

# Best Practices for Public Legal Information

Creating information that people  
trust, understand and use

June 16, 2020 @ 3:00 pm PT

**Better Legal  
Information**



# Best Practices for Public Legal Information

This webinar is for producers of **public legal information** who want to know

- **where** and
- **how**

to **invest their resources** to create information that people **trust**,  
**understand** and **use**

**Better Legal  
Information**

[betterlegalinfo.ca](http://betterlegalinfo.ca)

# What you can expect

- **Presentation**

- Why “best practices”?
- How were they developed?
- What are they?
- What do they mean for you?

- **Questions**



# Our presenter



## Drew Jackson

Access to Justice Consultant /  
Legal Content Developer for People's Law School

Lawyer and librarian keenly interested in making  
legal information easier to understand and more  
impactful for the public

# What is **public legal information**?



Credit: [unsplash.com](https://unsplash.com/photos/8Z8Z8Z8Z8Z) / Nik Shuliahin @tjump

Legal information designed  
with the needs of the public  
top of mind

# Why **best practices**?

There's a **paradox**: legal information is part of the solution to access to justice, but presents fresh challenges



Credit: Patar Knight / [CC BY-SA 4.0](#)

"We need to ... provide those who experience legal problems with **information and resources** to deal with them in an efficient and effective way."

"There is an **overwhelming** amount of information"...

"It is **not always clear** to the user what information is **authoritative, current or reliable.**"

**Justice Thomas Cromwell**, Chair, Action Committee on Access to Justice in Civil and Family Matters (2013)

# What's the ultimate purpose of the **best practices**?



Credit: [unsplash.com](https://unsplash.com/) / Jeff Nissen @jeffnissen

To help you produce legal information your audience trusts, understands and uses

# How were the **best practices** developed?



Credit: [unsplash.com / Bill Oxford @billoxford](https://unsplash.com/photos/Billoxford)

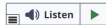
- Collaborative effort
- Guided by user research
- Rooted in how people look for information

# What is the Quality Mark™?



The Quality Mark™ signals that public legal information is trustworthy and relevant

## Getting Temporarily Laid Off



Your employer says they f...  
things pick up." Learn u...

### Alert!

Due to the coronavirus p...  
Emergency financial sup...  
earn no more than \$1,00...  
See our [3-minute summa...](#)



This information applies to  
British Columbia, Canada



Reviewed in March 2020



Time to read: 5 minutes



QUALITY  
Made for BC



This information applies to  
British Columbia, Canada



Reviewed in March 2020



Time to read: 5 minutes



QUALITY  
Made for BC



# Who can use the Quality Mark™?

## Quality Mark™ FAQ



Using the Quality Mark™ on your public legal information signals that it is trustworthy and relevant.

### – How do I qualify to use the Quality Mark on my information?

If you produce free legal information that is primarily intended for use by the public in British Columbia, you can qualify to use the Quality Mark on your information. There are three steps involved:

**Step 1. Complete the best practices self-assessment on your information, and achieve a minimum score.** Take the [best practices self-assessment](#), where you must score at least 12 out of a possible 16 points.

**Step 2. Commit to applying the public legal information best practices.** As a final stage of the self-assessment, you must commit to applying the [public legal information best practices](#) to your information to the best of your ability.

**Step 3. Apply the Quality Mark to your information.** If you qualify, you will be given access to downloadable files of the Quality Mark, in two orientations and various sizes to fit your needs.

See if you qualify

The Quality Mark™ can be used on information that substantially follows our best practices.



