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Improved services for lawyers

In our ongoing commitment to provide you with excellent support, we are pleased to announce the following service improvements effective **January 15**.

E-Authorizations for disbursements (excluding transcript requests)

This latest addition to our suite of e-tools is convenient and efficient for both lawyers and LSS, and mandatory. Features such as drop-down lists, check boxes, mandatory fields, and helpful tips and prompts will ensure we receive the information we need to make a decision. It will eliminate the need to follow up with you — which is quite common now — and will result in quicker turnaround times. Lawyers who participated in the pilot said, “E-Authorizations is easy to use!” [Read more...](#)

New access to lawyer e-services

We'll be emailing you on January 15 with your new user ID and password to access lawyer e-services. Your previous user ID and password will no longer be valid. This new login will provide both you and LSS with greater security and information protection, as it uses new security technology and follows industry best practices and standards. Please note: As a further security measure and to streamline our processes, access to lawyer e-services will now be for lawyers only; access for assistants will be disabled.

Centralized helpdesk for faster service

Call **604-601-6155** or **1-888-401-6206** (no charge) to reach our new centralized helpdesk. Our staff can answer all of your questions: tariff, billing, lawyer e-services, authorization requests (such as disbursements, transcripts, extra fees, CCM, Extended Family or CFCSA services), LSS quality assistance program, and any general inquiries you may have.

Lawyer Services Department (formerly Tariff Services Department)

We've renamed the department to better reflect its broad scope and our focus on supporting your various account processing needs.

Family and CFCSA referral retainer agreement template

Lawyers accepting family referrals told us that a retainer agreement for legal aid referrals would be helpful to them. So we've created a [sample retainer agreement](#) you can use for both *Family Relations Act* and *Child Family Community Services Act* referrals, which will support you in managing your family client expectations.

In this agreement, we've been mindful of the issues that are particular to legal aid retainers and to refer to the limitations of the tariff. We've advised clients to use their time appropriately, emphasizing that time spent with their lawyer on emails, telephone calls, or in their office are all part of the total billable preparation hours. We've also cautioned clients about change of counsel requests, as unreasonable requests may result in them losing legal representation. This template is a plain language document. It includes links to our Family and CFCSA Tariffs. We hope you'll find it useful and welcome your feedback or comments.

Tariff simplification mid-term evaluation

In 2010, we restructured our Criminal, Family, and CFCSA Tariffs with an aim to simplify lawyer billing, processing of accounts, and other administrative functions. We committed to evaluating the outcomes of this initiative with a three-year longitudinal assessment of outcomes. We're

excited to announce that the results of the second interim evaluation are set to be available in early 2013 and indicate that tariff simplification is having a positive impact, with improved efficiencies in key administrative areas and quicker, more accurate billings.

Among many indicators measuring staff time and costs, the evaluation finds that bills are clearing at a higher rate than under the old tariffs. This means that the costs and time associated with processing bills are down and, consequently, lawyers are being paid faster. Additionally, the evaluation finds that “average fees per case” increased with the new tariff. Note there are many factors external to LSS, or separate from changes to the tariffs, that may influence average case costs, including systemic issues such as court delays, which increase preparation time and court attendance.

We'll provide more information about the second interim report findings in the coming months. The third (and final) evaluation report will be completed and made available at the end of 2013.

Okanagan lawyers receive Chair's Award for Distinguished Service

On November 29, 2012, we recognized the hard work of legal aid lawyers in the Okanagan region. Valerie Bonga of Penticton and Michael Newcombe of Kelowna were presented with the [LSS Chair's Award for Distinguished Service](#) for their meaningful contributions to legal aid — both have been taking referrals for more than 20 years. The awards were presented at the Kelowna Bar Association's annual Bench and Bar Dinner, which was attended by 150 lawyers from Kelowna, Penticton, and Vernon. Our LSS Chair's Award for Distinguished Service honours front-line lawyers who have made a sustained and significant career contribution to legal aid.

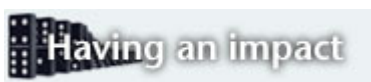
Service stop dates on referrals

Referrals have a stop date of two years from the date of interview/assignment (see Notices to Counsel [#74](#) and [#75](#)). We encourage you to check current cases to ensure a referral service period is in effect.

If a stop date is approaching, your client should reapply for legal aid, unless any of the following apply:

- a hearing or continuation is scheduled within 30 days
- it's a criminal case (including Criminal Case Management)
- the case has been approved for Extended Services
- it's an immigration case
- it's an appeals case

To request a stop date extension, contact our [Case Management Section](#).



Family services evaluation

We recently completed an independent evaluation of our family law programs that asked 780 clients which services they used and how effective the services were. The research found high resolution and satisfaction rates for all services, and highlighted the importance of early resolution services such as duty counsel and Family LawLINE. Empirical research such as this helps us evaluate our programs so that our limited funding can be directed to those areas that provide the best outcomes for clients. To learn more about our family law services evaluation, read the [final report](#) or the [Vancouver Sun article](#) about this evaluation.

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All legal aid lawyers are required to receive this email. You may unsubscribe and we will contact you to discuss options for the newsletter.