

Spring 2023 Newsletter

# HALCO NEWS

Dignity

Equity

Justice

**HALCO provides free legal services for people living with HIV in Ontario.**

**We provide legal advice, representation and referrals, and engage in public legal education, community development and law reform activities.**



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We could not be more pleased to present our first extended newsletter since the COVID-19 pandemic arrived in early 2020. As always, we have been busy working with people living with HIV and others to bring about social, economic, health, and racial justice. We hope you find the information in this newsletter informative and useful.

Please continue to contact us or refer people to us for legal advice and representation, as well as for public legal education workshops.

The land on which the staff and board of the HIV & AIDS Legal Clinic (HALCO) live and work is the home and traditional territory of many Indigenous Peoples. Our work is carried out across the traditional territories of the land now known as Ontario, which continues to be home to many diverse First Nations, Inuit, and Métis people who have respected and cared for this land since time immemorial.

We work to address the ongoing injustices and resulting health inequities faced by Indigenous Peoples, which contribute to the disproportionate impact of the HIV epidemic on Indigenous communities. We are committed to taking the lead from, working in solidarity and collaboration with Indigenous Peoples, and dismantling and decolonizing practices and institutions to respect Indigenous Peoples and Indigenous ways of knowing and being.

HALCO is also dedicated to fighting anti-Black and other forms of racism as well as transphobia, sexism, homophobia, and other oppressions. Our work is informed and supported by the greater and meaningful involvement of people living with HIV (GIPA/MIPA), an approach that has always been and must continue to be central to the HIV movement.

We have plenty to learn and plenty to do. We are committed to doing so, working in collaboration with and following the lead of people living with HIV and communities most impacted by HIV.

## HALCO Highlights

As we have since opened our doors in 1995, HALCO continues to provide legal advice, representation, and referrals as well as engage in public legal education, law reform, and community development activities.

For information about our services, including our most recent annual reports, please see our [website: www.halco.org/about](http://www.halco.org/about)

For recent news, please see the [What's New](http://www.halco.org/archives/news) section of our website: [www.halco.org/archives/news](http://www.halco.org/archives/news)

For examples of our law reform activities, please see [here: www.halco.org/our-services/law-reform-community-development](http://www.halco.org/our-services/law-reform-community-development)

## 2022 James Kreppner Award

The late James Kreppner was a great friend to HALCO and communities of people living with HIV and Hepatitis C. In recognition of James' contributions, HALCO established the James Kreppner Awards in 2010. Presented at HALCO's annual general meeting, the awards recognize the efforts of people who have made significant contributions in advocacy for and support of people living with HIV or people with HIV and Hepatitis C in Ontario, Canada.

We were extremely honored to present the 2022 James Kreppner Award to Simran Kaur; coordinator of the Toronto Linkage to Care Program at Fife House. Simran has been an immense source of support for clients living in precarious circumstances.

Thank you very much, Simran, for your excellent and effective work.

## **Ontario Government Ends Health Coverage for Uninsured People**

In 2020, the Ontario government expanded access to healthcare for uninsured people across Ontario, with coverage of hospital-based care, and some community-based care. On March 24, 2023, the Ontario government announced that the uninsured funding, known as the Physician and Hospital Services for Uninsured Persons (PHSUP) funding, will end on March 31, 2023.

It will be devastating if this coverage stops, and HALCO and others will be responding. As the funding cut was announced as we were finalizing this newsletter, we are unable to share more information at this time. Please contact us for up-to-date information.

## **HIV Criminalization Update**

Canada continues to be a place where people living with HIV are unjustly criminalized. There have been at least 224 prosecutions in Canada, the overwhelming majority taking place after 2004. While the number of prosecutions has thankfully decreased in recent years, Canada remains the only country known to use aggravated sexual assault charges in relation to HIV non-disclosure, even when (i) there is no allegation of transmission of HIV; (ii) there is no intention to transmit; and (iii) the sexual activity in question poses negligible to zero risk of transmission.

The consequences related to HIV criminalization, which have a disproportionate impact on Indigenous, Black, and gay people, are extremely serious. For example, a conviction leads to a maximum life sentence and inclusion on sex offender registries. In addition, for those who are not Canadian citizens, a conviction generally leads to deportation.

