



Do you need help with your family law case?

Family duty counsel are lawyers paid by the Legal Services Society (LSS) to help people with low incomes with their family law issues. The family duty counsel service is available in nearly 50 BC Provincial Courts.

If you qualify financially for this service, family duty counsel can help you with all matters in Family Court (including cases involving the Family Maintenance Enforcement Program, the Family Maintenance Program, and the Ministry of Children and Family Development).

Generally, duty counsel can help you by attending court with you to:

- request an adjournment;
- get a consent order;
- get a without notice (emergency) restraining order; and
- help you with simple uncontested hearings about custody, access, and support.

If there is time, duty counsel will:

- advise you about your legal rights, obligations, and Family Court procedures;
- help you prepare Family Court documents or review Family Court documents you have prepared;
- help you negotiate and settle issues on a temporary or final basis; and
- help you prepare or review consent orders or family agreements that can be filed in Family Court.

If you do not qualify financially, family duty counsel can still attend court to request an adjournment and advise you on what other resources are available.

Family duty counsel cannot, under any circumstances:

- go to court for a contested trial or any hearing for which the issues are lengthy or complex;
- attend trial planning conferences;
- help you with complex property disputes;
- help you get a divorce;

- help you if you already have a lawyer acting for you;
- prepare your Family Court documents;
- help you with any legal problems that are not related to family law; or
- serve or accept service of any court documents.

It is best to speak to a family duty counsel lawyer before your court date, if possible. If you are in Port Coquitlam, Surrey, or Vancouver, call to make an appointment; if you are in another location, drop by during duty counsel hours. See the list of court locations and family duty counsel hours on the LSS website at www.legalaid.bc.ca (click Legal aid — Legal advice — family law matters — How to find Provincial Court family duty counsel), or call your local legal aid office for information (see www.legalaid.bc.ca and click Legal aid — Legal aid offices, or check the business listings of the white pages under “Legal Aid”). Bring copies of all your court documents to your appointment.

Family duty counsel are available on all first appearance or family list days in all locations. At the courthouse, you can identify family duty counsel lawyers by their name tags. The lawyers will first help people with matters in court that day, then those who drop in for advice.

Please note that you will be asked to provide information about your legal problem, the names of other people or agencies who are or who will be part of your case, and information about your finances.

See the Family Law in BC website at www.familylaw.lss.bc.ca to find legal information and self-help resources. LSS has public access computers that you can use in most legal aid offices and at community partner locations throughout the province. For a list, see www.legalaid.bc.ca (click Legal aid — Legal aid offices), or call your nearest legal aid office (check the business listings of the white pages under “Legal Aid”).