

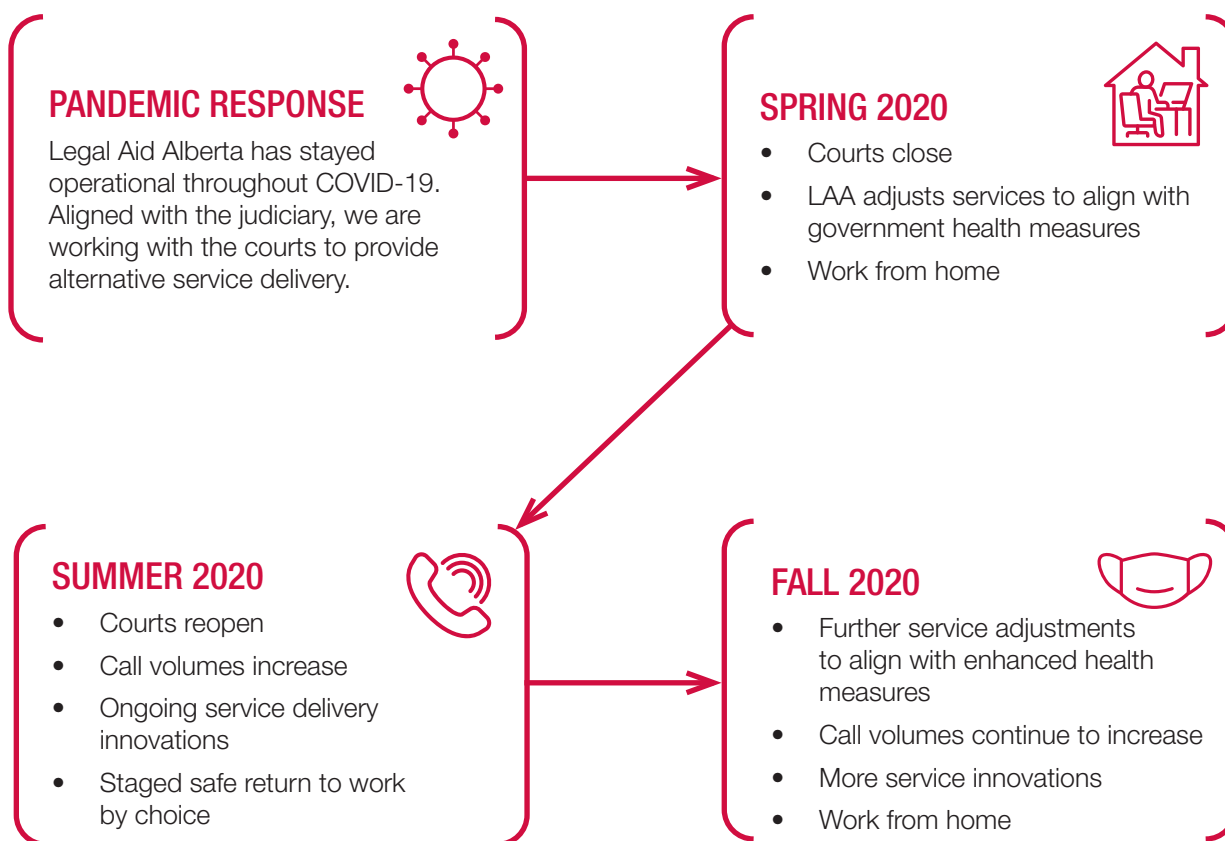


2020 YEAR IN REVIEW

LEGAL AID ALBERTA YEAR IN REVIEW

2020 has been a year of extraordinary challenge and change.

Legal Aid Alberta continues to innovate and re-imagine processes in order to serve Albertans and help them navigate the justice system safely during the pandemic. As part of the 2020 Come Together: Our Path Forward Initiative, we want to come back from the pandemic even stronger.



By keeping our focus on staying accountable to Albertans, even in the middle of a pandemic, we're making the best use of our expertise and resources, so we can deliver access to justice, and make the biggest possible impact in our province.

