

Legal Aid NSW Practical Legal Training (PLT) Program

Guidelines for Applicants

1. Overview

Thank you for your interest in the Legal Aid NSW PLT Program. This document:

- Sets out background information about Legal Aid NSW and where you can find further detailed information about us
- Outlines what you may do during a PLT placement with us
- Identifies the criteria we use to select students for PLT placements
- Explains how you can apply to participate in the Legal Aid NSW PLT Program
- Gives you some guidance about preparing your application.

2. About Legal Aid NSW

Legal Aid NSW is an independent statutory body established under the *Legal Aid Commission Act 1979* to help socially and economically disadvantaged people to understand and protect their rights in the legal system.

We provide legal services across NSW through a state-wide network of 28 offices (including Head Office in Central Sydney), plus 2 satellite offices located in Walgett and Bourke and over 240 regular outreach locations.

Our services range from high volume legal information, advice and minor assistance (writing letters for clients or making phone calls for clients), dispute resolution and duty (one off help at court) through to ongoing legal representation and casework.

We also undertake community legal education that targets and human services workers in the community sector working with our clients.

We contribute to law reform at state and national levels due to our experience and expertise in representing disadvantaged people who come in contact with the justice system. We draw on our extensive experience in assisting disadvantaged clients to contribute to law and policy reform. We work closely with our partners to write submissions and policy papers on issues that affect our clients.

For more information, see [Legal Aid NSW website](#).

Criminal law

The Criminal law practice helps people charged with criminal offences appearing at courts in each jurisdiction (Local, District, Supreme, Court of Criminal Appeal and High Court). Our criminal lawyers also provide advice in specialist courts such as the Drug Court, Parole Authority and Youth Drug and Alcohol Court.

Civil law

Our Civil law practice helps people resolve legal problems that impact on people's everyday lives such as debts, unpaid fines, and discrimination, housing and tenancy, employment, and Centrelink problems. The focus is on helping people to resolve legal issues as early as possible.

Civil lawyers also help people at the Administrative Appeals Tribunal, Mental Health Review Tribunal and NSW Civil and Administrative Appeals Tribunal.

Family law

Our Family law practice helps adults and children resolve their family disputes and to achieve safe and workable care arrangements for children. Family lawyers help clients with problems involving care and living arrangements for children, child support, care and protection arrangements with Family and Community Services (FACS).

3. What will I do during a PLT placement at Legal Aid NSW?

During a PLT placement, you might be asked to:

- Help lawyers to provide advice to clients by:
 - Taking instructions from clients
 - Observing advice sessions
 - Taking file notes.
- Help lawyers to provide minor assistance to clients by:
 - Conducting legal research
 - Writing letters for clients
 - Calling organisations to advocate or liaise on behalf of clients.
- Help lawyers representing clients who have a grant of aid by:
 - Preparing briefs to counsel
 - Observing court proceedings.
- Help lawyers to deliver Community Legal Education by:
 - Preparing CLE planning materials
 - Observing, facilitating or presenting CLE sessions.

4. How does Legal Aid NSW select students for the PLT program?

Only eligible applicants will be considered for the PLT program. To be eligible, you must be:

- a final year LLB (or equivalent law qualification) student or recent graduate who has not yet completed PLT
- fully vaccinated against COVID-19 prior to commencement
- willing and able to complete a placement that is a minimum of 80 days at Legal Aid NSW, on a full time or part time basis in a voluntary capacity.

We use the selection criteria listed in the PLT Student Roles and Responsibilities to make decisions about offering PLT placements to eligible applicants.

The selection criteria include:

- Knowledge of legal systems and processes.
- Knowledge of issues relating to delivery of legal services to socially and economically disadvantaged people (including people from ATSI communities, those who may be distressed, have physical or intellectual disabilities, come from non-English speaking backgrounds, or have problem behaviours such as drug or alcohol addictions).
- Knowledge of, or capacity to quickly acquire knowledge of relevant court procedures and Legal Aid Commission policies and procedures.
- Excellent written and verbal communication skills, including the ability to prepare letters, draft submissions and other documents.
- Sound legal research and analytical skills.
- High level administrative and computer skills.
- Ability to work in a small team, to take initiative and to problem solve.
- Ability to meet deadlines, and to manage a diverse workload.
- Strong interpersonal skills.
- Capacity to identify and understand legal and cross cultural issues facing socially and economically disadvantaged people.

Should you be successful in obtaining a placement at Legal Aid NSW, you will be required to complete a criminal record check. The link to this check will be sent to you by the recruitment team when confirmation is received that your placement can be accommodated. You will not be able to commence your placement until the criminal record check clearance is received.

5. How do I apply?

Legal Aid NSW has arrangements in place with a number of universities in NSW. These arrangements usually involve an agreement between the university and a Local Legal Aid NSW office to offer placements to PLT students.

You can check with your university to see if there is an arrangement in place with a local legal aid office and find out from the university how to apply.

If your university does not have any arrangements in place with Legal Aid NSW, you can also apply directly to Legal Aid NSW.

You should submit your application by email to: erecruitment@legalaid.nsw.gov.au

Please ensure your application includes:

- Cover letter (max 2 pages)
- A completed application form
- Curriculum Vitae (max 3 pages)
- Contact details of 2 referees
- Copies of your University transcripts
- A copy of insurance coverage/policy
- Evidence of vaccination

You may also be asked to attend an interview to further discuss your application.

6. Tips on preparing your application for PLT Placement

Covering letter

Your covering letter should state:

- why you want to do your Practical Legal Training at Legal Aid NSW, and
- how you meet the selection criteria listed in the PLT Student Roles and Responsibilities.

Application form

- Complete all fields on the application form
- Indicate what practice areas and placement locations you would prefer.

We take these preferences into consideration. However, there is no guarantee you will be offered a placement in the preferred area of practice or location.

Curriculum Vitae

You should include details about:

- Your education
 - A short statement that outlines all your qualifications and dates commenced and completed (or partly completed).
 - Any school and university or college studies you have completed or are undertaking. Show the institution and years you attended.
 - List any subjects that are relevant to your placement preferences.
- Your training

Details of all formal and on the job training that is relevant to the placement (e.g. training in computer applications) and the level of proficiency achieved.
- Any additional information that may strengthen your application such as:
 - Languages spoken (other than English)

- interests
- faculty activities
- prizes
- volunteer work
- community activities.

Referees

You should provide the names, email, addresses and telephone numbers of two (2) people who we can contact about your application. Please state clearly how you know the referees.

7. What if I have more questions?

You can contact our recruitment team via email at erecruitment@legalaid.nsw.gov.au or on (02) 9134 9347.