


Parents Legal Centres

Child Protection and the role of the PLC

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Legal Aid BC
Support when you need it



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Overview of child protection law and Parents Legal Centres

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Legal Aid BC 

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You Tube

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Acknowledgment

- I acknowledge that I am making this presentation from the from the traditional and unceded territories of the Laich-Kwil-Tach, Klahoose and K'ómoks First Nations.



Parents Legal Centres

- The PLC's are a service provided by Legal Aid BC.
- This service is available anytime after a parent/guardian has been initially contacted by the Ministry of Children and Families (the "Ministry") or a Delegated Aboriginal Agency ("DAA").
- If a social worker from the Ministry or a DAA contacts you or visits your home, you may be under investigation.



Parents Legal Centres

- How can the PLC help?
 - There are ten PLCs located across BC: Campbell River, Duncan, Kamloops, Prince George, Smithers/Hazelton, Surrey, Terrace, Vancouver, Victoria, and Williams Lake.
 - You'll work with a lawyer and an advocate to help you address the social worker's concerns about your children's safety (child protection).
 - Together we can help you find solutions that work for you and your family.

Parents Legal Centres

- The PLCs are a service provided by Legal Aid BC that assists eligible clients with early, collaborative resolution of child protection issues.
- The PLCs focus on trying to resolve cases consensually out of court, and identifies alternative methods to address child protection issues before they escalate to require court processes.

Parents Legal Centres

- The PLC teams include: lawyer(s), Aboriginal Community Legal Worker(s)/Advocate(s) (“ACLW/Advocate”), and administrator(s).
- The lawyers will provide clients with legal advice and representation to support at an early stage, including at collaborative meetings, mediation, court and court case conferences.
- The lawyers will advise clients of their legal options, but the client will make decisions about the direction they would like to take.
- The ACLW/Advocate supports the client in resolving the underlying issues that led to the protection concern(s), connects the client with community supports and resources, and may attend collaborative meetings with you.



Parents Legal Centres

- The PLC is not acting for the client in any matter other than the current child protection case.
- If the client requires assistance with a Family Law Act matter, or a Criminal matter or any other legal proceeding the PLC would direct them to contact Legal Aid BC to make an application for additional representation for those matters or the client may need to hire a lawyer privately.
- PLCs may assist with related family law issues at the discretion of the lawyer.

Parents Legal Centres

- The PLCs aim to engage in collaborative processes with the objective of reaching a settlement that addresses each party's concerns with a minimum of emotional trauma to the parent(s) and their child(ren).
- If the client opposes or does not agree with the director's application, the PLC can represent the client up until trial dates must be set.
- If it is necessary to set hearing or trial dates, the client may either be referred to another lawyer who can take their contested matter to trial, or, if they do not qualify for legal aid, they can proceed on their own or hire a lawyer privately. The PLC will cooperate with their trial lawyer for a smooth and timely transition of their file.

Parents Legal Centres

- The PLCs will:
 - Inquire, investigate and prepare for legal processes as we think necessary to provide the client with effective representation;
 - Engage such agents, consultants and experts as we think necessary, if such costs are approved by the Legal Aid BC;
 - Help negotiate and settle issues on a temporary or final basis;
 - Prepare or review consent orders or family agreements that can be filed in court;
 - Prepare or reply to court applications as appropriate;
 - Attend court and collaborative processes with the client;
 - Inform the client about court and collaborative processes; and
 - Refer the client to other resources as appropriate.

Parents Legal Centres

- What if I don't live near a PLC?
 - You may be able to get help at a PLC Network location in your community.
 - PLC Network locations provide a space and computer access for you to get help from a PLC lawyer or advocate about your child protection case.
 - Call 1-888-522-2752 (1-888-LABC-PLC) to find out if you qualify for this service.
 - You can meet privately with a lawyer or advocate in person, or by phone or video.

Parents Legal Centres Network Locations

- Burns Lake – The Link (Lakes District Family Enhancement Society)
- Chase – Adams Lake Indian Band and Neskonlith Indian Band
- Clearwater – Yellowhead Community Services
- Courtenay – Wachiay Friendship Centre
- Fort Nelson – Fort Nelson Aboriginal Friendship Society and Fort Nelson Community Literacy Society
- Fort Ware – Kwadacha Nation
- Houston – Dze L K'ant Friendship Centre Society

Parents Legal Centres Network Locations

- Mission – Mission Friendship Centre Society
- Nanaimo – Tillicum Lelum Aboriginal Friendship Centre
- New Aiyansh – Nisga’a Lisims Government
- Port Hardy – Sasamans Society
- Salmon Arm – Adams Lake Indian Band
- Terrace – Kermode Friendship Centre
- Vancouver – Sheway (Vancouver Coastal Health)
- Vernon – Native Courtworker and Counselling Association of BC
- Victoria – Hulitan and Island Metis Family and Community Services Society



Parents Legal Centres

- PLCs can provide:
 - information and advice on options for resolving child protection issues out of court;
 - legal advice and representation, where appropriate, through collaborative processes such as mediation and family case planning conferences;
 - legal advice and representation at uncontested hearings;
 - an advocate who will support you and go with you to meetings and appointments; and
 - referrals to other services, including online resources and other public agencies.

Parents Legal Centres

- What does the lawyer do?
 - give you legal advice about how to resolve child protection concerns as early as possible;
 - represent you during mediations, Family Case Conferences, and other meetings; and
 - represent you at court hearings (if you don't have to have a trial).

Parents Legal Centres

- What does the Aboriginal Community Legal Worker (“ACLW”) or Advocate do?
 - provide information and support;
 - connect you with other services, such as counselling and housing; and
 - go with you to meetings and appointments.

Parents Legal Centres

- **Best interests of the child**

- The safety and well-being of children are the paramount considerations under the law.
- The PLCs will always ensure that the best interests of the child are taken into consideration as you work towards resolving your case.

Parents Legal Centres

- How to contact us:
 - https://legalaid.bc.ca/legal_aid/parents-legal-centres
 - 1-888-522-2752 (1-888-LABC-PLC)
 - 1-866-577-2525 (provincial call centre)



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