

Coordinated Intake Handbook

Overview of Coordinated Intake

The purpose of the coordinated intake system is to provide eligible Minnesotans with efficient and easy access to the legal aid organization most likely to assist them, based on their legal issue and venue, by accurately routing their first call for help.

Background

The Coordinated Intake effort began in 2017 with a directive from the Minnesota Supreme Court to improve the experience of applicants needing legal aid services by coordinating intake access throughout Minnesota. This directive was rooted in the recommendations contained in a report examining access to legal aid services across the state. The recommendations in the report (referred to as the “Tull Report”) were intended to address confusion and frustration on the part of applicants regarding where to apply for assistance and to reduce applicant “bounce”. Bounce refers to the process in which applicants were only provided an organization’s phone number when referred to other legal aid organizations. This required applicants to make phone calls to multiple legal aid organizations, telling their story over and over, as they searched for an organization able to help.

The creation of a statewide, toll free number for legal aid, the establishment of clear and consistent referral policies, and a broad marketing campaign to reach likely applicants are all components of the Tull recommendations. The current coordinated intake system reflects the participating organizations’ efforts to respond to these recommendations and shorten the journey to justice for eligible Minnesotans.

Over the course of 2019 and 2020, all participating programs migrated to LegalServer to facilitate electronic case transfers, and a referral policy and governance structure were put into place. Legal Services State Support created and launched LOON, a website used by participating organizations to evaluate applicant eligibility so intake staff can accurately refer applicants to organizations likely to provide service to that applicant.

Goals

The goals of Coordinated Intake are to:

- Assist applicants seeking legal aid services in reaching the organization most likely to assist them on their first phone call.
- Create and market a statewide, toll-free telephone number for legal aid services across the state.
- Establish referral policies and case priorities for participating legal aid organizations.
- Implement an easy process for the secure electronic transfer of applicant information between organizations.

- Identify mechanisms and data tracking to ensure applicants do not “fall through the cracks” between organizations.
- Ensure the ability of legal aid organizations to provide advice to a high volume of applicants whose legal situations are best resolved through limited services.

Participating Organizations

Minnesota is divided into four regions with “regional hubs” to conduct initial applicant screening and referral to the legal aid organization that best fits the applicant’s legal needs. Hubs receive calls from the statewide 1-877 number and screen applicants to determine which participating organization in the region is most likely to serve the applicant. Hubs are familiar with the legal aid organizations in their area, as well as local community service providers and partners. This knowledge allows Hubs to effectively screen applicants for legal services and knowledgably refer applicants to non-legal service organizations.

Minnesota’s hub system:

- **Northeast:** Justice North (previously LASNEM) provides legal aid services and coordinated intake for the 11 counties of northeastern Minnesota.
 - Justice North serves as the hub organization for Anishinabe Legal Services and Volunteer Lawyers Network.
- **Northwest:** Legal Services of Northwestern Minnesota (LSNM) provides legal aid services and coordinated intake for the 22 counties of northwestern Minnesota.
 - LSNM serves as the hub organization for Anishinabe Legal Services and Volunteer Lawyers Network.
- **Central:** Mid-Minnesota Legal Aid (MMLA) provides legal aid services and coordinated intake for 20 central Minnesota counties, plus 6 additional counties for seniors, and statewide services for disability law.
 - MMLA serves as the hub organization for Central Minnesota Legal Services and Volunteer Lawyers Network.
- **Southern:** Southern Minnesota Regional Legal Services (SMRLS) provides legal aid services and coordinated intake for the 33 southern counties of Minnesota and legal aid services for agricultural workers statewide and across North Dakota.
 - SMRLS serves as the hub organization for Legal Assistance of Olmsted County, Legal Assistance of Dakota County, and Volunteer Lawyers Network.

The Applicant Experience

Applicants enter the Coordinated Intake System through the 1-877-MY-MN-LAW (1-877-696-6529) telephone number, calling a participating organization directly, or completing an online intake. The 1-877 number is currently listed on all Hub websites in place of their usual intake number.

When an applicant calls the 1-877-MY-MN-LAW (1-877-696-6529) number, an automated phone system asks the caller which language they prefer: English, Spanish, Hmong, Karen, or Somali. The system then prompts the caller to enter their zip code. Every zip code in the state is linked to a specific regional Hub. The system matches the zip code to the appropriate Hub and seamlessly transfers the call based on the information entered. If no zip code is entered, the caller is connected to SMRLS.

