

# Know Your Rights

## Getting Help – Legal Services and Community Resources



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# Getting Help – Legal Services and Community Resources

In circumstances where you believe that your rights under Nova Scotia's **Human Rights Act** have been violated by an employer, landlord or other service providers, there are many legal services and community supports available to assist you with challenging the discrimination, self-advocating and enforcing your rights.

## Legal information and services

### Nova Scotia Legal Aid

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**Nova Scotia Legal Aid** offers free legal help to adults and youth facing a range of legal issues. Although some of Nova Scotia Legal Aid's services are based on financial need, others are available to all Nova Scotians. Nova Scotia Legal Aid's services consist of:

- **Legal information**
- Legal advice
- Representation by a lawyer

In general, there are three requirements you must meet to receive representation from a lawyer through Nova Scotia Legal Aid:

1. You must meet their income requirements and provide proof of income;
2. Your legal issue must fall under the areas of criminal, family, or social justice law (including Residential Tenancies and landlord/tenant issues); and
3. There must be legal merit to your case, meaning there must be a reasonable chance of success.

Nova Scotia also offers free walk-in/online clinics at **set times** to help people understand the legal process, answer their questions and help them get legal aid. If Nova Scotia Legal Aid is unable to assist with your matter, they can connect you to alternative resources/services to assist with your matter.

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## reachAbility

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**reachAbility** is a non-profit organization that operates a **legal referral service**, wherein people with disabilities are connected with volunteer lawyers, who provide a free one-hour consultation.

reachAbility also provides various other services, including:

- Form Filling clinics,
- **Employment support services**,
- **Employment Bootcamp**,
- and many others.

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## The Courts of Nova Scotia Free Legal Clinics

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**The Courts of Nova Scotia Free Legal Clinics** offer free legal clinics to self-represented litigants, who have cases before the Nova Scotia Supreme Court or the Court of Appeal. Clinics are currently offered in **Halifax, Yarmouth, Sydney** and **Truro**. Private one-hour sessions with a volunteer practicing lawyer and a law student are also available by appointment.

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## Legal Information Society of Nova Scotia (LISNS)

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**Legal Information Society of Nova Scotia (LISNS)** is a charitable organization which provides Nova Scotians with reliable information and resources about the law in various areas, including (among others) **employment** and **housing**.

LISNS also provides a variety of other services, including **lawyer referrals** and legal information via **live chat**, **telephone**, or **email**.

LISNS' website also has a directory of **free and low-cost legal help services in Nova Scotia**.

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## Dalhousie Legal Aid Service

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**Dalhousie Legal Aid Service** is a community law clinic that is operated by the Schulich School of Law at Dalhousie University. Community groups, law students, community legal workers, and lawyers work together to combat injustices affecting persons with low incomes in Nova Scotia.

Some of the services offered by Dalhousie Legal Aid include:

- Providing legal information to tenants about how to resolve disputes with their landlords; and
- In some circumstances, legal representation.

You can **contact** Dalhousie Legal Aid by phone at 902-423-8105 or by email at [legalaid@dal.ca](mailto:legalaid@dal.ca).

## Other important services

### Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission

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The **Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission** is an independent government entity that is tasked with administering the Nova Scotia **Human Rights Act**.

Two of the Commission's main roles include:

- Providing a human rights **dispute resolution** process to resolve allegations of discrimination both on an individual and systemic level; and
- Working to eliminate barriers and prevent discrimination through **education, training, public engagement and policy development**.

If you believe that you have been discriminated against by an employer, landlord, or other service provider, you have the option of **contacting** the Commission to file a complaint. To get a better sense of whether the Commission can address your complaint, consider using the Commission's **self-assessment** tool.

### Nova Scotia Office of the Ombudsman

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The **Nova Scotia Office of the Ombudsman** addresses **complaints** involving provincial or municipal government departments, agencies, boards and commissions.