Over-criminalization is also harmful from a public health perspective. It hinders HIV prevention efforts and hampers care, treatment, and support for those living with HIV by providing disincentives for HIV testing and deterring honest and open conversations with health care and other providers, including public health authorities, for legitimate fear that such conversations will be used in court.

HALCO, along with people living with HIV and other stakeholders, continues to play a leading role in efforts to reform the law. To ensure that the law is informed by up-to-date science and human rights principles, we continue, among other activities, to:

- provide legal assistance to people living with HIV
- work with criminal lawyers to ensure the best possible representation for people
- produce public legal education materials and conduct public legal education workshops for people living with HIV, service providers, students, and others
- intervene in matters of importance in courts across Canada
- engage with Ontario and federal governments on law reform

While HALCO continues to appear in courts, it remains clear that legislative reform is required to bring the law in line with science and human rights. In particular, as laid out in the [2022 Consensus Statement](#) produced by the Canadian Coalition to Reform HIV Coalition, and endorsed by over 100 organizations, the following is required:

- removal of non-disclosure, exposure, or transmission of HIV or other sexually transmitted or blood-borne infections from the reach of assault laws, including the designation as a sex offender
- limiting prosecutions to the actual, intentional transmission of HIV
- ending of deportations of non-citizens following conviction
- review of past convictions

The 2022 Consensus Statement can be found [here](#):  
[www.hivcriminalization.ca/2022-consensus-statement](http://www.hivcriminalization.ca/2022-consensus-statement).

In the fall of 2022, the Canadian government engaged in a public consultation on *Criminal Code Reform*. For the submission of HALCO and the HIV Legal Network, see [here](#): [https://www.halco.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/HIV-Legal-Network\\_HALCO-Submission-to-GOC-Consultation-Final.pdf](https://www.halco.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/HIV-Legal-Network_HALCO-Submission-to-GOC-Consultation-Final.pdf)

Please watch for more news over the coming weeks and months as we step up engagement with the federal government on Criminal Code reform to finally bring the law in line with science and human rights in a manner that supports HIV-related care, treatment, support, and prevention.

## **New Resource for Lawyers Assisting Sexual Assault Complainants Living with HIV**

HALCO, the HIV Legal Network, Megan Schwartzentruber and Amanda Ross (two lawyers at Cooper, Sandler, Shime & Schwartzentruber LLP) released a paper for lawyers assisting sexual assault complainants living with HIV who could potentially be transformed from complainants to accused persons. Providing accurate information regarding the potential criminal repercussions for sexual assault complainants living with HIV is critical given that some studies have shown that misinformation and misconceptions of legal standards and duties imposed by the criminalization of HIV non-disclosure persist among those living with HIV and are particularly pronounced among certain subsets of women living with HIV. While the law criminalizing non-disclosure of HIV (i.e., the sexual assault provisions of the Criminal Code) purports to protect women, it can negatively affect women living with HIV.

The resource can be found [here](https://www.halco.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/Special-Considerations-for-Advising-Sexual-Assault-Complainants-Living-W...pdf): <https://www.halco.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/Special-Considerations-for-Advising-Sexual-Assault-Complainants-Living-W...pdf>

## **Resources on HIV Criminalization for Indigenous and Black Communities**

Along with the HIV Legal Network and Communities, Networks & Alliances (CAAN, formerly known as the Canadian Aboriginal AIDS Network), we will shortly be releasing a guide focusing on HIV criminalization for Indigenous communities. Together, we will also be presenting workshops introducing the new guide.

Over the next year, we will also be working with the Legal Network and Black-led/Black-serving organizations on the development of materials for Black communities. Please watch for more information about this over the coming months.



## Access to Justice for Trans People in Canada

HALCO, the Canadian Bar Association (CBA), and the TRANSforming JUSTICE: Trans Legal Needs Assessment Ontario (TRANSforming JUSTICE) Research Team recently released the Access to Justice for Trans People report.



This report uses “trans” as an umbrella term to refer to a diverse array of experiences and identities, and we acknowledge that the use of the word “trans” and the identities encompassed within it varies and is evolving. It is also important to note that the term “Two-Spirit” is claimed by some Indigenous persons who may also self-identify as trans, but that the term should not be conflated with Western sexuality and gender identities.