Regional Hubs answer intake calls during their intake hours. When an applicant reaches a Hub, the intake specialist screens the applicant to determine eligibility for services at their organization or other organizations within their region. Based on the applicant screening, the intake specialist determines which organization in the region is most likely to provide services to the applicant. The applicant's information is recorded in LegalServer and e-transferred to the appropriate organization.

Calls made to the 1-877 number outside of a Hub's designated intake hours are directed to the Hub's voicemail. To accommodate applicants who prefer a language other than English, each Hub must have voicemail prompts recorded in the languages commonly spoken in that region. Intake specialists at the Hub attempt to call the applicant back within one business day of receiving a voicemail.

Coordinated Intake Policies and Procedures

Updating Information in LOON

The Coordinated Intake System relies on the information in LOON (Legal Organizations Online Network) to determine which organization is most likely to serve an applicant. All organizations have agreed to use LOON when making referrals and keep the information in LOON updated. Maintaining the information in LOON and keeping it as up to date as possible is paramount.

Participating organizations are responsible for regularly updating their information in LOON. This includes reviewing and updating their listings at least quarterly and making immediate updates in the event of a significant program change. LOON can be accessed at www.lawhelpmn.org, scrolling to the bottom of the screen, and clicking on the "LOON" link in the footer. When you click the link, you will be prompted to sign in. Each legal aid organization has a unique username and password. If you do not know your organization's credentials, ask your supervisor, or email Sam Manning at smanning@mnlegalservices.org. Questions or comments about LOON should be directed to Sam Manning.

Hub Screening

If a call originates from the 1-877 number, use the **Intake Type** field in LegalServer to mark the case "**1-877 Call.**"

Hub intake specialists screen all applicants according to coordinated intake policies, regardless of whether the call originates from the statewide number, the hub's direct number, or online intakes. Hub intake specialists use the required LegalServer fields below to assess the

applicant's eligibility for services. Hubs can use these fields as a prescreen function in LegalServer or incorporate the required fields as part of their standard intake.

- Name
- Date of Birth
- Zip Code
- Address
- County of Residence
- County of Dispute
- Phone
- Email Address
- Contact Information Safety Screening
- Language
- Interpreter Needed
- Adverse Party Name
- # of people over 18
- # of people under 18
- Income Type
- Income Amount
- Legal Problem Code
- Emergency Status

Based on the applicant screening, the intake specialist determines which organization in the region is most likely to provide services to the applicant. If the applicant appears eligible for services at the hub, the intake specialist completes a full intake following their organization's intake criteria and process.

If the applicant appears eligible for services from another organization, the intake specialist records the applicant's information in LegalServer and e-transfers it to the appropriate organization.

Determining Where to E-Transfer the Case

Hub intake specialists use LOON to determine if another organization is likely to provide services to an applicant. Intake specialists review LOON for information about:

- an organization's case types and priorities for different levels of service;
- an organization's eligibility criteria; and
- contact information if the intake specialist has questions about the listing.

If the applicant appears eligible for services from another coordinated intake organization, intake specialists **e-transfer** (see below) the case.

What if it seems like no Coordinated Intake organization is likely to be able to serve the applicant?

During the applicant screening, if it is apparent that there is no coordinated intake organization that will likely serve the applicant, review LOON to determine if there are any other legal aid organizations that are likely to provide services. If there is a legal aid organization that is likely to provide services, make a referral to the appropriate organization as stated in the Referral Tab in LOON and the Referral Policy.

If after searching LOON there are no organizations that are likely to provide services, notify the applicant that they are not eligible for services.

Sending an E-Transfer

When e-transferring an applicant's information in LegalServer to another organization:

- Ask the applicant for their consent to transfer their information to the organization that is most likely to assist them. If the applicant does not consent, give them the organization's contact information and intake hours.
- Create an e-transfer note that contains the following information:
 - i. Basic legal issue
 - ii. Any known hearings or deadlines
 - iii. Language of caller and whether an interpreter is needed
 - iv. Email of the intake specialist at the organization making the e-transfer, **if** you are comfortable receiving follow-up questions from the receiving organization directly.
 - Example e-transfer note: *Referral for family issue – custody case with domestic violence, court on Jan. 2 at 9am. Applicant speaks Somali, needs interpreter. staffname@mylegalaid.org.*
- If the case qualifies as an emergency, select Yes in the Emergency system field. ([When to designate an e-transfer as an emergency](#)).
- Complete the Originating Agency Program field as appropriate. For example, set field as "Coordinated Intake Restricted" for all e-transfers to VLN.

