

**From:** [Office, Clerks](#)  
**To:** [MacDonald, Elizabeth](#)  
**Cc:** [Vining, Krista](#)  
**Subject:** FW: Independent Legal Advice Program  
**Date:** Tuesday, May 27, 2025 10:33:09 AM  
**Attachments:** [image001.png](#)  
[FAQ fact sheet Eng - ILA.PDF](#)  
[ILA Poster ENGLISH.pdf](#)  
[legal-advice-brochure.pdf](#)

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Hi, Elizabeth, logging as presentation request to WGEAC.

Leslie

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**From:** VICSERVICES-ILA Program <VICSERVICES-ILA@novascotia.ca>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, May 27, 2025 10:29 AM  
**To:** Office, Clerks <clerks@halifax.ca>  
**Subject:** [External Email] Independent Legal Advice Program

*[This email has been received from an external person or system]*

Good day:

I hope this message finds you well. Our names are Manisha and Lyndsay, and we work as the coordinators for the Independent Legal Advice (ILA) program, which offers survivors of sexual assault up to four hours of free legal advice. I am reaching out to share information about our program, as we know that for many individuals, understanding their legal options, receiving advice, and making informed decisions—such as whether to report—can be vital components of their healing journey. We would love to present at a Women and Gender Equity meeting.

Attached, you will find a Q&A sheet, as well as an electronic version of our program poster and pamphlet. We also have physical copies of the pamphlets (available in multiple languages) and posters, which I can send for your use as client resources. Additionally, we offer presentations about the program either in person or virtually.

Please let us know if you are interested and share your availability so we can schedule a time that works best for you.

Please don't hesitate to contact me if you would like to receive materials or schedule a presentation.

Best regards,

**Manisha Seebalak and Lyndsay Hollett**  
Coordinators – Independent Legal Advice Program

Victim Services  
Justice Supports and Services Division  
Nova Scotia Department of Justice

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**CONFIDENTIALITY NOTICE**

This message may contain privileged and/or confidential information. If you have received this e-mail in error or are not the intended recipient, you may not use, copy, disseminate, or distribute it. Do not open any attachments. Delete this message immediately from your system and notify me by e-mail or telephone that you have done so. Thank you.

*I would like to acknowledge that we are in Mi'kma'ki (MEEG-MA-GEE), the traditional territory of the Mi'kmaw people. I also acknowledge that people of African descent have been in Nova Scotia for over 400 years and we honour and offer gratitude to those ancestors of African descent who came before us to this land.*

# Frequently Asked Questions

Free Independent Legal Advice

NOVA SCOTIA

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## How does this work?

You call 211 NS to complete an intake (you will not need to provide details of what happened to you, only identify that the sexual assault happened in Nova Scotia). Each person who applies can receive up to four hours of legal advice through this program.

You will initially be given a two-hour certificate number that will be sent to you along with a list of pre-approved lawyers and a list of other resources that may be of benefit. After you receive this package, you can choose any lawyer on the list and contact them to make an appointment. If you feel more time is needed, just call 211 NS, who will be able to send you out one additional two-hour certificate number.

## What if I don't speak English?

Translation services can be arranged free of charge. For those needing a translator, we realize it can take longer to have an effective meeting. To make the most out of your meetings, both the lawyer and translator will be provided an additional hour for every two-hour certificate you use.

## Do I need to reside in Nova Scotia to access this service?

While the incident must have occurred in Nova Scotia, you do not have to presently be living in Nova Scotia to access this program.

## Why does it matter where the sexual assault took place?

Laws and rules can be different from province to province. Nova Scotia lawyers can give advice on the laws, programs and services existing in Nova Scotia but may not be able to advise regarding other Provinces.

## Does it matter when the sexual assault took place?

There is no statute of limitations on sexual assault. This program is open to adult Victims/Survivors of sexual assault, regardless of when it occurred and is available for Victims/Survivors of historical as well as recent sexual assaults. Individuals can use this program to seek legal advice at any stage after the assault occurred, regardless of whether it has been reported or not.