This report highlights that trans people face more co-occurring legal problems than cisgender people in Canada, often as a direct result of the legal system itself. A number of recommendations are made to improve access to justice for trans people.

### *QUICK FACTS:*

- The report was produced by HALCO, the TRANSforming JUSTICE Research Team, the CBA National Access to Justice Subcommittee, and the CBA Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Community Section.
- Trans participants in TRANSforming JUSTICE reported experiencing a disproportionate number of justiciable legal problems compared to the general population in Canada. Many of them also reported experiencing multiple legal problems simultaneously.
- Participants reported that they were generally reluctant to seek help or access the legal system. Some factors were identified, including discriminatory experiences, inadequate legal services, and lack of accessible and trans-specific legal information.

- The report makes many recommendations to improve access to justice for trans people, which are meant to be a starting point for future discussions and measures to address the issues faced by the members of trans communities in Canada. As the report states that many of the root causes of people's legal issues stem from the legal system itself, broad systemic change is required to truly address the lack of access to justice for trans people.
- Trans people must be supported to lead the further development and implementation of all recommendations.
- This work must be done in a way that respects the sovereign rights of the Indigenous Peoples of Canada, incorporates Indigenous justice approaches, and responds to Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada and Calls for Justice of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. Indigenous trans and/or Two-Spirit people must be supported to take the lead on this essential work.
- An intersectional lens that accounts for the different experiences of trans people with different identities and circumstances must also be employed at all stages of further development and implementation of the recommendations.

See below for links to the report in English and French:

- Access to Justice for Trans People:  
[http://cba.org/CBAMediaLibrary/cba\\_na/images/Equal%20Justice%20-%20Microsite/PDFs/CBA\\_AccesstoJusticeforTransPeople.pdf](http://cba.org/CBAMediaLibrary/cba_na/images/Equal%20Justice%20-%20Microsite/PDFs/CBA_AccesstoJusticeforTransPeople.pdf)
- L'accès des personnes trans à la justice:  
[http://cba.org/CBAMediaLibrary/cba\\_na/images/Equal%20Justice%20-%20Microsite/PDFs/CBA\\_FreAccesstoJusticeforTransPeople.pdf](http://cba.org/CBAMediaLibrary/cba_na/images/Equal%20Justice%20-%20Microsite/PDFs/CBA_FreAccesstoJusticeforTransPeople.pdf)

## HIV Testing and Reporting to Public Health in Ontario

HALCO and Community Legal Education Ontario (CLEO) have released a new guide on HIV testing and reporting to Public Health in Ontario.

The new guide includes information about the differences between nominal and anonymous HIV testing and details about what gets reported to Public Health authorities when people test positive for HIV. In particular, the guide provides updated information about reducing the possibility of a person's name being reported to Public Health authorities after testing positive anonymously and accessing HIV-related medical care. The guide also includes some information about HIV self-testing kits.

To reduce the possibility that Public Health authorities in Ontario will learn that you are living with HIV:

- get an anonymous HIV test (a test without your name but with a code)
- keep your anonymous test code, and
- contact [HALCO](https://www.halco.org) for free legal advice as soon as possible if you test positive for HIV and before you seek medical treatment: <https://www.halco.org/contact-us>

The guide can be found and print copies can be ordered in English and French [here](https://www.cleo.on.ca/en/publications/hivtest): <https://www.cleo.on.ca/en/publications/hivtest>

For further information or legal advice about HIV testing, please [contact](https://www.halco.org) us: <https://www.halco.org/contact-us>

## Changes to the Way That the Ontario Disability Support Program Deals With Employment Income

There are new rules for employment income earned by people who receive Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) benefits. These changes do not apply to people who receive Ontario Works (OW) benefits.

Under the new rules, the monthly flat rate earnings – the amount that people can earn without any deductions from their ODSP benefits – will increase from \$200 to \$1,000. This means that people will be able to keep the first \$1,000 of net earnings (after taxes and deductions) instead of the first \$200. However, the amount that will be deducted on income above \$1,000 will increase from 50% to 75%. Generally, these new rules will apply only to members of the benefit unit who are people living with a disability (the approach to employment earning exemptions will not change for other benefit unit members).