Receiving an E-Transfer

Participating organizations have agreed to accept all e-transfers, regardless of whether the applicant came in from the 1-877 number or an organization's direct intake line. Accepting an e-transfer does not mean accepting the case for service. Accepting the e-transfer means:

1. Clicking "Begin Intake" at the bottom of the e-transfer summary screen so that the information enters your LegalServer.
2. Being responsible for contacting the applicant to inform them you can or cannot take their case, and if appropriate, whether there is another referral available.

E-Transfer Process

1. Click the case to view the E-transfer Summary Screen.
2. Review e-transfer notes as they should provide important information.
3. Click "Begin Intake" at the bottom of the e-transfer summary screen.
4. Run a conflict check.
 - a. If there is not a conflict, assess whether your organization is able to accept the case.
 - b. If there is a conflict, or your organization cannot accept the case, use LOON to assess whether the applicant is likely to receive services at another organization.

Contact the applicant to inform them you are unable to provide services and whether there is another referral available.

- i. If the applicant appears eligible for services from another organization, get consent to transfer the case. Choose “Reject and Refer” to e-transfer the case.
- ii. If the applicant does not appear eligible for services at another organization, “Reject” the case and indicate in the Rejection Notes your organization had a conflict or why you were unable to serve the applicant.

What if the E-transfer was sent in error?

If the referring organization determines they sent an e-transfer in error, they can cancel the e-transfer if the receiving organization has not already started the intake. The referring organization can cancel the e-transfer by deleting the transfer from the list of existing transfers. This is usually displayed on the case profile.

- The transfer will drop off the receiving organization’s list of pending transfers. It is possible that someone at the receiving organization has the pending transfer list displayed and sees the pending transfer before it is cancelled. If the referring organization cancels, the receiving organization could still click on the pending transfer, but would not be able to reject or start intake. Once they returned to the list of pending transfers, the cancelled one will have disappeared.
- **Please notify the receiving organization, through the contact on the chart below, if you cancel an e-transfer.**

If a receiving organization accepts an e-transfer and then determines that the referring organization e-transferred the applicant’s case to them in error, the receiving organization should transfer the applicant to the correct organization as soon as possible. Then contact the referring organization directly using the chart below.

If you have questions about an e-transfer or received an e-transfer you should not (based on your LOON listing), contact the referring organization directly. If there are two emails listed in the contact section, the organization requests that you send communication to both email addresses.

Organization	Contact(s)	Email
Justice North	Ali Hanson	ali.hanson@justicenorth.org
LSNM	Kayla Swanson	kswanson@lsnmlaw.org
MMLA	Ann Cofell; Chris Hampson	acofell@mylegalaid.org champson@mylegalaid.org
SMRLS	Tansini Detpraiwan; Argerie Diaz-White	tansini.detpraiwan@smrls.org argerie.diaz-white@smrls.org

VLN	Luce Guillen-Givins	luce.givins@vlnmn.org
LAOC	Samantha Fletcher	samantha@laocmn.org
LADC	Sharon Jones	sjones@dakotalegal.org ; intake@dakotalegal.org
CMLS	Jessica Mastellar	jmastellar@centralmnlegal.org

If you are unable to resolve the referral issue, or it impacts larger coordinated intake processes, contact Aimee at State Support for assistance: afalbo@mnlegalservices.org.

Key Decisions

Coordinated Intake will be organized by Regional Hubs. One of the first significant decisions in Coordinated Intake was to organize the coordinated intake system into Regional Hubs. Hub programs were selected based on their experience with handling high volumes of applicants, coverage in the region, and technology to support Coordinated Intake. Based on these criteria, Justice North, LSNM, MMLA and SMRLS were selected as Hubs.

Governance Policy. The [Governance Policy](#) contains the agreement between participating organizations for how they will interact with each other, resolve conflicts, and monitor the coordinated intake system to ensure its success. (Adopted October 25, 2021, amended July 23, 2023)

Referral Policy. The [Referral Policy](#) lays out the rules for referring applicants between organizations when the first organization in contact with the applicant cannot serve them. This policy is superseded by Coordinated Intake, but still applies for referrals to non-participating organizations. (Adopted September 2020, an updated version currently being drafted)

