

Getting Legal Advice

If you are in trouble with the Police, or have been charged with a crime and have an upcoming court case, you should speak to a lawyer and get some legal advice.

What is the role of a lawyer?

Lawyers provide legal advice and information, as well as representation in court.

Lawyers are bound by a 'duty of confidentiality' towards their clients. This means that they cannot tell anyone the information you give them about yourself or your case. In fact, lawyers can get in very serious trouble if they break those rules. This applies even if you tell them about your involvement in a very serious crime.

Their role is not to judge you, it is to give you legal advice about the situation you are in, explain what your options are, and what the likely outcome of your case may be.

What about in court?

Your lawyer's role in court is to say things about your case and your circumstances that they believe will best advance your case. They may leave out information you have given them, but this may be for a good reason.

It is also important to understand that (despite what many people may think!), lawyers are not allowed to lie in court or give dishonest or misleading information – in fact when you become a lawyer you swear on oath that you will never mislead the court. Lawyers will only say things in court that they believe will help your case.

Legal Aid NSW – Children's Legal Service (under 18's)

This service provides advice, information and representation to anyone under 18 years of age who is in trouble with the Police, under arrest, or facing a charge or AVO application in the Children's Court.

For information contact the **Legal Aid Youth Hotline 1800 10 18**. This service is open until midnight during the week and 24 hours on the weekend.

See Fact Sheet – '*Legal Aid NSW Children's Legal Service*' for more information.

Legal Aid NSW –Criminal Law advice for adults (over 18's)

If you are over 18, you have to make an application for Legal Aid in order to get representation at Court. The test of whether you are eligible depends on how much you earn, what money you have in the bank, and also on the nature of your case. Legal Aid does not, for example, assist with traffic matters in the Local Court.

You can get basic legal advice through your local Legal Aid branch even though you may not be eligible for representation at Court.

For further information about how to apply for Legal Aid, the location of your nearest branch office, or how else we may be able to help you, you should contact Legal Aid NSW Head Office, Tel: 02 9219 5000.

Community Legal Centres

Aside from Legal Aid NSW, there are a number of Community Legal Centres who can assist with representation and advice in a range of areas, including criminal law.

For general information regarding Community Legal Centres, you can contact the NSW Combined CLC Group. Tel: (02) 9212 7333.

The following CLCs have specialist youth or children's solicitors, or may be of particular assistance to young people:

- Shopfront Youth Legal Centre (assists young people aged 10 – 25)
Tel: (02) 9360 1847
- Marrickville Legal Centre (has a specialist youth solicitor, for young people 10-18) Tel: (02) 9559 2899
- Welfare Rights Centre (assists / represents people having problems with Centrelink) Tel: (02) 9211 5300

What if I want to find a private solicitor?

You can contact the Law Society Solicitor Referral Service to find a suitable private solicitor in your area. Tel: (02) 9926 0300

Law Access – for general legal information and referrals

This service is a good place to start if you are not sure where to go for help. They have an enormous database of all of the legal services in NSW.

They also have lawyers on hand to give basic telephone legal advice if necessary, and assist with calls and enquiries to make sure you are steered in the right direction.
Tel: 1300 888 529.