

Payment of Accounts and Repayment of Holdbacks

As you know, LSS implemented a new billing system — CMS (case management system) in January of this year. CMS brings changes to our field offices; to tariff, audit, appeals, and disbursements processing; and to lawyers.

The area facing the most changes is the tariff processing section of the Tariff department, which means staff require significant retraining. Because several areas are undergoing changes, the processing of account payments has been affected. Because we anticipated delays would be likely, we introduced semi monthly cheque runs in order to mitigate the length of delay of making payments to you.

As with most new systems, it takes some time for all users to become proficient. Our turnaround time on clearing accounts for payment, which averaged 27 days before CMS implementation, is longer than usual. This increase in turnaround time is temporary. We are doing as much as possible to address this issue as we are very concerned about it. The slowdown is simply a result of the growing pains of a new system, and we anticipate that our turnaround time will improve considerably in a very short time.

At this point, although the *Guide to Legal Aid Tariffs* sets out that we will accept inquiries about accounts that are over 60 days (since LSS receipt of them), we ask for your patience and understanding. Please inquire about accounts *only* if you are experiencing financial difficulty, as responding to these inquiries is further slowing account turnaround time in general.

We have been and will continue to educate, train, and support all users of the system to improve turnaround time. Unfortunately, although some areas have improved, in that staff are being trained and billing problems have been identified and addressed, such training and problem-solving takes some time to show results. For example, several billing problem areas were identified and addressed in our June billing tips but we are still dealing with accounts that were rendered before these tips went out. In that regard, when you are billing accounts, please refer to the June billing tips for guidance.

As set out in the Notice to Counsel dated July 12, 1999 The LSS Board has decided to repay a portion of the holdbacks on criminal and family billings to LSS in the 1998/99 fiscal year. We are currently aiming to issue these repayments in mid September.

Nancy Peck
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