

## Getting To Know Student Legal Services



Housed within the Carolina Union is the wonderful opportunity of having access to a legal team comprised of three licensed attorneys and one legal assistant. Student Legal Services, which has been on UNC's campus since 1976, is a nonprofit law firm available for use by all UNC full-time students: graduate, professional, and undergraduate. Student Legal Services (SLS) is funded through student fees - meaning that UNC full-time students have unlimited access with no additional cost, unless there are court or filing fees charged by the state of North Carolina.

SLS can advise students to help resolve criminal and traffic matters, potentially saving the expense of hiring an attorney (though it is not permitted by the North Carolina State Bar to go to court for students). It can also assist students in expunging a dismissed criminal charge off of their record. According to Tristan Routh, a Staff Attorney with SLS, an expunction is "a document that the Student Legal Services office files with the court on behalf of a student asking the court to have a dismissed charge cleared off of a student's record." While SLS services for this are free, most expunctions of criminal charges carry a \$175 filing fee. In regards to traffic cases, SLS office is allowed to ask for continuances for students, such as moving traffic court dates.

The office is also capable of assisting students with civil matters - meaning issues that are neither criminal or traffic. In certain civil cases, Student Legal Services is permitted to go to district court for students. "Our office highly encourages students to take advantage of the office's services regarding Landlord-tenant law from the start of a lease to the end of a lease," said Routh. When dealing with landlord-tenant cases, some services SLS is able to provide are reviewing leases for students, helping students pursue rent abatement claims, and helping students get security deposits back from their landlords. Additional students can seek advice on include:

- wills
- simple powers of attorney
- debt collection issues
- contract issues
- domestic violence cases
- uncontested divorces
- separation agreements

Additionally, for any legal question or issue SLS does not offer counsel for, they can provide referrals to attorneys who can help.

SLS advises student organizations, so any time a student organization has a question regarding contracts, liability waivers, or becoming a nonprofit, Student Legal Services can assist with those matters. It is important to note that Student Legal Services cannot give advice or represent against other UNC students or the University. It is also important to note that everything that comes into the office is confidential and is protected by attorney-client privilege.

Currently, SLS is contracting with an attorney who is an immigration board certified specialist in Durham who comes once a month now to meet with students and give free consultations on immigration issues. The office also brings in a contract attorney/small business formation specialist to assist students wanting to create a startup or an application. SLS is not eligible to deal with tax issues, but the office will have an accountant come in during the spring to answer tax questions for student groups. SLS is also not permitted to assist with intellectual property (patents, copyrights), but is available to provide referrals for students. Student Legal Services is also available for educational presentations regarding multiple topics such as alcohol education or pre-law information and advice.

If you would like to visit Student Legal Services for assistance, advice, and questions regarding legal matters, the office is located on the third floor of the Carolina Union, in Suite 3512. Feel free to visit <http://studentlegalservices.web.unc.edu/> to make an appointment or for more information.

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