

Providing Appropriate Resources

Most LawHelp materials fall into several sections: **Know Your Rights** (self-help materials and legal information), **Find a Lawyer** (listings of free legal service providers), **Going to Court** (information about courts and their procedures), and **Finding Other Help** (non-legal services for low-income people).

Most LiveHelp users are seeking legal information (i.e., Know Your Rights materials) or representation (i.e., Find a Lawyer information). Operators should do their best to answer the user's exact question. But there are circumstances when operators should give other information as well:

- **Operators should generally offer appropriate Know Your Rights information to users seeking a free attorney**, if such information is available. ("Here is information on organizations that might be able to assist you. I am also going to send you a pamphlet with information about your legal rights.") Know Your Rights pamphlets may help users make informed decisions even if they find an attorney. They may also be crucial to those users unable to find representation.
- **Operators should generally offer referral information when a user raises a legal question about a complex, high-stakes problem** if there is a fair chance s/he may find a free lawyer. Users facing deportation, eviction or foreclosure, or those considering bankruptcy, should have the chance to review information about finding representation. ("Eviction cases are complicated and you might be able to obtain a free lawyer to help. Would you like a listing of organizations that might be able to help?")
- **In domestic violence cases, operators should ALWAYS offer a referral to an organization specializing in domestic violence matters and handling the type of legal matter at issue.**

Operators should be careful not to give users too many resources at once. Operators should never give referrals to private attorneys; instead, LiveHelp can provide links to nonprofit attorney referral services, such as those at the top of each 'Find a Lawyer' page.

The Tone of LiveHelp Conversations

LiveHelp operators should try to be professional and compassionate with our users. The people you are helping are often in crisis situations. They may have dealt with a series of less-than-helpful interactions (with courts, officials, legal organizations, for-profit attorneys, etc.) before getting to LawHelp; they may have found LawHelp hard to navigate. Try to follow these guidelines for keeping the right tone with LiveHelp users:

- **Try to express sympathy where appropriate** (e.g., "I'm sorry that happened to you. Let me try to find an organization that can help."). Our users often face serious challenges with little support and could use a kind word. Where LiveHelp is unable to offer much assistance—say, because we don't have resources covering the legal question, or because the user needs a lawyer and Find a Lawyer presents few options for representation—please say so appropriately. ("I'm really sorry, I can't find an answer to that.")

- Try to keep a nonjudgmental tone and offer neutral information if a user expresses an attitude that you find objectionable. It is not our responsibility to decide whether our users are doing the right thing: they are entitled to information about their rights, and we are obligated to help them find it.
- Please be patient with users—even the few who act angry or impatient towards you. (Of course, you do not have to carry on conversations with users who are hostile or threatening.)
- Remember that our users cannot see us. **Please warn users that it may take you a while to respond** if you are looking for information.