GO TO SELF-ASSESS

[betterlegalinfo.ca](https://betterlegalinfo.ca)

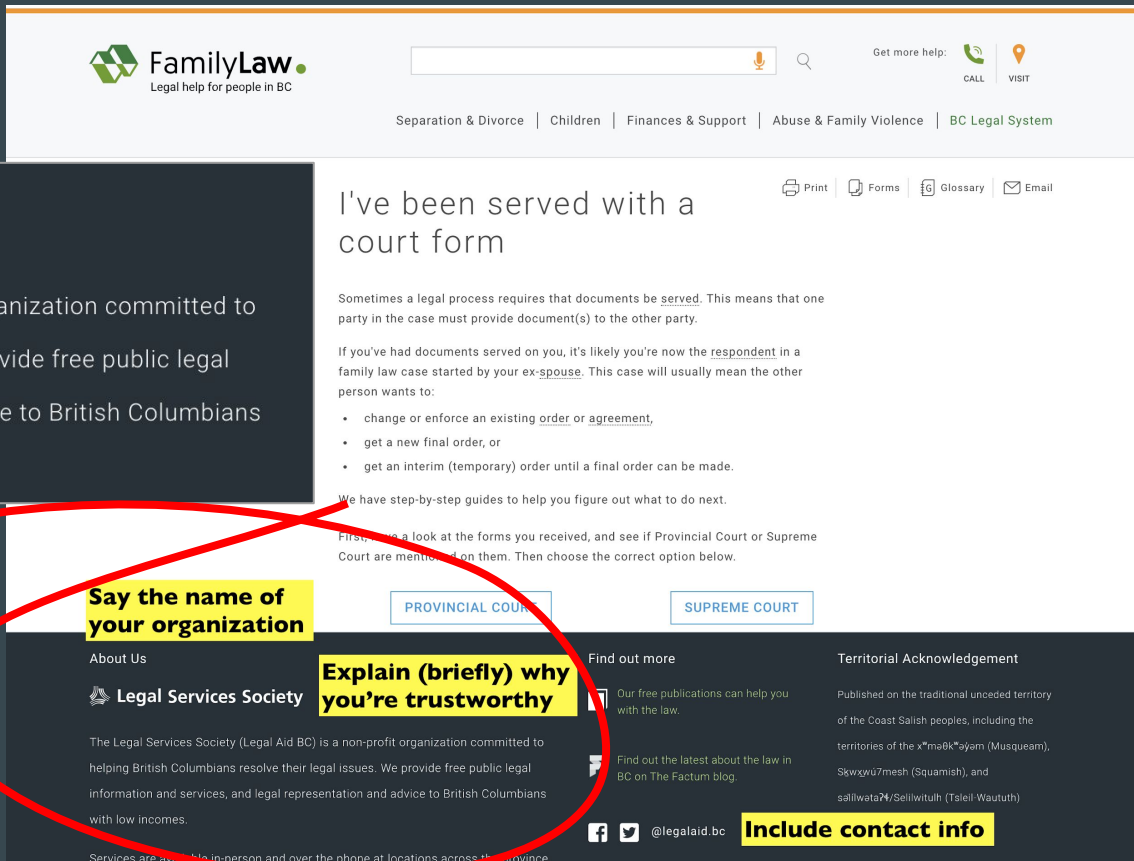
# The 8 **high-impact** best practices

High-Impact Best Practices
1. Say who made the information
2. Say where the information applies
3. Review the information for legal accuracy — and say you've done so
4. Include the date of the last legal review
5. Say who or what the information is for
6. Make the information understandable for the intended audience
7. Make the design clean, engaging, and easy to use
8. Refer to free or low-cost legal help

## Legal Services Society



The Legal Services Society (Legal Aid BC) is a non-profit organization committed to helping British Columbians resolve their legal issues. We provide free public legal information and services, and legal representation and advice to British Columbians with low incomes.

# 1. Say who made the information







The screenshot shows the FamilyLaw BC website. A red circle highlights the 'About Us' section, which includes the text: 'The Legal Services Society (Legal Aid BC) is a non-profit organization committed to helping British Columbians resolve their legal issues. We provide free public legal information and services, and legal representation and advice to British Columbians with low incomes.' The page also features a search bar, navigation links, and a footer with social media icons and contact information.

**FamilyLaw.**  
Legal help for people in BC

Get more help:  CALL  VISIT

Separation & Divorce | Children | Finances & Support | Abuse & Family Violence | BC Legal System

 Print  Forms  Glossary  Email

### I've been served with a court form

Sometimes a legal process requires that documents be served. This means that one party in the case must provide document(s) to the other party.

