

Newsletter

"There is no justice without access to justice."

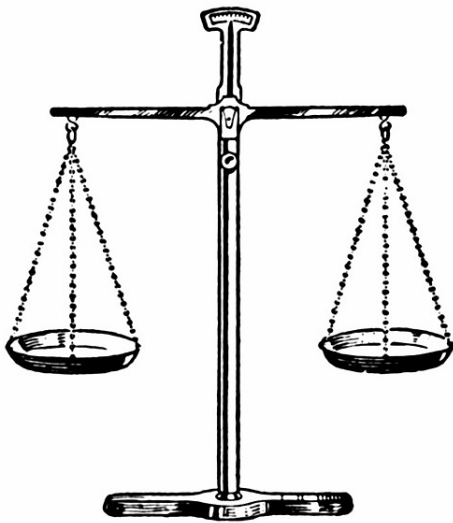
Low-income women in BC rely on family law advocates to navigate the family law system

Cuts to legal aid, beginning in 2002, were devastating for access to justice in BC. In 2018, the Law Foundation of BC began funding Family Law Advocacy programs to fill this gap. Today, there are more than 30 LFBC family law advocates across the province providing important and necessary support and resources for those navigating family law.

Did you know that Rise provides training and support to these advocates? In this newsletter we will explore Rise's advocate programs, and how they are **essential for increasing support for low-income women.**

“Rise is such an important resource” – Family Law Advocate

What is a family law advocate?



Family law advocates provide free family law information, advocacy, and assistance to low-income people in British Columbia. This includes matters such as separation and divorce, limited property division, guardianship and parenting arrangements, child and spousal support and protection orders. Advocates support individuals in navigating the family justice system by providing legal information, assistance with court forms, court preparation and emotional support.

Why are family law advocates important?

Family law is notoriously complex to navigate. Advocates increase access to justice by providing free and low barrier support for clients who cannot afford lawyers, are ineligible for legal aid, or need more support than legal aid can provide. **Family law desperately needs to improve access to justice, and advocates fill an important gap in current legal services and legal support**

for low-income women.

Advocates are also able to support clients emotionally and in ways that extend beyond typical legal services, such as accompanying clients in court. This is especially important for women experiencing intimate partner violence.

“I think about how many women went through the family law system alone before the advocacy program existed. How many women fell through the cracks?” –

Family Law Advocate

Rise's Own Advocates

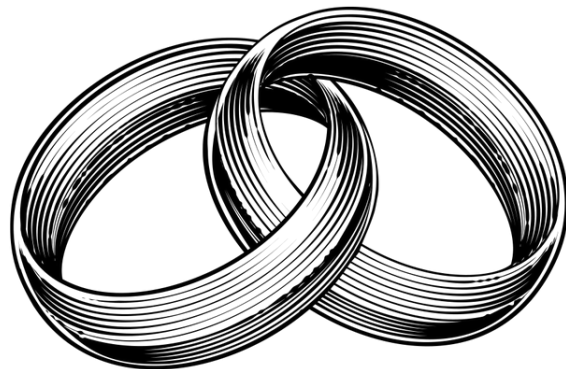
Rise has two legal advocates on staff.

Samantha Davis provides advocacy services to women through our Virtual Legal Clinic, which serves clients outside of the Lower Mainland.

Samantha has been increasing access to justice for women in rural, remote, and northern BC for the past 2 years.

Courtney Poland provides advocacy services to women through our Community Legal Clinic, which serves clients within the Lower Mainland.

Courtney is a new addition to staff and has helped increase the number of



women Rise is able to serve. **We are incredibly proud of our advocacy work, and the impact Samantha and Courtney are making for women in BC.**

“I couldn’t do my job without Rise” – Family Law Advocate

Family Advocate Support Line (FASL)

FASL is a Rise program dedicated exclusively to family law advocates, anti-violence workers, and support workers in BC, to help them better assist their own clients. Advocates are able to call the support line to receive fast advice on routine and complex cases. **Rise is able to offer knowledgeable advice from a culturally sensitive, trauma informed lens that other lawyers may not have.** This ensures all clients receive the best possible support.

FASL also provides ongoing training for support workers & advocates on matters of family law. These training sessions help advocates receive relevant, up to date information on how to best serve their clients, and connect with their peers and share knowledge.

This program is possible thanks to funding from the Law Foundation of BC.

Want to help Rise make a difference for women through our advocate support programs? Donations and grants provide crucial support. We are very grateful to our donors and grantors who make all this work possible.

“The people who work at Rise are incredible, everyone has been helpful. I feel like I am never alone” – Family Law Advocate

Centralized Legal Supervision

The Centralised Legal Supervision (CLS) program provides direct supervision to 6 Law Foundation of BC advocates in rural communities by an experienced family lawyer, Maggie House. [Women in rural areas experience rates of intimate partner violence at almost twice the rate of women living in urban areas.](#) Women in rural areas have lower access to employment, increased exposure to substance misuse, and have been disproportionately impacted by cuts to legal aid. There are also fewer lawyers in rural BC, and fewer that accept legal aid and have training in family violence.

These advocates receive ongoing training, weekly file reviews, one-to-one mentorship, and support developing consistent practice management skills. The CLS provides needed support and security to advocates as there is a high turnover rate, and training and skill levels can vary significantly. **The consistency the CLS provides fills an important gap in current supports available to**

them.

This program is possible thanks to funding from the Law Foundation of BC.



**Thank you for your support – thank you for ensuring we can
assist low-income women across BC.**

“If people saw what we see if they knew how egregious the family law system in BC is to low-income women and women experiencing family violence, they would be angry. They would demand change” – Family Law Advocate

Family Advocate Educator

Our new position, Family Advocate Educator, was created in 2022 to provide further support to advocates in BC. Andrea Bryson has over 14 years experience working with clients as a family advocate, with 4 of those as the first family law navigator at Rise. **Andrea has a deep and rich knowledge of how non-lawyer professionals can support clients who have experienced abuse, particularly how family law advocates can help survivors safely navigate the family law system.** Andrea was one of the first, if not the first, family law navigators in BC, and is a trail blazer in family law advocacy. We feel incredibly privileged to have her and her expertise on our staff.

Andrea is working on a 5-year project under the Department of Justice's victim supports program to provide coaching, mentorship, support, and training to the approximately 30 Law Foundation of BC funded advocates. This includes monthly training, bi-weekly open office hours, and the development of training materials. To further serve the diversity of clients experiencing family violence, in her position, Andrea will work with noted professionals in the field, such as Myrna McCallum, Vikki Reynolds, and Hummingbirds Rising, to provide additional direct training to advocates.

This program is possible thanks to funding from the Department of Justice.

“Without Rise I would feel very alone and isolated” – Family Law Advocate

We are grateful to the family law advocates across BC for the support they provide low-income women, and their work on the frontlines of access to justice. We are grateful to our donors, grantors, and supporters who ensure we can provide these resources. They allow us to do everything we can to ensure all women in BC, particularly those experiencing family violence, can receive the best support possible.

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