

What you can expect your **Lawyer** to do

The guidelines below explain what to expect from your legal aid contract with Legal Aid BC (LABC). This will help you and your lawyer work together on your case.

Your lawyer will:

- Set a date to meet with you to discuss your case.
- Explain to you:
 - Our confidential process and the reasons for it
 - Your roles
 - The steps in the legal process
 - Your legal options
 - Your chances of getting what you want
 - Risks you may face
 - Scope, details, and limits of your legal aid contract
- Ask you for any information you have about your case.
- Ask you what results you want from your case, but let you know that they *can't* guarantee the outcome of your case.
- Give you legal advice about what to do. (Their legal opinion may provide different options than what you want.)
- Answer your legal questions.
- Try to complete work on time and inform you if they expect a long delay.
- Try to return your calls and respond to emails or letters as soon as they can (perhaps not on the same day or outside business hours).
- Keep appointments with you. Or contact you to make another appointment if they can't keep or miss an appointment.
- Discuss all important decisions about the case with you.
- Keep you informed at each stage of your case.
- Try to get you an interpreter if you need one for a meeting or hearing.
- Give you copies of documents or other information, if it's a realistic request.
- Let you know right away if they forgot to do something important or made a mistake.
- Explain to you whether or not you can appeal the result of your case (ask for a review), if you're unhappy with it.
- *Never* ask you for money.



Change of lawyer



If you think your lawyer hasn't met their responsibilities, discuss this with them. If you can't work out the problem, contact your local legal aid office to find out what you can do. LABC allows you to change your lawyer only in *limited* circumstances, and only if you still qualify for services.

If you apply to change your lawyer (called a **change of counsel** request), you must have a *good* reason (such as quality of service concerns). Your request must also be *fair* (based on realistic expectations). Changing your lawyer in the middle of your case can create problems.

If you do ask to change your lawyer, you must let them know in writing. If LABC approves your request, your lawyer must transfer your file to the new lawyer as soon as possible.

What your lawyer expects **You** (their client) to do

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You should:

- Ask your lawyer how much time the contract gives them to work on your case and how you can help prepare your case. Their time on your case includes your emails, phone calls, and meetings; court preparation and court attendance; legal research; and review and preparation of legal documents.
- Give them all the facts about your case and be honest. If you're not honest, your lawyer's advice may not be helpful and may even hurt your case.
- Give them some idea about what you want to have happen and when you hope it will get done.
- Take notes of your discussions at meetings and on phone calls. Write down any tasks you agree to do and when you expect to finish them.
- Tell them about any upcoming court dates, appointments, or other urgent issues, such as family violence.
- Answer all of their questions as soon as you can.
- Ask questions if you don't understand something.
- Give them any documents about your case they ask for and any new information you have; send it to them by email or in a letter, or tell their assistant.
- Talk only about your case and the facts important to your case.
- Be on time for every appointment or court appearance.
- Tell them what you decide at each stage of your case and give them clear instructions.
- Prepare for your meetings; decide what your most important legal issues are and get the documents you need.
- Make sure they have up-to-date contact information for you and let them know where they can leave messages.
- Discuss any disagreement you may have with them.
- Tell them if you want to have your criminal trial conducted in French.

Complaints



If you're unhappy with any LABC service, you have the right to make a complaint. For more information, see legalaid.bc.ca/about/complaints.

If your lawyer wants to withdraw from your legal aid contract, and they have a good reason and their request is fair, they can withdraw, but they must tell you and submit a change of counsel request to LABC.