The new rules took effect on February 1, 2023, and will be reflected in people's March 2023 payments. People are still required to report their income by the 7th day of the month following the month they get paid. In other words, people who earn employment income in February 2023 and report that income by March 7, 2023, will have the new rules applied to their ODSP payment for March 2023.

The changes are expected to have a positive impact on many but not all people who are working and receiving ODSP benefits. For example, people with net earnings up to \$2,600 will have less taken off their ODSP income support and will end up with more money overall. However, recipients with net earnings above \$2,600 will end up with less money overall, and they will "earn their way off" ODSP sooner (meaning they will not be entitled to financial and some other benefits).

Under the old rules, a recipient who is entitled to \$1,228 per month (current basic needs and maximum shelter amount) becomes financially ineligible for ODSP once they earn about \$2,656 (net) a month. Under the new rules, that will drop by about \$18, to about \$2,638 (net) a month.

Generally, people living with HIV who receive ODSP benefits will continue to be eligible for prescription drug coverage even if they stop receiving financial benefits from ODSP because they make too much employment income. If ODSP determines that someone makes too much employment income to receive financial benefits, the worker must discuss options for prescription drugs with the person (i.e., the Extended Health Benefit or the Transitional Health Benefit).

See this [factsheet](#) put together by the [Income Security Advocacy Centre](#), which includes a comparison table and different fact situations, for more information about the new employment income rules: <https://incomesecurity.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Earned-income-exemption-changes-ODSP-Nov-2022.pdf>

It is important that people call HALCO right away if they stop receiving ODSP benefits, including if they stop receiving access to prescription drugs through ODSP. People living with HIV can contact [HALCO](#) about ODSP or other legal questions: <https://www.halco.org/contact-us>

People not living with HIV can contact their [local community legal clinic](#): <https://www.legalaid.on.ca/legal-clinics/>

## Repayment of COVID-19 Recovery Benefits

The COVID-19 pandemic has been incredibly challenging. In addition to health impacts, many people lost their employment and continue to struggle to meet their basic needs. One way the federal government responded was by introducing various recovery benefits, including the Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB), Canada Emergency Student Benefit (CESB), Canada Recovery Benefit (CRB), Canada Recovery Caregiving Benefit (CRCB), Canada Recovery Sickness Benefit (CRSB), and the Canada Worker Lockdown Benefit (CWLB).

The Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) is now seeking repayment of the benefits from those who were not eligible. For more information from the government, see [here: https://www.canada.ca/en/revenue-agency/services/payments-cra/individual-payments/repay-covid-benefits/why-may-need-repay.html](https://www.canada.ca/en/revenue-agency/services/payments-cra/individual-payments/repay-covid-benefits/why-may-need-repay.html)

While we support a repayment amnesty (forgiveness), below are some things you should keep in mind as a person receiving ODSP who may be asked to repay COVID-19-related recovery benefits.

If you wrongly received recovery benefits, the CRA is able to keep all or a portion of your tax refunds or GST/HST credits until the amount is repaid. You may be able to arrange a payment plan with the CRA. There may be [other options](#) depending on your personal and financial situation, including applying for help under the CRA's financial hardship provision: <https://www.canada.ca/en/revenue-agency/services/forms-publications/publications/ic13-2/ic13-2r1-government-programs-collection-policies.html#TaxpayerRelief>

Please contact [HALCO](#) if you have questions about recovery benefits, including paying them back. <https://www.halco.org/contact-us>

# COVID-19 Recovery Benefits and ODSP

## *Reporting Recovery Benefits to ODSP*

People receiving ODSP are required to report their income every month, including COVID-19 recovery benefits. Recovery benefits are treated as income and taken dollar for dollar from a person's ODSP payments, which means that for every dollar someone gets from a recovery benefit, they lose one dollar from ODSP payments.

Reporting late may result in ODSP applying an overpayment to your file (which means that ODSP will deduct money from monthly benefits until the amount is repaid, or may take steps to collect the overpayment in another way if the person is not receiving ODSP benefits). If you did not report recovery benefits to ODSP, we urge you to speak with us before you do so.

