



May 7, 2012

This email newsletter is designed to keep you informed about developments at the Legal Services Society. It is distributed to chief executives of justice system stakeholders, Canadian legal aid plans and law-related organizations. Please forward this to anyone in your organization who might be interested. I welcome your feedback. For more information on legal aid in BC, visit the [LSS website](#) or LSS's [family law website](#).

Premier's Innovation and Excellence Award

In April, the Vancouver Drug Treatment Court (VDTC), an LSS partner, was recognized with the [Premier's Innovation and Excellence Award](#) for the Lower Mainland. The VDTC uses an integrated team of justice, health and social service professionals to provide drug-addicted offenders with court-supervised drug treatment to reduce future criminal offending and increase public safety. This honour is given to public service employees who create new and better ways of providing services to British Columbians.

BC Justice Reform Initiative

In February, BC's Attorney General, The Hon. Shirley Bond, [appointed Geoffrey Cowper QC to chair a review of the criminal justice system in BC](#). Mr. Cowper, a former LSS board chair, is [calling for submissions](#) from stakeholders and the public on the various issues affecting the system. As part of the announcement, the Attorney General also [requested LSS's advice](#) on ways in which legal aid can be used to create efficiencies elsewhere in the justice system so that savings can be reallocated to enhance legal aid funding.

Aboriginal Justice Forum

LSS helped organize the [Aboriginal Justice Forum](#), an event that took place on May 3 at the Irving K. Barber Centre in Kamloops. The forum

included panel discussions on Aboriginal offenders, restorative justice and correctional and probation services for Aboriginal people. There was also a keynote speech from the Hon. Judge Marion Buller Bennett from the First Nations Court in New Westminster. The forum was attended by those from the justice community, including legal aid lawyers, who work with Aboriginal people experiencing legal issues. The CBA, the CBABC Criminal Justice – Kamloops Section, the Elizabeth Fry Society and the Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc legal department were also organizers of this event.

Settlement workers and intermediaries conferences

From March 27 to 28, LSS hosted a conference in Richmond for settlement workers, who are the first contact to help immigrants with legal issues. The [Legal Information and Resources for Settlement Workers Training Conference](#) educated attendees about legal services available in BC, the different areas of law and how settlement workers can help their clients apply for legal aid. On February 16, LSS also held a second Fraser Valley Regional Intermediaries Conference in response to overwhelming demand after the first conference that was held only two weeks before. The conference was attended by 80 community workers from a number of groups including health services, libraries, family services, transition houses and schools. The conference provided attendees with a thorough overview of LSS services as well as other legal resources.

Increasing client accessibility

LSS has launched a series of projects aimed at increasing client accessibility to the many print publication and online resources produced in LSS's Public Legal Education and Information department. These projects will make the LSS family law website easier to navigate and more accessible to a broader range of audiences, will improve print and online resources by addressing the varying levels of literacy in legal aid clients and will develop a strategy to reach more Aboriginal people and communities who are becoming an increasingly larger online presence.

Simpler disbursement tariff

At the beginning of April, LSS introduced a new, simplified [Disbursement Tariff](#). Redesigned and reduced from 46 to 30 pages, the new tariff will make legal aid billing simpler for both lawyers and LSS staff while keeping authorization limits unchanged for most items.

Extended Family LawLINE hours

In mid-March, LSS expanded its [Family LawLINE](#) to include afternoon

hours. This will allow Family LawLINE lawyers to offer 27 additional hours per week of family legal aid advice to clients. This service provides brief, next-step advice about a range of family law issues including custody, child support and court procedures.

LSS partners with Access Pro Bono

A partnership began in April that allows LSS to refer clients, who were denied legal aid, to Access Pro Bono's [legal advice program](#). Access Pro Bono is BC's largest pro bono legal services provider. With client consent, LSS can contact Access Pro Bono who will call the client providing up to 30 minutes of free legal aid advice.

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