It considers and investigates complaints from people who believe they have been treated unfairly when using government services, or when they believe a policy or procedure has not been followed correctly or is unfair.

You may contact the Ombudsman by telephone at 1-800-670-1111 (toll-free) or by email at [Ombudsman@novascotia.ca](mailto:Ombudsman@novascotia.ca).

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## Residential Tenancies Program

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**Residential Tenancies Program:** If you are a tenant and you are unable to resolve a dispute with your landlord, you can apply to the Director of the Residential Tenancies Program for mediation or a hearing. You may apply **online** or by calling 1-800-670-4357. To learn more, visit the Government of Nova Scotia's website, titled **Residential Tenancies: a guide to resolving disputes between Tenants and Landlords**.

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## Nova Scotia's Labour Standards Division

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**Nova Scotia's Labour Standards Division** is responsible for administering the **Labour Standards Code**. This is done through:

- Providing awareness sessions and presentations to employers, employees and recruiters;
- Investigating and resolving Labour Standards complaints;
- Auditing pay and recruitment records; and
- Answering inquiries from the public by phone, email and in person.

If you feel you have been treated unfairly by your employer, in violation of the **Labour Standards Code**, you can **contact** Nova Scotia's Labour Standards Division or visit their website to **learn more about the complaints process**.

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## The Canadian Human Rights Commission

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The **Canadian Human Rights Commission** deals with complaints under the **Canadian Human Rights Act**. For federally regulated services and activities, you may be able to bring a **complaint** about discrimination based on disability to the **Canadian Human Rights Commission**.

## The Canadian Transportation Agency

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The **Canadian Transportation Agency** (also called the CTA) helps protect the human rights of people with disabilities to access federally regulated transportation services. For federally regulated transportation services, you may be able to file a **complaint** with the CTA.

The CTA also has a toll-free **Accessible Transportation Complaints Help Line**, wherein staff can provide information and guidance about concerns involving accessible transportation. The hours of operation for the helpline are Monday to Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Eastern Time, and the contact information is:

- **1-844-943-0273**
- TTY: 1-800-669-5575

The CTA also publishes a range of helpful materials such as:

- **Take Charge of Your Travel**
- **Travelling with a Service Animal**
- **Additional Seating and the One Person, One Fare Requirement for Domestic Travel: A Guide**

# Community Organizations and Supports

## General

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**211 Nova Scotia** is a free, confidential service that operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week. It exists to connect individuals to community groups, government organizations and social services that are available across Nova Scotia. The service helps residents of Nova Scotia who are looking to find the right community or social resource, but do not know where to start.

In addition to searching on the 211 Nova Scotia [website](#), there are various ways for people to **contact** 211 Nova Scotia, including calling 2-1-1.

## Education

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**Atlantic Provinces Special Education Authority (APSEA)** is an inter-provincial agency that is jointly funded by the governments of Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island and Newfoundland and Labrador.

APSEA provides free support to students, aged 0-21, who have hearing loss and/or sight loss. To determine if you are eligible to receive services from APSEA, you can refer to their [Eligibility for Service](#) page on their website.

APSEA provides support in many different forms, including:

- in-school and in-classroom support to improve accommodations
- advocating for students within school settings
- developing **resources** for educators who work with children and youth who have sight loss

APSEA also has a **Production and Library Services** department that provides students with alternate format materials to support their instructional needs.

The **Centre for Equitable Library Access** and **National Network for Equitable Library Service** also provide information about library services that are available to Canadians with print disabilities.

**The National Educational Association of Disabled Students (“NEADS”)** is a national charity that advocates for full access to education and employment for post-secondary students with disabilities. Among many other resources, NEADS offers a **guide** on how to enhance the accessibility of post-secondary institutions.



## Employment

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The **Solutions Learning Centre** is a Dartmouth-based organization that is funded by the provincial government. It provides participants with free employment training programs that assist with job preparation and provide job-specific skills.