VISION

An Alberta where everyone is able to understand and protect their legal rights.

OUR CLIENTS

At Legal Aid Alberta, we help some of our most vulnerable citizens - many of whom are facing more dire circumstances due to the pandemic.

\$9,995 average annual income **21%** have zero income
80% of Legal Aid Alberta certificates are for criminal matters

Nearly **80%** of LAA's budget is allocated to Charter matters and Duty Counsel services integral to the functioning of the courts.

In addition to their extremely limited financial resources, our clients also face a variety of unique circumstances.

- Mental health issues
- Incarceration
- Chronic homelessness
- Addiction
- Family breakdown and lack of family supports
- Language and education barriers
- Indigenous and historical cultural trauma



"COVID has introduced so many challenges for so many individuals but we want people to know they're not alone."

— **Andrea Doyle**, Senior Advisory Counsel for Family and Immigration Law

New in 2020



**Choice of
Counsel**



Dignity



Compassion



Empowerment

Clients can indicate their choice of counsel within a court district, within Alberta or across Canada depending on the seriousness of their charges. This allows clients in rural areas, for example, to have access to the same breadth of experience as those in larger centres.


Impact: Putting our clients on a level playing field by letting them choose their own lawyer.


OUR CLIENTS



“Drug court has given me the opportunity to go forward in life and be stronger than I ever was.”

— **Tyson**, graduated from Drug Treatment Court in 2020

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|  <p>Duty Counsel Crown Disclosure</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Advocacy ✓ Communication ✓ Continuity | <p>Previously, our Duty Counsel lawyers had no access to fulsome Crown disclosure. Now that they do, they can represent clients more effectively and refer them to the service that best matches their needs.</p> <p>Impact: Making sure our clients get continuity of service and are connected with the resources they need.</p> |
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|  <p>Authorization Request Process</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Service ✓ Stewardship ✓ Time | <p>When extra hours may be needed for a certificate, our legal experts review the request and determine the appropriate hours required in consultation with the assigned lawyer. This is an important part of our due diligence and financial accountability.</p> <p>Impact: Making sure clients are getting the best service at the best price.</p> |
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“People are treated with great dignity in an effort to understand their challenges in conditions that don’t set them up for failure.”

— **Amna Qureshi**, head of LAA’s mental health court team

OUR SERVICES

We provide affordable legal services in:

- **FAMILY LAW**
- **DOMESTIC VIOLENCE**
- **CHILD WELFARE**
- **IMMIGRATION**
- **YOUTH AND ADULT CRIMINAL DEFENSE**

As a publicly funded, non-profit organization, we are mandated by the Government of Alberta, Minister of Justice and Solicitor General, to provide legal services to Albertans.

The tariff and mandated services are outlined in our 2019 Governance Agreement.


Duty Counsel

LAA staff lawyers perform duty counsel services and their long-standing presence in this role has made them extremely knowledgeable, efficient, and highly valuable to the courts.

There is a high volume of individuals in the court system with addictions, mental health issues, cognitive challenges such as FASD, and related issues.

The practice of law client management is a skill unto itself, particularly when dealing with individuals who may have significant personal challenges.

New in 2020

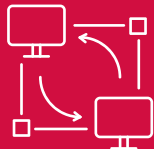


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|  Advance Appearance Duty Counsel (AADC) | <ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Access to Justice✓ Options✓ Safety | <p>Before AADC, Albertans in areas with a Case Management Office could only travel to the courthouse in-person in advance of their first appearance. Now, they can contact our lawyers by phone up to 14 days in advance to receive legal advice, assistance in requesting disclosure, and Duty Counsel may appear on behalf of a self-represented litigant for the scheduled court appearance.</p> <p>This temporary service helps people address their legal matters sooner.</p> <p>Impact: Giving all Albertans a way to deal with many legal matters by phone—saving trips to the courthouse—and giving them a flexible window to get the process started.</p> |
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OUR SERVICES



“I’ve often helped clients for whom a trip to the courthouse was a challenge, since they had to walk to the city from a rural area. Having the 14-day window to prepare in advance, and remotely, is a substantial improvement to their access to justice.”

