

B3: Better Billing Bulletin

Issue #52 | February 2017

Complete your 2017 self-report by the March 31 deadline

The self-report form for the calendar year of 2016 has been posted. Panel lawyers can access it in the Personal Information section of Legal Aid Online. The deadline for all LAO panel lawyers to fill in and submit their self-report is March 31, 2017.

All Legal Aid Ontario (LAO) panel lawyers must complete and submit an annual self-report to:

- renew or retain membership on the legal aid panels and areas of law in which they work
- confirm their ongoing compliance with panel standards
- automatically update their panel standing on LAO's rosters.

Applying for a tier level increase

Lawyers who take on legal aid work are eligible to apply for a tier level increase if they satisfy the minimum number of years of experience. When applying for a tier level increase, please keep in mind the following:

- Legal Aid Ontario does not automatically increase your tier level. You are responsible for applying for an increase when you have satisfied the requirements;
- Tier increases always take place on the first day of the month following approval of the application;
- Increases are not paid retroactively;
- Fees are not increased for students-at-law, law clerks, paralegals or duty counsel;
- For Canadian legal experience gained outside of Ontario, LAO calculates entitlement to a higher level of compensation by including all criminal law experience and one half of one's civil litigation experience;

- The experience level of the lawyer acknowledging the certificate applies only to work personally performed by that lawyer.

You are required to bill separately for all hourly services up to the date before your tier level increase. This includes all services on certificates you acknowledged plus services that you billed as an agent for other lawyers in your firm. After the tier level increase comes into effect, you may only then submit a second account for services. Tier level increases do not apply to block fee accounts as block fee rates are not tiered.

To apply for a tier level increase, please complete the application for tier level increase located on our website and fax the completed document to: 416-979-1718.

Upcoming purchase order close process

Occasionally Legal Aid Ontario performs a function called a purchase order close in which completed certificates are archived and unlisted from Legal Aid Online. On February 26, Legal Aid Ontario will initiate a purchase order close for concluded appeals and all cancelled, final billed or terminated certificates that were completed prior to June 1, 2011.

Certificates that will not be closed include:

- BCM cases
- PCU cases
- Appeals pending
- Cases with accounts in exception
- Select GATC cases which will first be referred to LSP for review

No action is required on your part. Please note that while accounts older than June 1, 2011 will no longer be visible on Legal Aid Online, you may contact the Lawyer Service Centre to acquire information about any of your previously closed certificates.

***Legal Aid Online* account submission process updates**

Beginning January 30, all new accounts submissions on Legal Aid Online will display a warning about the possible consequences of entering incorrect information. In some cases, the individuals submitting the account will be required to identify themselves.

Prior to submitting an account for payment:

- If the acknowledging lawyer is submitting the account, they will be required to declare they have reviewed it for accuracy
- If an individual is submitting the account on the lawyer's behalf, they will be required to enter their name, contact information and declare that the acknowledging lawyer has reviewed the account for accuracy.

This declaration and identification request is similar to the process found in LawPro declarations.

Legal Aid Ontario has implemented these changes to make clear the possible consequences of entering incorrect information in Legal Aid Online. Lawyers must be aware that it is the **acknowledging lawyer's responsibility** to ensure the accuracy of information, regardless of who entered the account.

New question on Lawyer Response Form for Change of Solicitor (COS) requests

Effective January 30, 2017, lawyers are now asked to indicate if a complaint has been made when responding to a Change of Solicitor request. This will provide lawyers with the opportunity to respond directly to the concern(s) raised by the client. If you have any questions, please contact the Lawyer Service Centre at 1-866-979-9934.

Questions?

Please let us know if you have questions or if there are topics you'd like to see us cover by contacting the Lawyer Service Centre at pl-lsc@lao.on.ca



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