



[MIDLAS: Access to Services number 2.1.2]

2.1.2	ACCESS TO SERVICES
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Applies to: Staff, Volunteers and Clients
Specific responsibility: All advocates, lawyers, support staff and Financial Counselors

Version: 3.0
Date approved: 27/01/2011
Next review date: 27/01/2012

Policy context: This policy relates to	
Standards or other external requirements	NACLC Accreditation Standards
Legislation or other requirements	<i>Income Tax Assessment Act 1997 (Cth), Corporations Act 2001 (Cth), Competition and Consumer Act 2010 (Cth)</i>
Contractual obligations	FaHCSIA, Lotterwest, Department of Commerce, Department of Child Protection, Public Purposes Trust

POLICY STATEMENT

It is the intention of MIDLAS that all people in the organisation’s target group have equal access to our services.

MIDLAS is committed to maximising access to our services for everyone within our agreed target group. We identify and address barriers to access and provide equal access for people who need our services. We endeavour to optimise access to our services and activities within available resources.

MIDLAS is a not-for-profit community legal centre that provides vital services to the underprivileged and vulnerable members of the community free of charge. MIDLAS offers six free services to eligible clients: Information Service, Financial Service, Emergency Relief Service, Legal Service, Tenancy Service and Disability Service. The MIDLAS service area encompasses the City of Swan, Shire of Mundaring, Shire of Kalamunda and the City of Bassendean.

MIDLAS endeavor to have our workplace fully accessible for client’s who are disabled in any way, including easy access to our client interview rooms, to providing easy English versions of all forms and letters and providing information in appropriate alternative formats as required.

MIDLAS will hold community engagement sessions to engage with potential clients from our catchment areas, also to provide free service on these occasions.

PROCEDURES

Identifying barriers to access for our target group

Our agreed target group for eligible clients: The MIDLAS service area encompasses the City of Swan, Shire of Mundaring, Shire of Kalamunda and the City of Bassendean or others as agreed by the board from time to time.

Our services will address the following specific needs within our overall target group:

- Information Service:
 - MIDLAS provides clients with the knowledge and tools necessary to stabilise their lives and work towards a better and more self sufficient future. Many clients who attend MIDLAS have multiple issues; often requiring immediate intervention to resolve critical concerns. Some problems may be issue specific,



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for example an inability to pay bills, a threat of eviction or problems stemming from domestic and family violence whereas other issues may be broad and general, capable of being resolved through education. MIDLAS provides an Information Service for disadvantaged and vulnerable people to empower them with the relevant information required in order to ensure the crisis does not reoccur. MIDLAS provides all its clients with free telephone, face to face and written information about our services and our networks.

- Financial Service:

MIDLAS employs qualified Financial Counsellors who offer assistance to people in financial stress. The Financial Counsellors help with anything from personal budgeting skills through to debt management and bankruptcy information. They also negotiate with creditors and seek to provide options to better regulate the financial situation of the clients MIDLAS' Financial Counsellors are funded by the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs and by the Department of Child Protection. MIDLAS regularly engages in the community to provide training and resources.

- Legal Service:

MIDLAS provides a quality, free legal service focused on assisting victims of family and domestic violence, including initial assistance and advice in family law (not property), criminal injuries compensation and other matters. For anything that exceeds the scope of the MIDLAS Legal Service, the solicitor will facilitate a referral and transfer to a suitable, alternate legal practitioner. MIDLAS regularly engages in the community to provide training and resources.

- Tenancy Service

Tenancy Service is available for tenants in the private rental market as well as those in public and social housing thanks to funding from the Department of Commerce. Our tenancy advocates provide information to tenants on their rights and responsibilities under the Residential Tenancies Act 1987 (WA) and negotiate with property agents and owners to secure an improved outcome for the tenant. Where appropriate, MIDLAS provides court representation if the tenant is unable to advocate for themselves. MIDLAS regularly engages in the community to provide training and resources.

- Disability Advocacy

Our Disability Service provides individual advocacy for persons with a disability. The disability advocate will provide guidance and support to individuals, having regard to their rights, including access to services, discrimination, alleged abuse and neglect. This service is funded by the Department of Families, Housing, Community Service and Indigenous Affairs. MIDLAS regularly engages in the community to provide training and resources.

- Emergency Relief

MIDLAS offers limited assistance for people in immediate crisis. As part of the wider financial services offered by MIDLAS, the organisation also provides some Emergency Relief to people in immediate need. MIDLAS will provide a limited number of blankets to people in need, pharmacy vouchers, and other assistance as deemed appropriate thanks to an Emergency Relief grant from Lottery West. Emergency relief assistance is available by appointment only.

