



Law Society Referral Service

If you need help finding a lawyer or a paralegal, you can call the Law Society Referral Service (LSRS), a free public service of the Law Society of Upper Canada.

When you call the LSRS, we will give you the name of a lawyer or paralegal who will provide a free consultation of up to 30 minutes to help you determine your rights and options.

You can access the service by calling **1-800-268-8326** or **416-947-3330** (within the GTA) or by accessing our online request form at **lsrs.lsuc.on.ca**. The service is available from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday to Friday.

Is there a cost to the service?

No. The phone call, the referral process, and your initial consultation of up to 30 minutes are all free. However, the consultation is meant to help you determine your rights and options. You should not expect a lawyer or paralegal to do any free work during this time.

What are the benefits of the LSRS?

The LSRS will help you find a lawyer or paralegal who practises law or provides legal services in an area that meets your needs. The service can also help you find a lawyer or paralegal who meets specific requirements, such as speaking a certain language, or accepting Legal Aid Ontario certificates.

Law Society members who participate in the LSRS will offer you up to a half-hour free consultation. This consultation may be over the phone or in person; the choice is up to the lawyer or paralegal. During this time, you can ask:

- How does the law apply to my situation?
- How can I use the law to solve my legal problem?
- How long could my legal work take?
- How much would the lawyer or paralegal charge to help me?

After the consultation, you can decide if you want to hire the lawyer or paralegal to work for you.

I am in a crisis. Can I still use the LSRS?

Definitely. However, please read the following carefully:

When you call the LSRS, we give you a referral number and a lawyer or paralegal's phone number. You then phone that lawyer or paralegal's office, leave a number where you can be reached, and wait to be contacted within three business days to arrange for your consultation.

If you cannot wait at least three days for an initial consultation, or if it would be a problem for you to leave a call-back number for the lawyer or paralegal, please let us know these facts when you call the LSRS. In

this situation we can provide you with the names and numbers of three members who you can try to contact. Please note that we do not provide a referral number in this instance, so you will not be entitled to a free consultation.

What happens when I call the LSRS?

When you call the LSRS, a Legal Information Officer will answer your call and ask you some questions:

- Where in Ontario do you want the lawyer or paralegal to be located?
- What do you want the lawyer or paralegal to do for you?
- Are you planning to apply for Legal Aid? The LSRS is available to Legal Aid clients, but some lawyers do not take Legal Aid cases.

The Legal Information Officer can also assist you with your special needs — for instance, finding someone who speaks a certain language, or who has a wheelchair accessible office.

When your needs are clear, you will be given a referral number and the name and telephone number of a lawyer or paralegal.

Call the lawyer or paralegal's office and leave your name, your phone number and the referral number. Be sure to tell them you received their name from the LSRS. Someone from that office will call you back within three business days to arrange the free consultation.

My consultation with a lawyer or paralegal has been set up. What do I do now?

The lawyer or paralegal needs to hear your story. What happened? Why do you want to hire someone?

- You can prepare for your conversation in the following ways: Think about what you are going to say. Plan to explain your situation clearly and simply, starting from the beginning.
- Gather together any papers that are important. Although the lawyer or paralegal will not review your documents during the consultation (since that is considered legal work), you may wish to have them with you in case you decide to hire the lawyer or paralegal.
- When you speak to the lawyer or paralegal, talk openly. He or she needs to know details — and sometimes even very personal information — in order to understand how the law applies to you.
- During your conversation, you may want to write down a few notes. This may help later, when you are trying to remember exactly what the lawyer or paralegal said.

The purpose of the consultation is to give you information about how the law applies to you. It is also a chance to find out more about this lawyer or paralegal. By the end of the consultation, you should know more about your legal options and how much it would cost to hire this person to work for you.