## *What happens if I have to repay the recovery benefits but I already reported the benefits to ODSP?*

If you reported your recovery benefits to ODSP, then you should have received less money from ODSP in the months you received the recovery benefits. This means that if you are required to repay the federal government for the recovery benefits, then ODSP should reassess your income support for the months that you wrongly received the recover benefits. If ODSP determines that you are eligible for money for the relevant period, they should pay that amount directly to you. Please contact HALCO if you have any problems with recovering the income support you are entitle to.

## Sex Workers' Rights Intervention

In October 2022, a legal action was brought before the Ontario Superior Court by the Canadian Alliance for Sex Work Law Reform, several sex workers, and the former operator of an escort agency. Together, they sought to challenge as unconstitutional the sections of the Criminal Code that (i) criminalize sex workers who communicate in public to sell sexual services and (ii) criminalize all clients who obtain or communicate to try to obtain sexual services. Also being challenged are offences criminalizing third parties, including sex workers acting as third parties, who (i) receive compensation related to someone else's sexual services; (ii) facilitate the purchase of someone else's sexual services; or (iii) advertise someone else's sexual services.

For more information about the Canadian Alliance for Sex Work Law Reform and the court case, see [here: http://sexworklawreform.com/](http://sexworklawreform.com/)

HALCO, together with COCQ-SIDA (Coalition des organismes communautaires québécois de lutte contre le sida) and the Action Canada for Sexual Health and Rights, intervened in the court case to highlight various points, including that the law (i) prevents negotiation of consent and safer sex practices; (ii) leads to dangerous working conditions that put the sexual health of sex workers in danger, and (iii) reduces access to health services for sex workers.

We look forward to the decision and to the day that sex workers are treated with respect and dignity.



## COVID-19 Catch Up Payments for Children and Youth in School

The Ontario government is offering one-time payments for student learning. The deadline to apply is March 31, 2023.

Students are eligible if they go to a publicly funded school, private school, First Nation-operated or federally operated school, or are homeschooled. Eligible applicants will receive a one-time payment of:

- \$200 for each student between kindergarten and Grade 12, up to age 18
- \$250 for each student with special education needs between kindergarten and Grade 12, up to age 21 (a student with special education needs is any student receiving special education programs or services by their school board or any student with a special education need)

Both in-person and remote learning students are eligible.

For more information and to apply for the benefit, see [here](#):

<https://www.ontario.ca/page/catch-up-payments>

## Canada Dental Benefit

As of December 1, 2022, people can apply to receive the Canada Dental Benefit for children under 12 years old. The benefit is intended to help lower dental costs for eligible families earning less than \$90,000 (net income) in 2021. See [here](https://www.canada.ca/en/revenue-agency/services/child-family-benefits/dental-benefit/who-apply.html) for the eligibility criteria: <https://www.canada.ca/en/revenue-agency/services/child-family-benefits/dental-benefit/who-apply.html>

Depending on a person's adjusted family net income, a tax-free payment of \$260, \$390, or \$650 is available for each eligible child (with each split in half when there is shared custody). This interim dental benefit is only available for up to two periods. The first benefit period is for children under 12 years old as of December 1, 2022, who receive dental care between October 1, 2022, and June 30, 2023. An additional payment may be available starting on July 1, 2023, for some eligible children.

For more information and to apply for the benefit, see [here](#):

[https://www.canada.ca/en/revenue-agency/services/child-family-benefits/dental-benefit.html?utm\\_campaign=hc-sc-dental-22-23&utm\\_medium=sem&utm\\_source=ggl&utm\\_content=ad-text-en&utm\\_term=canada%20dental%20benefit&adv=2223-348800&id\\_campaign=19028624151&id\\_source=143154882479&id\\_content=637268023675&gclid=EAlalQobChMIPO9s7Hy\\_QIVbiKtBh0X9AtXEAYASAAEgJVGPD\\_BwE&gclsrc=aw.ds](https://www.canada.ca/en/revenue-agency/services/child-family-benefits/dental-benefit.html?utm_campaign=hc-sc-dental-22-23&utm_medium=sem&utm_source=ggl&utm_content=ad-text-en&utm_term=canada%20dental%20benefit&adv=2223-348800&id_campaign=19028624151&id_source=143154882479&id_content=637268023675&gclid=EAlalQobChMIPO9s7Hy_QIVbiKtBh0X9AtXEAYASAAEgJVGPD_BwE&gclsrc=aw.ds)

## Canada Housing Benefit

The federal government announced a one-time top-up to the Canada Housing Benefit to help low-income renters with the cost of renting. People may be eligible for a tax-free one-time payment of \$500 if their income and the amount that they pay on rent qualify.

