

Performance Standard No. 1 – Client Access
Article No. 1

- I. **Introduction** – The State Board of Civil Legal Aid (BOCLA) establishes standards, administrative policies, and procedures necessary to ensure quality advocacy for persons unable to afford private counsel, as directed by Minn. Stat. 480.2415, subd. 2(b)(3). The intake standards outlined in this policy seek to (1) improve the applicant experience when applying for civil legal aid services, (2) provide clarity for direct service programs to properly maintain information in LOON, and (3) ensure that applicants are referred to an available provider or told that there are no available civil legal aid services in the most efficient manner.

- II. **Compliance** - Compliance with these standards is required as a condition of the BOCLA grant contract. Compliance will be monitored through site visits, data requests through Legal Services State Support, and evaluation of case data spreadsheets. Failure to comply may result in performance improvement plans or additional corrective action.

- III. **Effective Date** – September 1, 2026

- IV. **Definitions** – The following definitions apply to Article 1.
 - a. Applicant: A person who is applying for legal aid services but has not yet had their case accepted for service.

 - b. 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.

 - c. Coordinated Intake: A centralized intake system to provide eligible Minnesotans with efficient and easy access to the participating legal aid organizations (see the list of Hub organizations and Receiving organizations on BOCLA website for full list) based on the applicant’s demographics, venue, income, and legal issue. The key components of the coordinated intake process include a centralized phone number, Hub and Receiving organizations, LegalServer, and LOON.

 - d. Direct Service Provider: A BOCLA funded organization that provides legal representation to individuals and has a public facing intake option. A list of the current direct service provider organizations is available on the BOCLA website.

- e. 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 required by that organization, including questions related to eligibility, demographics, and legal problem.
- f. Hub Organization: Hub organizations are the legal aid organizations that receive telephone transfers from the statewide phone 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. A list of the Hub organizations is available on the BOCLA website.
- g. LOON: LOON is an acronym for 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 real time priorities, current case types served, and income eligibility. LOON reflects the case types that are currently accepted from public applicants.
- h. Receiving Organization – 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 must use the coordinated intake policies and procedures, as described in the Coordinated Intake Handbook found on LOON. Receiving organizations gather additional information from applicants and conduct further intake analysis to determine case acceptance. A list of the current Receiving organizations is available on the BOCLA website.
- i. Referral – To send or direct an applicant to a different direct service provider for legal assistance based on screening the case type, income of the applicant, county of residence, county of dispute, age of the applicant, and immigration status of the applicant.
- j. Reject – To refuse to accept an applicant or consider another direct service provider for legal assistance based on the legal issue of the applicant, eligibility requirements of the direct service provider, or capacity as listed on LOON.

V. LOON Information

- a. Accurate referrals depend on the information in LOON to determine which organization is most likely to serve an applicant. All direct service providers are required to keep the information about their organization in LOON up to date.
- b. Direct service providers will update LOON in real time as priorities and capacities change. Examples of changes that could impact priorities or capacity include medical or parental leave, grants are received or end, projects are started or finished, staffing changes, or other significant program changes.
- c. Direct service providers will review LOON listings with supervisors to ensure LOON information accurately reflects current case acceptance within the organization.
- d. Direct service providers will have appropriate staff designated to verify the accuracy of the information in LOON at least quarterly.
- e. Direct service providers will have an editor account and a provider (view only) account. The editor account will only be used when editing or verifying the accuracy of the LOON listing. The provider (view only) account will be used by direct service provider staff for making referrals.
- f. Direct service provider will designate and train a back- up staff member to ensure LOON accuracy during periods of transition. The contact information for the back-up staff member will be communicated to Legal Services State Support.
- g. Direct service providers will communicate with Legal Services State Support to identify specific issues with the LOON technology or process.
- h. Direct service providers will communicate with each other to clarify or confirm information listed on LOON. If direct service providers cannot resolve their concerns, they may contact BOCLA staff for assistance.

VI. Referrals

a. Making Referrals

- i. Direct service providers will use LOON when determining where to refer an applicant. Direct service providers will incorporate checking LOON into their official intake process.
- ii. When reviewing a listing in LOON, staff will look for information about:
 1. Service area/counties served
 2. Legal topics
 3. Eligibility requirements and criteria
 4. Staff Notes for case types and priorities for different levels of legal service
 5. Referral Tab for the best way to refer a case to the organization
- iii. Direct service providers will communicate with each other to clarify or confirm information listed on LOON. If direct service providers cannot resolve their concerns, they may contact BOCLA staff for assistance.

b. Case Venue

- i. When an applicant's residence is different from where the case is venued, a referral will be made based on where the case is venued. For cases with no clear county-based venue (such as immigration cases or federal benefits cases), the referral will be made based on the applicant's residence.
- ii. Determining where to refer a case when the venue may be different than the applicant's residence can be complicated. For further guidance and examples, please refer to the FAQ section on LOON.

c. Process for a Referral Before Opening a Case in a Client Management System

- i. This section outlines requirements for referrals when one or both direct service organizations do not participate as a Hub or Receiving organization in the coordinated intake process. The Hub and Receiving organizations within the coordinated intake process will use the coordinated intake policies and procedures, as described in the Coordinated Intake Handbook found on LOON.
- ii. The sending direct service organization will review the Referral Tab in LOON to determine the best way to refer the applicant to the receiving direct service organization and give this information to the applicant.

- iii. If after reviewing LOON, the sending direct service organization cannot identify another organization to provide services to the applicant, the applicant will be told there are no organizations available to help with their legal problem and the case will be rejected.
- iv. Referrals to law libraries, self-help centers, and lawyer referral programs are not covered by this standard.