Health Services</p> <p>General information about child neglect in Washington and how you can prevent it.  <a href="#">full description</a></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is child neglect?</li> <li>• Who can I contact if a child is being neglected?</li> <li>• Where can I find information on child death rates in Washington State?</li> <li>• Where can I find an online child safety guide?</li> <li>• What are signs of child abuse and neglect?</li> <li>• Where can I find child abuse prevention resources?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Child Abuse Prevention Resources</b>  <a href="http://www.dshs.wa.gov/geninfo/capmonth.html">http://www.dshs.wa.gov/geninfo/capmonth.html</a>  <b>Source:</b> Washington State Department of Social and Health Services</p> <p>General information about child abuse prevention services in Washington State. Includes DSHS's endharm hotline telephone number.  <a href="#">full description</a></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Where can I get information about child abuse prevention?</li> <li>• Who should I contact to report child abuse?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Reporting Abuse of Children or Vulnerable Adults</b>  <a href="http://www.dshs.wa.gov/geninfo/endharm.html">http://www.dshs.wa.gov/geninfo/endharm.html</a>  <b>Source:</b> Washington State Department of Social and Health Services</p> <p>General information about reporting the abuse of children and vulnerable adults. Contains telephone numbers for DSHS's Endharm hotline.  <a href="#">full description</a></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What should I do if I know of a child or vulnerable adult that is being abused?</li> <li>• Who should I contact to report abuse?</li> </ul>

# LAWFORWA.ORG'S FEATURES

reference tools

Reference tools help users understand how the website works, as well as provide definitions of legal terms:

The screenshot shows the lawforWA.org homepage. A callout box highlights the 'Glossary' feature. The callout box contains the following text:

**Glossary**

Our glossary defines many legal terms and phrases that are relevant to everyday life -- click on any letter to see its entries and find what you're looking for. If a letter -- K, X, Y, Z -- is not there, it means we have no entries for it at this time. Please note that some of our other sections, such as [Practical Law](#), may also link directly to a particular term or phrase in this glossary.

A B C D E F G H I J L M N O P Q R S T U V W

**Sample of terms you'll find inside:**

[actus reus](#) [binding instruction](#) [codicil](#) [defamation](#) [ex post facto](#)

[fiduciary](#) [guardian](#) [habeas corpus](#) [immunity](#) [jury](#)

[leading question](#) [mala in se](#) [nominal party](#) [opinion](#) [perjury](#)

[quash](#) [redirect examination](#) [settlor](#) [transitory](#) [undue influence](#)

[voir dire](#) [weight of evidence](#)

quick links

The "quick links" provide easy access to law and government gateway websites:

The screenshot shows the search results for 'quick links' on lawforWA.org. A callout box highlights the dropdown menu in the search bar, which lists the following links:

- quick links
- Washington State Law
- Washington State Government
- Washington State Legislature
- Washington State Court Directory
- Washington County Government & Law
- Washington City & Town Government & Law
- Washington Tribal Government & Law
- Federal Government & Law

The main content area shows search results for 'Child Abuse' with a resource description and a list of questions answered by the resource.

**Resource Description:**

**Understanding Child Neglect**  
<http://www.dshs.wa.gov/geninfo/undnegl.html>  
**Source:** Washington State Department of Social and Health Services

General information about child neglect in Washington and how you can prevent it.  
[full description](#)

**Washington Laws on Abuse of Children -- RCW 26.44**  
<http://www.leg.wa.gov/RCW/index.cfm?fuseaction=cha>

**Questions answered by the resource:**

- What is child neglect?
- Who can I contact if a child is being neglected?
- Where can I find information on child death rates in Washington State?
- Where can I find an online child safety guide?
- What are signs of child abuse and neglect?
- Where can I find child abuse prevention resources?
- Where do I find Washington laws on child abuse?
- What are the rights of an alleged abuser?
- What are the procedures for protective custody?

# LAWFORWA.ORG'S FEATURES

current events

Both the home page and section pages provide up-to-date news briefs on current events in law and civics:



focus on select topics

"Spotlights" on the home page and section pages, which will be replaced regularly, give users a few useful resources on select law and civics topics:

