

# Legal Help and Information If You Represent Yourself in Court

If you do not have a lawyer, you will have to prepare your case and do the research to represent yourself. You will need to learn about the court system, the specific law in your case, what you and the “other side” must both prove, what defences you have, and all the possible arguments for your case.

## GET HELP: In Person and By Phone

### Justice Access Centre Self-help and Information Services

Staff in Vancouver can help you get the information you need to prepare your Supreme Court family or civil case or find information about other justice-related civil or family problems. Drop in Monday to Friday at 800 Hornby Street in Vancouver or visit the website at [www.SupremeCourtSelfHelp.bc.ca](http://www.SupremeCourtSelfHelp.bc.ca).

### Legal Aid (Legal Services Society of BC)

You may be able to get free legal help (legal aid) if:

- your legal problem is covered by legal aid rules,
- your income and the value of your property are below a certain limit, and
- you have no other way of getting legal help

Call 604.408.2172 in the lower mainland and 1.866.577.2525 elsewhere in BC.

See the Legal Services Society website at [www.lss.bc.ca](http://www.lss.bc.ca) for locations of legal aid clinics and more information.

### Lawyer Referral Service (Canadian Bar Association, BC Branch)

This service will help you find a lawyer who will meet with you for 30 minutes for \$25.

Call 604.687.3221 in the lower mainland and 1.800.663.1919 elsewhere in BC or learn more on the website at [www.CBABC.org](http://www.CBABC.org).

### Duty Counsel (at the courthouse)

Duty counsel is a lawyer at the courthouse who can give you quick and free legal advice, and may be able to assist you briefly in provincial court for criminal law and family law matters. For example, duty counsel could help you postpone your case or represent you in a bail hearing. Duty counsel cannot represent you at a trial.

### Access Pro Bono Society of BC

The Society promotes access to justice in British Columbia by providing and fostering quality pro bono legal services for people and non-profit organizations of limited means. Volunteer lawyers provide free legal assistance in criminal, family, immigration and civil matters for those who cannot afford legal services. Lawyers do not represent clients in court but do give legal advice and help clients prepare for court appearances. In Vancouver call 604.878.7400, call toll free 1.877.762.6664, or visit their website at [www.AccessProBono.ca](http://www.AccessProBono.ca).

### **The Salvation Army's Pro Bono Lawyer Consultant Program**

This program helps people who cannot afford a lawyer and who cannot get legal aid. Lawyers will provide legal assistance, help prepare legal documents, and prepare you for court in the areas of criminal, family, immigration, labour, welfare law, and in some areas of civil law, but the lawyer will not appear in court with you. There are clinics in many parts of BC. Call 604.872.7681 or see the website at [www.probono.ca](http://www.probono.ca).

### **UBC Law Student's Legal Advice Program in Vancouver**

This program is only for people with low income. It does not cover cases of family law, personal injury, Supreme Court, or for claims over \$10,000. There are many clinics in the lower mainland. Call 604.822.5791 or see the program website at [www.lslap.bc.ca](http://www.lslap.bc.ca).

### **The Law Centre – University of Victoria Faculty of Law – in Victoria**

The Centre provides advice, assistance, and representation to people who cannot afford a lawyer. The Centre covers law in the following areas: criminal matters, divorce, support and other family law matters, human rights, civil disputes, hearings before administrative tribunals for employment insurance, welfare, landlord and tenant disputes, and Canada Pension Plan. The Centre also gives free legal education classes. Call 250.385.1221 or see the website at [www.thelawcentre.ca](http://www.thelawcentre.ca).

### **Court Information Program for Immigrants**

This program reduces language barriers to BC courts. Operated by the Justice Education Society, the program provides free legal information and referrals to new immigrants and refugees who are appearing in court. Services are available in English, Chinese, Vietnamese, Punjabi, Hindi and Spanish. Call 1.866.550.2474 to speak with a court worker or visit their website at [www.CourtInformation.ca](http://www.CourtInformation.ca).

### **Elizabeth Fry Societies**

Advocacy and support services for adolescent and adult women in conflict with the law or at risk of coming in conflict with the law. To find out more about these services, call:

- Vancouver: 604.520.1166
- Kamloops: 250.374.2119
- Kelowna: 250.763.4613
- Prince George: 250.563.1113
- Ashcroft: 250.453.9656

### **Anti-Poverty Advocates (PovNet)**

PovNet maintains a list of community-based advocates throughout British Columbia listed on their website at [www.PovNet.ca](http://www.PovNet.ca). To find an advocate where you live, click on a town near you, and you will get a list of non-profit organizations that may be able to assist you.

