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**Legal Technology Tools Aid with Justice Problems But
Remain Limited in Services Provided: Report**

CHICAGO, Jan. 28, 2019 — A report released today by American Bar Foundation (ABF) Faculty Fellow [Rebecca Sandefur](#) surveys the rapidly developing field of legal technologies for non-lawyers. *Legal Tech for Non-Lawyers: Report of the Survey of U.S. Legal Technologies* was created with funding from [Open Society Foundations](#) and examines an expansive list of over 320 digital tools that help a range of users to act on a legal problem.

Each year, tens of millions of Americans face justice problems that have potentially wide-ranging impacts on core areas of life including livelihood, shelter, care and custody of minor children, neighborhood safety, and environmental conditions. Most of these issues do not reach the justice system and receive no attention from any sort of legal professional. *Legal Tech for Non-Lawyers* assesses how legal technology tools can assist people who do not practice law in dealing with these sorts of challenges, with a focus on bridging the access to justice gap for low-income communities and others who have restricted access to law and legal services.

The report identifies an extensive number of tools that aim to aid both individual users and those who work with the public on a range of criminal and civil justice problems. Tools described in the report specialize in areas from criminal to civil rights to employment to health. Though no single tool offers a “one stop shop” for every kind of justice issue, most try to ease the experience of dealing with justice barriers for non-lawyers by providing legal information, offering connections to lawyers, or facilitating legal actions for users.

Although these tools offer resources to non-lawyers in dealing with justice concerns, many of them reflect outdated design standards, are limited in services they provide, and only partially match the type of justice issues most commonly reported by Americans. The report found that there is currently a substantial mismatch between the services offered by the legal tools and the services people need.

Because of barriers of language, literacy, and the cost of internet data access, the same groups that often cannot access traditional legal services, such as people with lower incomes or less education, are also less likely to be able to use many existing tools that would otherwise be available to them.

“There is another important cause of the mismatch between the help these tools offer and the help people need,” said Sandefur. “These tools could be more effective if they could provide more extensive help. That’s not a technological problem.”

“Right now, the rules that prohibit people who are not lawyers from providing even limited legal advice for common justice problems are excessively strict,” Sandefur continued. “It’s time to rethink these rules in a smart way. We need to open up spaces for innovation that put the public interest first. That means focusing on consumer protection and access to justice, not old-style professional monopolies.”

[Read the report here.](#)

About the American Bar Foundation

The [American Bar Foundation](#) (ABF) is among the world’s leading research institutes for the empirical and interdisciplinary study of law. The ABF seeks to expand knowledge and advance justice through innovative, interdisciplinary, and rigorous empirical research on law, legal processes, and legal institutions. To further this mission the ABF will produce timely, cutting-edge research of the highest quality to inform and guide the legal profession, the academy, and society in the United States and internationally. The ABF’s primary funding is provided by the [American Bar Endowment](#) and the [Fellows of The American Bar Foundation](#).

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