The deadline to apply is Friday, March 31, 2023.

For more information and to apply for the benefit, see [here](#):

<https://www.canada.ca/en/services/taxes/child-and-family-benefits/top-up-canada-housing-benefit.html>

## Employment Insurance Sickness Benefits Increase to 26 Weeks

The federal government announced that the maximum EI sickness benefits period is permanently extended from 15 weeks to 26 weeks. These extra weeks will be available for new EI claims established on or after December 18, 2022.

See [here](#) for more information: <https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/news/2022/11/government-of-canada-improves-sickness-benefits-under-the-employment-insurance-system1.html>

# Immigration and Refugee Law Updates

## *The New Asylum eApp*

On September 13, 2022, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) launched the new asylum online application (eApp). This is now the main way to make a claim for refugee protection from inside Canada. People who already made a claim using the Canadian Refugee Protection Portal (CRPP) before the eApp was introduced do not need to complete a new application using the eApp.

IRCC will communicate with refugee claimants directly through the eApp. For those who need accommodations based on disability or other grounds, accommodation requests are determined on a case-by-case basis.

Please see this [guide](#) for submitting a refugee claim through the eApp:

<https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/application/application-forms-guides/guide-0174-inland-refugee-claims-portal.html>

## *Temporary Limit on Off-Campus Work Hours Lifted*

From November 15, 2022, to December 31, 2023, international students who are in Canada and are authorized to work off-campus will be able to work more than 20 hours off-campus. Students are still required to balance their studies and work; students who stop studying or reduce their courses to part-time studies are not eligible to work off-campus. Before this temporary policy, students with authorization to work off campus were only allowed to work a maximum of 20 hours per week during classes, and full-time during scheduled school breaks.

For more information, see [here](#): <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/news/2022/10/international-students-to-help-address-canadas-labour-shortage.html>

## *Online Submission of Permanent Residence Applications*

IRCC is in the process of transitioning to 100% online applications for permanent residence programs. If applicants are unable to apply online (e.g., due to a disability), they can request accommodations to submit their permanent residence application in a different way. Some of the application categories which must now be submitted online include:

- sponsoring a spouse, dependent child, eligible relative, orphaned sibling, niece or nephew, or grandchild
- permanent residence applications based on humanitarian and compassionate grounds
- applications related to home support worker and home child care provider programs

For a full list of all permanent residence categories that are transitioning to digital applications, please see [here](https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/news/2022/08/transitioning-to-online-applications-for-permanent-residence.html): <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/news/2022/08/transitioning-to-online-applications-for-permanent-residence.html>

## *Update to Parent and Grandparent Super Visas*

On July 4, 2022, IRCC made changes to the parent and grandparent super visa program. Parents and grandparents can now stay in Canada for five years in a row without having to renew their super visas. In the past, they could only stay for two years in a row. Holders of the super visa can also now get medical insurance through designated companies in countries other than Canada.

For more information, see [here](https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/visit-canada/parent-grandparent-super-visa/about.html): <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/visit-canada/parent-grandparent-super-visa/about.html>

## *Backlogs and Processing Times*

There are major backlogs in the processing of all immigration applications. Processing times for each specific immigration applications can vary from week to week. Depending on individual circumstances, it could still take much longer than the times noted on the IRCC website (see below for the website information).

In order to receive the most up-to-date information on processing times, you can find a list for most immigration applications [here](#):

<https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/application/check-processing-times.html>

## *Changes to the Post-Graduate Work Permit Program*

All students who were enrolled in Post-Graduate Work Permit (PGWP)-eligible programs in March 2020, or who started a program of study between March 2020 and August 31, 2022, are no longer required to complete 50% of their program of study in Canada. Up to 100% of their program can be completed online from outside Canada. For these students, time spent studying outside of Canada up until August 31, 2023 can be counted toward the overall length of the PGWP.

