



Expanded Criminal Duty Counsel (CDC) is a pilot program offered by the Legal Services Society (LSS) in Port Coquitlam. It is one of five Justice Innovation and Transformation Initiatives funded by the Ministry of Justice until 2017.

The Expanded Criminal Duty Counsel program aims to provide legal aid clients with an early resolution to less complicated criminal matters and contribute to court efficiency. Usually, clients receive legal advice from a different duty counsel every time they go to court. In this program, the same lawyer provides services to the client until a trial is scheduled or the matter is resolved.

Innovative services

Expanded criminal duty counsel will provide advice to people making initial appearances in the Port Coquitlam Provincial Court. It will:

- Focus mainly on achieving a resolution before the trial date is set in addition to providing advice.
- Provide continuing services to try to achieve early resolution of cases, such as:
 - reviewing disclosure
 - having discussions with Crown Counsel
 - attending court if a guilty plea is required to resolve the case
- Provide information and advice about the charges people are facing.
- Review police reports to Crown Counsel with the person charged so that they understand the evidence in their case.
- Explain the court process and discuss the options available.

Under the program, criminal duty counsel do not conduct bail hearings. Criminal duty counsel will help with matters that appear resolvable and will focus on achieving an optimal resolution for the client. If a case is complicated, CDC will refer it to lawyers who provide representation services for LSS.

Broader eligibility

During the pilot, eligibility has been broadened to include more low income earners (their income can be above the current threshold) and people do not have to face a risk of jail. Before the pilot program, a client had to meet LSS financial eligibility guidelines as well as be facing jail to get more services.

This initiative complements two other criminal justice system reforms: the Provincial Court Scheduling Initiative and the Crown File Ownership Project.

An independent evaluator will evaluate the program to determine whether the pilot meets its objectives.
