

Carole Curtis, B.A., LL.B.

Barristers & Solicitors

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ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION FOR NEW CLIENTS

BUSINESS HOURS AND APPOINTMENTS

1. Our business hours are 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Monday through Thursday and 8:00 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. Friday.
2. Technology has changed both the ways in which we get instructions from our clients, and how we serve our clients. It is not necessary, as it may have been, for our clients to make frequent visits to our office, and we try to minimize the number of appointments that are needed. We encourage you to use voicemail, e-mail and fax to communicate with us as much as possible.
3. Our preferred way of communicating on your file will be electronic mail. We are moving away from paper files to storing all file material, where possible, electronically. As a result, your file will predominantly be stored in electronic format, and the correspondence on your file will be sent in electronic format, whenever possible. If you have e-mail that you can rely on for private, confidential communications, we will use e-mail to communicate with you, including sending you letters, accounts and copies of the material we send and receive on your file. If we cannot use your e-mail address for these purposes, please let us know. Unless we hear otherwise from you, we are assuming that we can use e-mail to send you this material and that you check your email regularly.
4. Although we would encourage you to use e-mail as the primary method of communicating with us, we remind you that for urgent contact, the telephone is preferable. You can learn from the telephone whether the lawyer is in the office to help you that day, a feature not available through e-mail. And if the lawyer is not there, someone else in the firm may be able to help you.
5. You may be asked to provide the lawyer with written material, in the course of our work for you. This is often an efficient way to get historical or detailed information from you in order to prepare court documents. The written material you provide will be extremely

helpful, may be able to be used in several aspects of your case, and will result in greater efficiency for us and reduced legal fees for you. We prefer to get this material in electronic format (by e-mail), and if you can provide it to us this way, it will save you money.

6. You can reach the members of the firm at the following electronic addresses:

The law firm, generally
mail@email.com

Carole Curtis Family Law Lawyer
Email@email.com

Pauline Lee Law Clerk, Assistant to Carole Curtis
paulinelee@email.com

Valda I. Blenman Family Law Lawyer
valdablenman@email.com

Bernice Daigle Law Clerk, Assistant to Valda Blenman
terrychalmers@email.com

Victoria Starr Family Law Lawyer
victoriastarr@email.com

Helen Pereira Law Clerk, Assistant to Victoria Starr
helenpereira@email.com

Dilshad Chunara Bookkeeper
dilshadchunara@email.com

7. If you don't currently own an answering machine at home or have a voice-mail system, we suggest that you get one now. We need to be able to reach you promptly, and if it is difficult or time-consuming to reach you by telephone, it may even cost you more money in legal fees. If you are not reachable through electronic mail and don't currently own a fax machine, but may be getting a fax machine soon, now is a good time to get one. We have found that we can serve our clients who do not have electronic mail, but who do have fax machines, faster and cheaper, particularly with regard to the drafting of documents. It may also result in fewer trips to our office for you to review material, or give us instructions. It will also reduce the cost to you of couriers, which are sometimes needed when time lines are short.

8. The lawyers accept appointments with a starting time as follows:

Carole Curtis between the hours of 2:15 p.m. and 4:30 p.m.
Valda I. Blenman between the hours of 10:00 a.m. and 3:30 p.m.

Victoria Starr between the hours of 10:00 a.m. and 3:30 p.m.

9. In special circumstances, appointments may be available with the lawyers outside normal business hours (that is, after 5:00 p.m.). However, those appointments are the exception. As these appointment times are popular, they are often the first appointments to be booked, and may not be available in the same week that you request such an appointment.
10. The lawyers are not available for consultation without appointments. Please don't "drop in" hoping to see the lawyer.
11. Weekend and holiday appointments are not generally available.
12. Certain aspects of family law are crisis-oriented, and on occasion, lawyers are called to court on short notice, or are required to stay in court longer than they expected. Consequently, on occasion, appointments may have to be rescheduled or even cancelled on short notice. Every effort will be made to provide you with as much notice as possible, should that be necessary. If you are booking an appointment with a lawyer on a day that is a court day for the lawyer, it is a good idea to confirm the appointment with the assistant that day.

TELEPHONE CALLS

13. This firm returns all telephone calls and wherever possible, on the same day. Except for emergencies, calls are usually returned in the order they are received. The lawyers' assistants deal with as many of the telephone calls as possible, so that the lawyers are free to perform work that only the lawyers can do. This is in your financial interest, so that your legal fees are kept as reasonable as possible.
14. This firm has a voicemail system. You can leave a detailed confidential message. The person you intend to contact will listen directly to your message (the lawyers retrieve and deal with all their own messages). Also, you can learn the lawyer's availability to help you from their phone greeting (e.g., "I'm in court today and will return calls tomorrow"). You will also be offered an option to connect to someone else, usually the lawyer's own assistant.
15. Voicemail has changed the way business is conducted. It allows us to actually conduct business in messages, sometimes even "back and forth". We hope you will use our system this way to ensure the smooth and prompt progress of your case.
16. It is very helpful to us, and it is in your financial interest, that you leave the purpose of your call with any message. For example, if you are looking for a status report, the assistant can probably give you the information you need. But the assistants are not lawyers, and cannot give legal advice.

