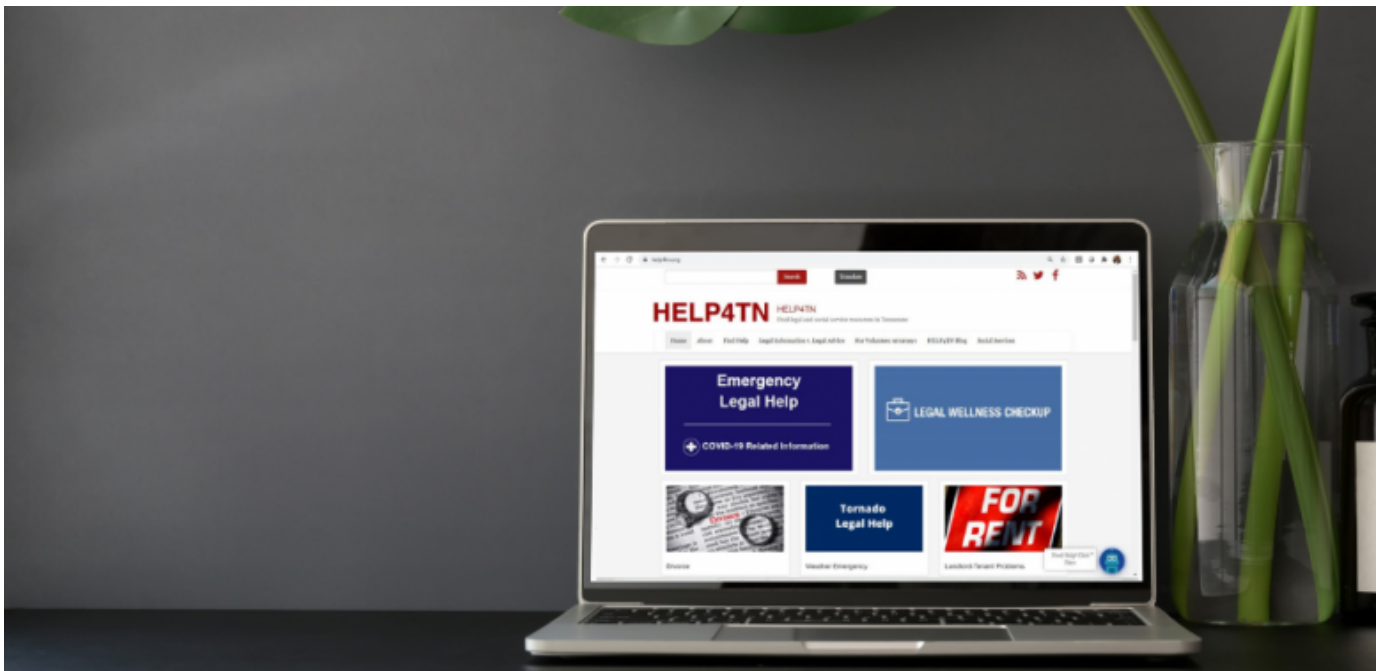


TALS, Bureau of Worker's Compensation Collaborate to Provide Innovative Resource to Injured Tennessee Workers



NASHVILLE - The Tennessee Alliance for Legal Services' (TALS) and the Tennessee Bureau of Workers' Compensation (BWC) have launched an innovative new tool to help Tennessee workers navigate the workers' compensation process.

Often workers cannot secure legal help when they experience an on-the-job injury, and they are faced with the daunting task of trying to represent themselves with no legal training.

Recognizing this reality, TALS and the BWC partnered to develop a way to assist self-represented workers in completing the required forms. Injured workers seeking benefits for on-the-job injuries can now fill out three key forms by simply speaking into their smartphone or any other internet-connected device.

The new tool, “WC Bot,” is a free document-filling assistant and is available to the public at www.HELP4TN.org. The chatbot icon is in the lower right corner of the page.

The tool is interactive and user-friendly, allowing the user to decide whether to interact with the bot by typing or speaking into their device. As the interview progresses, WC Bot provides helpful information about the workers’ compensation process in various formats, including handouts, videos and links to blog posts.

At the conclusion of the interview, the tool provides a completed form accepted in all workers’ compensation courts in Tennessee. Forms available through WC Bot are:

- Petition for Benefits Determination
- Request for Expedited Hearing and Affidavit

“Fairness and equal justice under the law are core values in our legal system. This collaborative project is an example of how we can use technology to help level the playing field for self-represented litigants,” said Ann Pruitt, TALS’ Executive Director.

The WC Bot is built using LawDroid, an award-winning technology company. The secure and confidential platform allows users to access relevant videos and handouts throughout the interview. Users can also pause their interview, save their information, and come back to finish the interview.

This collaboration is part of a larger project with TALS, the BWC, Lincoln Memorial University Duncan School of Law, and LawDroid to study the impact of 2013 legislative changes to the workers’ compensation process and the impact on injured workers. The study identified a major barrier to workers seeking and obtaining compensation: filling out and returning the forms required to proceed with a claim.

“This tool is a significant step to addressing the gap between knowing how to use the Bureau of Workers’ Compensation’s dispute resolution programs, and the ability to complete the forms to do so,” said Brian Holmes, the BWC’s Director of Mediation and Ombudsman Services.

In addition to creating the WC Bot, this team has provided substantive legal training to law students and attorneys about the workers’ compensation process.

This project is funded by a Tennessee Legal Initiatives Fund Grant from the Tennessee Bar Foundation.

Learn More

Tennessee Alliance for Legal Services (TALS) is a statewide nonprofit organization that builds tools and partnerships to strengthen the delivery of civil legal services for low-income and elderly Tennesseans. TALS manages a web portal providing legal information- www.HELP4TN.org, and staffs 1-888-HELP4TN, a toll-free civil legal advice and information phone line. Learn more at www.tals.org.

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