



Legal
Services
Society

British Columbia
www.lss.bc.ca

Announcement

February 9, 2005

More people to qualify for legal aid

LSS is an independent, non-profit organization that has provided legal aid to people with low incomes in BC since 1979.

Legal representation is available for serious family issues (e.g. involving child apprehension matters or domestic violence) and serious criminal problems. It is also available for some immigration, mental health law, and prison law matters.

Legal advice is available through criminal duty counsel in all courts, family duty counsel in provincial courts, the Brydges Line, and several pilot projects scheduled to operate until July 29 2005 – including an enhanced LawLINE project that provides brief legal services to people with low incomes.

Legal information is available through the province-wide toll-free LawLINE, plain language publications, and Internet services, including the Electronic Law Library, the Family Law in British Columbia, the LSS, and the LawLINK websites.

To contact the LSS Call Centre and LawLINE, dial: (604) 408-2172 (Lower Mainland) or 1-866-577-2525 (toll free from outside the Lower Mainland).

Vancouver, BC — Effective Wednesday, February 9, more low-income people in BC may qualify for legal aid.

The Legal Services Society (LSS) is increasing its financial eligibility limits for both legal representation and legal advice services. It is also implementing a single cut-off level for representation services in all areas of law. Until now, there were separate levels for criminal, family, and immigration cases.

Anyone whose net household income and assets fall below set limits is financially eligible for a referral to a lawyer, as long as their problem is covered by LSS rules. Under the new limits, an applicant from a household of four with a net monthly household income of \$2,516 or less (and personal assets of no more than \$5,000) would qualify for a legal aid lawyer. This compares to previous limits of \$2,366 (criminal), \$2,091 (family), and \$1,941 (immigration).

In March 2004, LSS received a grant from the federal Legal Aid Renewal Fund, which allowed the society to increase income limits for applicants with criminal law problems.

“The improved limits we are implementing today bring the financial eligibility cut-offs for family and immigration law clients in line with those for criminal law clients,” said LSS Executive Director Mark Benton.

Benton noted that “the new system is easier to adjust and administer than the former system. It should improve our ability to respond effectively to changes in volumes and funding.”

LSS is also raising the income limits in its financial eligibility test for legal advice services to match the levels implemented in June 2004 for family justice counselor (FJC) services. Benton said this change brings the advice test into line with the society’s new cut off limits for legal representation.

This test applies to many of the society’s family duty counsel, LawLINE, and family advice lawyer services.

For further information, see the financial eligibility backgrounder and fact sheet and/or contact:

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