

# The Differences between Federal, State, and Local Laws

## Overview

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 or town.

### 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

Information about federal courts can be found at

<http://www.uscourts.gov/FederalCourts/UnderstandingtheFederalCourts/FederalCourtsInAmericanGovernment.aspx>. You can start your search for information about federal law about some topics at [www.legalinfotn.org](http://www.legalinfotn.org) and [www.lawhelp.org](http://www.lawhelp.org). You can find information about immigration laws at <http://www.immigrationlawhelp.org/>.

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

You can start your search for information about Tennessee's laws at [www.legalinfotn.org](http://www.legalinfotn.org). Links to actual laws and regulations are found at <http://www.loc.gov/law/help/guide/states/us-tn.php>.

If you are looking for information about law in another state, try [www.lawhelp.org](http://www.lawhelp.org).

### **What are local laws?**

There are different counties, cities, municipalities and towns in Tennessee. Some of them have their own system of laws and courts that handle:

- Building codes
- Zoning
- Local safety

Many city codes and charters are on the website for the Tennessee Municipal Technical Advisory Service <http://www.mtas.tennessee.edu/public/web.nsf/Web/View+Codes>. Also, you may find local laws (or "codes") on your city's or county's website.

### **About this Guide**

This guide was adapted from the guide authored 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.

To read all of the guides in this series, visit [LawHelp.org](http://www.lawhelp.org).

### **Disclaimer**

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