

SMCBA LAWYER REFERRAL SERVICE FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQ)

What is the Lawyer Referral Service?

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

All our attorneys 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 attorneys carry malpractice insurance and must meet our experience requirements.

Are you an attorney? Can you give me legal advice?

We do not have attorneys in our office. When you call, please note that the LRS staff who answers the phone is not an attorney. Staff members are not qualified to give you legal advice or answer legal questions. Our LRS staff members are trained to refer you to an attorney 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 attorney. 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. 150
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 attorneys?

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

I do not have any money for an attorney. 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 attorney charge?**Do the attorneys work on contingency?**

All the attorneys on the LRS Program are private practice attorneys. The LRS does not maintain fee information on the attorney. If you decide to retain the attorney 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 attorney? Can I pick who you refer me to?

The attorneys are categorized by the specific areas of law that they practice. We have friendly staff trained to select an attorney 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 attorney. We do not refer based on race, gender, nationality, or religion.

Will the attorney be close to where I live?

If you live in San Mateo County, we will try to refer you to an attorney who is close to you. But remember, our priority is to refer you to an attorney 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 attorney to set up an appointment. If you have a time sensitive case, you must keep in mind that the attorney 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 attorney?

You should call the attorney to schedule your appointment as soon as you receive the referral. Every attorney on the LRS Program has an active caseload and may not be able to immediately take your call, but the attorney will return your call in a timely manner. If you have a time sensitive case, you must keep in mind that the attorney 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 attorney to return your call. If the attorney 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 attorney to set up an appointment. If for any reason you are unable to keep your appointment with this attorney, please call the attorney'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 attorney's office directly at least 24 hours in advance. Otherwise, the attorney 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 attorney's discretion.

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

We do not have access to any of the attorney's schedules – the attorney 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 attorney to return your call. If the attorney 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 attorney see me in person?

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

Will the attorney review my documents?

Because the 30-minute timeframe is so limited, attorneys may not 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 attorney without first obtaining the attorney's consent.

Do the attorneys 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 attorney, will I be given a second referral?

Our service only offers **one attorney** per referral, unless there is a conflict of interest, or it is determined that the attorney 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 attorney 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 attorney. If it is determined that that you do not have a case that can benefit by legal action, often the attorney 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 attorney are under any obligation to proceed beyond the initial consultation. If you choose to hire the attorney for any services, the attorney 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 attorney; 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 an attorney in another county or state?

We only refer attorneys who are licensed to practice law in the state of California and who have an office in San Mateo County. If you need an attorney 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/Attorney-Referral-Service>

What do I do if I have a complaint?

If you believe your attorney has done something wrong, you can file a complaint through the State Bar of California or by calling the State Bar Attorney 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 LRSCClient@smcba.org