



Notice to Counsel

September 4, 2024, #126

Changes to Computer-assisted Legal Research for Family Contracts, New Legal Software Support Fee

Background

Legal Aid BC previously covered the cost of the software program DivorceMate on a per-use basis for lawyers who did not hold an annual subscription. This was billable under the “computer-assisted legal research” tariff item. DivorceMate recently eliminated pay-per-use pricing and now requires a subscription. Because of this change to their pricing model, our previous billing criteria has become outdated.

We recognize that having access to legal software such as DivorceMate can be beneficial to a lawyer’s legal aid practice and without it, their clients could be at a disadvantage. Further, we do not wish to be prescriptive in what software best meets a lawyer’s needs.

As a pilot project, and in consultation with the Association of Legal Aid Lawyers (ALL), we are introducing a \$10 generic legal software support fee for family representation contracts. This flat rate fee can be billed once on each family representation contract to supplement any legal software utilized in the lawyer’s family law practice. It will apply to contracts issued on or after **September 6, 2024**, as well as existing family contracts that have not reached their bill by date by September 6, 2024.

Tariff Changes

Legal Aid BC is introducing a new tariff item to the Disbursements Tariff for family representation contracts, effective September 6, 2024. The new tariff item provides \$10 dollars per contract for any legal software service that best supports the lawyer's family law practice.

The tariff item "computer-assisted legal research" will be removed from family contracts but will remain on contracts in other areas of law (e.g., criminal, immigration).

Note that funding for computer assisted legal research on family contracts remains available by submitting an authorization request via the lawyer portal.

The updated disbursements chapter of the LABC Tariffs will be available on September 6, 2024, on the LABC website at legalaid.bc.ca (under Lawyers — LABC Tariffs) and in the lawyer portal.

Transition Rules for Clients

The "legal software support fee" tariff item will be added to all new family representation contracts issued on or after September 6, 2024, replacing the computer-assisted legal research tariff item. You can bill this item on or after September 6, 2024.

For existing family representation contracts that have not reached their bill by date by September 6, 2024, the legal software support fee will be added and available if computer-assisted legal research has not been previously billed.

If you have incurred costs relating to computer-assisted legal research that have not been billed by September 6, 2024, please submit an authorization request on the lawyer portal.

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

September 4, 2024

Questions or comments?

Contact our Lawyer Support team:

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

RESOURCES

LAWYER PORTAL

LAWYER NEWS

LABC TARIFFS

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