

# Lawyer Referral

The Lawyer Referral and Information Service Newsletter



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## LRIS Expands Service to Sullivan County

The State Bar's Lawyer Referral and Information Service (LRIS) recently expanded its coverage in the Catskills Region to include Sullivan County. Residents in Sullivan now join 44 other Upstate New York counties\* that have access to prescreened attorneys in their area. (Other counties receive referrals through their local bar association programs.)

Callers are referred to private attorneys based on their legal need and location. Since 1981, the LRIS has been serving the public and to date have assisted over 655,000 callers.

"Thank you for your help! This was such a relief to find the right attorney to help my family member," said one LRIS client.

"The LRIS really helped me grow my practice," said Elena Jaffe Tastensen of Saratoga Springs (Law

Office of Elena Jaffe Tastensen). "Now that I have been in business for myself for more than 10 years, it's still a great way to find new clients."

Attorneys that are interested in joining the service must have a physical office in one of our eligible counties. For more information about the service and to download an application, go to [www.nysba.org/joinlr](http://www.nysba.org/joinlr), or call 1.800.342.3661.

\*Allegany, Cattaraugus, Cayuga, Chautauqua, Chemung, Chenango, Clinton, Columbia, Cortland, Delaware, Essex, Franklin, Fulton, Genesee, Greene, Hamilton, Herkimer, Jefferson, Lewis, Livingston, Madison, Montgomery, Niagara, Oneida, Ontario, Orleans, Oswego, Otsego, Rensselaer, St. Lawrence, Saratoga, Schenectady, Schoharie, Schuyler, Seneca, Steuben, Sullivan, Tioga, Tompkins, Ulster, Warren, Washington, Wayne, Wyoming, and Yates.

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## Q&A

In an effort to assist you and your staff with some common inquiries below are answers to frequently asked questions.

### **What is the LRIS membership fee?**

LRIS panel members pay an annual fee of \$75 (\$125 for non-NYSBA members).

### **What is the referral fee if a client retains my services?**

LRIS panel members agree to remit 10% of their entire fee if the fee is \$500 or more.

### **Do I need to carry malpractice insurance?**

Yes, LRIS panel members are required to provide proof of malpractice insurance in the minimum amount of \$100,000.

### **How much should I be charging for the initial ½ hour consultation?**

The consultation fee is \$35.

### **What if I can't help a client that was referred to me?**

If you decline a referral for any reason, you should refer the client back to the LRIS. A LRIS client can also be seen by another attorney in your firm but the referral will be tracked as a referral to you.

### **Do I have to have an office in the County that I want to receive referrals from?**

Yes, attorney members must have an office in one of our 45\* service counties to be eligible to participate in our referral panel.

### **How do I sign up?**

Download the LRIS application at [www.nysba.org/joinlr](http://www.nysba.org/joinlr) or call 1.800.342.3661 or email [lr@nysba.org](mailto:lr@nysba.org) to have an application mailed to you.

\* Go to [www.nysba.org/joinlr](http://www.nysba.org/joinlr) for a complete list of service counties.

## Message from Chair



**Tastensen**

As we come to the end of the calendar year, and a tumultuous election season, it is a good time to pause and reflect. While each of us decided to enter the practice of law for different reasons, most of us decided to become lawyers to help: help people, help advise companies, help create policy, help serve the public, etc. One of the ways in which the New York State Bar Association's Lawyer Referral Service helps to serve the public is by referring the uniformed consumer to an experienced attorney. NYSBA's Lawyer Referral Service currently serves 45 counties in New York State, and receives over 50 calls per day from

individuals seeking attorneys all over the state, in all different practice areas.

I am thrilled to report that we have increased our attorney membership ranks this year, and have several new attorney members currently participating in the Lawyer Referral Service. To our new members, I welcome you! If you have any questions about how the LRS operates, or any comments or suggestions, please do not hesitate to contact me, another committee member, or the Lawyer Referral Manager Eva Valentin-Espinal.

Access to referrals to prescreened competent attorneys, is a unique public service provided by our members to members of the public. I have been a LRS panel member for over 12 years. To all of our long-standing members, I thank you for your continued support and participation, and wish you a happy and successful 2017!

