

LEGAL

NOTES ON LEGAL AID

HALTON COMMUNITY LEGAL SERVICES (HCLS)

CENTER FOR EQUALITY RIGHTS IN ACCOMODATION (CERA)

Legal Aid Ontario (LAO) provides legal services for financially-eligible, low-income Ontarians in the following areas: domestic violence, family law, immigration and refugee law and criminal law.

Services Offered:

- **Toll-free telephone services:** Call Legal Aid Ontario toll-free ([1 800 668-8258](tel:18006688258)) to speak to legal aid staff, and access a wide range of legal aid services, information and advice. Help is available Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. The best time to call is between 9 a.m. – 10 a.m.
- **Duty counsel services:** Duty counsel are lawyers who give immediate legal assistance to low-income people appearing in court without a lawyer. If you have a criminal or family law issue, you should speak to duty counsel before your court appearance. Duty counsel can:
 - *give advice about legal rights, obligations and the court process; provide assistance in the courtroom for bail hearings and sentencing; assist with diversion, guilty pleas, and adjournments.*
 - Find out more: <https://www.legalaid.on.ca/en/getting/helpinthecourtroom.asp>
- **Courthouse offices:** If you need to speak to someone in person, you can talk to a legal aid worker at one of our many courthouse offices. Depending on your legal issue, the legal aid worker may refer you to duty counsel, help you apply for legal aid, or direct you to another service.
- **Community and specialty clinics:** See entry above for Halton.
- **Representation by a lawyer – the certificate program:**
 - Legal Aid Ontario’s certificate program covers the cost of a lawyer. You can apply for the certificate program if you are financially eligible, and your legal matter is covered by LAO. The certificate acts as a voucher, guaranteeing that the lawyer will be paid to represent you for a certain number of hours. Certificates are only for the most serious cases; for example, for criminal charges where a jail sentence is likely, or serious family problems.
- **Student Legal Aid Services Societies:** (SLASS), funded by Legal Aid Ontario, operate out of Ontario's six law schools. With the supervision of full-time lawyers, volunteer law students provide legal advice and represent clients in cases such as:
 - *minor crimes; landlord and tenant issues; immigration; tribunals, including the Ontario Human Rights Commission.*
- **Family law services:**
 - Family Law Information Centres offer free assistance and information on family law issues. At the FLIC, you can find brochures and information about family law in Ontario, or speak with an advice lawyer. These are lawyers who provide general legal advice, and can help with preparing documents.
 - Family Law Service Centres (FLSCs) offer eligible clients a range of legal resources and support for family matters, including:
 - *help with documents; referrals to advice counsel; full representation in family law cases by a staff lawyer; referral to a private lawyer who does legal aid work, if eligible; mediation and settlement conferences.*

LawFacts.ca: Free online legal information resource. LawFacts is a free online legal information resource for individuals with questions about criminal law in Ontario. If you’re going to criminal court for the first time, have a loved-one who has been arrested, or simply want to know more about criminal law, LawFacts can help explain in plain-language many aspects of criminal law. LawFacts does not provide legal advice, and is not a substitute for advice from your lawyer or duty counsel, but it will help explain the justice system so that you can make more informed choices about your next steps.

Eligibility: Extensive eligibility for both legal and financial requirements. See: www.legalaid.on.ca/en/getting/eligibility.asp

Website: www.legalaid.on.ca/en/
TF Phone: [1 800 668-8258](tel:18006688258)

HALTON COMMUNITY LEGAL SERVICES (HCLS)

Halton Community Legal Services offers free legal information and advice for issues regarding OW, ODSP, Human Rights, Tenant Rights, Government Pension, Employment Insurance and Standards, Housing, etc.

PROGRAMS:

The level of service is determined on a case-by-case basis. Depending on the situation, they offer:

- **Summary Advice:** This includes a legal opinion on the situation and practical direction on the steps that should be taken to solve the problem independently.
- **Brief Service:** A caseworker may provide further help like reviewing legal documents or assisting with their completion, doing research, helping to prepare cases so they can represent themselves at the Landlord and Tenant Board, the Board of Referees or before the Social Benefits Tribunal, etc.
- **Representation:** Full service for 1 out of every 10 callers or 200 people a year for complicated cases where a negative outcome could directly impact the client or their family or they cannot do it on their own
- **Referrals:** In areas of law they do not practice.
 - Halton Community Legal Services **cannot help with family law and criminal law problems**. Please contact *Legal Aid Ontario* (see entry above) for help: 1 (800) 668-8258.

Additional Links: <https://legalhealthcheckup.ca/>

This tool is a “check-up” to help people who are living in poverty so they can identify legal problems and get recommendations confidentially emailed or phoned to them. It is a simple, easy to use survey-style questionnaire that will assess areas requiring potential legal help. It takes a holistic approach and addresses various parts of the individual's life (e.g., income, housing, education, employment, health, family/ community supports, etc.).

We highly recommend that Support Volunteers encourage Participants to use this tool, regardless of identified need.

- **SUPPORT VOLUNTEERS: Secondary Legal Consultation –**
 - The service provides **access to legal advice and information** to health care providers, social services and community groups and agency personnel and **volunteers** to assist their clients. Call us at (905) 875-2069 or email haltonconsult@lao.on.ca.
 - This is particularly helpful when Participants may be over the LICO threshold to qualify for services.

NOTES:

Eligibility: Participants must meet financial eligibility criteria for service; call for intake and to discuss situation. Rough estimates are based below the LICO:

- A single person with a net income over \$15,800/year may not qualify for legal aid.
- Maximum income allowed under financial eligibility guidelines to qualify for legal aid, for a family of four: \$29,352/year.

CONTACT:

Phone: (905) 877-5256 - Head Office

Email: www.haltonlegal.ca/general-inquiries.php

Website: www.haltonlegal.ca/

CENTER FOR EQUALITY RIGHTS IN ACCOMODATION (CERA)

*A non-profit organization that promotes human rights in housing and offers free services for individuals who have experienced **housing discrimination** (e.g., unfair eviction, denied or excluded benefits under the Human Rights Code; i.e. due to marital status, pregnancy status, social assistance recipient status, family status, racial identification, ability, sexual orientation, landlord references and credit checks, etc.)*

PROGRAMS:

- CERA provides **summary advice** on human rights protections under Ontario’s Human Rights Code, advocacy over the phone and via letters, **mediates with landlords** to change discriminatory tenant selection policies, and offers **representation** for individuals who have filed human rights applications with the Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario (where capacity allows).

NOTES:

Eligibility: Any tenant facing eviction, or some form of human rights issues or housing discrimination.

- The Human Rights Code as it applies to housing is applicable to most types of rental housing including private market units, public subsidized units, condominiums, and co-ops. The Code does not apply if you are required to share a bathroom or a kitchen with your landlord or a member of your landlord’s family.

Additional Notes: If you experience discrimination, act quickly – record the date, time, what was said, and who was there. Call x 22 or email intake@equalityrights.org to speak to a case worker.

CONTACT:

Phone: 1 (800) 263-1139 x 1

Email: cera@equalityrights.org

Website: www.equalityrights.org/cera