

Working Together:
You & Your Legal Aid Lawyer

What can I expect from my lawyer?

The lawyer's job is:

- To provide legal advice, explain choices for you and the results you might expect.
- To tell you what to expect and advise you of the progress of your case in a way you can understand. If you do not understand, don't be afraid to ask. We are trying to assist you with your legal problems and it is important that you are aware of what is being done on your behalf.
- To speak for you and to represent you in Court and in discussions on your case and provide you with any offers of settlement.

It is **not** a lawyer's job:

- To do whatever you want, whether or not there is any likelihood of success of your request.
- To provide emotional, marriage or non-legal counselling, as this requires special training. Your lawyer may be aware of community services and resources. Don't be afraid to ask.
- To enter a plea of guilty when you do not admit to doing anything wrong.

Confidentiality

Your lawyer needs to know everything about your case. What you say is completely confidential and will not be disclosed without your permission, except as required by law. Unless you need an interpreter or translator, the lawyer will want to meet with you alone. If you bring a friend or advocate when you see the lawyer, the lawyer may ask them to wait in the waiting room. This is because your friend could be asked to testify in Court about what was heard in the lawyer's office.

Role of a Legal Assistant

In some cases, you may work directly with a legal assistant. A legal assistant works as part of your legal team and always works under the supervision of a lawyer. The legal assistant has the same commitment to good service as your lawyer.

What can your lawyer expect from you?

- **Your full name, address and phone number.** You must advise your lawyer if you change your name, address and phone numbers. Your lawyer must be able to locate you easily.
- **Any information requested by the lawyer or legal assistant.** Complete all forms to the best of your ability and return them to the office as quickly as possible. Often we cannot do our work until all the information has been collected.

- **Information on changes in your financial or your family situation.** Have you started or stopped working? Has your family size changed?
- **Keep all appointments.** If you are unable to keep an appointment, phone and inform the offices and reschedule.
Note: Failure to do so without a good reason and without notice may lead to withdrawal of legal services.
- **Attend court dates** when requested by your lawyer or when required by the Court.
Note: Failure to do so without a good reason and without notice, may lead to withdrawal of legal services.
- **Your co-operation.** The lawyer is trying to assist you in dealing with your legal problems. This is a difficult time for you. The lawyer's job is to provide your legal choices, and to suggest some reasonable solutions based on the law, not on what you would like to have occur.
- If you wish the lawyer **to do nothing further on your case**, let the office know. You can always re-apply later if you change you mind.

Making Contact

- When you call to make an appointment with your lawyer, ask what you should bring with you. You may be asked to bring all your papers and court documents.
- Before you go to the lawyer's office, write down the details of your case to help you talk about the legal problem more easily. Include dates and names of witnesses.
- Make a list of the questions you want to ask. If you are confused or don't understand something, tell the lawyer.
- Tell your lawyer as much as possible about the legal problem even though you may feel embarrassed or uncomfortable. The lawyer is not there to judge you.
- Bring a notebook with you to each meeting so you can make notes of what your lawyer says.
- When you call the Legal Aid office, tell the receptionist to whom you wish to speak. The lawyers are often in Court, and so may not be available to take your call. If there is a reason someone should return your call immediately, let us know.
- Let us know the best time to reach you and your full name and phone number so that someone can call you back, if needed.
- If you want to make an appointment or confirm a Court date, the support staff may be able to assist you.
- If you need legal advice or have important information to tell your lawyer, please leave a message for the lawyer. If legal assistants are assigned to work with your lawyer, you may leave the information with them. Our offices are very busy and we cannot always respond immediately to your telephone calls. **We ask that you call only when necessary.**

Feedback

If you have a complaint about the way your case is being handled:

- Speak to the lawyer or legal assistant who has been looking after your case about your concerns.

- Write them down and send them to:

Chief Executive Officer
Legal Aid Saskatchewan
Central Office
#502-201 21st Street East,
SASKATOON SK S7K 2H6

E-mail: central@legalaid.sk.ca