17. The lawyers in this firm are litigation lawyers, which means they are often in court. When they are in court, and particularly, when they are involved in a trial, it is not possible for the lawyers themselves to return telephone calls. An assistant will deal with your enquiries during these times.

18. Lawyers charge for the time they spend. You will be charged for all your contact with the lawyers, including telephone calls, voicemail and e-mail. Your call may be directed first to an assistant. If the purpose of your telephone call is to obtain specific information or provide information (for example, have we received a certain document yet from the other side?), that contact can be with the lawyer's assistant.

19. There is a cost to you for every contact you have with the lawyer, so it is in your financial interest to make your contact with the lawyers valuable to both you and the firm. You should think of telephone calls with a lawyer as though they were long distance calls, for which you are billed by the minute. Where possible, minimize the contact you have with the lawyers, unless the purpose of your contact can only be satisfied by a discussion with the lawyer.

20. Organize yourself before you phone, and ensure you have all the information you need available for the telephone call. Also, consider taking notes during your meetings and telephone calls with the lawyers. This is common sense, and good business.

PERSONNEL

21. This is a list of the professional and support staff in the law firm, their extension/voice mail numbers and their job titles:

Carole Curtis	222	Family Law Lawyer
Pauline Lee	333	Law Clerk, Assistant to Carole Curtis
Valda I. Blenman	444	Family Law Lawyer
Bernice Daigle	555	Law Clerk, Assistant to Valda Blenman
Victoria Starr	666	Family Law Lawyer
Helen Pereira	777	Law Clerk, Assistant to Victoria Starr
Dilshad Chunara	888	Bookkeeper
Pauline Curtis	200	Clerk

ACCOUNTS

22. If you have questions about your accounts, (either regarding fees or disbursements) please direct all inquiries first to the assistant of the lawyer involved, or to the bookkeeper.

23. The more work you do for yourself, the less work you will need done by the lawyer. If you can save time for the lawyer, it will save you money in fees.

24. Anytime you are giving the lawyer a collection of documents (court documents or financial documents, for example) it is in your financial interest to put those documents in chronological order first, and to prepare an index or list of the material you are giving us. If you do this, it will reduce the work needed by us to organize the material. It is the first thing we will do when we receive the documents.

25. Come to your meetings and any telephone calls with the lawyer prepared, possibly with a list of questions or subject areas you need to have covered.

WHAT IS THE LAWYER'S JOB

26. Your lawyer will help you by providing leadership to you in a difficult time. This leadership means providing direction to you, to help you to identify and eliminate the risks and dangers in your situation, as well as to help you understand your options and opportunities. It means working with you to design a plan to help you make progress and achieve success in the areas of your life where you are looking for legal advice. You will be the one to make the decisions. One of the goals of this leadership is to help you experience ever-increasing confidence and independence, so you can look more optimistically at the path that you will take through personal difficulties to a more positive future.

THE CONDUCT OF YOUR CASE

27. Most of our clients do not want their case to go to court. Most would like to negotiate a settlement. That is not always possible. It is not in your interest to negotiate on an open-ended basis, as that does not always accomplish a cost-efficient resolution. Some long negotiations end up costing more than it would've cost to simply start the court case. Our firm will negotiate for you for a period of three months after we have given the other side our financial information. If no progress is being made (and particularly if we have not received the other side's financial disclosure) we will start a court case. This is a tactical decision (when to start the court case) and it is a decision that the lawyers make. We will also decide, in consultation with you, which lawyer attends court.

FILE TRANSFERS

28. If you are transferring your file to us from another lawyer, it will be necessary for us to review the correspondence and documentation provided and ensure that it is complete and organized. You will be billed for this time spent, and for any time spent organizing the material received. You can minimize this expense by making sure that the material from your previous lawyer is put in chronological order.

29. If you are transferring your file to another lawyer from us, you need to remember that **you will have already been sent copies of all letters and court documents during our work for you. You should keep them organized**, as this may make such a transfer to another lawyer quicker and cheaper. If you have not kept the copies we sent you, we will provide electronic copies of the correspondence between solicitors and electronic copies of any court documents (again), and as well, the originals of any of your personal documentation. You will be billed for the time involved in preparing the file for transfer. If we have to make additional paper copies of material we have already sent you, you will be billed for that, as well.

CONFIDENTIALITY

30. All information you provide to our office is completely private and confidential. All the details of your case will be handled with the utmost confidentiality and respect for your privacy, by the lawyers and support staff. The privilege of confidentiality between solicitor and client is, in law, a protection which belongs to the client. Therefore, it is up to the client, only, whether or not that confidentiality is to be waived.

31. Please remember this when your family members or friends request information directly from your lawyer. We are frequently contacted by new partners, or other family members who want to discuss your case. You have to give your lawyer specific instructions to permit that discussion to take place. Also, as the time spent by the lawyer will be time spent on your file, you will be billed for any time spent discussing your case with anyone at your request, or in the context of your file.

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