E-transfers may not be rejected. Participating organizations will accept all e-transfers. This decision applies to all e-transfers between participating organizations, regardless of whether the original call came in from the 1-877 number or an organization's direct intake line. Accepting an e-transfer means accepting the LegalServer matter into an organization's LegalServer system. It does not necessarily mean the organization will accept the case for service. When a program accepts an e-transfer, they are responsible for following up with the applicant to either: (1) accept the case for service OR (2) if unable to serve the applicant, refer the case to another program OR notify the applicant they are not eligible for services. (Decided 1/24/2022; Clarified 3/28/2022)

Hubs will no longer make "phone number only" referrals to programs in their region; only e-transfers will be used. Hubs will screen all applicants to determine which organization in the region can best serve the client's needs. If a Hub determines another organization may be able to serve the applicant, the Hub will refer the applicant to the appropriate organization by e-

transfer. This decision applies to all calls received by a Hub, whether the call came in through the 1-877 number or to the Hub's direct number. If a Hub determines the caller should be served by a different region before entering information into LegalServer, the Hub may transfer the phone call to the appropriate Hub without an accompanying e-transfer. Transferring the call is not the same thing as a phone number only referral and removes the burden from the caller to write down and call another phone number. (Date Decided: 1/24/2022; Clarified 3/28/2022)

Use of Restricted Programs. All Hubs will use a Coordinated Intake "restricted program/office" in LegalServer. This should be implemented as soon as possible, and at a minimum, prior to when the Hub's region is "Live." For organizations concerned about conflicts when accepting e-transfers, best practice is to implement the LegalServer restricted program/office functionality. (Date decided: April 25, 2022)

LegalServer Required Screening Fields. Hubs are required to screen all applicants for services using the following LegalServer fields:

- Name
- Date of Birth
- Zip Code
- Address
- County of Residence
- County of Dispute
- Phone
- Email Address
- Contact Information Safety Screening
- Language
- Interpreter Needed
- Adverse Party Name
- # of people over 18
- # of people under 18
- Income Type
- Income Amount
- Legal Problem Code
- Emergency Status

Hubs can select whether to include the LegalServer fields as a prescreen or incorporate into their current intake process. (Date decided: March 27, 2023)

Communication Policy for disseminating new coordinated intake policies and procedures. (Date decided: October 23, 2023)

1. Committee/State Support will draft new or updated written policies and share with the Communication Lead at each organization. Each organization is responsible for establishing its own process for how the Communication Lead will share information internally.
2. State Support will share new or updated policies at CIWG Intake Staff Supervisors Meetings.
3. State Support will create Talent LMS trainings for staff to complete on their own time.

Definitions:

The following definitions apply to terms used throughout this reference guide:

1-877-MY-MN-LAW (1-877-696-6529, also called “statewide phone number”): Toll-free telephone number created to support Minnesota Coordinated Intake. Callers are asked what language they prefer (English, Spanish, Hmong, Somali, Karen) then directed to enter their zip code, and automatically connected to the hub organization for their zip code.

Applicant: a caller who is applying for legal aid services but has not yet had their case accepted for service.

Applicant Screening: the process of collecting basic information regarding an applicant’s demographics, venue, income, and legal issue to determine which organization can best serve the applicant’s needs. The required LegalServer fields for all Hub e-transfers can be found in the Key Decisions section of this Guide. Hubs can use this list as a prescreen function in LegalServer or include the required fields in their own intake process. This information is collected by Hubs and shared with Receiving Organizations when e-transferring cases. Gathering consistent information allows **Hubs** to determine which **Receiving Organization** is most likely to accept and serve an individual applicant. It also ensures Receiving Organizations receive consistent information from all Hubs.

Contact Information Safety Screening Field: The coordinated intake organizations decided to create a custom ‘safe to contact’ field to identify whether the applicant’s information is safe to use. As described in the *e-transfer summary screen* definition, the e-transfer summary screen cannot be edited. Therefore, to view the ‘safe to contact’ field, the receiving organization must click Begin Intake. The e-transfer summary screen may show some phone numbers as ‘unsafe’ because the default LegalServer safety screen is a checkbox; and when left unchecked, the contact information will display as unsafe. Receiving organizations should click through to the full intake to review the custom ‘safe to contact’ field as this is the field all organizations have agreed to use.

E-transfer: the process of sending applicant and client data electronically between Coordinated Intake program participants through LegalServer.

E-transfer Summary Screen: When an organization receives an e-transfer, they first click on the case ID to see the e-transfer summary screen. The e-transfer summary screen contains a standard set of fields that cannot be edited. To see the applicant’s case file, the receiving organization must click “Begin Intake”. The information that the referring organization has already collected from the applicant will then populate the receiving organization’s corresponding intake fields.

