

Making referrals for legal services

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

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Many people, especially marginalized ones, end up getting referred to the wrong legal service — and then they're told to phone or go somewhere else. This is frustrating and can lead to "referral fatigue". And it becomes less likely that the person will take the steps they need to deal with a legal problem in a timely way.

Here are some things to consider when making referrals to legal services to try to make sure that the people you refer end up in the right place.

1. Does the legal office serve the area where the person lives or works?

- Some legal offices that provide cheap or free legal services, such as community legal clinics, can only serve people that work within a specific geographic or "catchment" area.
- You can find the correct community legal clinic to refer someone to by [conducting a postal code search](#) on the Legal Aid Ontario website.

2. Does the legal office give help for the type of legal problem the person is dealing with?

- Legal offices vary in the services that they provide. It's a good idea to check the websites of the legal offices you are referring people to in order to see whether they can help.

3. Does the legal office require the person to meet financial eligibility criteria?

- Many cheap or free legal services get public funding and must restrict some or all of the services they offer to people who make less than a certain amount of money. And financial eligibility criteria are typically set at a very low income threshold.
- But some places may be able to offer legal information or advice by telephone to people who do not qualify financially.

4. Does the legal office offer services that are accessible for the person?

- If the person you are referring has special needs, phone or check the website of the legal office if possible to find out how the office can accommodate those needs.

5. Does the legal office have someone who speaks the person's language?

- Some legal offices can access telephone interpretation services, while others cannot afford to. You could suggest to the person you're referring that they ask a friend or family member to help them communicate with the legal office.

