



National Legal Aid

National Legal Aid Best Practice Standards

Legal Information and Advice Services

Principle

Information and advice services should equip clients with sufficient, adequate and appropriate information and other resources necessary to resolve legal queries or to access support services able to assist such resolution.

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Element	Includes	Best Practice Standard
Access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Telephone services. • Video services. • Electronic access – web, kiosk, email. • Personal interviews. • Outreach services. • Classes and forums. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The mix of options should be based on an analysis of need of client groups. A range of service options will assist clients to access services. • Awareness of the service by clients is a prerequisite to access. Services should employ strategies to ensure that clients are aware of the availability of services. Such strategies should be consistent with the ability of the service to meet client demand.
Equity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All services should ensure equity in service coverage. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Services should be provided in a manner which is non discriminatory. In particular services should be designed so as to facilitate access by clients who may experience social or economic disadvantage. • Equity strategies may be wide ranging and would include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The provision of interpreters; and - Specially designed access routes for particular target client groups.
Efficiency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Services should maximise limited resources. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In an environment where demand for service may exceed the resources available to meet the demand, there is an imperative for services to operate efficiently by <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Utilising databases, precedents and other materials - Providing support materials and resources to clients etc

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Professional Competence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Services should be of a high quality and reflect good professional practice. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Services should be able to demonstrate that staff have the professional competence to provide the level of legal information or advice which they are required to provide. In this context, competence is wider than technical legal competence and includes high level communication and client management skills. • All staff providing the service should receive appropriate training, professional development and professional supervision. Where paralegal staff are used, services should demonstrate appropriate supervision. • Training should include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Legal update training - Communication and client management skills - Use of office systems and resources.
Accuracy and Consistency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff provided with appropriate resources to enable them to provide a consistent and accurate service. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appropriate procedures and resources must be available including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Legal Information and Referral databases - Precedents and toolkits - Self Help materials.
Clear definition of service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Services delivered within clearly defined parameters. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Services should be clearly defined and should be apparent to clients using the service. • A legal information service provides information of general application only.

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information may be made available to clients through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Telephone services - Inperson services; or - Published materials • A legal advice service provides fact specific advice where the provider: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Makes an assessment of the client’s individual circumstances - Exercises professional judgment in applying the law to the client’s circumstances - Provides the client with a range of options about how to proceed - Analyses those options so as to assist the client to make a decision about which option best meets the client’s need
<p>Clear Standards</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Services standards should incorporate all elements of best practice. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service Standards should include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Scope of service - Professional and ethical obligations - Client confidentiality - Client service standards - Conflict policy - Professional supervision - Client feedback mechanism.

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Element	Includes	Best Practice Standard
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All standards should be consistent with the elements of best practice.
Evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Services measures should indicate: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Efficiency - Effectiveness - Quality • Services should be evaluated regularly. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Services should have a range of measures incorporating <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Financial measures - Non financial measures of effectiveness - Quality measures - Client feedback. • Services should have evaluation strategies in place to ensure continuous review and improvement.