

# IMPROVING THE CLIENT EXPERIENCE

We are committed to our clients. We want to make sure their experience with Legal Aid Alberta helps them understand and protect their legal rights.

Choice of Counsel is enshrined in the Legal Aid Alberta Governance Agreement, and is an important issue for many. Beginning February 2020, we are expanding choice of counsel to all offense levels, and simplifying travel compensation.

We are expecting these changes to improve the overall client experience, improve the working relationship we have with our dedicated Roster, reduce delays in Alberta courtrooms, and create efficiencies in the way we operate.



## CHOICE OF COUNSEL

**What is the implementation date?**  
February 2020.

### What are the changes?

Level 1 and 2 offences will go to a clients' preferred counsel.

Level 2.5 will retain choice of counsel within Alberta (with travel compensation), and Level 3 offences will retain choice of counsel within Canada (with travel compensation).

### How does this benefit me?

We will be extending offers and travel compensation to roster lawyers in all areas within the service location.

## ROSTER LAWYER TRAVEL COMPENSATION

**What is the implementation date?**  
February 2020.

### What are the changes?

Your certificate will include travel compensation from your primary courthouse to the courthouse where you are providing services.

We will be paying travel compensation within service locations for levels 1 and 2.

Level 2.5 and Level 3 offences remain unchanged. See Service Locations for more details.

### How does this benefit me?

An increased mileage rate of \$0.75/km (up from \$0.50/km) will be paid from your primary courthouse to the courthouse where services are provided. This increase will be replacing paid travel time.

Where applicable, we will be adding travel compensation to the certificate issued, reducing administrative burdens on both you and Legal Aid Alberta.

Pre-defined mileage will be auto-calculated in the system; lawyers just need to add the number of trips taken between the two locations.

# HOW WILL THIS NEW COMPENSATION SYSTEM WORK?

## Example 1:

### Level 1: Calgary lawyer, hearing in Airdrie

Byron has an Assault charge LAA categorizes as a Level 1 Offence. Byron's hearing is in Airdrie, and he requests Andrew as his counsel. Andrew has set Calgary as his home courthouse with LAA.

### Result:

Andrew is issued an offer to be paid at the Level 1 tariff rate. Travel compensation is included with the certificate, calculated from courthouse to courthouse (without compensation for travel time)

Calgary primary courthouse to Airdrie courthouse (return) = 68 km x \$0.75 = \$51.00\*

## Example 2:

### Level 2: Calgary Lawyer, hearing in Lethbridge

Jennifer has an Assaulting Peace Officer charge LAA categorizes as a Level 2 Offence. Jennifer's hearing is in Lethbridge, and she requests Joanne as her counsel. Joanne has set Calgary as her home courthouse with LAA.

### Result:

The certificate offer would go to Joanne first, and would not include travel compensation because Joanne's office is outside the service location. If Joanne declines, the certificate offer would go to a suitable lawyer in the Lethbridge service location, paid at the Level 2 Tariff rate and include travel compensation from courthouse to courthouse.

If no lawyers are able or available to accept the certificate in the service location, LAA will issue the offer to Joanne because she is reasonably close to the service location. If Joanne was in Grande Prairie, LAA would attempt to find a lawyer closer to the hearing.

## Example 3:

### Level 1: Edmonton Lawyer, hearing in Edmonton, with an existing, active certificate

Brad has a Break and Enter with Intent charge LAA categorizes as a Level 1 Offence. Julia is representing Brad on an active certificate in Edmonton regarding a separate Level 1 Offence. Julia has selected Sherwood Park as her primary courthouse. Brad's hearing is in Edmonton for the Break and Enter with Intent charge, and he requests Pat as his lawyer.

### Result:

Because Brad has a current, active certificate with Julia, and because Julia's office is within the same service location is able to represent Brad for this new matter, Julia receives the offer, and is paid at the Level 1 Tariff rate, including travel compensation.

Edmonton primary courthouse to Sherwood Park courthouse (return) = 17 km x \$0.75 = \$12.75\*

\*Disclaimer: the distances in examples 1 and 3 are for effect only and do not represent actual distances.

# TRANSFER OF CERTIFICATES - PHASE ONE

## What is the implementation date?

March 2020.

## What are the changes?

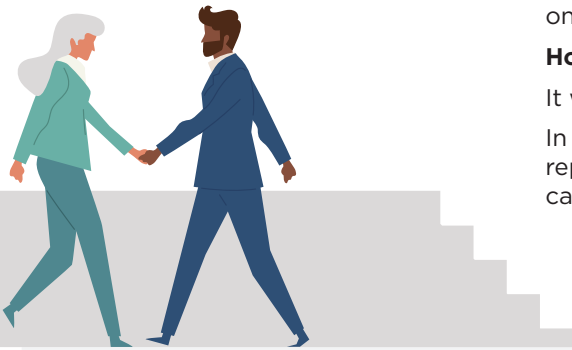
You will now have the ability to transfer certificates with client consent.

Transfers will be possible from one lawyer to another lawyer within the same 'firm' (as defined by the Law Society code of conduct) on one occasion only and with the client's prior consent.

## How does this benefit me?

It will reduce the number of changes of counsel required by clients.

In many cases, it will enable lawyers to work with clients to ensure representation without the delay caused when a Roster Lawyer can no longer accept a certificate.



# TRANSFER OF CERTIFICATES - PHASE TWO

## What is the implementation date?

Implementation will depend on outcomes of Choice of Counsel, Travel Compensation, and phase one of Transfer of Certificates.

## What are the changes?

You will have the ability to transfer certificates with client consent from one lawyer to any other lawyer within the province.

Travel compensation rules will remain in place.

## How will this benefit me?

It will further advance the objective of reducing the number of changes of counsel.

In many cases, it will enable lawyers to work with clients to ensure representation without the delay caused when a Roster Lawyer can no longer accept a certificate.



# LEGAL AID ALBERTA SERVICE LOCATIONS

