

**ACCESS TO JUSTICE:  
TOOLS OF THE TRADE**

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Margaret Capes, Community Law School (Sarnia-Lambton) Inc.

In cooperation with Victim Services of Sarnia-Lambton and the Ministry of the Attorney  
General

# **ACCESSING JUSTICE: TOOLS OF THE TRADE**

## **INTRODUCTION**

In this booklet, we will provide a summary of the various services available to individuals and groups who may need to access the justice system. These services have been designed to increase understanding and manoeuvrability within the system. To make the booklet easy to use, we have categorized the services under the following headings:

1. Services from Lawyer Groups
2. Legal Aid Ontario
3. Ombudsman Offices
4. At the Courthouse and Police Station
5. Criminal Injuries Compensation Program
6. At the Psychiatric Hospitals: Patient Advocates
7. Public Guardian and Trustee Office
8. Translation Services
9. Lay Advocates

This booklet is far from the definitive tool for accessing the justice system. In fact, we have added pages for you to make notes of other resources which you may discover in your work. It is important to share our ideas and discoveries so we would encourage you to join the Community Law School (Sarnia-Lambton) Inc. electronic bulletin board at [www.rivernet.net/~cls](http://www.rivernet.net/~cls) and post your findings.

This booklet does not claim to provide legal advice. You should contact one of the services listed for assistance with accessing the justice system. The information provided is current to January, 2004.

## TOOLS OF THE TRADE

### 1. SERVICES FROM LAWYER GROUPS

#### a) Law Society of Upper Canada - Lawyer Referral Service

This public service helps individuals and groups find an lawyer in the area of practice needed. Members of the public call the 1-900 phone number and will be provided with the name of a lawyer in their area which may be able to help with their case. Members of the public can receive up to 30 minutes free consultation on their case from the lawyer. If this service is used, a \$6.00 charge is added to their phone bill each time the Service is called.

Law Society of Upper Canada  
Lawyer Referral Service  
130 Queen St. W.  
Toronto, Ontario  
M5H 2N6

Phone: 1-900-565-4577

Crisis Phone (domestic abuse or persons incarcerated under age 18):

1-416-947-3330 (in Toronto)

1-800-268-8326 (outside Toronto)

Email: [lawrefer@lsuc.on.ca](mailto:lawrefer@lsuc.on.ca)

Website: [www.lsuc.on.ca/public/referral\\_en.jsp](http://www.lsuc.on.ca/public/referral_en.jsp)

#### b) Law Society of Upper Canada - Discrimination and Harassment Counsel

This free service is available to members of the general public who have faced discrimination and/or harassment from a lawyer or law firm. The position is currently filled by Toronto lawyer Cynthia Peterson. Members of the public can receive counselling, be provided with options, obtain assistance with the completion of a complaint to the Law Society (the group that has the responsibility to regulate and discipline lawyers in Ontario) or the Ontario Human Rights Commission and/or receive assistance in settling the matter.

Law Society of Upper Canada - Discrimination and Harassment Counsel

Phone: 1-877-790-2200

Email: [assistance@dhcounsel.on.ca](mailto:assistance@dhcounsel.on.ca)

Website: [www.dhcounsel.on.ca](http://www.dhcounsel.on.ca)

### **c) Pro Bono Law Ontario**

This organization matches lawyers with clients for free legal services. The clients cannot otherwise be receiving legal aid assistance. This group acts as a broker and assists groups and individuals in their search for legal assistance. Individuals and/or organizations must have limited financial resources in order to qualify.

Pro Bono Law Ontario  
130 Queen St. W.  
Toronto, Ontario  
M5H 2N6

Phone: 1-866-466-7256  
Email: [info@probononet.on.ca](mailto:info@probononet.on.ca)  
Website: [www.probononet.on.ca](http://www.probononet.on.ca)

### **d) Pro Bono Students Canada**

This program operates at certain Canadian law schools including the University of Western Ontario and the University of Windsor. They match law students with community organizations (incorporated, non profit organizations), government agencies or practising lawyers who are working on public interest legal cases. The students volunteer their time and can provide policy research and writing, produce educational materials and assist with workshop preparations. The projects must be legal in nature but the students cannot provide legal advice. There are coordinators at the law schools and the students are supervised by lawyers who act as mentors. The service is free of charge and placements are generally made from September to the end of March each year.