## TELL US HOW WE ARE DOING

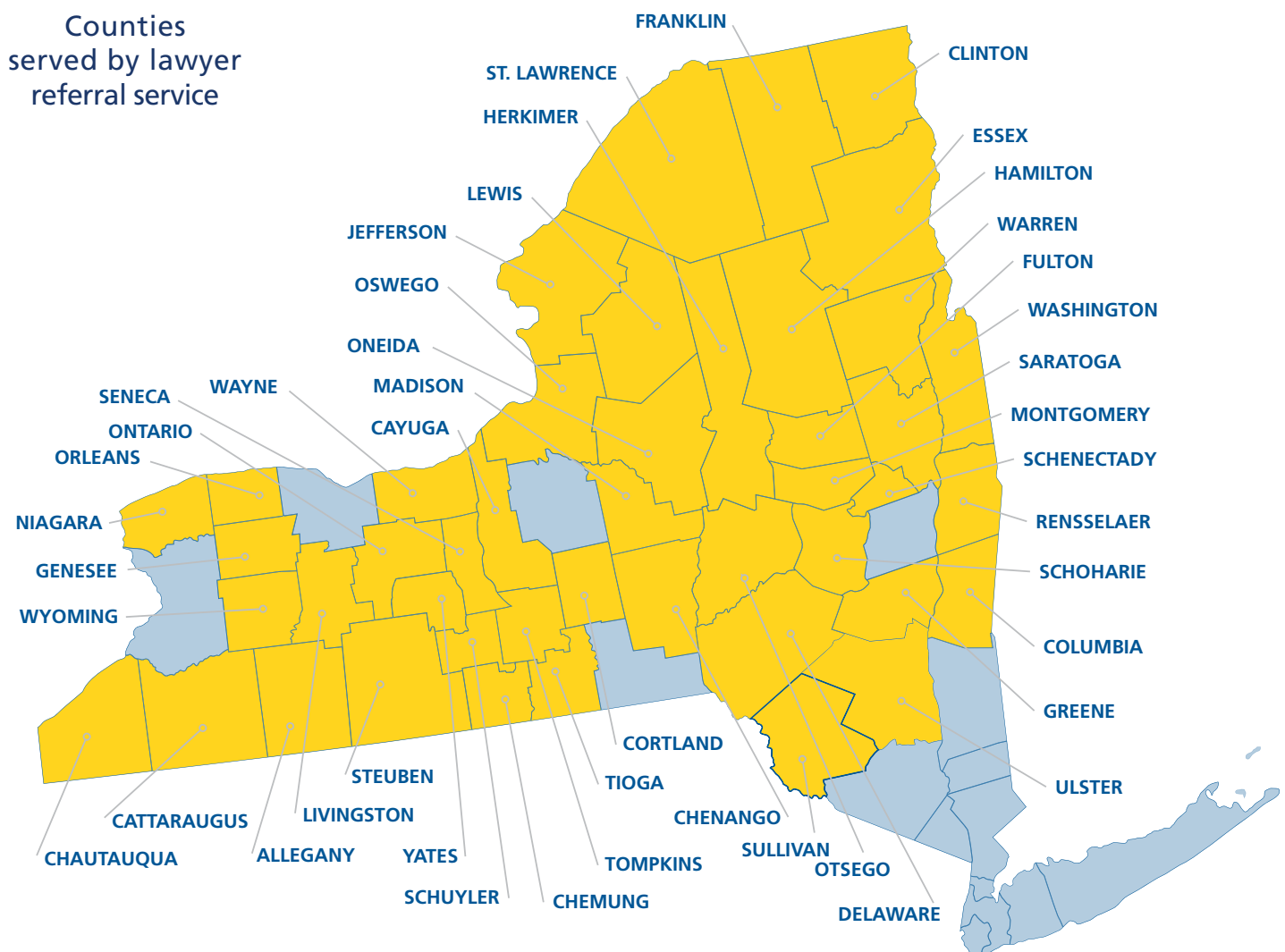
We want to be responsive to your practice and your needs. LRIS lawyers have a good perspective on the effectiveness of the program, and we value your suggestions, complaints and kudos. Send your feedback to [evalentin@nysba.org](mailto:evalentin@nysba.org)

## Percentage Fee Reminder

LRIS collects 10% of the entire fee for any referral case fee that is \$500 or more. For example, our percentage for a legal fee of \$1,000 would be \$100. Some attorneys have mistakenly subtracted the first \$500 and submitted only \$50.

**Any questions** about percentage fees can be directed to Eva Valentin-Espinal, Lawyer Referral Manager at [evalentin@nysba.org](mailto:evalentin@nysba.org).

New York is a big state and we cover a lot of it.  
Please help us recruit your colleagues & we will waive  
your LRIS membership for a year.



# How I Practice - Soma S. Syed

**1. What are your areas of practice?** My areas of practice are general, with my expertise in residential and commercial real estate transactions, mortgage foreclosure defense, landlord and tenant, leases, financing, loan structuring, along with contracts litigation and bankruptcy. My other areas are non-profits law, matrimonial and family law, immigration and traffic. I like versatility and being able to handle multiple areas of the law.

