



Legal Aid Facts

Criminal law services

Information services

Publications: LSS staff produce legal information and self-help materials in a number of languages to help clients identify, avoid, and resolve common legal problems. Topics include criminal law. A complete list is available at legalaid.bc.ca/publications.

Legal Information Outreach Workers: LIOWs help low-income people find legal information and understand court forms. They also provide referrals to other resources and give presentations at Aboriginal, women's, immigration, social service, and other community agencies.

There is no financial eligibility test for legal information services.

Advice Services

Duty counsel: LSS contracts with private lawyers to provide legal advice to accused persons at Provincial Courts throughout the province. Duty counsel provide advice about the charges a person is facing, court procedures, and legal rights. Duty counsel may represent people at bail hearings or on a guilty plea and can speak on behalf of the accused at sentencing.

Telephone advice services:

- LSS maintains a province-wide, toll-free telephone advice service for persons who have been arrested, detained, or are under active investigation by a law enforcement agency. This service is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.
- LSS also maintains a province-wide, toll-free telephone advice service for persons in custody awaiting a bail hearing outside normal office hours, on weekends, or on statutory holidays.

There is no financial eligibility test for these services.

Representation by a lawyer

Legal representation is available to [financially eligible](#) adults who:

- are charged with criminal offences and, if convicted, face a risk of jail (including house arrest), a direct loss of livelihood, or immigration complications that could result in deportation;
- have a mental or physical disability that prevents them from representing themselves; or
- are Aboriginal, have a defence based on Aboriginal rights, and their ability to follow a traditional livelihood of hunting and fishing could be affected if convicted.



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Youth Representation

The federal Youth Criminal Justice Act provides for the appointment of counsel for anyone under 18 years of age who is charged with a federal offence, regardless of whether they qualify for a legal aid lawyer. However, LSS financial and coverage criteria apply to young offenders charged with provincial offences, such as motor vehicle offences.

Permanent or temporary wards of the Ministry for Children and Families are not eligible for a legal aid lawyer. The Ministry will provide lawyers for these young persons.