## What if I'm not sure that what I've been subjected to is a sexual assault?

It's common for people to be unsure. When you call 211 NS, you only need tell the intake person you believe you have been sexually assaulted. You will not be asked details about what happened to you. When you meet with the lawyer, they will help you to figure this out.

## Will I have to disclose to 211 what happened to me?

No. No one will ask you about your experience when you are applying for this program. You must only indicate that you believe that you have been subjected to an assault that was sexual in nature and that you would like to speak with a lawyer.

# Frequently Asked Questions

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## Why is the program available for persons over age 16?

The age 16+ was selected for this program as in Nova Scotia, under Section 25 of the Children and Family Services Act, there is a duty to report suspected sexual abuse for anyone under 16. There is also a duty to report suspected sexual abuse by a parent or guardian for people aged 16-19 and any sexual abuse where another person under the age of 16 may be at risk.

## How do I connect with the lawyer?

This program has a list of lawyers that you can choose from. You will be given a certificate number that you can provide to the lawyer when you contact them. You can contact that lawyer and decide how you wish to receive your advice, ie via videoconferencing, Skype or in person, or by telephone depending on what you and the lawyer decide. Please note that if the lawyer you decide to connect with does not work in your region, travel costs will only be considered in special circumstances and will need to be approved in advance for the lawyer to travel to meet with you in person.

## How does the lawyer get paid?

The program is a funding partnership between Justice Canada and the NS Department of Justice. The lawyers are independent. Their service is confidential. When they send in their invoices, there is no information that would identify clients of this program. 211 does not provide any names or contact information to Department of Justice, only information used for statistical purposes and to improve the program.

## Can I use a lawyer from elsewhere in the Province?

You can contact any lawyer on the roster. It is up to you who you choose. However, travel for the lawyers will only be considered in special circumstances and will need to be approved in advance. You also have the option to discuss your situation over the telephone, Skype or video conferencing if you are unable to meet in person with the lawyer you choose.

## Can I use this certificate to see a lawyer who is not on the roster?

All of the lawyers on the roster have been approved by the program, specially trained, and have agreed to work in the program and follow its terms. Only those lawyers can be paid through this program.

## Can I use this certificate for legal advice on something else?

No, the certificate is for you to talk to a lawyer about the sexual assault and to provide you legal advice that you would otherwise not have access to. The certificate can only be used for this purpose.

## Why can't I use the four hours for in-court representation?

The certificate is for legal advice, which means that a lawyer can listen to your questions and provide you with advice during your appointment time. Legal representation in court is a different type of service, which involves attending and setting court dates.

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## **What kinds of advice could the lawyer help me with?**

The lawyer can help you to determine your legal options, such as whether you should report the matter to the police or take civil action. You may decide after meeting with the lawyer, and receiving information about those processes, that you are choosing no further action at this time. This program is to help you make informed decisions. You have some choices on what happens next.

## **Do I need to have a lawyer to go through criminal court?**

No. Criminal cases involve Crown Attorney and Defence lawyer. The Defence lawyer represents the accused in court. The Crown Attorney represents the people of Canada and prosecutes criminal matters on behalf of the public. Because of this, you do not require a lawyer to prove your case because it is the job of the Crown Attorney to prove in court that a crime was committed. It is likely you will be asked to assist the judge in understanding what happened by testifying under oath.

## **Will the lawyer keep my information confidential?**

Yes. All communication between clients and their lawyers is not permitted to be disclosed to anyone. However, there are times when there are exceptions to the rule. The lawyer you meet with will review limitations of confidentiality before you share what happened to you. The civil and criminal justice system relies on clear and open communication between clients and their lawyers. Without it, clients may not be completely open and honest with their lawyers which could result in the lawyer not being able to give proper legal advice to the client.

