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## Mediation in child protection cases

In January 2004, the Legal Services Society (LSS) announced a new funding strategy to promote the use of mediation in child protection matters under CFCSA. Invitations were sent to all Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD) regions to submit proposals to take advantage of this funding. The mandate of this LSS fund is to:

- Increase the use of child protection mediation.
- Evaluate the outcomes of the project to serve as a basis for future projects.

LSS established a steering committee, which set out a funding formula for approved proposals. Funds covered 75% of mediation costs, including promotion and evaluation costs for each project and a provincial coordinator (supervised by the Dispute Resolution office at the Ministry of the Attorney General) to oversee the initiative.

Since April 2004, the steering committee has committed almost \$600,000 and approved five proposals (Vancouver Coastal Region, Interior Region [Okanagan], South Vancouver Island, Upper Vancouver Island, and Prince George). These projects have recruited referrals from legal counsel, social workers, judges, and parents. They have involved key stakeholders in the design and implementation processes, and built capacity through promotion and education. An evaluation from the first project (Vancouver Coastal Region) will be coming out soon.

During this period, child protection mediations across the province have increased from 282 (March 2004) to 510 (March 2006).

LSS encourages the use of mediation in appropriate child protection cases. Visit the Dispute Resolution office website at [www.ag.gov.bc.ca/dro/child-protection/index.htm](http://www.ag.gov.bc.ca/dro/child-protection/index.htm) and the Mediator Roster Society website at [www.mediator-roster.bc.ca](http://www.mediator-roster.bc.ca) for more information.

## Duty counsel review meeting

There will be a meeting of the Duty Counsel Roster for Vancouver on Wednesday, May 10, 2006, from 4:30 – 6:30 pm in Courtroom #101, 222 Main Street, Vancouver.

## Billing Tip — Administration fees

A recent review of billings shows that the \$40 administration fee (announced in September in Notice to Counsel #47) is not being billed on all referrals. This is a reminder that the fee is billable:

- on all referrals that are not yet final billed (regardless of when you received the referral);
- in the case of appeals, both on the original referral and again when an Appeal referral is granted;
- in family cases, on both an Emergency referral and again when an Extended Services referral is granted; and
- at any time (does not have to be billed at the conclusion of the case).

If you have any questions about this or any other billing matter, please contact our Tariff Helpdesk at 604-601-6155 or e-mail [helpdesk.tariff@lss.bc.ca](mailto:helpdesk.tariff@lss.bc.ca).

## Telephone advice for accused in custody

LSS is funding a two-year telephone advice pilot project that began on April 1, 2006. People who are in custody at police lock-ups awaiting bail hearings can now get legal advice over the telephone during evenings, weekends, and holidays. Please refer to [www.lss.bc.ca](http://www.lss.bc.ca) (Newsroom) for further information.

## Comments from Craig Sicotte — Surrey bar recognition award recipient

"I consider it a great honour to receive this award. There are many other more deserving lawyers who I see on a daily basis working with legal aid clients.

You have to be patient and compassionate. You will never receive enormous financial compensation for doing legal aid work, but at times you will receive incredibly sincere gratitude that is more rewarding in many ways than money could ever be. I've been told on more than one occasion, 'You've saved my life!'"

## *Mental Health Act* & B.C. review board hearings

To have your name placed on a roster of lawyers to provide legal representation at both MHA and B.C. Review Board hearings, please contact Shirley Li in the Criminal Law & Large Case Management Department by fax at (604) 681-7963, or e-mail [helpdesk.criminal@lss.bc.ca](mailto:helpdesk.criminal@lss.bc.ca).