**2. Describe a typical day for you?** I have two types of typical days since I am both a transactional and litigation attorney. Typically, I have courts half the week. When I have courts, my day starts in the courthouse, checking emails, answering phone calls, and then office to work on assignments, letters, follow-up calls, and preparing for the next day and for the next

week or so. When I do not have court, I come to the office to work on assignments with deadlines, call clients, attempt to set-up appointments with new leads, and try to stay focused on the business and client cases.

**3. Where do you practice? Do you have a stand-alone office or home office?** My practice is in Forest Hills, a very busy notable commercial section in Queens, with easy access to Manhattan via car, subway, bus, and near to the courthouse in Queens. I have a stand-alone office, but often take files home both weekdays and weekends.

**4. What is the most rewarding thing about having your own practice?** I am an entrepreneur by default. I never thought I would have my shingle hung and stay practicing on my own. I was never sure if I wanted

the big law life, government attorney life, or the public interest life. But I interned and took interests in all aspects of the areas. Somehow destiny had it set up for me this way. First my dad became ill the first summer of law school, which placed a severe emotional trauma on me. It was a miracle he lived another few years. Then my mother was diagnosed with cancer and lived 9 months before it became terminal, and that was my last year of law school. None of the dreams of aspiring to a corner room of the big law office in a white-shoe law firm, or be the next Richard Brown of Queens County (he is the DA) mattered to me. It was her life and I lost part of me with her, and became directionless for many years. I hung my shingle because I did not know what else to do. Looking for a job and going through

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the motion of interviews were severely traumatizing. I do not know if I am glad, but I have become a woman of my own island. The most rewarding is the ability to hold clients' hands, offer concrete solutions, see smiles on their faces, and knowing I have brought a change for them, their gratitude is the best reward.

**5. What are some of the challenges about having your own practice?** It is the discipline of treating your law practice as a business, having the balance of a profession with the dynamics of a business, generating new leads and clients, billing, collection, and sometimes the deadlines. You are also limited by the way you can be creative. If I had worked in a big law firm, or with the government or a public interest, I may had the chance to do cutting edge legal work and be able to

set precedents by reforming existing laws that do not make sense or are antiquated or violates the Constitution. It is the tradeoff between the freedom to be enterprising and creative.


**6. What are your must-have tech tools /apps ?** Email, Facebook, NYSBA website and communities.

**7. How do you market your practice? How do you find new clients?** When I first started, I had targeted newspaper ads in Bangla newspaper. I speak Bangla and I am from the Bangladeshi community. Then I became an of counsel so I did not continue with the ad. Most of my clients come through referral, family, friends, networking events, other attorneys I know and meet at the bar association events, and sponsorship of events I do throughout the year.

**8. When and where do you interact with other attorneys?** I see them in the courthouse, bar association events, dinners, lunches, and CLE courses.

**9. How do you stay informed with legal news developments?** I get online ABA and NYSBA newsletters. I also get print NYSBA Journal and the NYSBA Digests. I read online news, CLE classes, and other attorneys.

**10. If a fellow attorney decided they wanted to start their own practice, what is the one thing they should know?** It is make sure you have thought about it deeply, know the ins and outs of having your own practice, and be willing to work alone and by yourself sometimes without the army of staff that you get at big and medium law firms.



*The most rewarding is the ability to hold clients' hands, offer concrete solutions, see smiles on their faces, and knowing I have brought a change for them.*

# Can't Help That Out-of-State Client?

By Ken Matejka

Many consumers find themselves overwhelmed by their choices and options when looking online for the lawyer that's best for them. Finding a lawyer can be a stressful event for people who have never hired a lawyer before and the confusion in the marketplace can make the process even more challenging.

In the confusion of the legal marketplace, occasionally the consumer doesn't choose correctly, geographically or by practice area. Sometimes it's not clear whether they have a case at all, or maybe the case is too small for your law firm at this stage of your business development.

## Not my area of practice

Every lawyer from time to time gets a call or email from someone who is geographically out of the lawyer's service area or needs services that the lawyer simply cannot provide. When we're faced with an out-of-area inquiry like this, sometimes we may be able to make a personal referral to a friend or colleague in that other location or that other practice area.

But what if we don't know anyone in that other location or who practices in this area of law? Where can we refer them for help with their search for the right attorney without having to spend any of our busy day performing research on their behalf?

## Introducing LRSconnect.org

Often people are unaware of the fact that usually there are nonprofit programs to help them through the process of finding legal services that are right for them. With trained staff standing by to talk with consumers, in many locations attorneys are qualified for experience and monitored for ongoing customer satisfaction. An example of such a service is the NYSBA's own Lawyer Referral Service, which screens attorneys in nearly every area of law and can refer cases in 45 New York counties.

