

# INCREASING ACCESS TO JUSTICE THROUGH THE LEGAL INCUBATOR



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Legal incubators have been increasing in recent years to address the negative consequences of two divergent realities: a widening legal justice gap for those of limited means and a shrinking network of full employment opportunities for newly minted lawyers who need practical training. While bringing the public and lawyers together for mutual benefit is the overarching framework of a legal incubator, it coincides with the essence of access to justice efforts at lawyer referral services and bar associations.

This year, the Lawyer Referral and Information Service (LRIS) will participate in two emerging legal incubators: the Bay Area Legal Incubator (BALI) coordinated through the Alameda County Bar Association, which launched in January, and the Community Law Practice Incubator (CLPI), set to launch this summer at BASF.

Drawing upon its broad low-fee legal services program to assist persons of modest means, LRIS will refer prescreened clients for significantly reduced rate services to mentored, trained incubator practitioners in family law, eviction defense, and bankruptcy. Through the LRIS limited-scope representation panel, incubator participants in family law will also work with individuals who are handling parts of their own family law cases.

LRIS is naturally poised to be a strategic community partner for the incubator lawyer (and for any lawyer) not

only as a source for screened, paying clients to build a practice, but also as a trustworthy resource when a client has a legal need outside a lawyer's practice area. Given that LRIS is inextricably woven into the fabric of legal resources serving the public good, the screening for legal agency referrals, pro bono services, legal clinics, and governmental resources also benefits the referred client.

Meanwhile, through LRIS's Attorney-to-Attorney Advice Program, established in 1975, practitioners can benefit from the knowledge and expertise of LRIS panel attorneys in more than twenty principal practice areas when encountering a new issue that will affect an ongoing case. This free service puts newer attorneys in touch with more experienced practitioners willing to advise them. It also works well for seasoned practitioners who run into an area of law with which they are unfamiliar.

Like all LRIS attorney panelists, incubator attorneys will support the critical access to justice mission of a lawyer referral service. Through participation locally as part of BASF's incubator and regionally in BALI, LRIS welcomes the opportunity to serve more clients of limited means, and, in so doing, further integrate LRIS as a partner with a growing number of community-based practitioners.

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