
OTTAWA LEGAL CLINICS TRANSFORMATION PROJECT

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

FEBRUARY 2016

KICKING-OFF STAFF WORKING GROUPS

This month the Transformation Project has been focused on laying the groundwork for, and launching, a set of four staff Working Groups aimed at answering some key questions about how the offices will work together in an amalgamated legal clinic. Staff and Board members of each clinic have volunteered to take part in the Working Groups, each of which will include representation from each clinic, each Board of Directors, and from different staffing positions. This will help to ensure that broad perspectives are represented, that challenges and opportunities are discussed holistically, and that the Transformation progresses based on the input of those most immediately impacted by the process.

STAFF WORKING GROUPS

Below are descriptions of the goals and responsibilities of the four working groups. Each of these groups will provide recommendations and insights to the Steering Committee of how some of the more specific areas of transformation should look. Understanding that the topics that each Working Group are addressing do not exist in silos, the Groups will also be in frequent communication with one another. Some issues that arose in previous staff interviews and the all-staff meeting did not make it into a Working Group, but will be discussed in future, such as maintaining and increasing Francophone outreach, and establishing satellite locations or access points.



1. WORK FLOW MANAGEMENT AND JOINT INTAKE

The Work Flow Management and Joint Intake Working Group will be considering the implications of the Transformation on the distribution of work among clinic offices and the intake processes that will be implemented in each office of the new clinic. The Group will discuss and provide recommendations addressing a variety of challenges and opportunities, including:

- Logistics and the use of technology in intake;
- Type of information collected through the Client Information Management System (CIMS);
- Balancing client preferences and available resources to ensure an equitable distribution of work across the legal clinic offices.

This group will address these difficult issues with a view to maintaining existing connections to individual communities, establishing an effective referrals procedure, and balancing demand for services and capacity.

2. LEGAL PRACTICE TEAMS

An amalgamated legal clinic will offer opportunities for staff across offices to collaborate, share their experiences, and build upon existing expertise. The Legal Practice Teams Working Group will look at how these opportunities are capitalized upon, and identifying the challenges that arise in the process. The Group will discuss and provide recommendations regarding:

- Establishing a holistic approach to service delivery in each office;
- The constitution and function of staff teams;
- Relationships that emerge or are impacted by the development of staff teams.

This list is not exhaustive. The Working Group will be considering a variety of questions about inter-office collaboration, including the potential for conflict of interest, and will consider examples of similar projects elsewhere.

3. SUPPORT STAFF AND OFFICE MANAGEMENT

Central to the operation of every clinic are the support staff and office managers. It is also critical to the success of an amalgamated legal clinic that these staff be adequately supported in the new model, and throughout the transition. These positions will see a significant shift, since the new model will include one Office Manager covering all three offices, with support staff supporting some Office Manager tasks. The Support Staff and Office Management Working Group will be tasked with discussing and developing recommendations to ensure the fair and responsible allocation of responsibilities, including:

- Day-to-day support activities and financial responsibilities;
- Overall team and office management in a decentralized model;
- Miscellaneous office tasks, policies and procedures.

Office environments can be complex and multi-faceted. This Group will have to balance this difficult reality against the efficiencies created in an amalgamated legal clinic.

4. HARMONIZING POLICIES

Each of the three offices have different policies addressing similar if not identical aspects of how the offices function. Some of these policies include group health benefits, sick leave and vacation time. The Harmonizing Policies Working Group will need to:

- Review an index of policies and prioritize those that should be reviewed;
- Consider which new policies may be necessary to address new challenges;
- Consider reporting structures for an amalgamated legal clinic.

The Group will review each of the various policies from each office, and develop a recommended set of policies that would work effectively within each office in the new model.

NEXT STEPS

The first Working Group meetings began in late February and continue into March. In these initial meetings, the groups will set up a structure and work plan for themselves. Throughout the following months, the groups will continue to meet and feed their recommendations on their discussed topics to the Steering Committee.

To learn more about this process, please visit www.ottawaclinics.ca.

To contact us, please email info@ottawaclinics.ca.