San Francisco-based LRSconnect, Inc., (<http://lrsconnect.org>) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit charity organized to address the issue that most public services cannot successfully compete for visibility in the online marketplace against well-funded for-profit enterprises. It also addresses the needs of attorneys who do not know where to refer a client they cannot help due to location or for other reasons.

Through a simple to use interface, visitors to the organization's website can quickly and easily find the public services they are looking for where their legal issue is located.

LRSconnect also provides important information to website visitors about how to hire an attorney and managing the attorney/client relationship.

Headed by a Board of Directors consisting of four bar association leaders, LRSconnect provides accreditation to nonprofit lawyer referral services that

meet high standards for attorney qualification and client satisfaction. When consumers see the LRSconnect seal on a public service program's website, they can be confident that the lawyer referral program is providing a public service beyond what any other legal service provider can promise or deliver.

## Refer that client to LRSconnect.org

So the next time someone comes to you requesting services that are beyond the scope of your law practice, please refer them to [LRSconnect.org](http://LRSconnect.org) to find the nonprofit lawyer referral service near them.

It's easy for you because you don't need to research lawyer referral services near you. It's good for the legal consumer because you're sending them to a location where they can easily find any nonprofit lawyer referral service in the nation, and it's good for the local lawyer referral service which is standing by to help.

## About The Author

Ken Matejka, J.D., LL.M, is a California attorney and a former member of the American Bar Association's Standing Committee on Lawyer Referral and Information Services. He is author of the #1 bestseller "The Lawyer's Ultimate Guide to Online Leads." He is the founder and president of LRSconnect, Inc., a nonprofit dedicated to connecting legal consumers with nonprofit public services nationwide.

**LRSconnect**<sup>TM</sup>  
Qualified, Affordable Legal Help.

# New Pro Bono Opportunity: NY.FreeLegalAnswers.org

## By Kristin Wagner

As this year's end approaches, NYSBA encourages all attorneys to continue working towards their aspirational goal of performing at least 50 hours of pro bono work for the year. If you are looking for an additional opportunity to do pro bono work, [NY.freelegalanswers.org](http://NY.freelegalanswers.org) may be an option for you.

NY Free Legal Answers, the new online pro bono project hosted by NYSBA and sponsored by the ABA, is quickly gaining traction. Since launching at the end of August, over 40 questions have been posted to the

site by New Yorkers from around the state, on topics ranging from family law to consumer debt, employment, and immigration issues. Thanks to over 50 attorneys who have signed up to volunteer and answer these questions, low-income New Yorkers are receiving the advice and guidance they need, but might not otherwise get. The number of questions posted rises weekly, so the need for volunteer attorney participation continues to grow.

Covered by malpractice insurance provided through the ABA, [NY.freelegalanswers.org](http://NY.freelegalanswers.org) is accessible from anywhere via an internet connec-

tion. Simply create an account, log on, and peruse the posted questions to see if any fall within your areas of expertise. You may respond to questions at your leisure and keep track of the time you spend answering them, all within the website. This service allows you to provide brief, limited scope advice on civil legal matters and help low-income New Yorkers obtain access to justice. For more information about [NY.freelegalanswers.org](http://NY.freelegalanswers.org), you may contact NYSBA's Pro Bono Services Department at 518-487-5641.

*Kristin Wagner is NYSBA's Pro Bono Director.*



## Committee on Lawyer Referral Service

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NEW YORK STATE BAR ASSOCIATION  
Lawyer Referral

**Eva Valentin-Espinal**, Manager,  
Lawyer Referral and Information Service

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## Interested in expanding your client base?

Do you practice in one of these counties...?

Allegany, Cattaraugus, Cayuga, Chautauqua, Chemung, Chenango, Clinton, Columbia, Cortland, Delaware, Essex, Franklin, Fulton, Genesee, Greene, Hamilton, Herkimer, Jefferson, Lewis, Livingston, Madison, Montgomery, Niagara, Oneida, Ontario, Orleans, Oswego, Otsego, Rensselaer, St. Lawrence, Saratoga, Schenectady, Schoharie, Schuyler, Seneca, Steuben, Sullivan, Tioga, Tompkins, Ulster, Warren, Washington, Wayne, Wyoming, Yates

Give us a call! **800.342.3661**  
[www.nysba.org/joinlr](http://www.nysba.org/joinlr)



Meets ABA Standards  
for Lawyer Referral  
AMERICAN BAR ASSOCIATION

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## Are you feeling overwhelmed?

The New York State Bar Association's  
Lawyer Assistance Program can help.

We understand the competition, constant stress, and high expectations you face as a lawyer, judge or law student. Sometimes the most difficult trials happen outside the court. Unmanaged stress can lead to problems such as substance abuse and depression.

NYSBA's LAP offers free, confidential help.

All LAP services are confidential and protected under section 499 of the Judiciary Law.

Call **1.800.255.0569**

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