

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) for 'Choose your own Assigned Solicitor' Pilot Programme

1. What is the 'Choose your own Assigned Solicitor' Pilot Programme about?

From 1 August 2023, the Legal Aid Bureau (LAB), a department of the Ministry of Law, is running a pilot programme which allows applicants of legal aid to choose their preferred Assigned Solicitors.

2. Who can take part?

This pilot programme is open to applicants who wish to initiate civil divorce proceedings, and have not commenced proceedings yet.

If your spouse has started divorce proceedings against you, you cannot participate in this pilot programme. Please file your Memorandum of Appearance (MOA) at CrimsonLogic Service Bureau (located at the State Courts) within 8 days from the day you were served the court documents. Thereafter, you may come to LAB to apply for aid.

3. How can I participate?

First, please register for a case on our Applicant's Portal (go.gov.sg/mlawlabesvc) and complete a financial questionnaire. You will be notified if you are eligible for legal aid, and may approach your preferred Assigned Solicitor directly thereafter. If the Assigned Solicitor agrees to act for you, he/she will submit the application on your behalf. After your legal aid application is submitted, you will need to pass the means and merits test before the Assigned Solicitor starts work on your case.

Please note that you may be required to pay a first contribution towards your case. Your Assigned Solicitor is not obliged to commence work for you before aid is granted and the first contribution is fully paid.

4. Can I choose any Assigned Solicitor?

The Assigned Solicitor you wish to appoint must be on the panel for the pilot programme. Visit go.gov.sg/mlawlabpilotas to find out more.

5. How will this pilot programme benefit me?

Apart from being able to choose your preferred Assigned Solicitor, your application process for legal aid will be more streamlined as you will no longer need to provide a statement on your legal issue to LAB first. Less time will also be required to assign an Assigned Solicitor to take on your case.

6. What if I cannot find or do not have a preferred Assigned Solicitor?

Don't worry, you can still apply for legal aid with LAB. As long as you pass the means and merits tests, we will assign a lawyer to assist you. If you have further queries, please call us or submit an online enquiry form at go.gov.sg/contactminlaw.

7. Why is the pilot programme only open to applicants who wish to initiate divorce proceedings, and have not commenced divorce proceedings yet?

This is currently a one-year pilot programme for us to better understand the needs of our Assigned Solicitors and applicants, before assessing whether to continue with this programme and/or extend this option to other types of cases.

8. How long is the pilot programme?

The pilot programme is expected to run for one year from 1 August 2023 to 31 July 2024.

9. What happens after one year? Will LAB continue with the pilot programme?

This is currently a one-year pilot programme for us to better understand the needs of our Assigned Solicitors and applicants. LAB will assess whether to continue with this programme and/or extend this option to other types of cases.

10. How are the Assigned Solicitors on the panel selected?

They are existing LAB's Assigned Solicitors who have expressed interest to participate in the pilot programme.

11. Can I choose more than one Assigned Solicitor?

You can only have one Assigned Solicitor to represent you in your case. Please ask your selected Assigned Solicitor to submit your legal aid application on your behalf. If you wish to change your Assigned Solicitor due to unforeseen circumstances, please let us know of your request and your reasons by contacting us at 1800-2255-529 or submitting an online enquiry form at go.gov.sg/contactminlaw.

12. How much time do I have to find an Assigned Solicitor upon registration?

Please ask your selected Assigned Solicitor to submit your legal aid application on your behalf within 1 month of your date of registration with LAB.

13. What happens after my Assigned Solicitor submits my application for legal aid?

An officer will contact you to assess your means. After you pass the means test, you will have to pass the merits test where the Legal Aid Board will assess whether you have a reasonable case to bring to court. If aid is granted, your case will be assigned to your Assigned Solicitor. LAB will notify you of the outcome.

14. How much do I have to pay for the Assigned Solicitor's services?

There is no difference in the amount you pay if you take part in this pilot programme. You will generally be required to pay a contribution and out-of-pocket expenses to LAB.

15. What documents do I need to bring to the Assigned Solicitor at my first appointment?

Please bring along all documents relevant to your case. They may include: Marriage Certificate
Children's Birth Certificate

- Court documents e.g. Expedited Orders, Personal Protection Orders, Maintenance Orders, if applicable
- Information on your spouse's NRIC number and last known modes of contact i.e. contact number and address
- Latest HDB / bank mortgage statement of account, if applicable
- Latest CPF Public Housing Statement, if applicable
- A screenshot of the page of the Applicant Portal to show that you have passed the Counter Financial Questionnaire

Please ensure you have your SingPass password with you as you may need it to access your SingPass account.

16. If I am represented by my lawyer as a private client and would like to apply for legal aid now, can I be assigned the same lawyer under the pilot programme?

If your lawyer is on the panel for the pilot programme and you have yet to commence proceedings, please ask your lawyer to submit your legal aid application to LAB. If your lawyer is not on the panel, you may wish to decide if you would like to continue to be represented by your current lawyer on a private basis. Alternatively, you may select your preferred Assigned Solicitor from our list of participating Assigned Solicitors for the pilot programme.

17. Who should I contact if I have queries or feedback on this pilot programme?

You may contact us at 1800-2255-529 or submit an online enquiry form at go.gov.sg/contactminlaw.