## **If I don't like the lawyer's advice, can I change to a different lawyer?**

Yes. You will be provided with one two-hour certificate number. It is possible to see two lawyers if you are not comfortable with the first lawyer or the advice you were given and you have not used both certificates. If further time with a lawyer is required, call 211 NS, give your name (no need for additional intake information as they will have that from the first call) and one more two-hour certificate number will be sent to you. The certificates must be used within 90 days from the time they are issued.

## **What should I look for when choosing a lawyer from the roster?**

This is a personal choice and completely up to you. The profiles will explain the lawyer's background and experience and what motivated them to do this work. All lawyers on the list were approved, trained and are committed to providing this service.



# Understand your rights.

*Independent Legal Advice  
Program for Adult Survivors  
of Sexual Assault* supports  
survivors by providing up to  
4 hours of free advice  
from a lawyer.

Learn more at  
[novascotia.ca/sexualassaultlegaladvice](http://novascotia.ca/sexualassaultlegaladvice)



*Funding support provided by  
Justice Canada Policy Centre  
for Victim Issues*





# Independent Legal Advice Program

## for Adult Survivors of Sexual Assault

To better support adult survivors of sexual assaults, Nova Scotia will provide up to four hours of free legal advice.



Sexual assault is not alright. It is a violation of a person's human rights and it causes serious health, social and public safety issues in our communities.

To help adult sexual assault survivors understand their rights and legal options, the Province of Nova Scotia has created a new program that gives survivors up to 4 hours of free advice from a lawyer.

The program respects survivors' privacy and their right to make their own decisions. Registration is done through an independent agency, 211 Nova Scotia, and participants do not have to report to police or take legal action if they use the service.

### ELIGIBILITY

- **Participants must be 16 years or older**  
In Nova Scotia, there is a duty to report suspected sexual abuse of anyone under 16. There is also a duty to report suspected sexual abuse by a parent or guardian for people aged 16-19 and any sexual abuse where another person under the age of 16 may be at risk.
- **The assault took place in Nova Scotia**  
Laws and rules can be different from province to province. Nova Scotia lawyers can only give advice on laws, programs, and services that exist in Nova Scotia but may not be able to advise regarding other Provinces.

### REGISTER FOR THE PROGRAM

- To use the service, call 211 NS, an independent agency, and register (dial 2-1-1 on your phone).

- You do not need to provide details about what happened. You only have to say that you were sexually assaulted in Nova Scotia, and that you would like to speak with a lawyer.

### USING THE SERVICE

- Once you are registered, you will be sent a package with a certificate number for up to 2 hours of legal advice.
- The package will also contain a list of participating lawyers. Choose any lawyer on the list and contact them with your certificate number to make an appointment.
- If more time is needed, call 211 NS and they will send you another certificate number for up to 2 additional hours of legal advice.
- Clients are welcome to select any lawyer from the list, regardless of region, who they feel best meets their individual needs. However, clients and lawyers are encouraged to explore all options to avoid the need for travel (e.g. video conferencing, Skype, telephone, etc.). The cost of a lawyer's travel will only be reimbursed where special circumstances exist to support traveling for a face to face meeting.
- Prior approval must be granted from the department for a lawyer to travel to meet with a client. Each lawyer's profile indicates if they are willing to travel to meet a client.

### CONFIDENTIALITY

- Before you share what happened to you, the lawyer will explain any limitations of confidentiality. Once you understand these limits, you can through with the session or not.
- The program was created by Nova Scotia's Department of Justice, but the Department does not have access to participants' names or contact information.
- The only information that 211 NS will share with the Department of Justice is non-identifying data. This information will be shared to measure that the program is being used.

### CONTACT 211 NOVA SCOTIA

Dial **2-1-1** on your phone.

Go to the 211 NS website at **ns.211.ca** and use the form on the "Contact Us" page.

**[novascotia.ca/sexualassaultlegaladvice](https://novascotia.ca/sexualassaultlegaladvice)**



*Funding Support provided by  
Justice Canada Policy Centre for  
Victim Issues*