8.7

November 9, 2016

today

Law Society Launches Early Intervention

In a new approach to addressing concerns received about lawyers, the Law Society of Alberta is introducing an improved intake and assessment process.

Our new early intervention approach is a proactive and collaborative way of supporting lawyer competence and enhancing the delivery of legal services to all Albertans. It enables us to address concerns about the professional and ethical conduct of Alberta lawyers, in a way that:

- Manages expectations while clearly reinforcing the mandate of the Law Society
- Changes our language and processes to reflect our shift from being a reactive, punitive regulator to being a proactive, supportive regulator

Going forward, information reported to the Law Society will no longer be labeled as a "complaint" at the intake phase. We will assess each matter brought forward according to a process that is fair and consistent for both lawyers and the public. Addressing all matters as complaints was resource-intensive and raised complainants' expectations that there would be a finding of conduct deserving of sanction. It also forced lawyers into an adversarial position with the complainant and the Law Society that did not lend itself to working collaboratively toward a resolution.

The vast majority of concerns received by the Law Society about lawyers relate to customer service issues that generally do not result in formal discipline or sanction in and of themselves.

Through early intervention, we are able to provide lawyers with programs, resources and resolution to foster better practice management and customer service, and proactively identify opportunities for improvement that may have otherwise been dismissed.

Please note matters that pose a significant regulatory risk, or where early intervention is unlikely to be effective, will still be directed to our disciplinary process. Also, some matters may fall outside our mandate as the regulator or may not pose a need for early intervention or discipline.

The information provided by the public and members of the business and legal community, concerning lawyer conduct is important and ultimately contributes to ensuring lawyers maintain the high standards demanded of the profession.

To find out more, visit our website and FAQs.