

# Understanding Legal and Other Services for Older Adults

*This fact sheet explains the structure of social care services for older adults in the US, highlights legal needs of older adults, and describes the differences between legal aid agencies and private attorneys.*

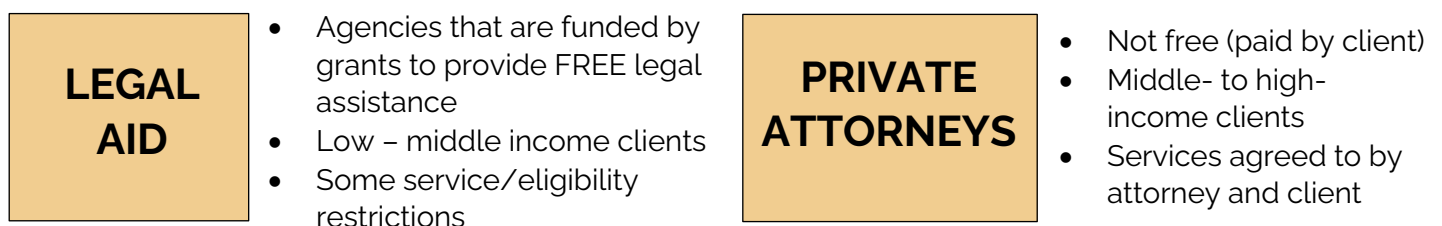
Free and low-cost legal and other social care services are available in the community because of a federal law called the The Older Americans Act. This law established the Administration on Aging at the federal level and Area Agencies on Aging at state and local levels. Area Agencies on Aging are meant to serve as a one-stop-shop for services for older adults and are a good starting place to get help.



Examples of the types of services offered by The Older Americans Act through state agencies, area agencies, and local/direct service providers include:



Legal aid is an important component of care for older adults because we have many legal needs as we age. These include help with incapacity planning, accessing public benefits such as Medi-Cal, housing concerns, retirement, debt and other income concerns, and helping prevent elder abuse or exploitation. Older adults or the people helping them can seek legal assistance through a legal aid organization or by hiring a private attorney. Here are the differences between legal aid and private attorneys:



**Key Resources:**

- California Advocates for Nursing Home Reform (CANHR) runs an elder law referral service that is regulated by the State Bar. They will refer to free and low-cost legal services as well as paid services. Call 1-800-474-1116 or visit [www.canhr.org](http://www.canhr.org).
- [LawHelpCA.org](http://LawHelpCA.org) is a free legal resource website run by Legal Aid Association of California. It has a directory of information and organizations people can search to find legal help.