

January Legal Aid News

New Family Legal Advice Service

Last week we emailed all approved family legal aid lawyers, inviting you to apply to become a provider of the new Family Legal Advice Service.

This new service will provide out-of-court legal guidance to low income earners with care of children disputes – helping those clients to understand their options for resolution, and helping them to complete court entry forms if required.

Although it's not a legal aid service, the Family Legal Aid Service will be provided by legal aid lawyers – so if you're currently a family legal aid lawyer you automatically meet the competency and experience requirements to provide this new service.

Anyone who isn't currently an approved provider, but who meets the requirements for approval, is welcome to apply. Please email legalaidthelper@justice.govt.nz for more information.

Further details can be found in the response to consultation.

The service will be introduced alongside other family justice changes, currently scheduled for the end of March.

Improved 'Amendment to Grant' Forms and Guidelines

Based on discussions held during the recent fixed fee review preliminary workshops, we have made several changes to the Civil (ACC) guidelines and forms. These changes:

- clarify the amendment to grant and disbursements policies in areas where providers said they found them difficult to follow
- modify the forms to make them simpler and easier for lawyers to use.

Legal Aid application forms 5 and 6 updated

Last year we updated legal aid application forms 5 and 6, to reflect changes introduced by the Legal Services Amendment Act 2013. Please ensure that your clients use the updated version of these forms when applying for family or civil legal aid.

Click here to download the updated Word template package (<http://www.justice.govt.nz/services/information-for-legal-professionals/information-for-legal-aid-providers/legal-aid-forms>). Orders can also be placed to Baseline for pre-printed forms.

Family and Civil (ACC) Fixed Fees Review Closes

Last December the Legal Services Commissioner wrote to all Family and Civil (ACC) providers seeking feedback on how the fixed fee payment systems are working. If you haven't given us your feedback, and would like to, please respond as advised in the Commissioner's letter by Friday 7 February.

Your feedback, along with feedback gathered during preliminary discussions, will form part of the Legal Services Commissioner's review of the Family and ACC fixed fee payment systems.