Feedback: information provided to the hub organizations regarding misdirected e-transfers or inadequate information gathering that resulted in an applicant being sent to the wrong organization. Feedback also includes information provided to State Support about the general operation of coordinated intake and its supporting tools.

Full Intake: a full intake is completed when the organization most likely to serve an applicant has conducted a complete interview with the applicant and received all information related to intake questions required by that organization, including questions related to eligibility, demographic, and legal problem. A full intake is different than an **Applicant Screening**.

Hub: Hub organizations are the four legal aid organizations that receive telephone transfers from the 1-877 number, screen applicants, and transfer applicants to the appropriate participating organization based on the information collected at screening. Each Hub covers a geographic region in Minnesota:

- Northeast MN: Justice North (previously LASNEM)
- Northwest MN: Legal Services of Northwest Minnesota (LSNM)
- Central MN: Mid-Minnesota Legal Aid (MMLA)
- Southern MN: Southern Minnesota Regional Legal Services (SMRLS).

IVR (Interactive Voice Response): “IVR” is the technical term for the automated phone system within the 1-877 number that prompts callers to enter their preferred language and zip code, and then connects applicants to the appropriate Hub’s phone system. The prompts in English and Spanish are automated text-to-voice recordings. The prompts in Hmong, Somali, and Karen are recorded voices of legal aid staff.

LegalServer: the case management system used by all Coordinated Intake organizations.

LegalServer List View: the chart display in LegalServer that is used for conflict checks, searches, pending e-transfers, your list of assigned cases, etc. Some list views allow the LegalServer administrators to change which columns show up, but others do not allow administrators to make changes.

LegalServer Intake Type: Intake Type is used to designate a matter in LegalServer as originating from the 1-877 number. Hubs must select “1-877 Call” as the Intake Type during their initial screening if the phone call originated from statewide 1-877 number. When a Hub e-transfers a matter to a receiving program, the Intake Type will already be designated as “1-877” and should NOT be changed.

LOON: Legal Organizations Online Network. A database, developed and maintained by State Support, that serves as the primary resource for referral information such as an organization’s priorities, case types served, and income eligibility. Organizations in LOON include those participating in Coordinated Intake and non-coordinated intake organizations. Organizations are responsible for reviewing and updating LOON information regularly, and any time changes

occur that impact case acceptance or referrals. LOON is the most current information for coordinated intake referrals. LOON is the database all organizations have agreed to use, and maintain, for all statewide referrals.

LOON can be accessed at www.lawhelpmn.org, scrolling to the bottom of the screen, and clicking on the "LOON" link in the footer. When you click the link, you will be prompted to sign in. Each legal aid organization has a unique username and password. If you do not know your organization's credentials, ask your supervisor, or email Sam Manning at smanning@mnlegalservices.org. For questions about LOON or to schedule a training, contact Sam Manning.

Participating Organizations: An LSAC funded legal aid provider who is participating in the Minnesota Coordinated Intake System. A participating organization receives applicant calls, e-transfers, and abides by all procedures and policies established by CIWG and Governance Committee.

- Justice North (formerly LASNEM)
- Legal Services of Northwest Minnesota (LSNM)
- Mid-Minnesota Legal Aid (MMLA)
- Southern Minnesota Regional Legal Services (SMRLS)
- Central Minnesota Legal Services (CMLS)
- Legal Assistance of Dakota County (LADC)
- Legal Assistance of Olmsted County (LAOC)
- Volunteer Lawyers Network (VLN)

Receiving Organization: All **Participating Organizations** who are not **Hubs**. A receiving organization receives e-transfers from a Hub based on the receiving organization's geographic coverage, eligibility criteria, case types, and priorities as reviewed by the Hub organization during the **screening process**. Receiving organizations gather additional information from applicants and conduct further intake analysis to determine case acceptance.

Restricted Program/Office: the restricted program/office configuration in **LegalServer** allows organizations to hold applicant information in a "walled off" space, so that case handlers within the organization do not have access to the applicant information. The purpose of a restricted program is to protect applicant data, allow for a conflict check to be conducted, and avoid potential conflicts of interest from occurring until an assessment of the applicant's situation is complete.

For example, if a **Hub** screens an applicant and then **e-transfers** the case to a **Receiving Organization**, the **Hub** can assign the matter to a Restricted Program to avoid a conflict if an adverse party later applies for services with the **Hub**. The original applicant's name will appear in the conflict search **List View** but data about the matter will not be available to staff who do not have access to the Restricted Program.