Legal Services Society
British Columbia
www.lss.bc.ca

What can I expect if my lawyer is given an Emergency Services referral?

What is an Emergency Services referral and why has my lawyer been given one?

A referral is what we call the instructions that the Legal Services Society gives to a lawyer when he or she starts a legal aid case. An Emergency Services referral is intended to allow your lawyer to help you under specific circumstances; for example, if:

- your safety or your children's safety is at risk;
- you have been denied access to your children on an ongoing basis; or
- there is a risk that your child will be permanently removed from the province.

What can my lawyer do for me?

Your lawyer may spend up to 25 hours to:

- review your case;
- discuss your case with you and give you legal advice;
- draft court documents;
- negotiate with the other side;
- prepare for a case or settlement conference;
- prepare for interviewing witnesses and/or expert witnesses; or
- prepare for hearings in Supreme or Provincial Court
  (but, in addition, will have enough time to go to court for you).

Your lawyer may also spend up to:

- 10 extra hours to prepare for hearings in Supreme Court;
- 10 hours to prepare for mediation or collaborative processes; and
- 15 hours to attend mediation or collaborative processes.

What can I do to help my lawyer?

Your lawyer only has a limited number of hours in which to help you. Here are some things you can do to help:

- only contact your lawyer if necessary, and keep your conversations as short as possible;
- gather any relevant documents and put them in chronological order to give to your lawyer;
- before you meet or call your lawyer, make a written list of your concerns or questions; and
- make sure your lawyer deals with the matter for which you received the Family referral and only assists with other matters if time is available within the referral.

What if my lawyer is out of hours and I still need help?

In some situations where you may have ongoing issues, your lawyer can request additional hours called extended family services.