



LIFE – Legal Information for Everyone | A PLE Toolbox

Resources for lawyers and paralegals delivering Public Legal Education in Ontario

Checklist:

TIPS FOR SPEAKING TO INTERMEDIARIES

Intermediaries are the many other types of professionals or community leaders whom people talk to about their problems. Often these intermediaries hear about issues early on and can help to connect people with legal resources. Effective issue-spotting and referral from intermediaries results in early attention to legal aspects of a problem. Typical intermediaries can include both those who receive training and professional support to be problem-solvers for the public, and those who are simply respected and approached about problems, without the support of an employer or professional training. The level of comfort with legal issues will vary dramatically depending on the level of training and institutional support each receives.

Examples of Intermediaries:

Community Supports

- Boys and girls club staff
- Camp counselors
- Coaches
- Community centre staff
- Family members
- Friends
- School counselors
- Teachers
- Youth workers
- Local politicians
- Business leaders
- Daycare staff
- Religious leaders

Informed Intermediaries

- Doctors
- Early childhood educators
- Library staff
- Nurses
- Paramedics
- Settlement workers
- Social workers
- Outreach workers
- Hospital staff
- Intake staff at social services
- Housing advocates
- Children's Aid Workers
- Court staff

BEFORE A SESSION WITH INTERMEDIARIES:

- ☐ **Inquire about the intermediaries' work, access to technology and knowledge of the law** – Find out their capacity to conduct research and provide reliable legal information and effective referrals for the people who approach them with legal problems
- ☐ **Ask about common legal problems that are raised by their clients** – This will help you focus the resources and contacts you provide them to assist in helping their clients.

DURING A SESSION WITH INTERMEDIARIES:

- ☐ **Acknowledge their role in promoting access to justice** – Intermediaries are important points of access to the justice system. They are often trusted individuals in the community whom people approach with their legal problems first. They play a critical role in connecting people with the appropriate information and legal advice to resolve legal issues. When you deliver a public legal education (PLE) session to intermediaries, you help build their capacity to fulfill this role.
- ☐ **You are there to build the legal capability of intermediaries** – A PLE session for intermediaries should focus on building the audience's legal capability in the same way it would for an audience of the general public. By helping intermediaries identify legal issues and by providing them with a basic understanding of these issues and the processes available to resolve them, you prepare intermediaries to best help their clients. A well-informed intermediary will know what specific types of resources and legal professionals to direct their clients to. For a more in-depth discussion of legal capability, review Module 3 of the Legal Information for Everyone resources.
- ☐ **Explain they cannot give legal advice** – Unlike other types of issues that they are able to assist their clients with; when it comes to legal questions, their role is to connect their clients with reliable resources and qualified legal professionals who can provide advice. Make sure to distinguish between legal information and legal advice. Community Legal Education Ontario's handout in Module 5 can assist with this.
- ☐ **Reinforce that their role is to provide referrals** – Intermediaries are well-positioned to provide warm referrals to local legal clinics and other lawyers and paralegals. For a discussion of warm referrals, see the materials that deal with building legal capability in Module 3. There may be a role for intermediaries in supporting people as they deal with a legal matter. However, intermediaries also need to understand the risks of proceeding without legal help and know the limits of their role. PLE sessions for intermediaries can give them confidence about how to be helpful and avoid future problems.
- ☐ **Clarify that there are often no easy answers to legal problems** – Like the people who are directly involved in legal problems, intermediaries will want to have a clear idea of what their clients face. However, it is important to explain that the law rarely has fixed, easy solutions and that every situation is different.

- ☐ **Emphasize the importance of early access to legal advice** – Many people may approach intermediaries in the early stages of a legal problem. It is critical for intermediaries to connect their clients with appropriate legal services quickly to ensure that the legal problems are dealt with early, when a more affordable and less stressful resolution is still possible. For situations involving clients facing criminal charges, it is especially important that these clients be connected with legal services immediately because criminal matters can have very serious short and long-term consequences for the people involved.
- ☐ **Show intermediaries where they can find reliable legal information** – Prepare a list of websites where they can find reliable legal information about a variety of different topics. Examples of organizations in Ontario that provide public legal information resources are: yourlegalrights.ca, Law Society of Upper Canada, Community Legal Education Ontario, Ontario Justice Education Network and legal clinics, government websites and organizations like the Canadian Civil Liberties Association.

AFTER A SESSION WITH INTERMEDIARIES:

- ☐ **Provide referral information that they can give their clients** – You can provide your own contact information as well as information about local legal clinics and accurate online links for legal questions. For all legal issues outside your area of expertise, provide a list of local legal clinics and information about the Law Society Referral Service or the Handling Everyday Legal Problems brochure. You will find all of this information in the materials associated with Module 1 and 5.