

## JDG 1

# ADDRESS EVERYDAY LEGAL PROBLEMS

### 1.1 EDUCATE EARLY

Provide targeted, free, accessible public legal education about frequent legal issues, different types of solutions and the process of enforcing rights.

### 1.3 OFFER A CONTINUUM OF SERVICES

Develop and expand legal services to include the full continuum of information, advice, help lines, online services, in-person services, and partial or full representation.

### 1.2 PREVENT

Foster legal capability so that people can spot legal issues early, get preventative or proactive help and anticipate, avoid or manage frequent legal issues.

### 1.4 REFLECT CANADIAN SOCIETY

Put the services people need in the communities where they live with the resources to address the barriers they face.

#### Projects advancing this goal



125

#### Organizations identifying this goal as their primary focus



26

## HIGHLIGHTS

250

new COVID-19 related FAQ's posted on CLEA's Step-to-Justice website

The public

can conduct legal research at the NL Law Society's library

18 month

consultation of the Black community across Ontario by the Black Legal Action Centre

5

vulnerable groups received education and support to avoid investment fraud through the Nova Scotia's Legal Information Society's Investor Protection and Fraud Awareness Project

## What is JDG#1 About?

Building people's legal capability strengthens their ability to identify and avoid legal problems and get help when they need it. Activities under this goal focus on developing broad public understand of legal options and the skills to take a first step. Public legal education organizations are often the first point of contact for people trying to understand their legal issues. Educational resources and information session offered by non-profits, clinics, courts and lawyers help people prepare for common legal issues.

Triage and referral services are part of the continuum of legal services. Identifying legal needs early and connecting people with both legal help and other kinds of supports can minimize the impact on their health, relationships and finances. In 2020, as people faced uncertainty in their workplaces, health care, housing and safety, the public legal education and information community responded quickly, helping people understand pandemic related changes to benefits and legal protections. Programs designed to connect with specific communities or focus on particular legal communities also adapted to find ways to deliver these critical programs.

## Educating People about Pandemic Benefits and Rights

Many public legal education organizations worked very quickly to develop new resources to help people understand the changing range of government benefits, tenancy rights and protocols for workplace safety throughout the pandemic. **Educaloi** produced a 12-page special booklet on the legal issues created by the pandemic and their impact on the justice system, which was published in print and on the web by the Journal de Montréal.

Shortly after the start of the pandemic, **Community Legal Education Ontario's (CLEO)** created detailed FAQ's on its Steps to Justice site to respond to people's most pressing questions about COVID-19 and income support, returning to work and housing. As the pandemic continued, it added new COVID-19 FAQs based on questions posed in the live chat service. In 2020, **CLEO** added almost 250 COVID-19 related FAQ's and estimate almost 2 million page views of the COVID-19 related content on Steps to Justice.

With the onset of the pandemic, **CLEO** began to receive many pleas from community workers across Ontario for support in helping their clients with questions arising from the pandemic. In response, it hosted a series of COVID-19

"hot legal topic" webinars for community workers conducted in partnership with experts from Ontario's community legal clinics, to provide practical, grounded support. Ten of these COVID-19 webinars for community workers were attended by a total of over 2500 participants.

**LawNow**, published 6 times/year by the **Centre for Public Legal Education Alberta**, published issues focused on civil liberties and laws affected by changing responses to the pandemic as well as emerging issues around working from home. With a focus on these timely issues, in addition to its regular emphasis on credible and readable legal information and analysis, **LawNow** helps Canadians understand the roles law plays in society and how it affects their lives.

## Expanding Online Resources

Established websites offer up-to-date legal information continue to people across Canada. Many of these expanded their services adding new legal resources and adding more interactive and navigational tools. In BC **Courthouse Libraries'** Clicklaw and Clicklaw Wiki Books resources continued to expand, linking BC's legal information with wiki-style contributions from lawyers. **The People's Law School** added new content to its website linked to major life events including illness, or buying a home. **Saskatchewan PLEA** Website optimized its search functions and overhauled the mobile optimization to make legal information more accessible.

Manitoba's **Community Legal Education Association** launched a new website in March 2020. It reorganizes existing and new content to make it easier for people to navigate, organized by 12 common topics. On each topic, the site provides information on general legal questions, resources for resolution outside of court, and detailed information on court procedures as well as next steps and resources. Resources for students and teachers have also grown to include case summaries and lesson plans. A new topic was added to address COVID-19 related issues with 73 questions and answers.

**Justice Canada** launched its Access to Justice website outlining its commitment to a people-centred approach to justice that puts consideration of the individual at the heart of justice responses. The website provides information and resources related to access to justice and links to external research and organizations.

**CLEO's** Steps to Justice site now includes a larger body

of practical, process-oriented, user-friendly information designed for online use. People in Ontario who have legal questions or problems, and the digital literacy, skills, and digital access, can make use of the site to find answers to questions, links to forms and connection to resources. Steps to Justice focuses on the legal questions and issues facing people who live on low or moderate incomes, or who face other forms of disadvantage as well as the trusted intermediaries who help their clients use the site. Steps to Justice had over 5.4 million visits in 2020.

**Éducaloi** continues to add to the 1000+ articles available in both French and English on its website. The site covers addresses employment, housing, health care, and laws protecting vulnerable populations, as well as a special Covid-19 feature.

New self-help guides to Family Law and Civil Law, with detailed instructions and ready-to-complete court forms, were released by the Northwest Territories' **Outreach Legal Aid Clinic**. The guides address commonly-encountered legal issues, such as divorce, variation of child support, small estate administration, and others.

