

PREFACE

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THE AMERICAN BAR ASSOCIATION LEGAL GUIDES are designed to provide guidance for people on important legal questions they encounter in everyday life. When American families are asked to describe their legal needs, the topics that come up repeatedly are housing, personal finance, family and domestic concerns (usually in conjunction with divorce and child support), wills and estates, and employment-related issues. In addition, more and more Americans have questions about operating a business, often out of the home.

These are the topics that *The American Bar Association Legal Guides* cover in plain, direct language. We have made a special effort to make the books practical, by using situations and problems you are likely to encounter. The goal of these book is to give helpful information on a range of options that can be used in solving everyday legal problems, so that you can make informed decisions on how to best to handle your particular question.

The American Bar Association wants Americans to be aware of the full range of options available when they are confronted with a problem that might have a “legal” solution. The Association has supported programs to eliminate delay in the courts, and has worked to promote fast, affordable alternatives to lawsuits, such as mediation, arbitration, conciliation, and small claims court. Through ABA support for lawyer referral programs and pro bono services (where lawyers donate their time), people have been able to find the best lawyer for their particular case and have received quality legal help within their budget.

The American Bar Association Legal Guides discuss all these alternatives, suggesting the wide range options open to you. We hope that they will help you feel more comfortable with the law and will remove much of the mystery from the legal system.

Several hundred members of the Association have contributed to *The American Bar Association Legal Guide*—as authors and as reviewers who have guaranteed the guides’ accuracy. To them—and to the ABA’s Standing Committee on Public Education, which was the primary force behind the publications—I express my thanks and gratitude, and that of the Association and lawyers everywhere