All students who started or will start a program of study between September 1, 2022 and August 31, 2023 are required to complete at least 50% of their program of study in Canada. For these students, time spent studying outside of Canada up until August 31, 2023 can be counted toward the overall length of the PGWP only if it is less than 50% of the program.

You can find more about the program changes [here](#):

<https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/corporate/publications-manuals/operational-bulletins-manuals/temporary-residents/study-permits/post-graduation-work-permit-program/temporary-policy.html>

# MEET OUR TEAM

## Staff

- Ahmad Ezzeddine, Administrative Assistant
- Alexandra Veall, Staff Lawyer
- Amy Secord, Director of Administration
- Amy Wah, Staff Lawyer
- Avi Cheema, Staff Lawyer
- Diana Hall, Staff Lawyer
- Eddy Carroll, Staff Lawyer
- Melissa Hyde, Intake/Legal Assistant
- Omar Tobah, Staff Lawyer (contract)
- Robin Nobleman (parental leave)
- Ryan Peck, Executive Director/Lawyer
- Sherifa Hadi, Staff Lawyer

## Board of Directors

- Ower Alexander Alberto
- Ashley Langstein
- Skylar Louttit
- Sari Feferman
- Shaz Islam, Co-Chair
- Robert Maich, Treasurer
- Maureen Owino
- Eric Peters, Chair
- Shakir Rahim

## HALCO Public Legal Education Workshops

HALCO staff organize, conduct, and participate in public legal education events across Ontario and provide workshops on topics of interest to people living with HIV as well as HIV-related legal issues for the broader community. Please [contact](#) us to arrange a workshop: <https://www.halco.org/contact-us>

In May 2023, we will be hosting a series of workshops via zoom. See [here](#) and below for more information and to register: <https://www.halco.org/2023/news/free-virtual-public-legal-education-workshop-may-2023>

### **Practical Tips for Supporting Clients Navigating the Immigration/Refugee System**

Presenters: Avi Cheema & Alexandra Veall, HALCO Staff Lawyers  
Thursday, May 04, 2023, 3:00-4:00 pm (Eastern Time)  
[Click here to register](#)

### **Supporting Clients in Navigating Income Support: ODSP**

Presenter: Eddy Carroll, HALCO Staff Lawyer  
Thursday, May 11, 2023, 3:00-4:00 pm (Eastern Time)  
[Click here to register](#)

### **HIV Non-Disclosure and the Law: An Update on Criminal and Public Health Law**

Presenter: Ryan Peck, HALCO Executive Director  
Thursday, May 18, 2023, 3:00-4:00 pm (Eastern Time)  
[Click here to register](#)

### **Human Rights and Privacy Issues for People Living with HIV**

Presenter: Sherifa Hadi, HALCO Staff Lawyer  
Thursday, May 25, 2023, 3:00-4:00 pm (Eastern Time)  
[Click here to register](#)



BECOME A  
MEMBER



## HALCO Membership

HALCO's work is supported by our members. HALCO membership is free and renewed every 3 years. Please offer your support by becoming a member of HALCO.

For information on becoming a member, see [here: https://www.halco.org/get-involved/membership](https://www.halco.org/get-involved/membership)

You do not have to be a HALCO member to contact us for legal services from HALCO. However, we encourage people to become members.

Benefits of membership include voting privileges at our membership meetings (after a minimum of 30 days of membership), and the right to stand for election to our Board of Directors.



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## Getting Legal Help

If you are living with HIV in Ontario and have a legal question or problem (it does not have to relate directly to HIV), please [contact](#) us for free legal advice at 416-340-7790 or toll-free at 1-888-705-8889: <https://www.halco.org/contact-us>

People not living with HIV in Ontario can contact their [local community legal clinic](#) to ask about local services: <https://www.legalaid.on.ca/services/legal-clinics/>

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

Laws, policies, and practices can and often do change.

*HALCO news is published by the HIV & AIDS Legal Clinic Ontario (HALCO) and is distributed free to our members, interested individuals, agencies and organizations. Previous editions are on our website: [www.halco.org/our-services/our-publications](http://www.halco.org/our-services/our-publications)*

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