

FOLA provides lawyer-focused guide to LSO materials

By AdvocateDaily.com Staff

[The Federation of Ontario Law Associations \(FOLA\)](#) is helping its members connect with the Law Society of Ontario's (LSO) extensive resources for smaller and regional firms, says executive director Katie Robinette.

As part of its recent rebranding initiative, the LSO embarked on a media campaign and website revamp, but Robinette tells AdvocateDaily.com that many of the lawyers she's been speaking with find that the majority of the regulator's material appears to be geared towards the general public.

"However, the more time you spend on the site, you'll find there is a wealth of valuable information in there for lawyers that many of our members just weren't aware of," she says. "Because we're a grassroots organization that helps lawyers in smaller firms and communities throughout Ontario, we went through that material, and picked out the information that our members will be interested in."

The result is FOLA's new practice resources [page](#), which breaks down the LSO material under headings related to key stages in a lawyer's life cycle:

- Opening a practice
- Operating a practice
- Closing a practice

"We're like a roadmap to the LSO information on these specific areas, and anything that deals with more technical requirements links straight back to their site," says Robinette, who views the FOLA site as complementary to the legal regulator's.

The site also has a section designed to support lawyers going through practice reviews or dealing with client complaints made to the LSO.

Again, Robinette says the LSO's campaign covers these issues in detail but is primarily aimed at a layman audience.

"We recognize that the LSO has to serve the public, but FOLA's duty is to serve the practising lawyer," she explains. "As such, we broaden our focus only beyond the more bureaucratic information about forms and regulatory responsibilities to offer more personal and practical support for lawyers."

Robinette says mental health and addiction in the legal profession were prominent themes in FOLA's most recent plenary session, and the organization's approach to LSO complaints, discipline and practice reviews reflects that.

"We incorporate some reassuring language and encourage them not to stress out over these processes," she says. "Many lawyers are subject to them, and while they can be very tough challenges, they don't have to be a career-ender.

"Were guiding them through with empathy and understanding," Robinette adds.

The FOLA guide aims to stop lawyers from becoming overwhelmed by LSO attention and features a story by a lawyer who frequently represents licensees in disciplinary proceedings. Robinette hopes to expand the offering to include a first-person account from a member of the regulator's disciplinary tribunal.

"We want to open up that cloud of mystique and see what the process looks like from the other side," she says.