



Good Samaritan Laws: The Facts

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What are Good Samaritan laws?

Good Samaritan laws are rooted in the ancient biblical parable, defining a "Good Samaritan" as an individual who intervenes to help another person without any prior obligation or expectation of compensation.[1] The general principle of most Good Samaritan laws protects individuals who provide care to an injured or ill person in an emergency without expecting payment from negligence claims. All 50 states and the District of Columbia have Good Samaritan laws along with federal laws for specific situations. Many of these laws were originally designed to protect physicians from liability when providing care outside their typical clinical environment.[1] The specifics of Good Samaritan laws vary by jurisdiction, including who is shielded from liability and under what conditions (such as clinicians, emergency medical technicians [EMTs], and other first responders). A recent area of Good Samaritan legislation is related to the opioid overdose crisis, with various states implementing drug-related Good Samaritan laws that extend limited legal protection to persons reporting overdoses to encourage them to render assistance [1,2].

Have You Heard?

- If the victim is unconscious/unresponsive, the Good Samaritan can act under the assumption of implied consent. If the person is conscious, the rescuer should first ask for permission before offering help.[1]
- Texas offers broad immunity to lay rescuers, specifically covering the use of automated external defibrillators (AEDs) in emergencies.[3]
- In Texas, individuals are protected under specific criteria when it comes to drug-related emergencies. For example, they must fully cooperate with emergency personnel and must be the first person to request/call emergency personnel.[4]

What Are the Consequences?

One consequence of Good Samaritan laws is a push to establish "Bad Samaritan" laws, which would create a duty to assist those in need, such that you may be liable for not coming to the aid of others.[1] Indeed, research finds that although individuals indicate they would help others, there is mixed support for laws *requiring* that individuals help those in need.[5]

How to Spread Awareness

Although the primary intent of Good Samaritan laws is clear, their real-world application can vary significantly. For example, unique responsibilities and coverage may apply when traveling in different jurisdictions. Nonetheless, Good Samaritan laws provide essential legal immunity to individuals who offer voluntary assistance in emergency situations. By protecting rescuers from liability, this law encourages people to help others without fear of legal consequences, provided they act responsibly and within the expected standard of care.[1] Therefore, all healthcare providers, victim service providers, first responders, and citizens alike should familiarize themselves with their state's specific rules and protections, and encourage others to do the same.

Resources

Texas

- **Texas Law Help --** <https://texaslawhelp.org/article/the-right-to-emergency-medical-care-and-good-samaritan-laws-in-texas>

National

- **SAFE Project --** <https://www.safeproject.us/good-samaritan-laws/>
- **Good Samaritan Overdose Prevention Laws --** <https://pdaps.org/datasets/good-samaritan-overdose-laws-1501695153>
- **Good Samaritan Law Explained --** <https://www.mycprcertificationonline.com/blog/good-samaritan-law>

References

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- [2]Reader, S. W., Walton, G. H., & Linder, S. H. (2022). Review and inventory of 911 Good Samaritan law provisions in the United States. *International Journal of Drug Policy*, 110, 103896.
- [3]CPR Select. (2024). Understanding the Good Samaritan Law: Protections for Lifesavers. <https://www.mycprcertificationonline.com/blog/good-samaritan-law>
- [4]SAFE Project. (2024). Good Samaritan Laws: State-By-State Analysis. <https://www.safeproject.us/good-samaritan-laws/#texas>
- [5]Time, V., Payne, B. K., & Gainey, R. R. (2010). Don't help victims of crime if you don't have the time: Assessing support for Good Samaritan Laws. *Journal of Criminal Justice*, 38(4), 790-795.

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Resources

- Aging and Disability Resource Center 855-937-2372
- Cyber Civil Rights Initiative 844-878-2274
- Mothers Against Drunk Driving 877-623-3435
- National Child Abuse Hotline 800-422-4453
- National Domestic Violence Hotline 800-799-7233
- National Human Trafficking Hotline 888-373-7888
- National Sexual Assault Hotline 800-656-4673
- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline 988
- Texas Abuse Hotline 800-252-5400
- Texas Council on Family Violence <https://tcfv.org/survivor-resources/>
- Texas Association Against Sexual Assault <https://taasa.org/get-help/>
- Victim Connect Resource Center 855-484-2846