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Director, Legal Advice and Representation

LSS is pleased to announce that Heidi Mason has been appointed acting Director, Legal Advice and Representation. Heidi replaces Ted Tanaka, who has left the organization.

Heidi has been with LSS since she joined the society as a tariff lawyer in 1994. Most recently, Heidi was Director, Public Legal Information and Applications. During her time at LSS, Heidi oversaw the implementation of the family duty counsel and family advice lawyer programs, and developed and implemented the former Family Case Management Program, which was recognized nationally and internationally as an efficient model for allocating scarce resources to meritorious family referrals.

In making the appointment, LSS Executive Director Mark Benton described Heidi as “a results-oriented leader” who can “engage in the organization.”

As director, Heidi will oversee all aspects of LSS’s civil and criminal law programs, including family law services, LawLINE, criminal law services, appeals, immigration, and prison law services. The division also includes case management and tariff interpretation.

Please join us in supporting Heidi’s work in leading the Legal Advice and Representation Division.

Rates for articling students — *reminder*

The hourly rate for articling students changes as of January 1, 2009!

As part of the July 2008 tariff revisions LSS announced that the hourly rate for articling student work on legal aid referrals will be 75% of Tier 1 (\$62.93). This takes effect on accounts received as of January 1, 2009 (we had considered using referral date previously).

When billing for articling student work on any hourly tariff item, claim the Tier 1 rate — \$83.90, and enter an ‘A’ in the status section of the service provider box on the form. The adjustment will be automatically applied when your account is processed for payment. When creating accounts in e-billing, please note that in some instances, the adjustment may not be reflected correctly. Block items (e.g., criminal block fees and travel fees) are not affected by this reduction.

Large criminal case management

LSS is reviewing its processes for managing larger, more complex criminal cases under SCAP. LSS is required to track separately costs for criminal cases that exceed \$50,000 and all cases where enhanced fees are paid. These cases are attributed to an exceptional case fund, which protects other LSS services from being impacted.

Increased spending on the exceptional case fund has resulted in closer monitoring of this budget. The traditional model for SCAP has been to set budgets early for each case and expect that the budget will remain appropriate through to the case’s conclusion. This is challenging for longer, more complex cases. Periodic reviews will ensure the budgets remain appropriate for these cases. For its most complex cases, LSS will also require counsel to develop a trial plan that indicates how preparation time will be used, which will allow us to monitor the progress of the case.

Timely billing also helps us to track and predict costs. We encourage counsel working on cases where a SCAP preparation budget has been set to bill at least every three months. Anticipate also new requirements for record-keeping, and a requirement for regular billing to be added to exceptional case fund cases. For our most complex cases, this will involve monthly billing.

LSS is developing ways to identify exceptional case fund cases earlier and may have questions regarding SCAP budgets. If you have questions about large case management, e-mail David.Griffiths@lss.bc.ca.

Screening for Mexican PIF applications

LSS is experiencing continued growth in the demand for immigration referrals. Spending on immigration services this year will surpass the available budget. We have seen a remarkable increase in refugee applicants from Mexico. At the same time, the acceptance rate before the IRB for Mexican nationals has dropped from 36% in 2006 to less than 14% today. Effective **December 1, 2008**, LSS will merit screen all applications for PIF referrals for Mexican nationals. To streamline this process, we have translated the Refugee Claimant Questionnaire into Spanish and will process applications in both English and Spanish.