— **Marino Eliopoulos**, LAA Legal Services Manager providing LAA advance appearance duty counsel services during COVID-19

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|  <p>Centralized Duty Counsel Scheduling</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Representation ✓ Rights ✓ Consistency | <p>Duty Counsel scheduling is moving from different systems for every court to one centralized system for all Alberta. This makes our process more efficient, reduces the risk of losing knowledge when an employee leaves the organization, and makes it easier for us to respond to requests and changes.</p> <p>Impact: Duty Counsel—a vital service for all Albertans—will be backed up by a stronger, more consistent system.</p> |
|  <p>Out-of-Court Duty Counsel (OCDC)</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Consideration ✓ Options ✓ Resources | <p>Some of our clients need more time than the standard Duty Counsel model can offer, but do not need full representation. OCDC gives our Duty Counsel lawyers a way to provide extra support to clients where it helps them deal with their legal matters more effectively.</p> <p>Impact: Giving vulnerable clients more time with duty counsel so that they have the resources they need to make life-changing decisions.</p> |
|  <p>Out-of-Custody Triage</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Planning ✓ Teamwork ✓ Health | <p>Clients who have been charged but not remanded can chat with a Duty Counsel lawyer in advance of their first court appearance. Our lawyers can request disclosure from the Crown, help the client resolve their legal matter, or refer clients to appropriate services, including full representation.</p> <p>Impact: Responding to COVID-19 by finding new ways to address matters earlier and reduce in-person trips to the courthouse.</p> |

OUR EXPERTISE

LAA has staff lawyers who specialize in complex areas of law. In practice, a working relationship with authorities is desirable in order to navigate the complexities of these matters.

- Child welfare
- Child representation in high-conflict parenting matters
- Youth and criminal defense
- Immigration and refugee law
- Domestic violence

New in 2020

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|  Criminal Trial Group | <ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Access to Justice✓ Cost✓ Efficiency | <p>The Criminal Trial Group lets us focus our lawyers' expertise on vulnerable clients who need it the most. This includes coverage under the Youth Criminal Justice Act, as well as some clients who have not indicated a choice of counsel, who come to us with challenges and barriers that require the specialized skills and experience of our staff lawyers to have the best possible access to justice.</p> <p>Impact: Bringing our team's specialized expertise to the next level and making it available to Albertans who need it most.</p> |
|  Family Law Assessment | <ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Access to Justice✓ Cost✓ Efficiency | <p>Our assessment team determines the appropriate number of hours to issue for each family certificate, reviews the merit of all property matters and can provide brief legal advice to help clients know what to expect. They are also empowered to provide referrals to Resolution and Court Administration Services (RCAS) when that's the best service for their needs.</p> <p>Impact: Providing clients with service that's customized to their situation, connecting them with the right resources early and making sure they know what to expect.</p> |

HUNDREDS ATTEND LEGAL AID ALBERTA'S VIRTUAL EVENT ON EMERGENCY PROTECTION ORDERS

2020 Featured Event

More people are looking to Legal Aid, police, and shelters for help with family violence during the pandemic. In response, Legal Aid Alberta lawyers held their first public event in 2020 to talk directly with Albertans about how an emergency protection order can keep someone safe from an abuser.



"With winter here and the pandemic worsening, families are feeling overwhelmed again by the substantial changes occurring in their households."

— **Bernadette LaBrie**, team lead of the Emergency Protection Order Program in Calgary

OUR PEOPLE

LAA staff provide highly specialized legal and support services to Albertans. Many of our staff are front line workers in courthouses across the province, and in our contact centre.

Our staff are diversely skilled in different fields and work in unison to help clients resolve their legal matters.