You may contact the Solutions Learning Centre by phone at 902-468-1320 or by email at [info@solc.ca](mailto:info@solc.ca).

The **Halifax Workers Action Centre** is a Halifax-based organization that is committed to improving the lives and working conditions of low-waged and marginalized workers. They do so by providing free legal information and education to workers.

You may contact Halifax Workers Action Centre by email at [halifaxwac@gmail.com](mailto:halifaxwac@gmail.com) or by phone at (902) 221-0755.

**Canadian Guide Dogs for the Blind** is a national charitable organization that offers free guide dogs to those with sight loss. This service is free for applicants and is supported by donations and fundraising activities.

**CNIB** is a non-profit organization driven to change what it is to be blind today. CNIB delivers innovative programs and powerful advocacy that empower people impacted by blindness to live their dreams and tear down barriers to inclusion. Some ways CNIB can assist include:

CNIB's **Come to Work Program** connects job seekers who are blind or partially sighted with prospective employers. To boost participation in the world of work, CNIB's Come to Work Program also provides the following services:

- Helping you with resume writing, job searches and job retention
- Helping you and your employer develop and implement a job accommodation plan
- Providing employers and employment agencies with training and education about how to accommodate people who have sight loss

**CNIB Mentoring Program** provides job seekers and employees with skills and strategies to effectively engage employers. Mentors answer your questions and share their firsthand experiences in the workplace.

**CNIB Entrepreneur Program** provides resources and inspiration to help people who are blind or partially sighted to succeed in their business ventures.

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## CNIB Resources for Employers

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The CNIB Foundation has created the following resources for employers to make the workplace more accessible:

- **Workplace accommodations:** Examples of tools and technologies that can be used to accommodate people with sight loss. This site also includes a link to some quick tips for creating an accessible workplace.
- **Creating an inclusive workplace:** Simple tips about how to be comfortable and supportive of co-workers with sight loss.
- **Hiring someone with sight loss:** Tips for employers around making the recruiting process (e.g. job advertisements, etc.) and interviews accessible to job candidates with sight loss.

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## CNIB Virtual Programs

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CNIB offers a range of [free virtual programs](#) for children, youth, adults and families.

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## Technology Training

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Join CNIB tech leads from across the country for [programming](#) that highlights the suite of programs, apps, products and services that will help empower you to achieve your personal and professional goals.

The **Virtual Vision Mate** program exists to address the feelings of isolation that many people with sight loss experience. Through the Virtual Vision Mate program, Canadians who are blind or partially sighted are connected with sighted volunteers to engage in virtual, weekly conversations.

**CNIB Online SmartLife Store** is an interactive retail experience that gives people with disabilities hands-on access to the latest breakthroughs in assistive technologies, as well as tried-and-true favourites. SmartLife's goal is not necessarily to sell products but to give customers the skills and confidence they need to make the most out of assistive tools that can help them lead better lives.

**CNIB's Advocacy Staff** can assist clients with advocating for themselves and understanding their human rights in Nova Scotia.

**CNIB's Guide Dog Program** can assist guide dog handlers with advocating for themselves and understanding their rights. CNIB's Guide Dog Program also raises, trains and matches guide dogs with Canadians who are blind or partially sighted

**Vision Loss Rehabilitation** (VLRC) is a not-for-profit national healthcare organization and the leading provider of rehabilitation therapy and healthcare services for individuals with sight loss. VLRC provides people with the practical skills they need to live safely and independently. VLRC's services are tailored to the unique needs and goals of each person. VLRC's services include, but are not limited to:

- Assistance with navigating new environments and using mobility tools;
- Assistance with maximizing remaining vision with optical and non-optical devices;
- Assistance with developing or restoring key daily living skills, such as learning new ways to cook, shop and manage your home;
- Assistance with accessing information and using technology; and
- Assistance with post-secondary education and employment planning, and ongoing support.

VLRC has offices located in **Halifax and Membertou**. You can contact VLRC by phone at 902-453-1480.