

Clues to reliable legal information

CLEO (Community Legal Education Ontario/ Éducation juridique communautaire Ontario)

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There is a lot of legal information available online – so much that sometimes it can be hard to tell what you can rely on. When looking for legal information online, ask:

1. Am I getting the information from a trustworthy source?

- **Does the organization have the appropriate expertise?**

It's important that legal information is reviewed by an experienced lawyer on a regular basis. Government, legal aid, and community legal clinics all have lawyers on staff. If you find legal information on the site of a non-profit and you're not sure if a lawyer was involved in preparing it, check the "About us" page or contact the organization to find out.

- **Are contact details given?**

Reliable legal information providers tell you how to contact them, usually by giving an email address and a phone number, and sometimes a mailing address.

2. Am I getting complete and unbiased legal information?

- **Is the information free?**

Commercial businesses are trying to sell services. Their information can be incomplete or biased as a way of encouraging you to buy their services.

- **Does the website or legal information have ads?**

Most organizations that present complete, unbiased information, such as government, legal aid, community legal clinics, and non-profits, don't have paid ads on their websites.

3. Does the legal information apply to my location?

- **Does the information apply to Ontario?**

Always check to make sure that the law applies to Ontario. Some information may apply to Ontario but be produced by the federal government.

4. Is the legal information up-to-date?

- **Does the information tell you when the information was produced or most recently reviewed?**

Laws change and legal information needs to be reviewed for accuracy on a regular basis. Check when the information was produced or last reviewed by someone with legal expertise.