

Technological Changes at Legal Services Society

As part of our ongoing effort to find ways to reduce costs and maximize efficiency, Legal Services Society has been exploring the use of technology as a way of reducing our administrative and labour costs, as well as increasing the speed of some of our processes.

Over the next several months LSS will be implementing a number of significant technological changes that will extensively alter the way we process lawyers' accounts and communicate to lawyers. One focus of these changes is a greater automation of processes. Automation will generate savings in administrative and labour costs, create greater consistency in decision-making, and allow greater speed in areas such as authorization of fees and disbursements, processing accounts, and communication with the bar.

The other focus is improved tracking and accessing of information. Inputting information to the system on-line from offices all over the province allows us to make decisions - from fee authorizations to forecasting projections and management decisions - based on up-to-date and complete data. Further integration of our databases will also assist in accessing complete data.

This Notice will introduce some of the new technologies being implemented, some of the savings and efficiencies resulting from their use, and their effect on you.

Enclosed with this Notice is a survey for you to complete regarding the technology in your office and the fax server test that was performed the week of October 5th, 1997. It is important that you take the time to complete this survey. The information gained through this survey will confirm that we have up to date phone numbers, fax numbers and e-mail addresses for our payment procedures, and will allow us to ensure that we are responding to your requests, and notifying you of crucial information, as promptly and efficiently as possible.

CMS PHASE TWO

As you are aware, Phase One of our computerized Case Management System (CMS) has been implemented and operating for some time now. Phase One of the system facilitates the on-line intake of legal aid clients, determining eligibility, and making referrals. Phase Two of the system, dealing with the processing of tariff accounts, will be implemented in the new year.

Phase Two is the primary source of the greater automation and improved information tracking mentioned above. It will bring some significant changes and improvements in

the tariff-related processes that are part of the current system. Some of the major changes are:

- New forms that are easier to use as they are designed to more closely model the billings a lawyer would submit to a non-legal aid client. Forms will be available to be copied from the tariff book and will not have to be obtained from the referring office.
- Tariff Accounts Examiners will not have to spend time preparing accounts before they can be entered into the computer; accounts will be entered into the system immediately and the computer system will apply all of the tariff rules and identify problems prior to review by the Examiners. This eliminates one whole step in the procedure for processing your accounts.
- Direct faxing of correspondence from computer to your office through our new fax server (see the section below on the fax server).
- Automated generation and sending of reminder letters on billing inquiries and requests for further information.
- On-line process for authorizing change of lawyer, conversion of referrals, fee and disbursements items requiring prior authorization. These changes will eliminate much of the time consuming internal paperwork done by LSS offices, such as case overrides.
- Automated process for correcting payments to wrong lawyers and conversion of referrals to private retainer

All of these changes will allow LSS to process accounts more quickly and efficiently, and allow faster turnaround for other related authorization requests. This improved speed and efficiency will mean less time between sending in your account and having the account approved for payment.

The integration of intake, fee and disbursement authorizations, referral information, billing and result information in one system gives us faster access to a more accurate picture of a case at any given point, and an ability to track all the above items for one client across all referrals for that client. This degree of sophisticated information reporting enables us to achieve a much better analysis of the services provided to clients and the cost of cases, as well as reasons for differences in cost between types of cases.

The implementation of Phase II in the new year will not affect any referral with a date of assignment prior to the date of implementation of the system. These accounts will be on the current forms and will be governed by our current policies and procedures.

FAX SERVER

LSS will soon be using a fax server to transmit much of our correspondence. The fax server will automate the process of sending correspondence directly from a PC to

your office. It will allow large scale broadcast faxes, and will automatically generate and transmit reminder notices. Closer to the implementation date we will send another notice with more details about Phase II and some materials on how to complete the new forms.

Once it has been tested, the fax server we will be used to send much of our correspondence including:

- Notices to Counsel
- Tariff accounts correspondence (Billing Inquiries, Notices of Increase/Deduction, Extra Fee notification, Junior Counsel correspondence, etc.)
- Disbursements authorizations and correspondence
- FCMP authorization and correspondence

LSS will realize significant savings through the use of this technology, as we will no longer incur the costs of the postage, printing and paper associated with sending correspondence through the mail. For example, the printing costs alone on an eight page Notice to Counsel for the roughly 2000 lawyers we have on our vendor list is approximately \$3500. Additional costs are incurred for postage and the labour to organize the mailout. Automated faxing will preclude many of the above costs. As well, the increased speed in relaying information to you will allow faster turnaround on requests for authorization and faster processing of your accounts.

LSS WEBSITE

Legal Services has an Internet website on the Vancouver Community Network at "<http://www.vcn.bc.ca/lssbc/>". It contains, among other things, information about the Society and Legal Aid in general, about our legal information and education programs, and our range of services and programs. One of the recently added topics on our Website is *Information for lawyers*. *Information for lawyers* has payment related information such as the anticipated date of the next cheque run, the date of the last cheque run and the accounts processing backlog. It is currently updated weekly. LSS will be expanding the content of *Information for Lawyers* to include the tariff on-line, billing practice tips, Tariff Helpdesk's frequently asked questions and other tariff-related content in the near future.

You may also find the information under other topics on our Website valuable.

Nancy Henderson
Director of Tariff



**Legal
Services
Society**

Providing legal aid
and legal education
for British Columbia

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LEGAL SERVICES SOCIETY TECHNOLOGY SURVEY:

Please fax back to : **Legal Services Society**
(604) 681-5796
Attn: Carolyn Rhee, Tariff Department

or e-mail to : Carolyn_Rhee@ho.lss.gov.bc.ca
or mail to the above listed address

Name: _____ Vendor # _____

Phone # _ (____) _____

Fax # _ (____) _____

Address: _____

E-mail address: _____

DID YOU RECEIVE THE FAX SERVER NOTIFICATION: YES NO

What type of Word processing Software do you utilize :

Is your software environment: DOS WINDOWS

Do you have internet access: YES NO

Do you regularly use the internet to gather information: YES NO

Would you prefer to receive notices via: e-mail fax:

Do you regularly turn off your fax at night/weekend YES NO

Comments:

