

Making referrals for legal services

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

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Many people with legal problems end up getting referred to the wrong legal service – and then they're told to try somewhere else. This is frustrating and can make it less likely that the person will take the steps they need to deal with a legal problem in a timely way.

Here are 5 things to consider to help you make an appropriate referral:

1. Does the legal office serve the area where the person lives or do they qualify for help from a specialty clinic?

- Some legal offices that provide free or low-cost legal services, such as community legal clinics, can only serve people that live within a specific geographic or “catchment” area.
- You can find a person’s local community legal clinic by [conducting a postal code search](#) on the Legal Aid Ontario website.
- There are also specialty clinics that serve particular groups in Ontario such as tenants, seniors, workers, persons with disabilities, specific ethnicities, youth, and other groups. CLEO's website has a full list of [specialty clinics](#).

2. Does the legal office give help for this type of legal problem?

- Legal offices vary in the services that they provide. Before making a referral, it's a good idea to check the website of a legal office to see whether they can help.

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

- Many free or low-cost legal services get public funding and must restrict some or all of their services to people who make less than a certain amount of money. Financial eligibility criteria are typically set at a very low income threshold.
- Some places may be able to offer legal information or advice by telephone to people who do not qualify financially. Before making a referral, check with the legal service to find out their financial eligibility criteria and if they offer any services to people who do not meet the criteria.



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

- If the person you are referring has accessibility 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. If not, 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.

