

Information from the Legal Services Society March 2010

What to Expect From Your Legal Aid Lawyer

The lawyer you get through legal aid should do the following:

1. Once your legal aid application is accepted and you contact a lawyer, the lawyer should meet with you as soon as possible to discuss your case. Usually, your lawyer should meet with you alone, unless you need an interpreter.
2. In an early meeting with your lawyer, he or she should ask you:
 - for any information you have about your case,
 - what results you want from your case.
3. Your lawyer should explain to you:
 - confidentiality (which means that your lawyer cannot discuss your case with others without your permission),
 - your role and the lawyer's role,
 - the steps in the legal process,
 - your legal options,
 - your chances of getting what you want,
 - the risks you face, if any,
 - the limits of your legal aid referral.
4. Your lawyer should follow your reasonable instructions about how to deal with your case, but cannot do anything unethical or illegal. If your lawyer cannot follow your instructions, he or she should explain why.
5. Your lawyer should return your calls within a reasonable time. If your lawyer is busy with other cases, he or she should let you know when there will be time to talk with you about your case.
6. Your lawyer should keep appointments with you. If your lawyer cannot keep an appointment or if your lawyer misses an appointment, he or she should contact you to make another one.
7. Your lawyer should keep you reasonably informed about your case. This means that your lawyer should:
 - explain what's happening at each stage of the case,
 - answer any questions you have,
 - give you any documents or other information you reasonably request.

8. Your lawyer should inform you immediately if he or she forgets to do something important or makes a mistake.

9. Your lawyer should make sure you get an interpreter if you need one for a meeting or hearing. The interpreter's job is to help you communicate with your lawyer. Your lawyer's job is to interview you and give you advice.

10. Your lawyer should try to complete work within a reasonable time. If your lawyer expects a lengthy delay, he or she should inform you as soon as possible.

11. If you are unhappy with the result of your case, your lawyer should explain whether or not you can appeal. If you change lawyers, your previous lawyer should transfer your file to your new lawyer as soon as possible.

If you feel that your lawyer has not met these standards, discuss it with him or her. If the problem is not settled, write to your local legal aid office to find out what you can do about it.

Source:

LSS website: www.lss.bc.ca