If you've had documents served on you, it's likely you're now the respondent in a family law case started by your ex-spouse. This case will usually mean the other person wants to:

- change or enforce an existing order or agreement,
- get a new final order, or
- get an interim (temporary) order until a final order can be made.

We have step-by-step guides to help you figure out what to do next.

First, take a look at the forms you received, and see if Provincial Court or Supreme Court are mentioned on them. Then choose the correct option below.


**Say the name of your organization**

**Explain (briefly) why you're trustworthy**

**Include contact info**

**PROVINCIAL COURT** **SUPREME COURT**

**About Us**

 **Legal Services Society**



The Legal Services Society (Legal Aid BC) is a non-profit organization committed to helping British Columbians resolve their legal issues. We provide free public legal information and services, and legal representation and advice to British Columbians with low incomes.

Services are available in-person and over the phone at locations across the province.

Find out more

Our free publications can help you with the law.

Find out the latest about the law in BC on The Factum blog.

  @legalaid.bc

**Territorial Acknowledgement**

Published on the traditional unceded territory of the Coast Salish peoples, including the territories of the x'maθk\*ayam (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and səlilwataʔ/Səlilwiltuh (Tsleil-Waututh)

Family Law in BC website, from Legal Aid BC, at familylaw.lss.bc.ca

Page

Search Clicklaw Wikib

Go

Search

Site

[Main Page](#)

[Covid-19 Resources](#)

[Contents](#)

[About](#)

Featured Wikibooks

[JP Boyd on Family Law](#)

[Dial A Law](#)

[Consumer & Debt Law](#)

[Tenant Survival Guide](#)

[Legal Help Guide](#)

[More Wikibooks...](#)

Tools

[What links here](#)

[Related changes](#)

[Special pages](#)

[Permanent link](#)

[Page information](#)

[Add your feedback](#)

[View feedback](#)

Contributors

[All Guides](#)

[Checklist](#)

[Style Guide](#)

[How to Edit](#)

## Entering a Tenancy

**Say the jurisdiction - and make it easy to see**

This information applies to British Columbia, Canada. Last reviewed for legal accuracy by [Tenant Resource & Advisory Centre](#) on 08/18

**DO:** carefully review and sign a tenancy agreement. This is one of the most effective ways you can protect yourself as a tenant.

**DO NOT:** forget that the [Residential Tenancy Act](#) prevents landlords and tenants from "contracting out" of the law. Any term of a tenancy agreement that avoids the law is considered unenforceable.

### Contents [\[hide\]](#)

[1 Protect yourself with a written contract](#)

[2 Tenancy agreements](#)

[2.1 Terms in a tenancy agreement](#)

[2.2 Illegal terms](#)

[2.3 Unconscionable terms](#)

[2.4 Month-to-month tenancies](#)

[2.5 Fixed term tenancies](#)

[2.6 Legal fees](#)

[2.7 Security deposits](#)

[2.8 Pets and pet damage deposits](#)

[2.9 Overpaying a deposit](#)

[3 Roommates](#)

[3.1 Co-tenants](#)

[3.2 Tenants in common](#)

[3.3 Occupants / roommates](#)

[4 Changing terms in a tenancy agreement](#)

**Protect yourself with a written contract**

### Tenant Survival Guide



This page is from the *Tenant Survival Guide*.

See the [full contents](#).

#### Contents

[Introduction](#)

[Preparing to Rent](#)

[Finding Rental Housing](#)

[Entering a Tenancy](#)

[Moving In](#)

[Rent](#)

[Living In Peace](#)

[Repairs and Services](#)

[Evictions](#)

[Moving Out](#)

[Dispute Resolution](#)

[Other Resources for Tenants](#)

#### From

This wikibook is from

[Tenant Resource & Advisory Centre](#)



TENANT RESOURCE & ADVISORY CENTRE

• • •

2. Say where the information applies

## If You Have a Problem with a Doctor

If you're concerned with the treatment provided by a doctor or about a doctor's conduct, there are steps you can take. Learn how to make a complaint about a doctor.

