

## Making Trauma-Informed Warm Referrals in the Legal Assistance Sector

### What is a referral?

Referral is the process of connecting clients to other services to address the range of needs the client is presenting with. This could include financial, emotional, housing, family, parenting, NDIS, mental health, and settlement etc. Referral to other services is a client-centred approach supporting the client beyond facing a legal issue.

Warm referrals are trauma-informed. They are made with the client present and with their consent. This approach may increase client engagement and address challenges in navigating service systems and feelings of being overwhelmed as well as experiencing distrust.

There are a range of ways referrals can be made depend on the needs of the client, policy of your organisation, the situation, time and other resources available.

Ideally, when making a referral:

- try to obtain written consent from the client.
- explain how the service system works, including possible wait times and waiting lists.
- acknowledge any challenges and frustrations of accessing services and the client's emotions.
- encourage the client to write down information such as times of appointments.
- discuss practical issues such as ways of getting to an appointment.

### What is a trauma-informed warm referral?

Supporting the client to make the call or self-referral with the staff member present.

This approach is helpful if the client would like support when making a self-referral. It may address a client's fear or apprehension when speaking to another service. You can support the client by anticipating the kinds of questions they will be asked and planning what your role will be during the referral process.

Making the referral with the client present.

If the client is not comfortable making the call themselves, this approach is helpful in establishing trust and transparency and involving the client in the referral process. The client is aware of the information provided to other organisations and can ask questions with your support.

### Other ways of making a referral?

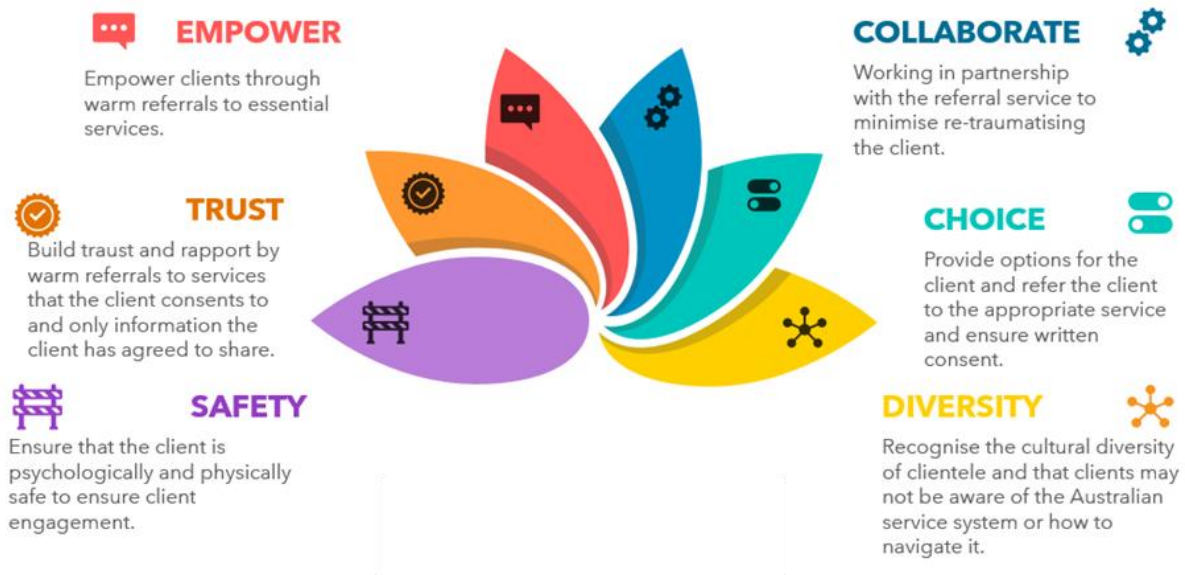
It is not always appropriate or possible to make referrals with the client present. In these situations, a referral may involve:

Providing information to the client about a service to enable the client to follow up when/if they're ready.

This approach is suitable if the client is unsure about accessing the service and would like further time to consider the referral or if the client has the personal and social resources to navigate the service system thus increasing their independence.

Contacting and providing information about the client without them being present and warm referrals.

This may be suitable if the client chooses not to participate in the referral process or if, for any reason, there are significant safety concerns, and the client is unaware or disagrees with the referral.



## How do I find the right services?

- AskIzzy – a free search tool to help find shelter, food, health and other essential support: [askizzy.org.au](http://askizzy.org.au)
- Telephone referrals/information services
- Interagency meetings
- Agency visits to local services

The following are a few examples of national accessible services:

- Alcohol Drug Info Service 1800 250 015. Support, information, counselling and referral to services nationwide.
- Domestic Violence Line 1800 737 732 (1800 RESPECT). The Domestic Violence Line provides telephone counselling, information and referrals for women and same-sex partners who are experiencing or have experienced domestic violence.

### Homelessness and Crisis Accommodation.

- NSW: Link2home 1800 152 152.
- ACT: OneLink 1800 176 468.
- NT: ShelterMe [www.shelterme.org.au](http://www.shelterme.org.au).
- VIC: Crisis Accommodation 1800 825 955.
- QLD: Homeless Hotline 1800 47 47 53.
- WA: EntryPoint Perth 1800 124 684.
- SA: Homelessness Connect 1800 800 098.
- TAS: Housing Connect 1800 800 588.

### Mens Services.

- Men's Referral Service 1300 766 491. Provides information and referral to men with family issues and the people who support them.
- Brother to Brother 1800 435 799 for First Nations men experiencing crisis.
- MensLine Australia. 24/7 online or telephone counselling support for men. 1300 78 99 78.

#### Aged Care Services.

- My Aged Care 1800 200 422. Assists older people, their families and carers to access aged care information and service.

#### For Mental health support.

- Lifeline 13 11 14. 24/7 crisis support and suicide prevention services.
- Suicide Call Back Service 1300 659 467.
- Beyond Blue 1300 224 636 for mental health support for all ages.
- 13 YARN for First Nations people needing crisis support.
- Head to Health national phone line 1800 595 212 for mental health information and support.
- Q Life 1800 184 527, Support LGBTQ+ people.

In an emergency situation follow the protocol of your organisation.

## Why it is so important for legal practitioners to make warm referrals as part of a trauma informed practice?

*Legal practitioners, by providing warm referrals to clients, are ensuring a continuation of care, which is part of an integrated practice. An integrated practice by legal organisations ultimately builds trust and further engagement with services for clients that are already disadvantaged and provides a more positive outcome.*

The *With You Trauma-Informed Organisational Toolkit*, developed from national consultations, research, and best practice examples, recommends that legal assistance organisations provide clients with best practice and holistic support.

Integrated practice, in the context of a legal assistance organisation, involves coordinating with various other services, such as mental health, social work, housing, and employment services to address the interconnected issues clients face. The goal is to ensure clients receive holistic support that addresses their legal, social, emotional and economic needs, ultimately providing a more seamless, supportive experience.

Contact the *With You* team to find out more about Trauma-Informed Practice throughout Australia: [withyou@legalaidsnsw.gov.au](mailto:withyou@legalaidsnsw.gov.au)