

SMCBA LAWYER REFERRAL SERVICE FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQ)

What is the Lawyer Referral Service?

The San Mateo County Bar Association's Lawyer Referral and Information Service (LRS) provides callers with a referral to a qualified lawyer. The LRS Program determines the legal area of the problem you describe and provides a referral to a proper lawyer or agency.

How do I know this service is not a scam?

The SMCBA's Lawyer Referral Service is a State Bar of California certified program (Certificate 0039).

How do I know your LRS lawyers are qualified?

All our lawyers are active members of the California State Bar and are licensed to practice law in California. They must meet strict LRS qualifications as required by the ***Rules for Lawyer Referral Service*** established by the SMCBA LRS Committee. In addition, all LRS lawyers carry malpractice insurance and must meet our experience requirements.

Are you a lawyer? Can you give me legal advice?

We do not have lawyers in our office. When you call, please note that the LRS staff who answers the phone is not a lawyer. Staff members are not qualified to give you legal advice or answer legal questions. Our LRS staff members are trained to refer you to a lawyer who is qualified to answer your legal questions.

How much does it cost to get a referral and how do I pay?

We charge you an administrative fee of \$35 to refer you to one lawyer. When you call, we will collect this fee over the phone by VISA, Mastercard, Amex or Discover. We also take debit cards. San Mateo County Bar Association will show up on your credit card statement.

You may also pay by cashier's check or money order (we do not accept personal checks). If you wish to pay with a cashier's check or money order, please make it payable to *San Mateo County Bar Association* and mail to:

Lawyer Referral Service
333 Bradford Street, Ste. 200
Redwood City, CA 94063

When you mail your cashier's check or money order, please include a note with your name and phone number. Once your payment is received, we will call you back with the referral information.

Why do you charge \$35 and what does it cover?

The \$35 administrative fee helps us run our program and makes it possible to offer this valuable service to members of the community like you. The \$35 administrative fee will also cover your consultation of up to 30 minutes. If we determine your case to be an employee Workers' Compensation matter, you will not be charged the \$35 administrative fee.

Do you have a list of pro-bono or free lawyers?

The lawyers on our network do not work for free and we do not have/provide a list of pro bono lawyers. We refer you to a qualified private practice lawyer in our network based on your legal needs.

I do not have any money for a lawyer. What can I do?

Please call our office at (650) 369-4149. We may be able to refer you to a non-profit organization or agency that may be able to assist you. You can also visit our “Other Resources” page for more information on legal agencies in the Bay Area that may be able to assist you.

How much does the lawyer charge?**Do the lawyers work on contingency?**

All the lawyers on the LRS Program are private practice lawyers. The LRS does not maintain fee information on the lawyer. If you decide to retain the lawyer after the 30-minute consultation, you will need to discuss the fees and payment options with them at that time.

How do you choose the lawyer? Can I pick who you refer me to?

The lawyers are categorized by the specific areas of law that they practice. We have friendly staff trained to select a lawyer who handles the field of law related to your problem and who has the right experience for your case. We have a basic underlying rotation but may be able to accommodate a geographic area or language preference if we have an available lawyer. We do not refer based on race, gender, nationality, or religion.

Will the lawyer be close to where I live?

If you live in San Mateo County, we will try to refer you to a lawyer who is close to you. But remember, our priority is to refer you to a lawyer who handles the field of law related to your problem and who has the right experience for your case.

Is it possible to schedule an appointment today?

We do not schedule the appointments. Once you have obtained your referral, it is your responsibility to contact the lawyer to set up an appointment. If you have a time sensitive case, you must keep in mind that the lawyer you are referred to has up to 5 business days to respond to your call and schedule your appointment.

How long do I have to wait to meet with the lawyer?

You should call the lawyer to schedule your appointment as soon as you receive the referral. Every lawyer on the LRS Program has an active caseload and may not be able to immediately take your call, but the lawyer will return your call in a timely manner. If you have a time sensitive case, you must keep in mind that the lawyer you are referred to has up to 5 business days to respond to your call and schedule your appointment. Please leave a message with your name and phone number and patiently wait for the lawyer to return your call. If the lawyer we refer you to is not able to take your call within 5 business days, please call our office.