## Programs to Build Legal Capability

Alberta's **Justice Sector Constellation** has developed and released Client Journey Maps as part of its Post-release Issues Project. These maps are visual representations of the process individuals can follow to find support and resources at transition points in life, such as on release from custody. Support for personal identification, addictions, mental health, employment and education, housing, and transportation are part of the journey maps. These maps are designed to improve the process of connecting individuals with the appropriate agencies and resources to meet essential needs and foster successful community integration.

The **Outreach Legal Aid Clinic**, run by the **Legal Aid Commission of the Northwest Territories**, offered free Wills, Incapacity and Estate Planning seminars in partnership with a local non-profit organization.

**Public Legal Information Association of Newfoundland and Labrador's** Legal Rights for Newcomers initiative supports newcomers by answering questions about everyday legal problems in the areas of labour and employment, residential tenancies and housing, human rights, family and criminal law. Services have expanded to include direct, one-on-one legal information and new plain language legal

information materials aimed at recent immigrants, refugees, international students, temporary foreign workers, and other people who have recently arrived in Newfoundland and Labrador. Public information sessions were adapted to virtual presentations and direct support provided to individuals via phone, Zoom, and email.

**Calgary Women's Emergency Shelter** developed Protection Order Maps to help frontline service providers to help clients navigate Emergency Protection Orders, Reviews, Restraining Orders and Parenting Orders. Based on these maps, training was provided for these intermediaries.

**Justice Canada** funded **Egale Canada** to develop new legal information for LGBTQ2 Canadians who have been disproportionately affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, in response to evidence of increase legal needs. Webinars in both official languages, focused on LGBTQ2 individuals with intersecting, racialized identities experiencing unique and exacerbated challenges related to housing, employment and immigration.

**Access Pro Bono** in partnership with the **BC Court of Appeal** provided an appeals program education. Judges and staff of the Court of Appeal offered a series of educational programs to help pro bono counsel working on appeals.

BC's **Ministry of Attorney General** installed public access computer kiosks as part of the expansion of its Justice Access Centres. In three family justice centres and in all self-help resource rooms located in justice access centres, citizens can access legal information, complete court forms online, and watch court-mandated parenting education courses. During periods when the family justice services offices were closed due to COVID-19, work was done to upgrade the system to be compatible with new applications such as the DivorceApp and to update new court forms.

**Newfoundland and Labrador's Law Society** opened up its law library allow members of the public to use resources and conduct legal research.

New plain language signage was developed by the **Law Society of Yukon** to help people attending court. The information is posted outside the first appearance courtroom in Whitehorse, designed to help the general public understand and better navigate the Yukon's court system.

Working with the **Office of the Treaty Commissioner and the Saskatchewan Teacher's Federation**, **PLEA** developed new learning resources for Saskatchewan students on Indigenous legal issues

Law students at **Community Legal Services at Western University** developed a plain language Landlord Tenant Handbook in partnership with local community organizations. The handbook is available in print and virtually to members of the public.

Nova Scotia's **Legal Information Society** launched its Investor Protection and Fraud Awareness Project providing investor education to minimize or avoid investment fraud, with particular emphasis on five identified vulnerable groups. The project includes podcasts on financial literacy and ways to identify and avoid scams. A Legal Planning Information Kit focuses on seniors, newcomers, youth as well as women and middle aged individuals both facing income disruption or low financial literacy. As the Society adapted its Kit for each of these audiences, it integrated the community expertise of the **Mount Saint Vincent University Centre on Ageing**, the **Immigrant Association of Nova Scotia, Student Assistance**, and the **Security Commission**.

In all adult correctional institutions in Newfoundland & Labrador, inmates received legal information and attended presentations self-litigation and court processes, delivered by **Justice and Public Safety**.

**CREATE Justice's** Saskatchewan Access to Legal Information Project, a partnership of justice stakeholders, improved access to legal information for Saskatchewan residents through the public library system. In 2020, the project focused on engagement with public library staff. A position, created through the **Ministry of Justice Innovation Division** now focuses on E-Justice initiatives and developing an Online Legal Information Portal to enhance public library staff's ability to help patrons access legal information.

Ontario's **Black Legal Action Centre** launched its School to Prison Pipeline Project providing resources and research about the impact of disciplinary policies and practices within schools that ultimately put students into direct contact with law enforcement. The **Black Legal Action Centre** launched an 18 month consultation process reaching out to the Black community across Ontario to better understand their experiences and to advocate for meaningful change and policy reform within justice and educational systems.

The new Prevention of Sexual Harassment and Harassment in the Workplace program, launched by the **Law Society of Nunavut** offers public legal education and information initiatives, to ensure that Nunavummiut, including employers, workers, and service providers assisting workers, are able to recognize workplace harassment and violence and explain rights and legal options. The

initiative includes Inuit-specific practices for healing and wellness and public legal education resources developed in partnership with ilinniapaa Skills Development Centre, including a comic poster, a guide for employers, a video on workplace violence, a resource sheet for service providers, and a legal and wellness resource booklet for employees. Two training sessions for lawyers and law students built their capacity to run community workshops and pro bono clinics, including on trauma-informed approaches to serving Inuit clients.

Ontario's **Advocacy Center for Elderly** held public legal education sessions for seniors and service providers to provide seniors with the information necessary to advocate for themselves or to identify areas in which they may need legal assistance.