#### **National Office**

Pro Bono Students Canada  
Faculty of Law  
University of Toronto  
84 Queen's Park  
Toronto, Ontario  
M5S 2C5

Phone: 1-416-946-0143  
Website: [www.law.utoronto.ca/probono](http://www.law.utoronto.ca/probono)

## **University of Windsor**

Pro Bono Windsor  
Faculty of Law  
University of Windsor  
401 Sunset Ave  
Windsor, Ontario  
N9B 3P4

Phone: 1-519-253-3000 Ext. 3966

Email: [pbsc@uwindsor.ca](mailto:pbsc@uwindsor.ca)

Website: <http://athena.uwindsor.ca/pbsc>

## **University of Western Ontario**

Pro Bono Students Canada  
Faculty of Law  
University of Western Ontario  
London, Ontario  
N6A 3K7

Phone: 1-519-661-2111 Ext.81195

Email: [law.probono@uwo.ca](mailto:law.probono@uwo.ca)

Website: [www.law.uwo.ca](http://www.law.uwo.ca) - Click Pro Bono

### **e) Volunteer Lawyer Service**

This program offers free legal assistance to eligible non profit and charitable organizations in Ontario. This service matches community agencies with volunteer lawyers from their area. The organizations must have limited financial resources in order to qualify. Examples of services which have been provided in the past include by-law revisions, addressing employment issues (e.g. human rights, wrongful dismissals, employment contracts), applying for charitable status, review of duties and responsibilities of boards of directors, and liability and insurance issues.

Volunteer Lawyer Service  
130 Queen St. W.  
Toronto, Ontario  
M5H 2N6

Phone: 1-416-947-3931

Email: [vl@lsuc.on.ca](mailto:vl@lsuc.on.ca)

Website: <http://volunteerlawyers.org>

## **2. LEGAL AID ONTARIO**

There are five main legal aid programs in Ontario which are available to clients with limited financial resources. They are:

- a) Certificate Program
- b) Duty Counsel Program
- c) Family Law Information Centres
- d) Community Legal Clinics
- e) Student Legal Aid Societies

Each will be described in the following section.

### **a) Certificate Program**

Under this program, clients who qualify financially receive full or partial coverage from Legal Aid Ontario. The client applies at the local Legal Aid Ontario office and, if approved, can receive legal representation (at no or some cost) for criminal, family and civil matters. There are considerable restrictions on the types of cases which will be approved for coverage. If approved, the client approaches a lawyer who handles legal aid cases for representation.

#### **Provincial Office**

Legal Aid Ontario  
375 University Avenue  
Suite 404  
Toronto, Ontario  
M5G 2G1

Phone: 1-416-979-1446 or 1-800-668-8258

Website: [www.legalaid.on.ca](http://www.legalaid.on.ca)

#### **Sarnia/Lambton Office**

Legal Aid Ontario  
201 N. Front St.  
Suite 100  
Sarnia, Ontario  
N7T 7T9

Phone: 1-519-336-9371

## **b) Duty Counsel Program**

Legal Aid Ontario offers duty counsel programs for criminal, family, mental health and tenant protection cases. Duty counsel are lawyers who are available on site at the courthouse, Ontario Rental Housing Tribunal or hospital to assist clients. They can provide information, limited representation and referrals to lawyers who can assist with the client's case. A roster of local lawyers provide the service (except in larger urban areas where full time duty counsel are available). The staff of the local legal clinic usually provides duty counsel services at the Ontario Rental Housing Tribunal.

### **Provincial Office**

Legal Aid Ontario  
375 University Avenue  
Suite 404  
Toronto, Ontario  
M5G 2G1

Phone: 1-416-979-1446 or 1-800-668-8258  
Website: [www.legalaid.on.ca](http://www.legalaid.on.ca)

### **Sarnia/Lambton Offices**

#### **Family, Criminal, Civil, Mental Health Matters**

Legal Aid Ontario  
201 N. Front St.  
Suite 100  
Sarnia, Ontario  
N7T 7T9

Phone: 1-519-336-9371

#### **Tenant Protection Act Matters**

Community Legal Assistance Sarnia  
201 N. Front St.  
Suite 100  
Sarnia, Ontario  
N7T 7T9

Phone: 1-519-332-8055

### **c) Family Law Information Centres**

In some areas of the province, Legal Aid Ontario provides Family Law Information Centres. Lawyers at these Centres provide legal information, summary advice, assistance with the completion of forms and referrals. In most areas, they are staffed by a roster of local lawyers and they are located at the courthouse. They are referred to as Family Advice Lawyers.

#### **Provincial Office**

Legal Aid Ontario  
375 University Avenue  
Suite 404  
Toronto, Ontario  
M5G 2G1

Phone: 1-416-979-1446 or 1-800-668-8258

Website: [www.legalaid.on.ca](http://www.legalaid.on.ca)

#### **For Sarnia/Lambton Information:**

Legal Aid Ontario  
201 N. Front St.  
Suite 100  
Sarnia, Ontario  
N7T 7T9

Phone: 1-519-336-9371

### **d) Community Legal Clinics**

There are generalist clinics (e.g. Community Legal Assistance Sarnia) and speciality clinics (e.g. Advocacy Centre for the Elderly and Advocacy Centre for Tenants Ontario) funded by Legal Aid Ontario. They represent persons of limited financial means with social assistance, housing, disability pension, human rights and Criminal Injuries Compensation matters. The specialty clinics undertake policy development and test case litigation as well. The generalist clinics also provide the duty counsel program at the Ontario Rental Housing Tribunal. A complete list of all clinics can be found at the Legal Aid Ontario website.

