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# OTTAWA LEGAL CLINICS TRANSFORMATION PROJECT

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MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

JULY 2014

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## WELCOME!

This is the first edition of the Ottawa Legal Clinics Transformation Project newsletter. These newsletters will be available on a monthly basis to keep everyone updated and informed on this project as it evolves.

## ABOUT THE PROJECT

### What is the Ottawa Legal Clinics Transformation Project?

Community Legal Services Ottawa Centre, South Ottawa Community Legal Services and West End Legal Services have come together to consider how to deliver more and better coordinated front-line services. The Ottawa Legal Clinics Transformation Project is about creating new ways to provide access to justice for the poorest residents of Ottawa.

### How did this project come about?

We have been discussing new ways of collaboration since our joint strategic plan in 2007, and in 2009 we began considering ways to restructure that would allow us to use our resources in the most effective ways possible. We want to spend less time and money on administrative tasks and re-direct those resources into increasing our capacity to deliver front-line services.

Right now, clinics across the province are transforming the ways in which they provide services. Legal Aid Ontario has committed to maintaining our funding throughout this process and to re-invest any cost-savings back into service delivery. We want to make the most of this opportunity, and experience has shown both in Ottawa and elsewhere that having legal clinics take the lead in initiating and managing changes can have positive results.

### How are we going to do the work?

Before recommending any changes, we are going to conduct in-depth research and analysis.

The first step will be analyzing demographic data and community needs. Using 2006 and 2011 census data and 2011 tax filer data, we will map out where low-income people live and the challenges they face that may lead them to require our services. These challenges and barriers include accessing affordable housing, immigration issues, and income maintenance.

We will also be reviewing our own internal systems to see where our services are matching up to community needs and where there are gaps.

The Steering Committee will be reviewing this data in July.

Community legal clinics around the world use different strategies and models to provide poverty law services. We will conduct a literature review to examine some best practices and make assessments as to which ones we could adapt to work locally.

We will also learn from previous experiences of restructuring within the community legal clinic system as well as in other relevant sectors including the community health, non-profit and child welfare sectors, about what strategies need to be put in place to make transitions successful.

The Steering Committee will be reviewing the literature in August.

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We also want to talk to people who use our services and work in our system to learn more about what is working well, what the challenges and barriers are that people face, and what their ideas, hopes, and concerns are for transformation. We will be conducting focus groups and interviews with clients, staff, directors, board members and community partners to gather this information.

The Steering Committee will be reviewing this data in September and October.

We don't want to rush into anything; we want all the evidence on the table before we begin planning for change. Based on that evidence, we can develop a model that reflects the needs of the community and best practices.

Once we have a model, we'll need to think about transitions. Change can be hard and there is a duty to the people who work in clinics and the people they serve to make sure the changes are as smooth as possible for everyone. Past transitions in the sector show that including everyone in thoughtful transition planning processes and taking all details into account is critical to successful transitions.

The Steering Committee will spend November exploring these ideas.

A final report will be developed that will outline all the research and make recommendations as to the model that the Ottawa legal clinics propose.

The Steering Committee will release this report in December.

### Who is leading the project?

Each of the three clinics are encouraged to fully participate in the project. Each clinic has three representatives on a Steering Committee that guides the process. The representatives include the executive director, a board member, and a staff representative.

Each clinic has a vote on the Steering Committee which will develop proposed recommendations for changes to organizational structures and service delivery. These decisions will be made in consultation with our stakeholders, including staff, community boards, partners, and clients.

### How can I participate?

If you are involved with a Clinic, talk to your Clinic's Steering Committee representative about what's happening. If you work at a Clinic, you'll be asked to have direct input. If you live in an affected community, we'll be asking people to participate in interviews and focus groups to give us their guidance - let us know if you'd like to participate. And if you just have a really great idea, send us an email at [info@ottawaclinics.ca](mailto:info@ottawaclinics.ca).

You can stay on top of all the progress by visiting our website [www.ottawaclinics.ca](http://www.ottawaclinics.ca). In the meantime, we will be putting out this newsletter once a month to let you know what's happening.

## STEERING COMMITTEE MEMBERS

### WEST END LEGAL SERVICES (WELS)

Jacques Chartrand

Linda Martineau

Cavell Townley

### COMMUNITY LEGAL SERVICES OTTAWA CENTRE (CLSOC)

Charles McDonald

Sarah Sproule

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### SOUTH OTTAWA COMMUNITY LEGAL SERVICES (SOCLS)

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