We identify barriers to access in these ways:

- All services



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- Clients who cannot physically come to MIDLAS: We will provide a service to these particular clients via our website, our phone service, contacting by mail, and meeting our clients regularly at community engagement events held by MIDLAS staff.
- Issues with clients attending appointments at past premises': Upon completion on an interview being made, the client will be directed to the new premises with detailed explanation of how to access the building.
- Clients not knowing that our service exists: MIDLAS staff and Board are determined to engage with the communities within our catchment areas more frequently and expand our service so it can be accessed by a greater number of residents'.
- MIDLAS use feedback from staff to identify barriers to access. All staff are encouraged to be on the lookout for potential barriers and to report this to the Executive Officer.
- MIDLAS identify barriers to access from client feedback forms; which are to be completed at the conclusion of an interview.

Service planning to maximise access

We plan our services, activities, facilities and premises to maximise physical and cultural accessibility for our clients.

- MIDLAS events are conducted according to our Client Service charter, as well as according to our Policy and Procedures.
- At all times, MIDLAS remain non-discriminatory in regards to all clients to access our services.
- MIDLAS Board and the Executive Officer review all accessibility standards yearly to ensure that MIDALS standards fall into line with our Service Charter and agreed national standards.

MIDLAS regularly reviews the level of accessible our services to our target client group. Based on what we learn we take action to improve access whenever this is possible.

The Executive Officer, along with the Disability Advocates will meet yearly to discuss at length accessibility standards of MIDLAS. All MIDLAS staff are responsible for maintaining these standards. Any accessible issues must be reported to the Executive Officer immediately.

Physical and Cultural Accessibility

- All our client interview rooms have the agreed size door frames to allow access for wheelchairs and those client on crutches.
- The waiting room at MIDLAS has easy access chairs.
- MIDLAS use wide based chairs.
- MIDLAS use the National relay Service for clients who may have hearing or sight difficulties.
- MIDLAS use the latest technology in speech recognition software, allowing multiple translations as well as type to speech and speech to type. This allows our clients to have information provided to them in a format that is easily understandable and recognisable. This information will be provided to clients immediately, or in a timely fashion.
- MIDLAS is located within close proximity to Midland Train Station. We are also positioned directly behind Centrelink, allowing clients to access both services in close proximity to other networks.
- MIDLAS staff engage with Culturally appropriate training to increase the capacity of our service to all clients.
- All clients are encouraged to complete a questionnaire, detailing how satisfied they are with the service provided to them and provide suggestions for improvements.



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- MIDLAS Board and Staff annually review all policies related to accessibility and identifying accessibility issues.

Client information strategies

We promote our organisation by producing information in a range of formats suitable for our target group. We distribute and present this information widely in ways and places that will reach those most in need of our service.

Written information for clients and agencies about our service is in the following formats:

- All forms and letters are made available in Easy English Format upon request.
- All forms and letters are made available in audio format upon request.
- MIDLAS utilise the service of the National Relay Service for clients who may benefit from this service.
- MIDLAS provides interpreters upon request.

Client information strategies we use to promote our service are:

- MIDLAS hold regular community engagement events to provide our clientele with information about how to access our service as well as providing detailed information sessions about: money management, Disability inclusion, legal matter pertaining to Violence Restraining Orders and tenancy rights and responsibilities.
- The MIDLAS website is to be updated regularly to provide details of the times of MIDLAS community events are to be held. The Website also provides useful information to all clients about how to access our service and to provide information on the given issues that is presented.
- MIDLAS have large, visible signage on our building with A4 frames directing clients to the entrance.
- All MIDLAS staff wear name badges.
- The MIDLAS logo uses primary colours, with the opposite side of the spectrum, for ease with clients who have sight disabilities.
- MIDLAS pamphlets are distributed to all major organisations that MIDLAS have affiliations with for clients to access our service.
- MIDLAS staff are encouraged to network and engage in all community events to provide more clients the opportunity to access our services.
- All MIDLAS staff engage in a range of professional development, workshops and training, community education, and campaign events.

DOCUMENTATION

Documents related to this policy	
Related policies	Grievance Policy Duties and Responsibilities of Board Members Policy Code of Ethics and Conduct Policy Risk Management policy C.a.L.D Policy Conflict of Interest Policy Privacy Policy



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Forms, record keeping or other organisational documents	MIDAS Feedback survey Authority to Act Easy English version Letter of Engagement Easy English Version Centrelink authority Easy English Version Organisation structure Service Standards