## **FIND INFORMATION: Online and By Phone**

To educate yourself about the law, the cases and the possible arguments in your case, you will have to do some legal research; this can be a long, complicated process. You will have to collect information from various places, using websites, publications and the phone. Here are a few basic resources to start with:

## **Justice Education Society of BC**

Providing public legal education in BC for over 20 years, the Justice Education Society offers over 100 programs and resources, which can be accessed via the website at [www.JusticeEducation.ca](http://www.JusticeEducation.ca). Phone 604.660.9870. Online web resources include:

- [www.SupremeCourtBC.ca](http://www.SupremeCourtBC.ca)
- [www.SmallClaimsBC.ca](http://www.SmallClaimsBC.ca)
- [www.AdminLawBC.ca](http://www.AdminLawBC.ca)
- [www.SupremeCourtSelfHelp.bc.ca](http://www.SupremeCourtSelfHelp.bc.ca)
- [www.VictimsInfo.ca](http://www.VictimsInfo.ca)
- [www.FamiliesChange.ca](http://www.FamiliesChange.ca)
- Court Tips for Parents
- Family Law and You
- Supreme Court Civil Guidebooks
- Accessing Court Documents Online

## **Clicklaw**

[www.Clicklaw.bc.ca](http://www.Clicklaw.bc.ca) is a website that features legal information and education from more than 24 public legal education contributors. The resources available through Clicklaw were designed to be used by the public and those helping the public access legal information. Clicklaw: Solve Problems. Find Help.

## **Dial-a-Law (Canadian Bar Association, BC)**

Call and listen to recordings of legal information on over 130 topics. Have a pen and paper ready. Call 604.687.4680 in the lower mainland and 1.800.565.5297 elsewhere in BC. Go to the website at [www.DialALaw.org](http://www.DialALaw.org) to learn more and access print and audio scripts.

## **Legal Services Society (LSS)**

Legal Aid offices and their website [www.LSS.bc.ca](http://www.LSS.bc.ca) have information on:

- Appeal Procedures
- Legal Research
- Criminal Charges
- Fines
- Legal Aid
- No Contact Orders
- Trial Procedure
- Women/Abuse

## **Family Law Website (LSS)**

Legal Services Society maintains a comprehensive family law website at [www.familylaw.lss.bc.ca](http://www.familylaw.lss.bc.ca). It provides general information about family law, self-help kits about divorce, custody applications and support orders, as well as information on child protection and removal issues.

## **BC Ministry of Attorney General**

The Attorney General's website at [www.gov.bc.ca/ag](http://www.gov.bc.ca/ag) provides information on a range of legal topics, BC court procedures and more. Information booklets are available in most courthouses.

## **Provincial Court of British Columbia website**

Information on appeals, alternatives to trial, frequently asked questions, the complaint process, a court locations map as well as some information about criminal, youth, family, small claims, traffic, bylaw matters and related laws are available on this website [www.ProvincialCourt.bc.ca](http://www.ProvincialCourt.bc.ca).

### **BC Supreme Court and BC Appeal Court website**

The official BC courts website at [www.courts.gov.bc.ca](http://www.courts.gov.bc.ca) has the Rules of Court, decisions that you can study and basic information for self representing litigants.

### **The Law Centre (University of Victoria Faculty of Law)**

A broad range of information is available on their website at [www.thelawcentre.ca](http://www.thelawcentre.ca). The law faculty offers free legal education classes, as well as fact sheets, booklets and self-help kits. Call 250.385.1221.

### **The People's Law School**

The People's Law School has printed information on family law, and information on various topics on their website at [www.publiclegaled.bc.ca](http://www.publiclegaled.bc.ca). Phone 604.331.5400.

### **BC Courthouse Libraries**

There are 35 courthouse libraries in communities throughout British Columbia where you can do legal research for your case. Call toll free 1.800.665.2570 to find the library nearest you or use the website at [www.CourthouseLibrary.ca](http://www.CourthouseLibrary.ca).

### **The John Howard Society of BC**

A wide range of programs and activities for adults and youth involved in conflict with the law. Offered in 15 communities across BC. For details, see the website at [www.johnhoward.bc.ca](http://www.johnhoward.bc.ca) or call 250.386.3428.

### **Best Guide to Canadian Legal Research**

This website [www.legalresearch.org](http://www.legalresearch.org) is a starting point for legal research. Information includes: effective strategies and techniques for Canadian legal research, finding and using secondary sources, finding and analyzing cases, updating your research, legal writing, and frequently asked questions.

### **Access to Justice Network**

This organization's website at [www.acjnet.org](http://www.acjnet.org) is another starting point for legal research. It includes information on hundreds of legal topics.

### **Department of Justice, Canada**

This government of Canada website [www.canada.justice.gc.ca](http://www.canada.justice.gc.ca) provides information on issues related to federal laws. For example, federal statutes and regulations, constitutional documents, court decisions, child support guidelines, and immigration matters.