

# Missouri Legal Services

Legal aid programs providing free legal help to the low-income and disadvantaged in Missouri



www.lsmo.org

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## Wrongful Discharge or Termination of Employment in Missouri

Missouri follows the **\*Employment-At-Will** doctrine in employment matters. This means that either the employer or employee **can terminate** the employment relationship at any time and for any reason, unless:

1. There is an employment contract to the contrary;
2. There is discrimination under civil rights laws (based on race, color, age, national origin, religion, ancestry, sex, or physical/mental disability);
3. Merit laws apply, or;
4. The termination was in violation of the Missouri's public policy. This normally happens when an employee:
  - Refuses to engage in an illegal activity on behalf of the employer;
  - Whistle Blows an employer's illegal activity; or
  - Exercises their workers' compensation rights.

An employee cannot bring a wrongful termination claim simply because he or she was terminated. There has to be evidence or some indication that the firing was wrongful because it violated a law. If an employee is successful in such a claim, he or she may be able to recover lost wages, damages for mental and emotional distress and, potentially, punitive damages. Remember, you can always consult with a private attorney on any of the above employment issues by finding an employment lawyer through [The Missouri Bar Lawyers Referral Service](#)

**If you click on any link on this page you may be leaving this website.**

**Suggestion** - search the Labor/Employment categories under the Area of Law field.

If you have been terminated from your job or you quit your job because your employer violated one or more of the reasons listed above, you may have other legal options. Remember, termination cases can be extremely complicated to prove. If you think you have been terminated illegally or you quit your job because your employer violated one of the reasons listed above, you can take the following additional steps:

1. You can apply for free legal assistance with one of the legal aid program that serves your county. Go to the link [Offices](#) to locate the legal aid program that serves your county and make an application for legal assistance. Please note that legal aid programs do not normally accept wrongful termination cases as they case are considered fee-generating cases;
2. If you feel you have been discriminated against while on a job or applying for a job, you have the right to [file a complaint](#) with the Missouri Commission on Human Rights; or
3. You can try the **Legal Answers** program to seek free advice from a lawyer. **Legal Answers** is a statewide virtual legal advice clinic. Qualifying users post their civil legal question to the link below. Missouri pro bono attorney volunteers, who must be authorized to provide pro bono assistance in Missouri, log in to the website, select questions to answer, and provide legal information and advice. Users are then emailed when their question receives a response. Click on the following link to go to the Missouri **Legal Answers** site: [MO Legal Answers](#)

\*Missouri Department of Labor and Industrial Relations - [Discharged Employees](#)

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Printed:October 1, 2022

<http://www.lsmo.org/node/780/wrongful-discharge-or-termination-employment-missouri>

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