TIP 12.5

Researching the Law: Diving In

If you are ready to begin researching the law, use these tips to conduct thorough research.

Get an Overview

- Identify the area of law you are researching and get an overview of that legal topic.
- Use credible websites if you use the Internet for this research. For Maryland law, visit:
  - □ Maryland Judiciary website at mdcourts.gov, or
  - □ People's Law Library at peoples-law.org.
- You can also use encyclopedias, books that explain the law, or articles to find overviews of the law.
- These resources can lead you to sources of the law relevant to your case, such as statutes, rules, and cases.
- If you are researching Maryland state law, be sure only to view information specific to Maryland.

Narrow Your Research

- After you understand the broad area of law, narrow your research to the specific law that applies.
- To view Maryland statutes and rules, review the Maryland Code and Rules at mdcourts.gov/lawlib.
- To view case law, use a legal database, such as Google Scholar, Lexis, or Westlaw. Google Scholar is available online for free. Lexis and Westlaw are available for free at public law libraries.

Cite Check

- Laws change often, so it is important to check that the law you found is still up to date.
- Reliable sources of Maryland statutes and regulations should state if the information is current.
- If you use Lexis or Westlaw, there is a process for cite checking cases, called Sheparadizing or Keyciting.
- If you are unsure of how to cite check, ask a law librarian.

Get Help

- Law librarians can help you with your legal research.
- Help Center attorneys can answer some legal questions for free.

Resources

- Visit mdcourts.gov/ccll for library locations and information.
- For court addresses and other contact information, view the list of court locations at https://mdcourts.gov/courtsdirectory.
- You can get free legal help at the Maryland Court Help Center at 410-260-1392, or at mdcourts.gov/helpcenter.
- Read more about researching the law on the People's Law Library at https://peoples-law.org/cat/how-do-i/legal-research.

Maryland Court Help

Free. Online. In Person. By Phone.

- Find information on specific legal topics on the Maryland Judiciary's website at mdcourts.gov/courthelp.