



Expanded Criminal Duty Counsel

Expanded Criminal Duty Counsel (CDC) is a service offered by the Legal Services Society (LSS) in Port Coquitlam. It 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.

Expanded CDC is one of four justice transformation initiatives funded by the Ministry of Justice. It was piloted for three years ending March 31, 2017. The provincial government has renewed funding of the service until March 31, 2020.

Innovative services

Expanded criminal duty counsel provides advice to people making initial appearances in the Port Coquitlam Provincial Court. The service:

- Focuses mainly on achieving a resolution before the trial date is set in addition to providing advice.
- Provides 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
- Provides information and advice about the charges people are facing.
- Reviews the police reports with the person charged so that they understand the evidence in their case.
- Explains the court process and discuss the options available.

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

Broader eligibility

Eligibility for the service was 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. Outside the program, a client has to meet LSS financial eligibility guidelines as well as be facing jail to get more services.

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