

SIGMA ASSISTEL

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Sigma Assistel, a Canadian leader in telephone assistance services and a subsidiary of Desjardins Financial Security, serves more than five million Canadians. Sigma Assistel is committed to providing businesses and organizations with high-quality assistance services 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The Company has obtained ISO 9001:2008 certification. The author, Elisabeth Boisvert, is Marketing Consultant for Sigma Assistel.

Legal Assistance: it's not just for problems

We regularly take proactive measures to avoid potential issues. For example we consult a specialist to be vaccinated before taking a trip or we see a dentist for the annual checkup. And other things are so ingrained in our daily routine, we just do them automatically, such as applying sunscreen before going outside.

We should apply this same preventive attitude to Legal Assistance. All too often, we think of calling this service only when we're faced with a legal problem, forgetting that Legal Assistance is very useful in preventing problems and helping with everyday issues.

Legal issues: various levels of importance

The legal issues we encounter aren't all equal. While some constitute actual problems, many are more prevention-related. Here's how we might categorize various legal issues, along with examples:

1. **Legal questions:** These arise when we don't have all the information required to make a decision. Very often, the situation originates with the person, who can influence how it develops. As such, the questions are almost always prevention-related. At this stage, a client might call Legal Assistance with such questions as:
 - ❖ My son wants to work when he turns 15. Can he?
 - ❖ Can my daughter take her driver's test without taking any courses?
 - ❖ We're thinking about starting a family. What do I need to check with my employer?
 - ❖ I'd like to travel overseas with my children. Can my ex-husband refuse?
 - ❖ We're thinking about buying a home. What do we need to do to protect ourselves?
 - ❖ I want to have a party at my home. Am I responsible for my guests if they're impaired when they leave?

2. **Potential legal problems:** These matters generate moderately negative emotions in the individual, who often did not cause the situation. At this stage, legal problems can sometimes be prevented, but not always. A client may contact Legal Assistance with such legal questions as:

- ❖ My neighbour is threatening to take action because my dog barks very loudly. What can I do?
- ❖ I have a business and the building's owner is selling. Can I be evicted?
- ❖ My former spouse is thinking about moving out of the area. Does this breach our custody agreement?
- ❖ My neighbour wants a new fence. Who pays for this? How do we respect the boundaries?

3. **Legal problems:** These matters generate strong negative emotions. Because they upset our daily lives and require action, the individual is in reactive mode. At this stage, the matter almost always constitutes a problem, although preventive measures can be taken to minimize the repercussions. Therefore the client might contact Legal Assistance with such legal questions as:

- ❖ I have to go to small claims court. Can you help me through the process?
- ❖ I received a formal notice. What do I have to do?
- ❖ I'm having renovations done and the contractor is not respecting our agreement. What recourse do I have?
- ❖ My spouse and I are separating. What are my rights?
- ❖ My uncle just died and I've been appointed executor of his estate. What do I have to do?

All too often, people think about lawyers and Legal Assistance only when they're at the problem stage. This is understandable, since action must be taken. In this situation, they think of contacting Legal Assistance to minimize the expense of consulting a lawyer. Obviously, Legal Assistance can help them, but the scope of the problem may be such that they'll still need to meet with a lawyer in person.

Of all the legal information tools available, Legal Assistance is certainly the best way to prevent legal problems. Provided free of charge, it's a fast way to obtain legal information and reassurance.

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