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Upcoming changes

The online *Guide to Legal Aid Tariffs* will be updated April 1, 2009 to reflect the changes announced in Notices to Counsel #61 – #65. Following are reminders of those changes:

Administration fees

Administration fees are eliminated on referrals assigned after March 31, 2009. You can continue to claim administration fees for referrals with a pre-April 1, 2009 date of assignment. Claiming the administration fee on referrals assigned after March 31, 2009 will delay the payment of your accounts.

Tiered rates

Tiered rates on criminal duty counsel (excluding circuits) are ending for accounts received after March 31, 2009. You are encouraged to use e-billing to bill for attendances towards the end of March. To account for the time taken to receive paper accounts through the mail, we will continue to apply a tier on paper accounts received up to April 14, 2009 (where you are billing for services prior to April 1, 2009).

Criminal Category I offences

Category I offences will not be covered for adults who apply after March 31, 2009. Some exceptions will be made for clients who have mental or physical disabilities. Where an Information includes multiple offences, including a Category I offence, LSS will not pay for services relating to the Category I offence. We have changed our computer systems to indicate “not billable” on referrals that have a Category I offence.

A change of counsel on pre-existing referrals that include a Category I offence will be considered in the usual way; however, if additional charges arise on existing referrals after March 31, 2009, LSS will not approve those that are Category I.

Family Dispute Resolution Services (DRS) referrals

DRS referrals will not be issued for clients who apply after March 31, 2009, and changes of counsel on pre-existing DRS referrals will not be considered. Bill for work on pre-existing DRS referrals within six months of the last service date or by March 31, 2010, whichever is soonest.

Extended Family Services (EFS) referrals

EFS referrals resulting from a DRS referral will no longer be considered. EFS referrals arising from emergency referrals will continue to be considered within the limits of the tariff budget, and by applying stricter approval standards. Key considerations for granting EFS referrals will be whether: the client has made good faith efforts to negotiate a settlement where appropriate; the underlying issues of the emergency services referral remain unresolved; and the resolution will significantly impact the client's ability to maintain their or their children's safety, or to feed, clothe, and house themselves or their children.

Family Duty Counsel minimums

Family Duty Counsel minimums have changed from four to three hours, unless otherwise specified. Please carefully review your referral for the minimum.

Lawyer e-services website — new look

In early April, the Lawyer e-services website will be updated to complement the LSS website, with similar colours, fonts, and headers.

BCMA, meals, and meterage changes

The online *Guide to Legal Aid Tariffs* will be updated April 1, 2009 to reflect increases to BCMA fees. Meal allowances have also increased in accordance with BC Public Service Agency rates, effective March 29, 2009 as follows:

- Breakfast — \$11.50
- Lunch — \$13.25
- Dinner — \$22.25
- Per Diem — \$47.00

Meterage has increased to \$0.50 per kilometre.

LawLINE update

We have redesigned our telephone advice service, LawLINE. LawLINE will now focus on issues arising from the economic downturn, and legal advice will only be available for six main areas: housing; debtor assistance; family; health/estates/seniors issues; employment; and income security. Starting in April, advice services will be primarily delivered by paralegals under the supervision of two lawyers. In May, some family advice will also be available from external telephone advice lawyers, who will take calls from remote locations. Examples of LawLINE's services will soon be listed on the [LSS website](http://www.lss.bc.ca).