



The Differences between Federal, State, and Local Laws

There are different types of laws. Federal laws apply to everyone in the United States. State and local laws apply to people who live or work in a particular state, commonwealth, territory, county, city, municipality, town, township or village.

What are Federal laws?

Federal laws are rules that apply throughout the United States. These laws apply in every state, such as:

- Immigration law
- Bankruptcy law
- Social Security and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) laws
- Federal anti-discrimination and civil rights laws that protect against racial, age, gender and disability discrimination
- Patent and copyright laws
- Federal criminal laws such as laws against tax fraud and the counterfeiting of money

What are state laws?

There are 50 states and several commonwealths and territories within the United States. Each has its own system of laws and courts that handle:

- Criminal matters
- Divorce and family matters
- Welfare, public assistance or Medicaid matters
- Wills, inheritances and estates

About this Guide

This guide was created by the Legal Aid Society of Northeastern New York in partnership with the New York LawHelp Consortium and Pro Bono Net, with support from the Legal Services Corporation Technology Initiative Grant program.

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- Real estate and other property
- Business contracts
- Personal injuries such as from a car accident or medical malpractice
- Workers compensation for injuries at work

What are local laws?

There are different counties, cities, municipalities, towns, townships and villages in each state, commonwealth or territory. Some of them have their own system of laws and courts that handle:

- Rent laws
- Zoning
- Local safety

For More Information

Looking for more information on this topic? Visit LawHelp.org and select your state to find other self-help resources and information about free and low-cost legal aid providers in your area.

Disclaimer

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