



# ***Legal Aid Facts***

## **Parents Legal Centre**

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The Parents Legal Centre (PLC) is a pilot program that focuses on early, consensual resolution of child protection issues. It engages with eligible parents at an early stage prior to and during their involvement with the Ministry of Children and Family Development/Delegated Aboriginal Agency, and provides services to parents to support the issues being resolved collaboratively.

The Parents Legal Centre is located at the Robson Square Courthouse in Vancouver. It is one of five Justice Innovation and Transformation Initiatives funded by the Ministry of Justice until 2017.

### **Innovative services**

The PLC is available for all child protection issues under the Child Family and Community Services Act. It offers the following services:

- Information and advice on options for resolving child protection issues out of court
- Legal advice and representation, where appropriate, and collaborative processes such as mediation and family case planning conferences
- Information and advice on court processes
- Legal advice and representation at uncontested hearings
- Referrals to other services, including online resources and other public agencies

The PLC focusses on trying to resolve cases consensually out of court, and identifies alternative methods to address the child protection issues before they escalate to require court processes.

In addition to a lawyer, the centre has an advocate who supports parents in resolving the underlying issues that led to the protection concern in the first place.

### **Benefits for families**

Collaborative planning and decision making has been shown to strengthen family relationships by empowering families to work together to find long-term solutions to the problems giving rise to child protection concerns.

By focussing on early and collaborative approaches to resolution, the Parents Legal Center will support parents to achieve better outcomes for their families.

The program's approach will help families avoid lengthy hearings, thereby freeing up judicial resources. The centre also facilitates the improvement of the flow of cases through the courts.

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