#### **Provincial Office**

Legal Aid Ontario  
375 University Avenue  
Suite 404  
Toronto, Ontario  
M5G 2G1

Phone: 1-416-979-1446 or 1-800-668-8258

Website: [www.legalaid.on.ca](http://www.legalaid.on.ca)

### **Sarnia/Lambton Office**

Community Legal Assistance Sarnia  
201 N. Front St.  
Suite 100  
Sarnia, Ontario  
N7T 7T9

Phone: 1-519-332-8055

### **e) Student Legal Aid Societies**

Legal Aid Ontario funds student legal clinics at each of the six Ontario law schools. Law students work on cases under the supervision of Review Counsel. They develop practice skills in a clinical setting. Cases handled by student legal clinics include criminal, housing and small claims court matters. There are student legal clinics at both the University of Western Ontario and the University of Windsor.

### **University of Windsor**

Community Legal Aid  
354 Sunset Avenue  
Windsor, Ontario  
N9B 3A9

Phone: 1-519-253-7150

### **University of Western Ontario**

Community Legal Services  
Room 120  
Faculty of Law  
University of Western Ontario  
London, Ontario  
N6A 3K7

Phone: 1-519-661-3352

Website: [www.law.uwo.ca](http://www.law.uwo.ca)

### **3. OMBUDSMAN OFFICES**

#### **a) Provincial**

##### **Ombudsman Ontario**

This provincially funded office provides assistance to the general public with questions relating to Ontario government services. If a client feels they have been wronged or cannot get an answer from a provincial government agency, they can contact the Ombudsman's office. The Ombudsman does not have the authority to change a decision but they can contact the government office on behalf of the client, help clarify matters and obtain answers. This service is free of charge.

Ombudsman Ontario  
125 Queens Park  
Toronto, Ontario  
M5S 2C7

Phone: 1-800-263-1830 (English)  
1-800-387-2620 (French)

Website: [www.ombudsman.on.ca](http://www.ombudsman.on.ca)

#### **b) Federal**

Unlike the province of Ontario, the federal government does not have a stand alone ombudsman office. However, most federal departments have complaints offices or internal ombudsmen who can address the concerns of the general public. A complete list of the federal government departments, agencies and commissions can be found at the website listed below.

##### **Government of Canada**

[www.gc.ca](http://www.gc.ca)

## **4. AT THE COURTHOUSE AND POLICE STATION**

### **a) Victim Services of Sarnia-Lambton**

This non profit organization, with offices on Sarnia, Forest and Petrolia, provides immediate emotional and practical support to all victims of crime and tragic circumstances 24 hours/day, 7 days a week. The staff provide practical assistance and emergency measures (e.g. food and accommodation), information on victims' rights and the justice system, assistance with Victim Impact Statements and Criminal Injuries Compensation applications and referrals to community agencies. The Sarnia-Lambton office is one of a network of offices throughout the province of Ontario. The services are free of charge and are accessed by calling the Sarnia Police Services and/or the Ontario Provincial Police.

Victim Services of Sarnia-Lambton  
555 Christina St. N.  
Sarnia, Ontario  
N7T 7X6

Phone: 1-519-344-8861 Ext. 5238 or 1-888-281-3665 Ext. 5238

Email: [victim@ebtech.net](mailto:victim@ebtech.net)

Website: [www.victimservices.on.ca](http://www.victimservices.on.ca)

### **b) Victim Witness Assistance Program**

Staff are available at the local courthouse to provide information, assistance and support to victims and witnesses of crime throughout the criminal justice system. These employees of the Ontario Ministry of the Attorney General assess the needs of victims and witnesses, provide referrals (where applicable), emotional support, case information (court dates, bail conditions) and court orientation and accompaniment. These services are available in most parts of the province of Ontario and are free of charge.

