



Left to right: A participant listens in while paralegal Stacie Ayukawa(standing) discusses an affidavit with Jennifer Lin, lawyer.

# Amici Curiae Friendship Society CV

[www.legalformsbc.ca](http://www.legalformsbc.ca)

Current to October 9, 2020

Powered by legal professionals and assisted by the legal community, Amici Curiae Friendship Society helps British Columbians prepare their legal forms for free.

## Overview

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.



## Overview

Amici Curiae Friendship Society (AC) provides legal assistance to individuals who require help drafting or filling 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.

AC is a non-profit charity offering confidential workshops that help the public complete the legal forms necessary to present a matter to court or a tribunal. It is powered by paralegals, newly called lawyers, law school students, law librarians and law accountants, supervised by lawyers and supported by the profession. No legal advice is given on anything other than completing legal forms.

Amici Curiae is a non-profit society offering workshops that help the British Columbians complete the legal forms necessary to present a matter to court or a tribunal. No legal advice is given. The public service paralegal programme was launched by Dom Bautista, Executive Director of Law Courts Center, a continuing professional development provider, encouraged by the former Supreme Court of BC Chief Justice Donald Brenner. The first workshop was held on February 8, 2011, in partnership with Access Pro Bono BC and the Ministry of the Attorney General Justice Access Centre (Vancouver). Since then, workshops have been established through a network of strategic partnerships.

## Key features of the legal forms workshops

- The free workshops are open to every British Columbian, regardless of their means.
  - Appointments are confidential and are at least one hour long.
  - Individuals can return as needed.
  - There is no income test.
- Our workshops help people complete their legal forms in *non-criminal* legal matters at the:
  - BC Court of Appeal
  - Supreme Court of BC
  - Provincial Court of BC
  - Federal Court
  - Tribunals (ie BC Human Rights and Civil Resolution).

### ***Nature of virtual workshops***

- Virtual workshops are held on Thursday evenings.
- Workshops are held between January to November. Emergency services are available.
- Services at workshops are provided by a team of volunteers that includes:
  - Legal Professionals<sup>1</sup> who work one-on-one with clients to complete their forms
  - Lawyers who review the forms for completeness; lawyers do not give summary legal advice.
  - Law librarians who conduct legal research when required.
  - Law firm accountants who help with financial statement affidavits.

### ***How to book a virtual appointment***

- Individuals must arrange an appointment.
  - They may file online: <http://www.legalformsbc.ca/contact-us.html>
  - write to: [legalformsbc@gmail.com](mailto:legalformsbc@gmail.com), or
  - call 778.522.2839.
- An intake coordinator will answer within five business days to decide if we can help the person.
- Those who we can help receive a 30 minute technology check first.
- Once a client submit their documents, they are provided dates for their legal appointment.

## **References**

Here is a message from former Chief Justice of BC Finch 3/21/11:

*I welcome the creation of the Paralegal Pro Bono Program and Access Pro Bono's partnership with the Law Courts Center in its evening Pro Bono Paralegal Program at the Vancouver Justice Access Centre. The Program is unique in Canada in engaging paralegals as primary pro bono legal service providers who work under the supervision of a lawyer to provide assistance to those who would otherwise find themselves with no help at all.*

Here is a message from Attorney General of BC Eby 02/15/19:

*A key priority for the Ministry of Attorney General is to increase access to justice for British Columbians. Equal access is a vital element of our justice system and is a guiding principle for the ACFS. The society has built a strong reputation for the quality of its service and its commitment to those who need assistance resolving legal matters.*

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<sup>1</sup> Legal professionals include: paralegals, law school and articling students, law accountants and librarians.

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