

Career Coaching Program for Women Lawyers - Frequently Asked Questions

What is the Career Coaching Program for women lawyers?

The five-year pilot Career Coaching Program is designed to reduce the hardship that arises when a woman lawyer in a small firm or a sole practitioner takes maternity, parental, adoption or compassionate leave. The Career Coaching Program provides 6 hours of career coaching free of charge (2 hours before a leave, 2 hours during a leave, 2 hours following a leave). The coaching is offered by professional and experienced coaches to practising women lawyers in sole practice or firms of five lawyers or fewer who take maternity, parental, adoption or compassionate leaves as described in the Guidelines and Criteria and who meet the eligibility criteria. The Program is structured to allow for two hours of coaching prior to the leave to assist women lawyers prepare for a leave, two hours during the leave, to assist women lawyers in maintaining their practice during the leave, and two hours following the leave, to assist with the reintegration into practice.

Why was the Career Coaching Program implemented?

The mandate of the Law Society of Upper Canada is to regulate the legal profession in the interest of the public and to promote access to justice. Our province-wide consultation with the profession of lawyers indicated that a Career Coaching Program for women in sole practice and firms of five lawyers or fewer would assist women lawyers to remain in practice, including practices in non-urban areas, thereby alleviating the shortage of legal services in some geographical regions.

Who is eligible to apply for the Career Coaching Program?

To be eligible for benefits under the Career Coaching Program, the applicant must satisfy all of the following requirements:

- a. be a woman lawyer who is either
 - i. about to take a maternity, parental or compassionate leave;
 - ii. on a maternity, parental or compassionate leave;
 - iii. returning from a maternity, parental or compassionate leave;

- b. be a member in good standing;
- c. be a sole practitioner or a lawyer in a firm of five lawyers or less.

A birth mother who would otherwise be eligible for career coaching services under these guidelines and has a miscarriage or stillbirth after the 19th week of gestation, remains eligible for career coaching services.

An applicant who satisfies the eligibility requirements specified above as of April 2, 2012 is eligible for the Career Coaching Program.

Are the services provided confidentially? Will my firm be informed that I have accessed the services?

The Law Society and the career coaches will protect the confidentiality of applicants and participants in the Career Coaching Program and will not release the names of participants, except where necessary to establish a relationship between a participant and a coach.

What services will an applicant receive?

Eligible applicants will receive 6 hours of career coaching (2 hours prior to the leave, 2 hours during the leave and 2 hours following the leave) from professional career coaches free of charge. The Law Society of Upper Canada will assign a coach to eligible applicants.

How do I apply?

A person who wishes to apply for the Career Coaching Program must include the following:

1. A completed Career Coaching Program application, in the form of an affidavit;
2. One of the following documents:
 - i. a medical certificate or a certified copy from a physician or a midwife confirming the pregnancy and due date or a certified copy of a Statement of Live Birth or equivalent acceptable official proof of birth of the child;
 - ii. a certified copy of an official proof of the date upon which the child is or will be placed with the applicant;

- iii. a medical certificate or a certified copy from a physician or a midwife confirming the date of stillbirth or miscarriage after 19 weeks of gestation;
- iv. in cases of compassionate care leaves, a medical certificate or a certified copy from a physician confirming that the family member is gravely ill or incapacitated.

Where can I obtain an application form?

Applications are available in both English and French on the Law Society's website in the Career Coaching Program section.

Is there a limit on the number of leaves for which an eligible applicant can receive career coaching services?

There is no limit on the number of leaves for which an eligible applicant can receive career coaching services.

Is the Career Coaching Program available for part-time practitioners?

Yes, part-time practitioners are eligible.

Is the Career Coaching Program available for Law Society women lawyers who are practising outside of Ontario?

No. The Career Coaching Program is only available to women lawyers who are sole practitioners or lawyers in a firm of five lawyers or less located in Ontario and who otherwise meet the eligibility criteria.

What happens if you decide not to return to the legal profession after your leave?

If you decide that you are not returning to the legal profession, you cease to be eligible for the remainder of the coaching hours.

What other Law Society resources are available for women taking parental or compassionate care leaves?

The Law Society offers a Parental Leave Assistance to partners in firms of 5 lawyers or fewer, including sole practitioners, who do not have access to other maternity, parental, or adoption financial benefits under public or private plans and who meet the eligibility

criteria. Under the Program, the Law Society provides a fixed sum of \$750 a week to eligible applicants for up to twelve weeks (maximum \$9,000 per leave, per family unit) to cover, among other things, expenses associated with maintaining their practice during a maternity, parental or adoption leave. The online information about the program is available at <http://rc.lsuc.on.ca/jsp/equity/PLAP.jsp>

The Law Society also offers a Contract Lawyers Registry, a province-wide listing of lawyers who are available to work on a short-term or contract basis. The Registry includes resources to help lawyers hire a Contract Lawyer. The online information about the program is available at <http://rc.lsuc.on.ca/jsp/contractLawyer/index.jsp>.

The Women's Online Resource Centre was created for women lawyers. The goal is to provide women lawyers with quick and easy access to practical resources and information that can assist them in practice. The online information about the program is available at <http://rc.lsuc.on.ca/jsp/worc/about.jsp>.

Do I need to change my status with the Law Society if I take advantage of the Career Coaching Program?

No, you do not have to change your status with the Law Society. However, if you are on leave and not practising, you may wish to change your status. The online information about changing your status is available at <http://rc.lsuc.on.ca/jsp/home/statusChangeHome.jsp>.

Other questions

If you have other questions about the Career Coaching Program, please contact coaching@lsuc.on.ca or the Equity Advisor at 1-800-668-7380 ext. 3954 or 416-947-3954.