



Legal
Services
Society
British Columbia
www.legalaid.bc.ca

Information Sheet

[MyLawBC website](http://mylawbc.com)
(mylawbc.com)

BACKGROUND:

- It is widely acknowledged that there is an access-to-justice crisis in Canada, and BC is no exception. The number of people who need low-cost legal services and apply for legal aid far exceeds the Legal Services Society's (LSS) ability to help. As a result, there's been a shift toward self-representation. This is particularly evident in family law.
- Research shows people are overwhelmed by online legal information, struggle to identify reliable sources, and are often left uncertain as to how to solve their problems having read the information. They are often afraid to seek out legal services or have exhausted their ability to do so.
- LSS was aware of emergent technology and new online best practices that could be applied for the first time in BC to meet these needs and thereby increase access to justice for British Columbians.
- MyLawBC is the product of an international access-to-justice collaboration. The Hague Institute for the Internationalization of Law (HiIL) developed the site concept for the Dutch Legal Aid Board through their partnership with Modria, one of the world's leading online dispute resolution providers. By contracting with HiIL to develop a BC legal aid version of the Dutch site, LSS joins this international collaboration.
- Self-represented litigants and the intermediaries who work with them were included in the development of the site, from initial design through planning and testing.
- LSS used a cross-sectoral, collaborative approach to development. This included consultation with public sector service providers, mediators, women's advocates, elders' issues experts, lawyers, Public Legal Education & Information (PLEI) providers, and others, who shaped the objectives, and prioritized the legal subject areas and audiences for the site.
- The site's dialogue tool offers a one-of-a-kind free service for families that does not exist elsewhere in Canada. The tool provides couples with a collaborative way to negotiate and draft a separation agreement online together.



- The site also uses guided pathways, which while not unique in Canada are still rare on public legal information websites. Guided pathways are a means of diagnosing an individual's legal issues. When users finish answering some questions, the pathway generates a plan that will help them resolve their legal problem.
- MyLawBC also contains Legal Information Toolkits, a Negotiation Toolkit, links to child and spousal support calculators, and links to specific, topic-relevant information from other PLEI providers and sources of in-person help.
- The site is designed to help users stay out of court, but for users with family law problems who intend to self-represent, it will guide them to resources such as the [Family Law in BC website](#), advice and coaching phone services from Family LawLINE, and in-person services like Family Duty Counsel.

ABOUT THE LEGAL SERVICES SOCIETY:

- The [Legal Services Society](#) (LSS) is a non-profit organization created by the [LSS Act](#) in 1979 to provide legal aid to British Columbians with low incomes, including legal information, advice, and representation services.
- Core services include legal information provided through front-line staff, local agents, community partners, publications and websites; legal advice provided through criminal, family and immigration duty counsel, a telephone line for people who have been arrested and detained by police, Family LawLINE telephone services, and family advice lawyers; and representation services for financially eligible people with serious family law problems, child protection matters, criminal law issues, and some immigration, mental health and prison law issues.
- LSS is also committed to integrating its services with the services of our many partners in the justice and social services system, sharing knowledge and improving access to justice.
- LSS operates two regional centers and has local agents offering services in 33 communities in BC. Staff at these offices take applications for legal representation, make referrals for those eligible and, along with 27 LSS community partners, provide legal information services. LSS has approximately 145 staff members.