

LEGAL REPRESENTATION

Finding a lawyer, legal counsel and information.

Restraining Orders, Peace Bonds & Terms of Release – Speakers' Note; METRAC and OWJN

It is always better to be represented by a lawyer when dealing with an abusive, threatening or harassing partner/former partner.

Your local shelter or women's group often keep a list of lawyers who understand family violence.

If you cannot afford a lawyer, **Legal Aid** (look in the White pages) can assess whether you are qualified and consider you for a legal aid certificate. This will allow you to be represented by a lawyer without having to pay for it. The Legal Aid office will give you a list of lawyers who accept legal aid clients. Legal Aid is not available for Peace bond applications.

If you cannot afford a lawyer and do not qualify for legal aid, you will have to represent yourself. However all family courts in Ontario have "**duty counsel**" who are fully qualified lawyers present at the court to assist people who do not have their own lawyers. Obviously, this is not as good as having your own lawyer because the duty counsel lawyer is assisting everyone who comes to the court on a first-come, first-serve basis. AS well, duty counsel responsibilities rotate among lawyers, so you will probably see a different person each time you come to court , which is frustrating. Despite these limitations, thought, the assistance of a duty counsel can be very helpful in getting you through various court documents and processes.

Ontario's Unified Family Courts provide Family Law Information Centres (FLICs) where you can get information from court staff and preliminary legal advice from a lawyer. Both FLIC staff and duty counsel can be of great assistance if you need to apply for a restraining order urgently and do not have time to hire a lawyer or complete a legal aid application.

Local Numbers

Waterloo Region Legal Aid: 743-4306

Family Law Information Centre (FLIC) (located in the court buildings)

Kitchener: 741-3300

Cambridge: 621-9220

Victim Witness Assistance Program (V WAP) 741-3351, wkdays 9:30-5pm