

- HALCO provides free legal services to people living with HIV in Ontario -

## Summer 2014 edition

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We hope you enjoy our *HALCO news/brief* - a mini version of our *HALCO news!* This quick update will help to keep you informed without taking too much of your all-to-brief summer...

### HALCO 2014 Annual General Meeting

Wednesday September 10, 2014  
at 7 p.m. (refreshments at 6:30 p.m.)  
Main Floor Amenity Room, Fife House,  
490 Sherbourne Street, Toronto

- Please plan to attend! -



## HALCO at WorldPride 2014

In June 2014, Toronto welcomed the world to **WorldPride 2014** and HALCO was delighted to be a part of it! Our WorldPride activities included:

- **HALCO information booth** at the **Paul Brown Boxfit “Float like a Butterfly” Beer Garden** that took place on June 28 and 29. Not only did Paul Brown Boxfit generously provide us with the space for our information table, they also chose HALCO as the charity to benefit from the beer garden proceeds.
- **Sex, Rights and the Law in Ontario** WorldPride affiliate event on June 16 (hosted by HALCO and ARCH Disability Law Centre, with support from the Advocacy Centre for the Elderly, the International Council of AIDS Service Organizations, and the 519 Church Street Community Centre).
- **LGBTQ & HIV Immigration Information Session and Reception** World Pride affiliate event on June 25 (organized by a coalition of community organizations and immigration lawyers including HALCO, the Committee for Accessible AIDS Treatment, and Amnesty International).
- **Ryan Peck**, HALCO’s executive director, spoke about the criminalization of HIV non-disclosure at the WorldPride **Human Rights Conference** on June 26.
- We distributed information about the launch of our **Trans\* Legal Needs Assessment** project at the WorldPride **Trans\* Rally and March** on June 27 (for more information about this project, please see page 3).
- **HALCO information booth** at the **Opening the Closet on Aging** conference on June 23.
- The annual **AIDS Candlelight Vigil** was held on June 24 (HALCO was a sponsor).

We are especially grateful to **Paul Brown Boxfit** for their support!

## HALCO’s 6<sup>th</sup> Annual Fundraising Bowl-a-thon

On Saturday November 1, 2014, beginning at 8:00 pm, HALCO’s 6<sup>th</sup> Annual Fundraising Bowl-a-thon will be held at Bathurst Bowlerama, 2788 Bathurst Street, Toronto.



Please join us for a fabulous evening of fundraising and disco dancing bowling as we raise funds to support the work of the clinic. There are prizes for the individual and team that raise the most money; prizes for the best – and worst! – bowling score; and, the very popular Team Spirit Award! As in previous years, the silent auction promises to house a treasure chest of items for you to purchase and enjoy!

For more information on how you can get involved, please contact:

**Bill Merryweather** at [merryww@lao.on.ca](mailto:merryww@lao.on.ca) or **Jennifer Hild** at [st2\\_halc@lao.on.ca](mailto:st2_halc@lao.on.ca)

# Trans\* Legal Needs Assessment project

With funding from Legal Aid Ontario (LAO), HALCO recently launched the Trans\* Legal Needs Assessment project to help ensure that the legal needs of trans\* people in Ontario are being met and determine the barriers that trans\* people face in accessing justice.



“Trans\*” is an umbrella term referring to people whose gender identity or gender expression is not reflected by the gender assigned to them at birth.

“Unfortunately, pervasive experiences of discrimination, harassment, and social marginalization exist for trans\* people,” explains **Nicole Nussbaum**, LAO Staff Lawyer and project lead. **Ryan Peck**, Executive Director of HALCO, adds, “Our goal for this project is to help a wide range of legal service providers make their vital services more available and accessible to all trans\* people.”

The Trans\* Legal Needs Assessment project will:

- document the need for legal services among trans\* people
- identify barriers to accessing legal services through a series of focus groups and a province-wide survey
- develop strategies to address barriers for all trans\* people in Ontario, including trans\* people living with HIV.

For more information:

- visit our website: [www.halco.org/2014/news/halco-is-conducting-trans-legal-needs-assessment](http://www.halco.org/2014/news/halco-is-conducting-trans-legal-needs-assessment)
- contact **Nicole Nussbaum**, Trans\* Legal Needs Assessment Project Lead, email: [transneedsassess@lao.on.ca](mailto:transneedsassess@lao.on.ca), phone: 519-852-1242.

## Minimum Wage Increases



Increases to Ontario’s minimum wage took effect on June 1, 2014:

- General minimum wage is now \$11.00 per hour (was \$10.25).
- Student minimum wage is \$10.30 per hour (was \$9.60).
- Liquor Servers minimum wage is \$9.55 per hour (was \$8.90).
- Homeworkers minimum wage is \$12.10 per hour (was \$11.28).