Can I get more than one referral?

The LRS staff can only provide **one referral** per phone call, but you may pay for additional referrals if necessary. If you wish to pay for more than one referral, keep in mind that the \$35 administrative fee is not refundable. If you decide to not use your referral, you will not be refunded.

I need to cancel my appointment. Do I get a refund?

The \$35 administrative fee is not refundable.

It is your responsibility to contact the lawyer to set up an appointment. If for any reason you are unable to keep your appointment with this lawyer, please call the lawyer's office directly at least 24 hours in advance. If you decide to not use your referral, you will not be refunded.

How do I reschedule an appointment?

If you need to reschedule the appointment, please call the lawyer's office directly at least 24 hours in advance. Otherwise, the lawyer expects you to be at the appointment.

A "No Show" is a client who fails to appear for a scheduled appointment without providing a 24-hour cancellation notice. No shows are considered a cancellation and are treated as such. Appointment re-schedules for no shows are left to the lawyer's discretion.

What if I cannot reach the lawyer you have referred me to?**What happens if the lawyer never calls me back to schedule my consultation?**

We do not have access to any of the lawyer's schedules – the lawyer may be in court or fully scheduled for the day. We ask that you leave a voicemail message with your name and phone number and wait at least 5 business days for the lawyer to return your call. If the lawyer does not return your call within 5 business days or is unavailable for a consultation, we ask that you call our office, and we will provide another referral at no additional charge.

Will the lawyer see me in person?

Consultations are scheduled by the lawyers themselves and you will be subject to the lawyer's availability. The consultation may be provided over the phone or in person depending on the lawyer.

Will the lawyer review my documents?

Because the 30-minute timeframe is so limited, lawyers cannot spend their time prior to, or during the appointment reviewing documents. To avoid compromising your legal matter, do not mail or email confidential information to the lawyer without first obtaining the lawyer's consent.

Do the lawyers work on weekends?

While they may work on existing cases outside of business hours, normal business hours are Monday through Friday 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., PST. Your 30-minute appointment will be scheduled during business hours.

What if I do not like the lawyer, will I be given a second referral?

Our service only offers **one lawyer** per referral, unless there is a conflict of interest, or it is determined that the lawyer we referred you to does not practice the type of law for your matter. If you wish to seek a second opinion, you may call our office to pay for another referral.

What if the lawyer will not take my case?

Whether or not you have a meritorious case, it cannot be determined until you have a consultation. The consultation is an opportunity for you to describe your case and determine if you want to hire the lawyer. If it is determined that that you do not have a case that can benefit by legal action, often the lawyer can point you in a direction without the need for legal services. Please keep in mind that further services beyond an initial consultation are not guaranteed. Neither you nor the lawyer are under any obligation to proceed beyond the initial consultation. If you choose to hire the lawyer for any services, the lawyer will set his/her own fee.

Why do you need my name and mailing information?

To receive a referral from our service, we must record your name, mailing address, phone number, and email address (if any). We are required to keep records. However, this information is only shared with the referred lawyer; it is never sold to a third party.

We will also mail/email you a client satisfaction survey so we can get your input about your experience. Your feedback is very valuable to our organization and we encourage you to fill it out and send it back.

What if I need a lawyer in another county or state?

We only refer lawyers who are licensed to practice law in the state of California and who have an office in San Mateo County. If you need a lawyer outside of San Mateo County, please visit the State Bar of California's list of certified Lawyer Referral Services at:

<https://www.calbar.ca.gov/Public/Need-Legal-Help/Lawyer-Referral-Service>

What do I do if I have a complaint?

If you believe your lawyer has done something wrong, you can file a complaint through the State Bar of California or by calling the State Bar Lawyer Complaint Hotline at 800-843-9053. If you were dissatisfied with our service or have a complaint, please contact our office at (650) 369-4149. If your complaint is unresolved and/or you have a complaint about our certified Lawyer Referral Service, you can file a complaint against the service with the State Bar of California.

For more information, please contact our Lawyer Referral Service Program during our normal business hours, Monday – Friday, 8:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. at (650) 369-4149 or by email at LRSCClient@smcba.org