

# HOW TO GET LEGAL INFORMATION AND ADVICE



The legal system can be difficult to understand, especially for people in a crisis or stressful situation. Legal language can be complicated and it can be frustrating not knowing what the rules are. And laws change, so you should make sure that you are acting on the most up-to-date information.

The value of good legal information and advice cannot be understated! It is an investment that can save considerable money over the long term. Getting reliable legal advice before starting a legal process can avoid costly mistakes. The organizations listed below can give you information on legal issues or can help you find a lawyer.

The **Legal Information Society of Nova Scotia (LISNS)** is a non-profit organization that provides information on legal issues and where to find a lawyer who can help you. They have several programs:

- **Legal Information Line** – A LISNS staff person responds to calls made to this telephone-based service and answers questions regarding the law or legal issues. She directs them to where they can get assistance with their legal problem. This may include referring them to the Lawyer Referral Service. LISNS staff does not give legal advice. The Legal Information Line is available Monday to Friday between the hours of 10:00 am and 3:00 pm and Tuesday and Wednesday evenings from 5 pm to 7 pm (September to May only). Call: **455-3135** in Halifax or **1-800-665-9779** (toll free in NS).
- **Lawyer Referral Service** – LISNS can refer an individual to a lawyer in private practice who practices the type of law the caller needs. Through this service, individuals can have a 30-minute consultation for \$20 plus tax. It is important to be realistic about how much can be accomplished in a half-hour consultation. You might need additional time to answer your questions. The Lawyer Referral Service is available Monday to Friday between the hours of 10:00 am and 3:00 pm and Tuesday and Wednesday evenings from 5 pm to 7 pm (September to May only). Call: **455-3135** in Halifax or **1-800-665-9779** (toll free in NS)
- **Dial-a-Law** – Legal information is available on a taped message service 24 hours a day. Dial-A-Law has over 70 titles to choose from. Call: **(902) 420-1888** (not toll free).
- **Website** – LISNS has a website where you can find information about the law including hundreds of answers to frequently asked legal questions including powers of attorney and advanced health care directives. You can visit the site at [www.legalinfo.org](http://www.legalinfo.org)
- **Publications** – LISNS produces written materials on a variety of legal topics. Much of this information is also now available on the LISNS website. Visit [www.legalinfo.org/publications.html](http://www.legalinfo.org/publications.html) or call **(902) 454-2198**.

- **Speakers Bureau** – Community groups can get a list of lawyers and other professionals who are willing to volunteer their time to speak on a specific area of law. To obtain a list of lawyers in your area, call: **(902) 454- 2198** or e-mail [lisns@legalinfo.org](mailto:lisns@legalinfo.org)

**The Nova Scotia Barristers’ Society** has listings for some law firms across the province and also has a list of French-speaking lawyers (listed at this website: [http://www.nsbs.ns.ca/how\\_french.htm](http://www.nsbs.ns.ca/how_french.htm)). They also have some great information about hiring and using a lawyer at <http://www.nsbs.ns.ca/why.html>

**The Legal Aid Commission of Nova Scotia** provides legal advice and court representation to those who have very low incomes. However, the service has very limited funding and focuses on legal problems that can have the most serious impact on a person's life. A large portion of their resources is used in providing services to people who have been charged with a criminal offence that may result in jail time if convicted. In some cases, they do provide help with certain family law matters. You can call the Legal Aid Commission of Nova Scotia to ask if they can assist you at: **(902) 420-6578** or toll-free **1-877-420-6578**.

**Dalhousie Legal Aid Service** is operated by Dalhousie Law School and provides legal aid services for people who wouldn’t otherwise be able to get legal advice. They also conduct research, provide information, and make recommendations on legal aid and law reform in Nova Scotia. Dalhousie Legal Aid accepts cases referred by Nova Scotia Legal Aid in the areas of family law (such as custody, access, maintenance, peace bonds, child and adult protection) and youth criminal justice. They also do individual casework law in the areas of: social assistance, landlord tenant and subsidized housing, human rights complaints, police and school board complaints, mental health, Nova Scotia Power, and debtor/creditor. Dalhousie Legal Aid doesn’t do adult criminal cases. Dalhousie Legal Aid serves the Halifax Regional Municipality. For more information on Dalhousie Legal Aid Service, visit their website at <http://law.dal.ca/Institutes/Dalhousie%20Legal%20Aid%20Service/> or call them at **(902) 423-8105**.

**Education and awareness are your most useful tools to prevent financial exploitation.**

**See the Seniors’ Secretariat website to learn more about programs and services in your**

**area: [www.gov.ns.ca/scs/elderabuse.asp](http://www.gov.ns.ca/scs/elderabuse.asp)**

**or call the Secretariat for more print material at:**

**(902) 424-0065 or 1-800-670-0065 (toll free in Nova Scotia)**

*This information sheet was produced as a supplement to the Seniors’ Secretariat website information on Financial Exploitation of Older Adults.*