



In This Issue ▶ ▶ ▶

LSS staff conference — March 1 & 2, 2006, January 2006 tariff revisions, Family duty counsel conflict referrals, Opinion poll, Family services evaluation, Immigration funding, Advice counsel RFP

LSS staff conference — March 1 & 2, 2006

LSS is having a two-day staff conference that will take place on March 1 & 2, 2006. Please note that *all LSS offices* will be closed on both days and will re-open on Friday, March 3, 2006. Local agents will remain open during normal business hours. The Call Centre will be open from **9:00 am to 4:30 pm** with limited staff. Lawyers with ongoing cases, please note that we will be unable to respond to requests on those dates.

January 2006 tariff revisions

The January 2006 tariff revisions are now posted on the LSS website at www.lss.bc.ca (under For lawyers).

Family duty counsel conflict referrals

New referrals are available for lawyers who assist family duty counsel who have a conflict of interest. In the event of a conflict, duty counsel may ask another lawyer present in court to help the client. In the past, this assistance has been sought on a pro bono basis. Now duty counsel can arrange for the helping lawyer to receive a conflict referral for the actual time spent helping the client. Lawyers need not be on the duty counsel roster to receive a conflict referral, but do need an LSS vendor number.

Opinion poll

A recent public opinion poll found there is widespread support for legal aid in BC and strong agreement that the government should give the service the same funding priority it gives other social services. The poll was conducted for LSS by Ipsos Reid in December 2005. Although 79% of respondents said they know little or nothing about legal aid, once the services were described, 89% said they support them. The poll also found that 51% of respondents believe legal aid is inadequately funded.

Interviewers told respondents that legal aid provides “low income people with legal information, advice, and/or representation in court. This can include providing them with a self-help kit, giving them a few hours of legal advice, or paying a lawyer to represent them in court for serious family, criminal, or immigration/refugee problems.”

For further information on the poll, check out the LSS website at www.lss.bc.ca to see the society's news release (under Newsroom) and a summary of the results (under About LSS — Reports).

Family services evaluation

LSS is evaluating its family law services. We will interview a range of clients to find out whether the help they received resolved their problems, what those resolutions were, and how long they lasted. Evaluators will interview clients who have used LawLINE, family duty counsel, and family advice counsel, and clients who have received Limited Scope, Emergency, and Extended Services referrals. Client participation is voluntary and confidential.

A final report is anticipated in the fall. This evaluation should help LSS plan future services and improve current services.

Immigration funding

Although we do not yet have formal approval of our 2006/2007 budget, LSS is continuing current services without interruption, as we understand the funding for these will continue on the same basis as this year.

The society will honour accounts on current immigration referrals even if services extend beyond March 31, 2006. The stop date on referrals for PIF preparation will continue to be two months from the start date, even if this extends referrals past March 31, 2006. Counsel who have received authorization for refugee hearings may schedule hearings after March 31, 2006. We will provide further information when our budget is approved.

Advice counsel RFP

LSS is seeking proposals from those interested to deliver telephone legal advice during the evenings and on weekends and holidays to people on low incomes detained at police lock-ups throughout the province. This is a two-year pilot project, to begin April 1, 2006. Counsel will provide advice before clients participate in telephone bail hearings with the Judicial Justice of the Peace Call Centre. A request for proposals is posted at the BC Bid website: www.bcbid.gov.bc.ca/open.dll/welcome.

To provide adequate time to submit proposals, we have extended the initial closing date of February 3 to February 17 at 4:30 pm, Vancouver time. If you have questions about the RFP, please contact James Deitch at james.deitch@lss.bc.ca.