

FAMILY LAW LEGAL AID ADVISORY COMMITTEE

TERMS OF REFERENCE

1. INTRODUCTION

The Attorney General's recent announcement of new funding for Legal Aid Ontario provides an opportunity to engage stakeholders on how this new investment can best be deployed to assist low-income Ontarians with their legal aid needs and better support those providing legal aid services.

2. NUMBER OF ADVISORY COMMITTEES

There are five (5) advisory committees:

- Major Criminal Case Advisory Committee
- Standard Criminal Law Advisory Committee
- Family Law Advisory Committee
- Poverty Law Advisory Committee
- Refugee & Immigration Law Advisory Committee

3. MANDATE

Part of the \$150 million investment in Legal Aid Ontario will help develop an approach to family law where children and their parents will have access to a faster, less confrontational, and simpler system. As part of this initiative, the Ministry of the Attorney General and LAO are dedicated to providing better support for those providing legal aid services.

The Family Law Advisory Committee is mandated with providing the Attorney General the specific advice necessary to flow the new investment as quickly as possible, including:

1. Whether alternative payment programs or models would better support lawyers.
2. What alternative service models could be adopted to support:
 - Improved information for clients and mandatory information sessions;
 - Early assessment/triage of cases to identify the most appropriate services for each client;
 - Increased diversion to mediation where appropriate and increased support for collaborative family law initiatives where appropriate.

4. HOW THE COMMITTEES FUNCTION

- a) Advisory Committee members are free to advise organizations of which they are members of the discussions of the Advisory Committees.
- b) Consensus of Advisory Committees or their members is neither sought nor required.
- c) The input and advice provided by Advisory Committee members does not supplant the role, mandate, and governance obligations of the Attorney General and of LAO in relation to the provision of legal aid services.

5. COMMITTEE CHAIR

- a) The Chair of the LAO Board of Directors will Chair the Advisory Committees.
- b) The role of the Chair is to chair committee meetings and, in coordination with Justice Linden, bring the advice and input of the members of the committees to the Attorney General.
- c) LAO and Ministry of the Attorney General staff will support the Chair and each advisory committee, including distributing materials, drafting meeting notes, organizing meetings, and acting as a resource during advisory committee meetings.

6. JUSTICE SIDNEY LINDEN

- a) Justice Sidney Linden has been appointed to facilitate the committee process.
- b) The role of Justice Linden is to provide assistance to each committee, to coordinate information flow between committees where necessary and, in coordination with the Chair, bring the advice and input of the members of the committees to the Attorney General.

7. REPORTING

The advice received from the Advisory Committee members will be provided by the Chair and Justice Linden to the Attorney General, by December 15, 2009.

8. MEETINGS

- a) Meetings can be held in person, by way of telephone and/or by video conferencing.