



Notice to Counsel

March 28 , 2024, #123

Family Legal Aid Expansion

Effective April 1, 2024, Legal Aid BC (LABC) is implementing the below enhancements to ensure improved access to family legal aid services. These changes aim to provide more support for family clients and those experiencing family violence.

Family Legal Aid Expansion Hours

For contracts issued on or after April 1, 2024, LABC will provide an additional 25 General Preparation hours to clients upon certification by the tariff lawyer that:

- the lawyer is not aware of the client having improved their financial situation since their most recent financial eligibility determination by LABC
- the client is experiencing family violence and one or more additional family law issues covered by LABC's standard representation services
- the client needs these additional hours to achieve stabilization of their family law matters

To receive the additional 25 hours, lawyers must make an authorization request via the Lawyer Portal and attach a simple [Family Legal Aid Expansion Hours Certification form](#) (a formal opinion will not be necessary). Lawyers must have invoiced 25 or more of their General Preparation hours before requesting the additional hours. These hours will be available until the clinic model is operational. Once the clinic model is operational these hours will be available if the clinic model does not have capacity to provide services to an otherwise qualifying client. For contracts issued

before April 1, 2024, or for clients who are not eligible for clinic services, extended family services hours remain available.

Financial Eligibility

The income threshold for eligibility for family clients will be adjusted effective April 1, 2024 to be aligned with the most recent Market Basket Measure, this will be followed by a subsequent adjustment once the new Market Basket Measure is released later in April. A further adjustment to financial eligibility will be applied on April 1, 2025, and April 1, 2026, to align with the most recent Market Basket Measure plus 2%.

Asset Exclusion for those Experiencing Family Violence

When calculating financial eligibility for applicants experiencing family violence, assets will be excluded if they are seeking family law services within six months of leaving their abusive partner. However, if the above exception does not apply, certain accounts will still be excluded from the financial eligibility calculation. This includes accounts with a combined value of \$30,000 (net liquidation costs) or less that are established for the following categories of accounts: (a) registered retirement savings plans; (b) registered education savings plans; (c) registered disability savings plans; and (d) tax free savings accounts.

Multidisciplinary Intensive Family Law Clinic Model

As [announced](#) by the Ministry of Attorney General, the expansion of family legal aid services also includes the development of a new family law clinic model for people experiencing family violence. The new multidisciplinary, trauma-informed clinic model will provide both in-person and virtual services and is expected to open before the end of this year. LABC is working closely with the Centre for Family Equity and other partners to engage community and the

expertise of other organizations in the sector to inform the development and implementation of operations of the clinic model. We are exploring how best to capture input on the future model from our legal service providers, as well as the Association of Legal Aid Lawyers. We will share more information as it is available.

As always, we welcome your feedback regarding the *LABC Tariffs*. If you have any comments, please email lawyer.support@legalaid.bc.ca.

Rhaea Bailey
Vice-President, Legal Strategy

March 28, 2024

Questions or comments?

Contact our Lawyer Support team:

- Call 604-601-6155; 1-888-401-6206 (no charge), or
- Email lawyer.support@lss.bc.ca

RESOURCES

LAWYER PORTAL

LAWYER NEWS

LABC TARIFFS

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