#### **Provincial Contact Information**

Ministry of the Attorney General

[www.attorneygeneral.jus.gov.on.ca/english/vw/vwap.asp](http://www.attorneygeneral.jus.gov.on.ca/english/vw/vwap.asp)

#### **Sarnia-Lambton Office**

Victim Witness Assistance Program  
700 Christina St. N.  
Sarnia, Ontario  
N7V 3C2

Phone 1-519-337-1766

**c) Canadian Mental Health Association - Lambton County Branch  
Court Outreach Worker**

The Canadian Mental health Association - Lambton County branch has staff available to assist persons living with mental illness as they negotiate their way through the civil, family and criminal justice systems. As well, staff are available at the courthouse to assist such persons with defence counsel, the Crown attorney, Duty Counsel and the police. The Court Outreach Worker assists the accused, victim or witness living with a mental illness to better understand the justice system and their options, and makes referrals to other agencies where appropriate. They can be reached at the Lambton County Branch.

Canadian Mental Health Association -Lambton County Branch  
210 Lochiel St.  
Sarnia, Ontario N7T 4C7

Phone: 1-519-337-5411

## **5. CRIMINAL INJURIES COMPENSATION PROGRAM**

This provincially funded program awards compensation to victims of crime. There must be proof of personal injury or death as a result of the crime. Expenses incurred as a result of the crime, lost wages and pain and suffering awards are made if all criteria are met by the victim. The criteria are extensive and as a result not all victims of crime qualify for this assistance from the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board.

Criminal Injuries Compensation Board  
439 University Ave., 4<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Toronto, Ontario  
M5G 1Y8

Phone: 1-800-372-7463  
1-416-326-2900

Website: [www.attorneygeneral.jus.gov.on.ca/english/about/vw/cicb.asp](http://www.attorneygeneral.jus.gov.on.ca/english/about/vw/cicb.asp)

## **6. AT THE PSYCHIATRIC HOSPITALS: PATIENT ADVOCATES**

The Psychiatric Patient Advocate Office (PPAO) is mandated to protect the civil and legal rights of inpatients in psychiatric hospitals and wards. When a patient is admitted, the PPAO staff are contacted and they meet with the patient to discuss his/her rights. As necessary, patients are referred to community advocacy resources including Legal Aid Ontario. In larger centres, there are full time staff available at psychiatric hospitals; however, in smaller centres, the Patient Advocates are called in off a roster as required.

Psychiatric Patient Advocate Office  
Head Office  
55 St. Clair Ave. W.  
Suite 802  
Toronto, Ontario M4V 2Y7

Phone: 1-416-327-7000

1-800-578-2343

Website: [www.ppao.gov.on.ca](http://www.ppao.gov.on.ca)

## **7. PUBLIC GUARDIAN AND TRUSTEE**

The Public Guardian and Trustee is responsible for protecting the interests of incapable persons by making important decisions when others are not available to do so. They can assist with decisions relating to personal care and property in conjunction with the client and/or their family or close associates. These decisions often relate to money management, the maintenance of property, housing, personal safety, health care and nutrition.

Public Guardian and Trustee  
Regional Office-London  
401 Clarence St., 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor  
London, Ontario N6A 3M6

Phone: 1-519-660-3140  
1-800-891-0504

## **8. TRANSLATION AND INTERPRETATION SERVICES**

Many individuals have difficulty dealing with the justice system because of language barriers. Across Languages Translation and Interpretation Services offers interpretation and translation services to those navigating the justice system. They are a non profit organization offering services in over 75 languages. Their office should be contacted regarding their costs to provide assistance.

Across Languages Translation and Interpretation  
515 Richmond St. Unit 3  
London, Ontario N6A 5N4

Phone: 1-519-642-7247  
1-866-833-7247

Website: [www.acrosslanguages.org](http://www.acrosslanguages.org)

## **9. LAY ADVOCATES**

Many social service agency staff act as lay advocates for persons dealing with the justice system. For some staff, advocacy is part of their job descriptions. Examples can be found at the Canadian Mental Health Association, the Sexual Assault Survivors' Centre, the John Howard Society and the Special Needs Employment Service. They assist clients through counselling, information sharing, assistance with the preparation of forms, court/tribunal accompaniment and referrals. Community Law School (Sarnia-Lambton) Inc. offers "in house" and community training for lay advocates on various aspects of social welfare law. Also, in conjunction with Lambton College, the Community Law School offers a Certificate in Community Advocacy program, an in depth review of advocacy skills and their application in a social justice context.

Community Law School (Sarnia-Lambton) Inc.  
59 King St. W.  
Box 1000  
Forest, Ontario  
N0N 1J0

Phone: 1-519-786-2334

Email: [cls@rivernet.net](mailto:cls@rivernet.net)

Website: [www.rivernet.net/~cls](http://www.rivernet.net/~cls)

## **THE FINAL WORD**

Please use the following pages to update and add to the information provided in this booklet. Also, stay connected with others who are dedicated to improving access to the justice system in our community through networking and sharing on the Community Law School (Sarnia-Lambton) Inc. electronic bulletin board found at [www.rivernet.net/~cls](http://www.rivernet.net/~cls).

## **NOTES**