

DUTY COUNSEL – FAMILY DIVISION (St. John’s only)

Legal Aid provides the services of lawyers (Duty Counsel) in the Family Division of the Supreme Court of Newfoundland in St. John’s to assist people appearing in Court but who do not already have a lawyer. Duty Counsel can give basic advice about legal matters that are before the court. They can explain your legal rights and obligations and provide information about:

- How to respond to a court application;
- What the terms of a proposed agreement would mean to you and your family, and the possible consequences;
- What should be included in a court application and what documents you need to file with the court;
- Time limits for filing documents with the court.

Duty Counsel can appear on your behalf on simple matters before the court on the day of your court appearance. They can:

- Speak on your behalf on some matters, depending on the complexity of the matter;
- Ask the court to postpone a matter for you;
- Tell the court that you are in agreement with what the other person is asking for;
- Speak to the other person or their lawyer to see if an agreement can be reached and/or advise the court whether or not an agreement has been reached;
- Appear at the request of other lawyers to seek postponements by consent, or to file consent orders when an agreement has been reached.

Duty Counsel cannot conduct trials or appear on contested matters.

The Duty Counsel office also has a Client Services Officer who can provide basic information about the court process, can help parties apply for a lawyer and can help you fill out some of the court documents.

Due to Covid-19 protocols, in order to speak to the Duty Counsel lawyer, you must call ahead at least 48 hours prior to your court matter to make an appointment. The Client Services Officer can be reached at 753-4614.