### What you should know

- + Depending on the problem, you have options
- + Pursuing multiple options at the same time

### Deal with the problem

- + Step 1. Talk to the doctor
- + Step 2. Make a complaint about the doctor
- + Step 3. The College investigates the complaint
- + Step 4. Apply for a review of the decision

### Get help

- + With more information

**Provide information  
about the reviewer's  
expertise**

Reviewed for legal accuracy by

Michelle Stimac, College of Physicians and Surgeons of BC



Was this helpful?

☐ Yes ☐ No

[Submit](#)

**Say you've done  
the legal review**

- 1 This information applies to British Columbia, Canada
- 2 Reviewed in March 2019
- 3 Time to read: 5 minutes

3. Review the information  
for legal accuracy —  
and say you've done so



**Include the currency date -  
and make it easy to see**

## The Persons with Disabilities (PWD) Application

This Help Sheet is funded by the Health Sciences Association of BC and the Law Foundation of BC.

Disability Alliance BC has prepared this Help Sheet to help you complete the Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction's (MSDPR) designation application form for the Persons with Disabilities (PWD) benefit.

This Help Sheet provides you with easy to follow directions that take you through the application form step-by-step. It includes letters to give to your doctor or nurse practitioner and assessor (a health care professional who must describe your disability on the form). There is also a checklist to help you identify the daily living activities you need assistance with.

Before you do anything, please read this guide and the designation application carefully. If you cannot understand the guide or the form, ask a friend, family member or advocate to help you.

### Getting started

If you already receive income assistance, contact MSDPR at 1-866-866-0800 and ask for a PWD application. If you do not yet receive assistance, contact MSDPR for information on how to apply for income assistance, or see our Help Sheet 12.

### What you will get with PWD

- You will receive up to \$1,183 a month if you are a single person without dependents
- You will be eligible for EITHER a monthly bus pass or an additional \$52 "transportation supplement" added to your monthly cheque (for a total of \$1,235 per month)


**Explain the importance of  
the currency date**



Disability Alliance BC

Information in this Help Sheet is based on the legislation that was current at the time of writing. The legislation and policy may be subject to change. Please check the date on this Help Sheet.

# 4. Include the date of the last legal review

My Province: British Columbia  ENGLISH / FRANCAIS


# Families Change


Guide to Separation & Divorce

[Home](#) [Parents](#) [Teens](#) [Kids](#)

Helping kids, teens and parents deal with a family break up

**Identify the audience**  
**Identify the purpose of the information**






### Parents

Help your kids deal with separation. Make decisions in the best interests of your children.


[VIEW PARENT GUIDE](#)



### Teens

Guidance to help teens cope with a family break-up and move beyond the grief.

[VIEW TEEN GUIDE](#)



### Kids

Kids ages 6-12: Learn about separation, divorce and the feelings you are having.

[VIEW KIDS GUIDE](#)

5. Say who or what the information is for

# Your Hearing Day

**Focus on your audience**

**Take a user perspective**

Your hearing is the central event of your refugee claim process. You may have many questions as you prepare for your hearing day.

**Use plain language techniques, such as an active voice, conversational tone, short sentences**

**Where will my hearing be?** Immigration and Refugee  
300 West Georgia Street,  
Vancouver BC

**When should I arrive?** At least 15-30 minutes before your scheduled hearing time. This gives you time to find the hearing room, speak with the interpreter to make sure you understand each other, use the washroom, and get yourself organized. If you have observers or witnesses, they should arrive at least 15 minutes before the hearing.