300 STAFF

1,200 ROSTER LAWYERS

8 LOCATIONS

1 UNIFIED VOICE FOR ALBERTANS

New in 2020

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|  <p>Change of Counsel</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Choice✓ Relationships✓ Timeliness | <p>We have tightened the timeline for status updates from roster lawyers, limited the number of requests allowed per client, and streamlined our internal processes to substantially reduce delays in the courts due to change of counsel requests.</p> <p>Impact: Addressing breakdowns in the lawyer-client relationship faster to minimize delays for clients.</p> |
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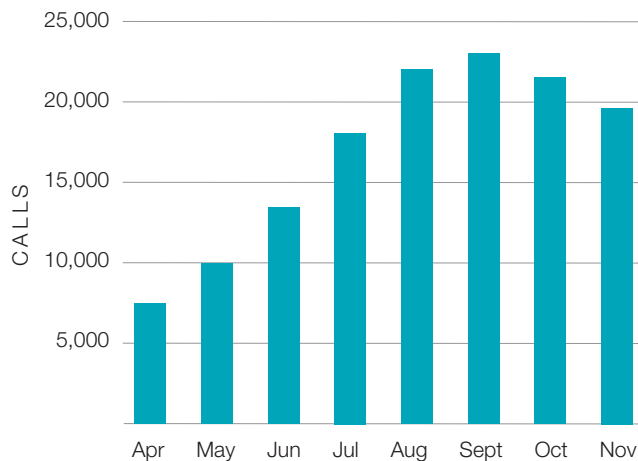
"Extending rule of law to every member of our society is a vital mission and one that I am proud to support."

— **Scott Hammond**, Staff lawyer

OUR OPERATIONS

The pandemic has exacerbated the struggles faced by many Albertans and demand for Legal Aid services has never been higher. In response, we have hired additional intake officers at our contact centre, and we are prioritizing calls from individuals in custody.

Total Calls 2020

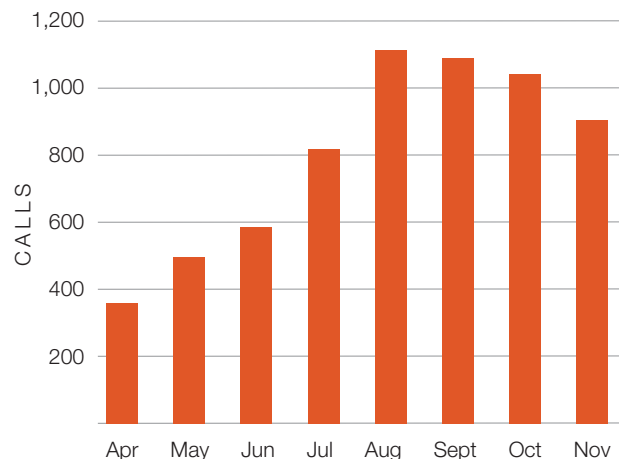


"You get so many different types of calls. It always challenges you to always find a way to be successful."

— **Elise**, Contact Centre Intake Officer



Average Calls Per Day 2020



OUR OPERATIONS

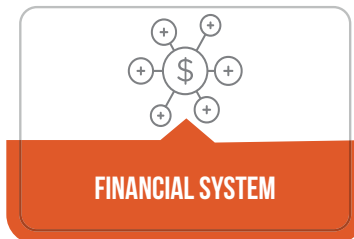
Improving front line service delivery during the pandemic is a priority for Legal Aid Alberta. We are finding efficiencies within our systems and processes to meet unprecedented demand for our services.

New in 2020

Work From Home

LAA has moved quickly to ensure all staff who could work from home do so as much as possible. Because our staff provide essential front line services within the justice system, we are working hard to pivot and adjust service delivery in response to fast-changing conditions.

Operational Systems Updates



New Calgary Office Space

Our Calgary office re-evaluated their space requirements and found a new space that costs less, is closer to the courthouse, and allows all our staff to be together on one floor.



2020 Media Highlights

LAA earned positive press coverage across Canada in 2020, helping grow awareness about our services and expertise.

- The Globe and Mail
- CBC News
- Calgary Herald
- Edmonton Journal
- CTV News
- Global News
- CBC Radio
- Fort McMurray Today
- Medicine Hat News