



Notice to Counsel

March 2025, #128

New Tariff Items and Revisions in Criminal Tariff and Disbursements for All Tariffs

Effective April 1, 2025, Legal Aid BC (LABC) will be publishing revised Criminal and Disbursements Tariffs which include new tariff items. LABC developed these tariff items based on proposals from, and in consultation with, the Association of Legal Aid Lawyers (ALL). The changes aim to simplify administration and better align compensation with the work legal aid lawyers must do.

These improvements are not funded from our core criminal law services budget but instead rely on limited supplementary federal funding that is available for 2025/26 and 2026/27. LABC will need to explore options to secure ongoing funding for these tariff items beyond the next two years. Introducing new tariff items carries inherent uncertainty about whether actual costs will align with our estimates, so LABC will be closely monitoring the billing and costs associated with these items to ensure they stay within budget.

Apart from the foregoing changes, the April 1, 2025, tariff revisions also include 'housekeeping' changes to update and clarify tariff language, as summarized below.

New Criminal and Disbursement Tariff items

The following items come into effect on April 1, 2025.

Criminal Tariff

Pre-trial Conferences

We are adding a new tariff item for **Pre-Trial Conferences (Subsequent)** to enable lawyers to bill for second or subsequent conferences for the same information on one contract. This recognizes the fact that criminal cases sometimes involve multiple pre-trial conferences.

The existing tariff item (renamed as “**Pre-Trial Conferences (Initial)**”) previously covered only the first pre-trial conference, requiring lawyers to submit authorization requests for second or subsequent ones. This change aims to provide better support and reduce the administrative burden for lawyers.

For **Pre-Trial Conferences (Subsequent)**, the billing rates are as follows:

Offence Category:	Administrative	Summary	Indictable	Major
Second or subsequent PTCs	\$123.00	\$153.76	\$192.20	\$307.51

The billing rates for **Pre-Trial Conferences (Initial)** remain the same, and the billing rules have been revised to clarify that all initial pre-trial conferences are billable, not only those ordered pursuant to practice directives.

Visiting Clients in Custody

During the COVID-19 pandemic, LABC suspended the requirement for an in-person visit and allowed lawyers to bill the visit item for virtual or telephone consultations with in-custody clients. We have now removed the COVID-era language to make this change permanent to preserve the flexibility and efficiency this provides counsel.

Housekeeping Changes

The following housekeeping changes have been made to the criminal tariff:

- Outdated COVID-19 amendments and language have been removed.
- The “**Section 525 bail review**” section has been renamed “**Section 525 detention review**”. This is a factual correction.
- The **Non-Trial Resolution- Guilty Plea** item has been amended to clarify it can be billed on the same half day as **Sentencing**.

Disbursement Tariff

Digital Media Devices

For selected criminal law contracts only, we have added a new tariff item, **Digital Media Devices**, to the Disbursement Tariff to allow criminal defence lawyers to bill for the purchase of two types of digital media devices:

1. *External hard drives* – Lawyers can bill their actual cost up to \$100 for the purchase of one hard drive per contract when necessary to provide digital disclosure to clients in custody.
2. *USB sticks / flash drives* – Lawyers can bill the actual cost up to \$5 per USB drive used to provide digital disclosure to clients and exhibits in Court.

This new tariff item recognizes that in BC, the Crown has shifted to providing disclosure entirely in digital form, requiring criminal lawyers increasingly to provide clients with copies of disclosure on digital media devices. Lawyers may also require digital media devices for use in court proceedings.

Medical-Legal Rates

Effective April 1, 2025, medical-legal rates are increasing by 2% to align with Doctors of BC rate increases.

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
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