

How can I get a child or youth the help they need from the Legal Centre?

Q. I would like to refer a child or youth to your office. How do I do that?

- A. You or the young person can call us by phone at 778-657-5544 or toll free at 1-877-462-0037

Send us an email at cylc@scyofbc.org

Drop by the office 303-1720 Grant Street, Vancouver, BC

Q. Are there any age restrictions?

The Child and Youth Legal Centre can help children and youth up to 19 years old. If they are able to form and express their views on matters that affect them, they may be eligible for our services. Even if the youth is older than 19, if the legal problem started before they turned 19, we may be able to help.

Q. What does the Child and Youth Legal Centre do?

- A. Our experienced lawyers provide a range of services for children and youth from confidential summary legal advice through to full legal representation at court.

Q. What legal matters do your services cover?

- A. The lawyers can provide legal advice and representation for children and youth in a number of areas including child protection, family law, and human rights. Where we do not provide full services, we may be able to provide some legal advice or a referral to an agency who can help. If you're not sure if that includes the problem you are concerned about, call us and find out. We can help you figure out what you need. If we can't help you with that issue, we can help direct you to someone who can.

Q. What legal matters are not covered by the Child and Youth Legal Centre?

- A. We don't provide legal assistance in financial matters (these are otherwise covered by the Public Guardian and Trustee), in Youth Criminal Justice matters (free legal representation is available through the Legal Services Society), or in immigration and refugee matters.

Q. What will happen when I call?

- A. Our intake worker will probably ask you a few questions. Depending on what the child or youth needs, they may be referred to a lawyer for an appointment. Even if we aren't able to help, we can provide you with other resources to help you solve the problem.

Q. Why should a young person speak with a lawyer?

- A. It is the right of a child or a youth to have access to justice and to receive legal advice. When adults are making decisions that affect young people, the children have the right to say what they think should happen and to have those opinions considered in coming to a final decision.

Q. What will the lawyer do?

- A. The lawyer will have a confidential consultation with the young person and will explain the legal process and relevant law. The lawyer may represent the child or youth in court and for any negotiated settlements. Throughout the process, the lawyer will ensure that the young person's views and interests are put forward. The lawyer will explain the final outcome.

Q. Does the child or youth meet alone with the lawyer?

- A. Yes. The Centre invites the young person to bring a support person with them if they wish and the lawyer may meet with the young person and the support person initially to get background information but the appointment will be with the lawyer and the young person only. If there are any concerns about this, the concerns should be brought up prior to the appointment.

Q. The child is over 12. Does the judge have to do what the child or young person wants?

- A. Not necessarily. Most adults will naturally give the views of teenagers greater weight than those of a preschooler, as a child's ability to form and express their opinions will develop with age. Regardless of the age of the child, however, the Judge will make an order that he or she believes is in the young person's best interest. In making that order, the Judge must take into account the views of the child or young person regardless of their age.

Q. Will the Centre always provide legal services to a child or a youth if their legal matter is covered?

- A. Not always. The Centre must prioritize the provision of legal services. Priority will be given to the most vulnerable children and youth and those with multiple overlapping legal issues.

Q. How much does this cost?

- A. The services are free to the child or the youth. The Child and Youth Legal Centre reserves the right to apply for reimbursement of legal services against another party to the proceeding where that party is not a young person.

Q. Can a Judge make an order that a young person have a lawyer?

- A. Yes, in some circumstances. The Centre must be notified prior to any Order being made concerning the Centre.

Q. Your address is in Vancouver. Are your services available to young people who don't live in the Lower Mainland?

- A. Yes. If our intake worker makes the child or youth an appointment with a lawyer, our lawyer may be able to meet with the young person on the phone instead of at the office. Just ask.