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Emergency Protection Order Program, Family Law Office, Legal Aid Alberta (Edmonton)

Theme: Legal Services

Legal Aid Alberta's Family Law Office helps victims of family violence through its Emergency Protection Order Program. The program is offered in Edmonton, Calgary and Lethbridge (and surrounding areas). The Emergency Protection Order Program provides clients with information and a lawyer who can help them to obtain and confirm protection orders. They attend court on a daily basis to represent Albertans who have experienced violence in their lives. The Emergency Protection Order Program also provides ongoing information, risk assessment and safety plans to victims of family violence.

Critical Elements

- There is no cost for obtaining or confirming protection orders and there are no financial eligibility requirements.
- The overall process can conclude within 10 days.
- There are a number of levels that the applicants must go through in applying for EPO, including an intake process during which a transcript is created, serving of the order on the respondent, a confirmation hearing, and in some instances an oral hearing if more deliberations are warranted.
- Legal Aid Duty Council is present in provincial court and provides support to victims as necessary.
- Legal Aid office also employs family resource facilitators, who are trained social workers or psychologists and who assist clients with other emerging issues, such as general support and safety planning, support in applying for funding, provide information about resources and act as advocates.
- Justices of the Peace are available to review orders that are issued after hours or on weekends.
- Police or RCMP are essential partners in the process as they serve the order on the respondent, which may be challenging if the respondent does not wish to be found.
- The orders require that the victim be in an emergency situation and a family member must be involved. Legal Aid lawyers work with those who do not qualify for an EPO to explore options available to them. Alternatively, there may be individuals accessing Legal Aid on other matters, and the Legal Aid lawyers may offer the EPO alternative to them if they qualify or connect them with other relevant resources.