

## Virtual Legal Forms Workshop (Virtual AC) Information

Updated July 31, 2020

### Who is AC (Friends of Court) Friendship Society?

AC Friendship Society (AC) is a nonprofit charity in British Columbia that assists the public complete their legal forms regardless of their means.

The ability to independently access the legal system is a challenge for ordinary British Columbians. More and more people are trying to resolve legal matters on their own, however most are unfamiliar with how to properly prepare legal forms or prepare for a hearing.

AC provides legal assistance to individuals who require help drafting or filing out legal forms. AC's services are provided on the principle of equal access to justice. This means going beyond the application of a simple financial eligibility test. Equal access to justice includes an assessment of an individual's capacity to navigate what has become a complex and inaccessible legal system for many British Columbians. And this principle of equal access to justice has become even more relevant as we all deal with the COVID-19 pandemic.

It has been in operation since February 8, 2011.

### What is Virtual AC?

AC likes to meet our clients where they are, so we have been operating an online service since April 1, 2020. We are able to help our clients while they are in the comfort and safety of their own home.

During the pandemic, we are not offering in-person services.

Virtual AC connects you with a legal professional (such as a paralegal) via a video conference session for an hour. A lawyer supervises our professionals and the work they prepare for you. The legal advice given is limited to what is necessary to complete your form.

For victims of gendered violence and those who can not use computers receive help by phone.

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### **What is video conferencing?**

Video conferencing connects two or more people using a live, visual connection between their computers. Virtual AC uses the online video conferencing service called Zoom.

You will need a computer, privacy and Zoom to connect with us here at Virtual AC.

The computer will need:

- Internet connection
- Microphone
- Speakers
- Webcam
- Ability to download Zoom if the client would like to

### **What happens during a Virtual AC meeting?**

Your first meeting with us involves a 30 minute technology check. We will

- Check your device to make sure you will be ready for your legal appointment
- Discuss the our Client Services Agreement Form and what to expect in your appointment to help you with your legal form
- Answer your questions relating to how AC will help you using Zoom and
- Not discuss your case.

### **How do I get an appointment for a Virtual AC meeting to get help for my form?**

After you complete your tech check, you will be given an account number. You will be asked to submit these:

1. Your ID government issued, library card or document showing name and/or address.
2. Legal history (what happened and when).
3. Collect all related documents related to your one claim.

We do not accept multiple submissions of your documents.

Sometimes, there may be cancellations. If you are able to submit these documents earlier, we try to see you earlier.

Then you will be provided dates and times to choose from.

## What areas of law can I ask for help with?

Here is a list of subject areas where we can help in completing legal forms:

Aside from asking about the details of your forms, you can also ask about:

- o Next steps and timelines;
- o Additional documents needed (if any), and;
- o Useful resources.

Recommended reading: [How to Make the Most of Your Appointment with Amici Curiae \(Friends of Court\)](#)

## How much time do I have in my appointment? Is there a limit to the number of appointments?

You decide how much support you need. You can receive as many appointments as you need. Your appointments are generally one hour long.

If you wish to return and you were given homework, you must first submit these. Once they are reviewed and approved then you will be given an appointment.

## What does AC expect from me?

Here are your rights and responsibility as a client. You have a lot of control on how you want to drive our relationship, at the same time, we expect you to do your share.

## Can we bring a family or friend?

We understand that you may be doing this on your own, so we try to make your time with us as pleasant and easy as possible. We encourage you to bring a trusted friend or family member to give emotional support, take notes, organize documents, or translate. Sometimes, a volunteer may be available to help you translate.

If you bring a friend, the first thing we do is to ask your friend to leave the room so we can ask you privately if you approve having the person as your helper.

If you do not have a computer or an email address, we will work with you to find a way to get your documents to you.

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### **Will I get the same volunteer when I return?**

It is unlikely that you will get the same volunteer. Be assured that your assigned volunteer reads your file before your appointment. We may assign the same volunteer if the executive director determines your file is complex.

### **Is Virtual AC a safe way to get help?**

Using the internet carries some level of risk.

AC has taken steps to minimize these risks by:

- Encrypting the digital copy of your Services Agreement Form, each Session Record Form and your legal history (if there is one);
- Having our digital storage protocols comply with Law Society of BC guidelines;
- No recording of meetings.

For victims of gendered violence and those with no access to a computer you will be helped by phone.

You are responsible for keeping your legal forms. If we work with you by phone, we keep your legal forms until we can safely deliver them to you. Please ask your volunteer if you need more information.

### **Can I use the Virtual AC from my desktop computer, laptop or mobile device?**

Yes. Before booking your appointment, a volunteer will meet with you virtually to help you set up and use Zoom. We will also answer any questions you may have about our Virtual AC service.

### **How do I make an appointment for Virtual AC?**

1. Visit us at [www.legalformsbc.ca](http://www.legalformsbc.ca)
2. E-mail us at [legalformsbc@gmail.com](mailto:legalformsbc@gmail.com)
3. Call us at 778.522.2839