



Year-end payments to legal aid lawyers

Earlier this year, the Legal Services Society (LSS) announced that all legal aid lawyers would receive a supplementary payment in June based on the number of referrals accepted in 2010-2011 (see [Message to the Tariff Bar: Additional funding to support lawyers](#), February 2011). These payments are to recognize the exceptional service the tariff bar provide to their clients.

Payments will be \$35 for each criminal or immigration referral and \$55 for each family or CFCSA referral, to a maximum of \$5,000 for any one lawyer. Payments will be made by direct deposit or cheque in late June.

The reason for the different payment rates is that the recruitment and retention of family law practitioners is particularly difficult. The number of lawyers accepting legal aid referrals has dropped from more than 1,700 in 1996 to fewer than 1,000 in 2009 with the biggest drop in the family bar. LSS believes these payments are an effective way to encourage lawyers to continue taking referrals and to encourage more lawyers to accept family law files.

To fund these payments, the LSS board of directors has reallocated money from new initiatives to lawyer compensation. Because these initiatives are fully funded in this way in 2011/2012, money will not be available for a general tariff increase in future years.

The strength of BC's legal aid program is the lawyers who are committed to meeting the legal needs of people with low incomes in BC. LSS has heard repeatedly through our lawyer satisfaction surveys and in our consultations with the bar that the current tariffs do not provide appropriate compensation. LSS remains committed to supporting legal aid lawyers and to securing funding that will support your work.

We welcome your comments at lawyersresources@lss.bc.ca.

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