



## HOW TO GET FREE LEGAL ASSISTANCE THROUGH THE MISSISSIPPI VOLUNTEER LAWYERS PROJECT

### About MVLP

The Mississippi Volunteer Lawyers Project ("MVLP") is a statewide, legal nonprofit organization dedicated to providing free legal services to low-income Mississippians. Since 1982, we have relied on a large network of volunteer attorneys to represent our clients in various legal matters. In addition to representing clients, we also provide seminars for attorneys, legal clinics and public awareness workshops across the state.

### Who Qualifies for MVLP's Services

Individuals qualify for our services if their combined household income is less than 200% of the federal poverty guidelines, if they meet our citizenship requirements, and if their legal matter is one that we normally handle. See the table below for the applicable income guidelines.

All prospective clients are screened for eligibility by MVLP. MVLP reserves the right to reject a prospective client's legal matter if the prospective client has an income which exceeds the program's guidelines and/or if the prospective client presents a legal matter which falls outside of the program's case priorities. Furthermore, even after an individual's matter is accepted by MVLP, the program may terminate its representation should the individual's financial situation or legal matter change such that he or she is no longer eligible for MVLP's services.

<b>Federal Poverty Guidelines</b>	
<i>Annual Household Income</i>	
<b>Household Size</b>	<b>200%</b>
<b>1</b>	\$23,540
<b>2</b>	\$31,860
<b>3</b>	\$40,180
<b>4</b>	\$48,500
<b>5</b>	\$56,820
<b>6</b>	\$65,140
<b>7</b>	\$73,460
<b>8</b>	\$81,780

*\*These income amounts are subject to change on March 1st of every year. Please contact MVLP for the newest income guidelines.*

### Legal Services Provided by MVLP

MVLP assists with the following legal matters: divorce, visitation, child support modification and contempt, guardianship, conservatorship, adoption, emancipation, birth certification correction, name change and wills. See the back page for short descriptions of each of these matters.

### Contact Us for Help

You can call our office from 8:30am – 5:00pm on Monday through Thursday and from 8:30am – 12:30pm on Fridays at 601-960-9577 to find out if you qualify for our services. To learn more about MVLP, please visit [www.mvlp.org](http://www.mvlp.org).

*The information in this handout is not intended to be legal advice. Mere possession of this handout does not mean the Mississippi Volunteer Lawyers Project has agreed to assist you with your legal matter.*



## SNAPSHOTS OF THE LEGAL MATTERS HANDLED BY THE MISSISSIPPI VOLUNTEER LAWYERS PROJECT

- ❖ **Irreconcilable Differences Divorce:** Both parties must want to be divorced and agree to all terms of the divorce. The waiting period before the divorce can be final is sixty (60) days.
- ❖ **Desertion Divorce:** To obtain this type of divorce, a spouse must have left the marital home, been gone for one continuous year and not tried to return to the marriage. A witness is required to support claims of desertion.
- ❖ **Sentenced to Penitentiary Divorce:** To obtain this type of divorce, a spouse must be or have been incarcerated in a state or federal prison.
- ❖ **Visitation:** A noncustodial parent may seek visitation with a minor child if he/she is paying child support or has a desire to do so.
- ❖ **Child Support Modification:** Child support awards may be modified, either upwards or downwards, if there has been a substantial and material change in circumstances after a child support order has been entered that affects one's ability to pay.
- ❖ **Child Support Contempt:** When a person obligated to pay child support is not doing so, he/she may be sued for child support contempt. He/she may then be ordered to pay back child support, along with the regular child support obligation.
- ❖ **Guardianship:** A guardian other than the parents may be appointed over a minor child where either of the child's parents is deceased and/or the minor's parents or a surviving parent is unable to fulfill the obligations of a parent.
- ❖ **Conservatorship:** Conservatorships are granted when a person, by reason of advanced age, physical incapacity or mental weakness, is no longer able to properly care for his or herself.
- ❖ **Adoption:** A person may be adopted regardless of age. If the natural parents of the person to be adopted are still living, then the parents must either consent to the adoption or their parental rights must be terminated.
- ❖ **Emancipation:** The age of majority in Mississippi is twenty-one (21). To become emancipated before twenty-one (21), a minor must file a petition in writing and join a "next friend" – typically a biological parent or next of kin.
- ❖ **Birth Certificate Correction/Name Change:** For the procurement of benefits, identification documents or other needs, Mississippi allows changes/alterations to birth certificates at the discretion of courts and the state's vital records agency.
- ❖ **Wills:** A will is a legal document that states one's desires concerning what will happen to assets after death. A will also contains other specific directions concerning who is to follow the instructions of the will and who will care for minor children that may be left behind.