You can find more information on the Ontario government website: [www.labour.gov.on.ca/english/es/pubs/guide/minwage.php](http://www.labour.gov.on.ca/english/es/pubs/guide/minwage.php).

# Ontario Social Assistance Update

## Ontario Child Benefit increased, but Ontario Works and Ontario Disability Support Program recipients will end up with the same amount of money each month

As of July 2014, the maximum Ontario Child Benefit (OCB) is increasing from \$101 to \$109 per child per month. But Ontario Works (OW) and Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) benefits are being reduced to match the OCB increase. OW/ODSP benefits for single parents on OW and for people on ODSP who have children ages 13 to 17 are being reduced by \$8 per child (the amount of the OCB increase). So OW and ODSP recipients will receive the same total amount of money from OW/ODSP and OCB each month.

## Social Assistance Rate Increases in Autumn 2014



The 2014 Ontario Government Budget includes:

- 1% rate increase for adults on OW, plus an extra OW increase for single adults without children.
- 1% rate increase for people with disabilities on ODSP, but no increase for their non-disabled family members.

OW and ODSP recipients will see these increases in the benefits that they receive at the end of September 2014.

## Do you have an “overpayment” from Ontario Works or the Ontario Disability Support Program?

If you have an “overpayment” from Ontario Works (OW) or the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP), you should get legal advice right away (see **Getting Legal Help** on page 6). Here are some reasons why you should get legal advice about any overpayment:

- To find out if the reason for the overpayment is legally correct.
- To make sure that the amount of the overpayment is correct.
- To check if any part of the overpayment relates to child or spousal support through the Family Responsibility Office (FRO).
- To find out about options to challenge or repay the overpayment.

## If you disagree with an ODSP or OW decision

If you disagree with any ODSP or OW decision, you have the right to request an Internal Review within 30 days. If it has been more than 30 days, you can ask for an extension of time to make your Internal Review request. **If you disagree with an ODSP or OW decision, you should get legal advice right away** (see **Getting Legal Help** on page 6).



## HALCO Staff Update

We welcomed **Jennifer Hild** as our temporary receptionist/administrative assistant in early 2014. In addition to reception, Jennifer helps out with many of the tasks that help to keep us going. For all you do, thank you Jennifer!

In May, we said farewell to **Javier Arvizu**, who worked with us as our articling student for the 2013-2014 year. Javier was a key member of our team who not only did a tremendous amount of work providing legal services for clients but who was also great at helping out with whatever was needed around the office – thank you and we wish you all the best Javier!

In July, we had the pleasure of welcoming **Ashley Jacobs** as our articling student for the 2014/2015 year. Ashley works with our staff lawyers to provide intake for new legal inquiries and to assist clients with their legal issues.

## HALCO Membership Information

HALCO's work is supported by our 175 members. Our primary goal is to provide free legal services to people living with HIV/AIDS in Ontario. To help us to fulfill our goal and to ensure that our services are relevant, we need the participation of people living with HIV/AIDS in Ontario, as well as those who are not living with HIV/AIDS.

Please offer your support by becoming a member of HALCO. HALCO membership is free and is renewed annually. Benefits of membership include receipt of our newsletter and mailings, voting privileges at our annual general meeting (after minimum 30 days membership), and the right to stand for election to our volunteer board of directors.

You can apply for HALCO membership or renew your HALCO membership:

- on our HALCO website using the on-line form or downloadable fillable pdf form: [www.halco.org/get-involved/membership](http://www.halco.org/get-involved/membership)
- by contacting us to ask for a membership application form by mail (please see HALCO contact information on page 6).

Please note that HALCO membership has no effect on eligibility to receive free legal services from us.



## Getting Legal Help

**If you are living with HIV in Ontario, please contact us for free legal information and advice.**

Others in Ontario can contact their local community legal clinic:  
[www.legalaid.on.ca/clinics](http://www.legalaid.on.ca/clinics).

HALCO provides intake for new inquiries on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. (not Wednesdays). A HALCO caseworker is assigned to deal with new inquiries each intake day.

**HALCO is a “scent-reduced environment”** so please avoid wearing scented products when coming to our offices. Help us to make HALCO more comfortable for everyone!

HALCO is a registered charity funded by Legal Aid Ontario, the AIDS Bureau of the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, and other sources including corporate, foundation and individual donors. We welcome donations.

*HALCO news/brief* contains general information only. It is not legal advice.

Laws, policies and practices can and often do change.

If you have a legal question or problem, you need legal advice. Please contact HALCO, your local legal clinic or a lawyer for legal advice.

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Please contact HALCO if you want to reproduce or excerpt any part of our newsletter.

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(HALCO – 2014 July)