



Personal Injuries Claimants Urged to Seek Proper Legal Representation

Law Society Launches Free Helpline to Promote Access to Lawyers

Claimants pursuing personal injuries compensation in court should seek assistance directly from lawyers and avoid engaging agents offering middleman service on the condition of sharing a portion of compensation, the Law Society of Hong Kong said today as a new Personal injuries Helpline was launched.

The Helpline, 28248200, to be in operation from 15th June will connect enquirers to a panel of 150 personal injuries case practitioners who volunteer up to one hour of free legal counsel for each enquiry. Callers lodging the required information, including name, ID number, telephone number and date of the accident will be contacted by a lawyer within one working day.

In recent years, a growing number of individuals known as claims or recovery agents have been active in touting business from people seeking compensation for personal injuries suffered in industrial or traffic accidents.

These recovery agents usually target emergency rooms of hospitals and offices of government departments which have frequent contacts with victims of personal injuries, such as the Legal Aid Department, Labour Department and Social Welfare Department.

Many of these agents typically market their services by offering “no win, no fee”, “risk-free guarantee”, or “huge sum of compensation”. They promise to handle all paper work and help claimants find lawyers, and offer victims various favours such as visiting them at hospitals or offering a loan. Some even operate in the name of charitable organisations.

Mr Wong Kwai-huen, President of the Law Society, said, “Members of the public should be aware that recovery agents’ middleman service is totally unnecessary. Claimants can and should directly approach lawyers. If members of the public don’t know how to contact a lawyer or pursue a claim, they can simply call our personal injuries helpline.”

“Recovery agents’ service is provided for reward or on the condition of sharing a portion of compensation awarded by the court, which is an unnecessary cost. They are not legally trained or qualified. Claimants relying on them are likely to jeopardise their chances of getting the best representation and redress,” said Mr Wong.

Mr Ludwig Ng Siu-wing, Chairman of the Law Society’s sub-committee on the publicity campaign concerning recovery agents, added, “Anyone encouraging a lawsuit and assisting a

claimant on the condition of sharing compensation may be guilty of maintenance and champerty and liable to a maximum penalty of seven years imprisonment if convicted. Members of the public should be careful not to be party to a crime inadvertently.”

Mr Ng also called on the Government to look into possible ways to strengthen regulations on advertisements placed by recovery agents as they are advertising potentially illegal services.

The Law Society will hold a seminar on 16th June to educate the public on the possible legal consequences in engaging recovery agents and publicise the new personal injuries helpline.

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