

Family Tariff (emergency services)

Since budget reductions in 2002, and particularly during the tariff review process, a consistent concern raised by lawyers and other legal aid stakeholders was the lack of sufficient hours to prepare family law cases. In response, the Legal Services Society has increased the general preparation hours for emergency services under the Family Tariff.

Up to 6 hours added for general preparation

Effective **February 8, 2005**, counsel may bill **up to 6 additional hours for a total of up to 14 hours** (tariff code 4110) for cases that have a date of assignment after January 1, 2004. General preparation includes work not specifically covered by other tariff items such as interviewing the client, preparing correspondence, taking instructions, preparing and filing court documents, and negotiating a settlement. This increase applies to all emergency services referrals that have not been final billed by February 8, 2005. Once a final results report has been submitted, you will not be able to bill for the additional time.

Counsel are reminded to:

- Complete the Family Billing Form — Final Results Report and submit it with your final account. LSS will compare the results from prior to and after February to determine whether these additional hours have made a significant difference to the level of service to clients and increased counsel's ability to achieve results.
- Bill up to the maximum 14 hours, but record the *actual* number of hours spent as specified in your time sheets. LSS will use this information to determine whether the increase in preparation hours compensates you fully or partially for your time.

LSS will evaluate this change in the next year to determine if we should revise the general preparation allowance in future years.

In response to the Attorney General's announcement of \$4.6 million in additional funding to support family legal aid services in British Columbia, LSS plans to announce further additions to family law services over the next two months.

James Deitch
Manager, Tariff Services