

# Legal Sources: Finding the Law

There are two sections in this guide: 1) Primary Sources and 2) Secondary Sources. Also, keep in mind the companion guide, *Preparing a Court Case*, to learn how to find a lawyer or represent yourself in case you need to litigate. Also, keep in mind the guide *Consumer Complaints*.

## 1. Primary Sources

Determining the actual letter of the law can be a complicated business. First, in our federal system, there are both federal and state (including local) law sources. Second, we often have to look at law as expressed not only in statutes, but also in administrative regulations, court cases, and sometimes, even constitutions.

[Illinois Compiled Statutes](http://www.ilga.gov/legislation/ilcs/ilcs.asp) (R 348.773 ILL, [www.ilga.gov/legislation/ilcs/ilcs.asp](http://www.ilga.gov/legislation/ilcs/ilcs.asp))

This is the collection of state laws passed by the Illinois legislature organized by subject. Though the online version is updated “on an ongoing basis”, you may want to check the most recent collection of [Public Acts](http://ilga.gov/legislation/publicacts/default.asp) ([ilga.gov/legislation/publicacts/default.asp](http://ilga.gov/legislation/publicacts/default.asp)), which contains new laws that may not yet have been incorporated into *Illinois Compiled Statutes*, especially the print version.

[Illinois Administrative Code](http://www.ilga.gov/commission/jcar/admincode/titles.html) ([www.ilga.gov/commission/jcar/admincode/titles.html](http://www.ilga.gov/commission/jcar/admincode/titles.html))

Here can be found the regulations issued by state agencies in pursuance of the above statutes passed by the General Assembly.

[Municipal Code of Burbank](http://library.municode.com/index.aspx?clientID=10988&stateID=13&statename=Illinois)

([library.municode.com/index.aspx?clientID=10988&stateID=13&statename=Illinois](http://library.municode.com/index.aspx?clientID=10988&stateID=13&statename=Illinois))

This is the municipal code of Burbank. Use this site to access the local laws of the city.

*International residential Code 2015* (Pending)

Along with the following work, this book constitutes part of the Burbank Building Code. References to it are contained in the [Municipal Code of Burbank](http://library.municode.com/index.aspx?clientID=10988&stateID=13&statename=Illinois), above.

([municode.com/library/il/burbank/codes/code\\_of\\_ordinances](http://municode.com/library/il/burbank/codes/code_of_ordinances))

*International Building Code 2015* (R 343.07869 INT 2015)

See entry immediately above and [Municipal Code of Burbank](http://library.municode.com/index.aspx?clientID=10988&stateID=13&statename=Illinois), also above.

[United States Code](http://uscode.house.gov) ([uscode.house.gov](http://uscode.house.gov))

This is the collection of federal laws organized by subject. Online versions are updated within days, but, for the sake of completeness, you may want to consult [Public and Private Laws](http://www.govinfo.gov/app/collection/PLAW)

([www.govinfo.gov/app/collection/PLAW](http://www.govinfo.gov/app/collection/PLAW)) to consult very newly enacted statutes.

[Code of Federal Regulations](http://www.govinfo.gov/app/collection/cfr/2018/) (CFR) ([www.govinfo.gov/app/collection/cfr/2018/](http://www.govinfo.gov/app/collection/cfr/2018/))

These regulations augment the United States Code in the same way that the *Illinois Administrative Code* does the *Compiled Statutes*.

*Westlaw* (in house at Cook County Law Library - Bridgeview Branch)

(Bridgeview Courthouse, 10220 South 76th Avenue, Bridgeview, IL 60455, 708-974-6201)

This is not a source per se, but rather an exhaustive collection of primary legal sources coupled with sophisticated, reliable, and expert editorial enhancements that enable those who know how to take advantage of its features to do professional-level legal research in a relatively short period of time. It's hard to find outside of a law office, but you can access it here.

## 2. Secondary Sources

Often, for the layman, the most valuable sources are *secondary sources*, those written by experts who digest all of the primary sources of the law and lay it out for us in an understandable way.

### Books/EBooks

#### Print Books in The Library Collection

The Dewey classification for legal materials is the 340s. Well represented is the trusted publisher of self-help legal books, *Nolo*.

#### EBooks

The library subscribes to two eBook platforms that contain legal (among other) titles. Titles in our subscription appear in searches of our Web catalog, but are best downloaded through the appropriate app or a Web browser.

- [\*eRead Illinois\*](#)  
This platform uses the *Axis 360* app to search for and read titles. You can also access titles through a Web browser.
- [\*MyMediaMall\*](#)  
Choose the *Libby* app for *Apple*, *Android*, and *Windows* devices. Use the *Overdrive* app for *Kindles*. Likewise, you can access titles through a Web browser.

#### [Illinois Legal Aid Online](http://www.illinoislegalaid.org) (www.illinoislegalaid.org)

Formed in 2001 by several non-profit entities, Illinois Legal Aid Online has tasked itself with the mission to provide people with free legal information and connect them to other resources, like pro bono representation. A notable feature includes the ability to chat with staff.

#### [Nolo.com](http://www.nolo.com) (www.nolo.com)

*Nolo's* Web site (see first entry, this page) has a lot of free legal information, in addition to premium content, including forms.

#### [Findlaw](http://www.findlaw.com) (www.findlaw.com)

Another venerable and reliable site with a lot of free information, along with premium content.

#### [Legal Information Institute](http://www.law.cornell.edu) (www.law.cornell.edu)

A non-profit offering by Cornell University, this site, in addition to offering secondary sources, serves as a good directory of primary law sources (statutes, regulations, and cases) from across the country.

#### [Justia](http://www.justia.com/) (www.justia.com/)

Started by the same people as started *Findlaw*, this site makes its money by designing Web pages for law firms, but also offers free articles and links to primary sources and legal representation.