

The Legal Aid Council

The Legal Aid Council (LAC) is a statutory entity under the Ministry of Justice. The Council's mandate is to administer an efficient and coordinated legal aid system in Jamaica

Main Functions

- Administer a Legal Aid Scheme which provides legal aid for citizens. Currently criminal matters are entitled to Duty Counsel or Court Assignments.
In its advisory capacity, it keeps under review the Provisions and Regulations of the [Legal Aid Act](#) and makes such recommendations to the Minister (of Justice) as the Council sees fit.
- Organises and establishes Legal Aid Clinics, formulating the requisite standards, procedures and regulatory framework.
- Establishes panels of attorneys to execute legal aid duties in fulfilment of its mandate. As at July 30, 2013, approximately four hundred and twenty-four (424) attorneys are enlisted, including almost ninety (90) Senior Counsel. Our cadre of lawyers provides Duty Counsel Services and accepts Legal Aid court assignments.
- Receives and administers the financial resources of the Council, consistent with the provisions of the [Financial Administration and Audit Act](#) and the [Public Bodies Management and Accountability Act](#).
- Is empowered by Statute to establish and maintain a tariff of fees to be paid by the Council to attorneys for services rendered. The scale of fees ranges from the allotment for Duty Counsel Services to a maximum fee for Senior Counsel for Capital Murder trials. Review of fees commences with the Council having consultation with the Jamaican Bar Association and the Advocates Association of Jamaica. The Minister has the final call on the recommendations emerging from the aforementioned consultations.

- Implement means test criteria and the prescribed process for contribution requests.
- Increase public awareness of the legal aid system in Jamaica.
- Administer an Outreach Programme to ensure that the public and stakeholders are fully apprised of its available services and the procedural processes required.

Legal Aid Council
Air Jamaica Building
72 Harbour Street
Kingston
Telephone: 948-6999

The Legal Aid Clinic
131 Tower Street
922-3792

The Montego Bay Legal Aid Clinic
42B Union Street
Montego Bay
952-2183

Ministry of Justice
2 Oxford Road
NCB Towers (South)
Kingston 5
Telephone: 906-4923 - 31
1-888-4-JUSTICE (5878423)
Email: customerservice@moj.gov.jm



Legal Aid In Criminal Matters

At the Court



Cedar Valley Court House

Legal Aid in Court

What is legal aid?

Legal aid is the provision of assistance to persons otherwise unable to afford legal representation and access to the court system. Legal aid is regarded as central in providing access to justice by ensuring [equality before the law](#), the [right to counsel](#) and the [right to a fair trial](#).

How can I get Legal Aid in Court?

If you are charged with a criminal offence, you can apply for assistance to obtain legal representation. An attorney will be assigned to your case to prepare it before you go to trial and to represent you at trial.

Can everyone get Legal Aid?

Everyone including persons detained or charged with an excepted offence can be granted legal aid under the Duty Counsel Scheme.

This is so even if you intend to get your own lawyer at a later stage.

You will qualify for legal aid if the court or any other person authorized by the [Legal Aid Act](#) decides that you are unable to afford legal representation.

The decision is taken after a means test.

Does legal aid cover all offences?

The only offences for which legal aid is not given are:

- ☞ Offences under the Money Laundering Act

- ☞ Offences under the Dangerous Drug Act for manufacturing, importing, exporting, taking preparatory steps to export, selling or otherwise dealing in any dangerous drug and being in possession, in excess of the specified amounts.
- ☞ Any offence not punishable with imprisonment.

How do I apply for Legal Aid?

You should apply as soon as possible after you have been charged with a criminal offence.

Three easy steps:

Step 1

Complete an application form from any Legal Aid Clinic, Court's Office or the Legal Aid Council.

If you are under 18 years, your parent or guardian or any other adult can apply on your behalf.

Step 2

- ☞ The Court's Office which is dealing with your case; or
- ☞ The nearest Legal Aid Clinic; or
- ☞ The Registrar of the Gun Court; or
- ☞ The Registrar of the Supreme Court; or
- ☞ The Register of the Court of Appeal.
- ☞ The Legal Aid Council

may require proof of your income or savings, earnings and expenses

Step 3

A successful applicant will have an Attorney assigned to the case. The Attorney will attend court for the matter.

Please note:

- ☞ You may be asked to pay a part of your legal fees.
- ☞ If you cannot afford it you will not be asked to pay.
- ☞ The Legal Aid Council will pay the fee to the attorney and will provide you with a bank voucher to pay your portion at any Scotiabank.
- ☞ You can pay in instalments.

If you have difficulty paying:

- ☞ You must tell this to the person who interviewed you.

REMEMBER

You must pay your portion of the fee at the time and place that you are told.

If your financial situation gets better or worse, you must tell the court and your contribution will be worked out again.

For more information you may contact :

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Air Jamaica Building
72 Harbour Street
Kingston**

Telephone: 948-6999

