

## Resources Available for Legal Research

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### Overview

Legal Research takes time and patience to learn. The James J. Lunsford Law Library has many resources to assist you with your legal research project.

Library staff are not attorneys, so they cannot provide legal assistance. They can assist with locating research materials and instruct on how to use those materials. Below is an overview of the types of legal research materials available for use.

### Dictionaries and Encyclopedias

Being familiar with legal terminology will make your legal research much easier. There are legal dictionaries, thesauruses and encyclopedias to help you understand “legalize” and learn more about legal subjects.

### Treatises

Treatises is just a fancy name for books, they can be a single volume or a multi-volume set. The advantage to a treatise is that you will learn specific areas of law along with procedures and possibly find sample forms. The actual primary law located in cases, statutes or regulations will be cited, or footnoted within the text. This is particularly helpful if you are researching an area you are not familiar with. You may need to try multiple topics within the index or consult a legal dictionary to familiarize yourself with specific terms. It is not unusual for issues to be a subcategory under a heading you would not think to look under. Unfortunately, self-help/Pro Se treatises are very limited.

### Primary Law

Primary law is the actual laws, rules, regulations and case law. These are the heart of legal research.

But the language can be vague and as a rule of thumb they do not give you the actual procedure or forms to initiate any type of legal action. Some primary law is annotated (contains citations to cases and other resources). This can help you see how the courts have interpreted the primary reference. It is your responsibility to be aware of and comply with laws, rules & regulations.

## Online Resources

Online web browsers such as Google are a great place to start. What is important with online resources is to stick with official sites, such as court or government web pages. If you are fortunate enough to have access to Westlaw as HCPLC customers do, then you have a virtual law library at your fingertips.

Because of the vast amount of information available, being familiar with legal terminology is going to be a great benefit. Don't be surprised if your first search brings back 1000s of results or finds nothing. While you can put your query in as a question or use old school search methods such as terms and connectors, you may well have to refine your search to get to the right material. With your HCPLC card you also have access to Gale Legal Forms, legal eBooks that you can check out, as well as links to other sources. All of this and more can be found at: <https://hcplc.org/research/legal>.