**Who will be at my refugee hearing?**



**Presiding Member**  
(Role: Makes the Decision)

**Interpreter**  
Present if needed (Role: Neutral)

**Minister's Counsel**  
A Representative from CBSA or IRCC is sometimes present. If so, they will tell you before your hearing. (Role: argues against you)

**Your Lawyer**  
(Role: advocates for you. See page 9 if you don't have a lawyer.)

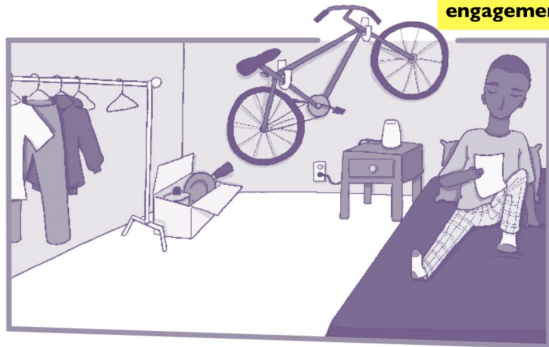
**You**

**Observers**  
You may invite a friend or family member. A representative of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) may attend your hearing.

**Be mindful of the many factors that affect comprehension - how information is organized, tone & voice, use of visuals**

## 6. Make the information understandable for the intended audience

Visuals increase engagement



## Asset rules

Headings help people find info

You can have some **assets** (things you own) and still qualify for welfare. When you apply, the ministry decides if your assets (including savings) are **exempt assets** or **non-exempt assets**.

To qualify for welfare, your **non-exempt assets** must be less than the total the welfare laws say you can have. This total is called your **asset limit**.

Bolding key terms helps scanning

There are different asset limits for income assistance (including PPMB benefits) and disability assistance. See the chart on page 22.

White space is easy on the eye

# 7. Make the design clean, engaging, and easy to use

## If You're Facing Foreclosure

This information applies to British Columbia, Canada

Reviewed: March 2018

⌚ Time to read: 13 minutes

🖨️ Print

Worried that you might lose your home because the bank is threatening to take it? If you default on your mortgage, the lender can start legal proceedings to take the property or sell it to pay the mortgage debt. This legal process is called foreclosure. Learn what to expect and what options you have if you're facing foreclosure.

### What you should know

- > If you default on your mortgage
- > You don't automatically lose your home if you default
- > If the lender starts a foreclosure action

### Deal with the problem

### Who can help

For assistance in preparing for a foreclosure hearing, see the options for [free or low-cost legal advice](#).

The **Credit Counselling Society of BC** is a non-profit society that helps people better manage their money and debt.

Call 1-844-642-0082 (toll-free)

[Send email](#)

[Visit website](#)

**Verify contact  
info for services**

**Include options  
for free or low-  
cost legal help**

## Options for Legal Help

At People's Law School, we believe accurate, plain English information can help people take action to work out their legal problems. But depending on how complex your legal issues are, it may be helpful to have a legal professional assist you.

### Options for free legal advice

There may be times when you want legal advice. Options for free legal advice include:

#### Lawyer Referral Service

A service that helps British Columbians of any income find a suitable lawyer to serve their legal needs. Operated by Access Pro Bono, the service provides the contact details of a lawyer who will meet with you for a free half-hour legal consultation. The lawyer can provide some initial advice on your options. Then, if you and the lawyer agree, you can hire that lawyer at their regular rates.

Call 604-687-3221 (Lower Mainland)

Call 1-800-663-1919 (toll-free)

[Send email](#)

[Visit website](#)

#### Access Pro Bono Clinics

At in-person clinics throughout BC, volunteer lawyers provide free legal advice to people with limited means.

Call 604-878-7400 (Lower Mainland)

Call 1-877-762-6664 (toll-free)

[Visit website](#)

# 8. Refer to free or low-cost legal help

## Additional Best Practices

### ***Strengthen your process***

9. Address an unmet need — and avoid duplication

10. Establish success measures

11. Test with your audience — and include them in the development process

12. Edit your language for clarity and simplicity

13. Review the information periodically

### ***Make your information more inclusive and easier to find***

14. Consider how the information makes your audience feel

15. Make the information accessible to people of varying abilities

16. Make the information easy to find

What are the other  
8 best practices?

**Thank you for joining us.**

**Better Legal  
Information**

[betterlegalinfo.ca](https://betterlegalinfo.ca)



**We welcome your feedback.**