



The Legal Aid Fax

September 2006

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Hourly rate increase

LSS has increased all its hourly legal fees except criminal enhanced fees. Effective on all accounts received on or after September 12, 2006, the new hourly rates are:

Tier	Hourly Rate
1	\$83.90
2	\$88.10
3	\$92.29

When submitting your accounts, calculate your hourly fees based on the tier 1 rate of \$83.90. The LSS accounts processing system will *not* make the adjustment from \$80.00 to \$83.90 automatically. However, do *not* calculate your fees using the tier 2 rate of \$88.10 or tier 3 rate of \$92.29. If you are eligible for tier 2 or 3 rates, LSS will add the applicable tiered-rate increase to the amount you claimed at the tier 1 rate of \$83.90.

Upcoming block fee adjustments

Continuing its tariff renewal process, in October LSS will announce increases to selected block fees for non-trial services. LSS is currently reviewing its block fees, primarily in the criminal tariff, and will make strategic adjustments to ensure they better reflect the time involved and the relative importance of the service. The society has received input from an expanded Criminal Tariff Committee and will meet with the committee again to review the proposed adjustments prior to implementation.

Family service improvements

By November, LSS will also announce improvements to family legal aid services. Changes will be based on a recent evaluation of existing services in this area and on responses to the society's discussion paper regarding family law priorities (go to www.lss.bc.ca and look under For lawyers > Online resources).

Quality assurance

QA initiative evaluation completed

Lawyers participating in the final evaluation of the society's Quality Assurance Initiative said the CLE Case Digest Connection subscription service, CLE course discounts, and LSS website improvements had the most positive impact on service quality.

The evaluation recommends that LSS continue funding these and other well-received initiatives such as the LAO Law Memoranda, the TLABC list-serve, and the mentorship program. Other recommendations include improving communications about and access to its QA initiatives, distributing the client expectation form, developing an orientation manual, and updating the expert witness database.

LSS is reviewing the recommendations and will develop a plan for implementing improvements in the near future. The evaluation is available on the LSS website at www.lss.bc.ca. Look under About LSS > Reports.

Mentoring pilot projects

LSS continues to offer two types of mentoring opportunities for lawyers with less than five years' experience. Under mentoring assistance, a lawyer with less than five years' experience can ask LSS to authorize a senior lawyer to provide practical advice and feedback on the conduct of a legal aid case. Alternatively, a lawyer with less than five years' experience can request authorization to act as apprentice counsel to a senior lawyer who is working on a complex legal aid case. The goal of both pilot projects is to afford practical learning opportunities to lawyers. For more details, go to www.lss.bc.ca (look under For lawyers > Online resources).

CLE bursary program & "easy pay" plan

The CLE BC Board and staff recently developed a Bursary Program that allows lawyers to receive a 50% discount on registration fees. They also have an Easy Pay plan that allows registrants to pay for courses and video repeats by monthly instalments over four months. For more information, go to www.cle.bc.ca (click "Courses," and scroll down the lower right hand column.)

New LawLINE blog

LSS LawLINE lawyers and paralegals field questions from more than 16,000 callers every year. The advice they give is now on the Web for everyone to access in the form of a blog — an online diary or letter to readers. The blog explains common legal issues in everyday language through the personal stories of callers. Names and histories have been altered just enough to protect confidentiality.

Read the LawLINE blog on the [LSS website](http://www.lss.bc.ca). Look for it in the box on the right of the screen.