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CONNECTING REGION INITIATIVE

ACTIVITY REPORT #6

Submitted to the
Law Foundation of Ontario
Access to Justice Fund

On behalf of the
CONNECTING OTTAWA NETWORK

July 2015



Effective communication
Accessible justice



Une communication efficace
Une justice accessible

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INTRODUCTION

This is the sixth and final Activity Report describing the implementation and outcomes of the Connecting Ottawa/*Connexion Ottawa* project, funded by the Law Foundation of Ontario under the Connecting Region Initiative of the Access to Justice Fund. The report describes activities and performance milestones for the six-month period 1 January to 30 June 2015. We are grateful to the Law Foundation for their support during the past three years and excited by the opportunity to continue managing this initiative during 2015-16.

Our focus has been the continued implementation of the planned activities, recruitment, training, assignment and supervision of volunteer facilitators, reaching out to our partners in the settlement services and community sectors, and reverting to our original role as case consultants to our partner organizations, a shift away from the interim case management support that had been consuming almost all our resources. A total of 642 clients and their families have benefited (directly or indirectly) from interventions by Connecting Ottawa over the past three years. The value of collaborative practice and a holistic response has been demonstrated by the 75 cases that have required a shared response from both the lawyer and the social worker. In 20 cases Connecting Ottawa facilitated access to interpretation services, and in 34 cases a volunteer Facilitator was assigned to help clients connect with needed services. The network of partners currently includes 49 organizations: 18 community service agencies, 10 agencies serving immigrants, 11 organizations providing legal services, 7 agencies serving people with disabilities, and 3 organizations that offer placements to students interested in access to justice issues. Connecting Ottawa has provided learning opportunities to 2 students from Carleton University School of Social Work, 5 students from University of Ottawa Faculty of Law, and 3 students from Pro Bono Students Canada. We have provided over 70 presentations and PLE events. Connecting Ottawa has hosted 4 annual conferences with over 250 participants. The Connecting Ottawa website has over 9,000 users and 390 people follow us on Twitter.

We have operated well within the approved budget. 2014-15 ended with a positive fund balance of \$57,876; actual expenditures were \$42,414 under budget. (Please see our [financial statement](#) with notes of significant variations.)

We were pleased to be back at full staffing strength in January when Alexandra Derisier joined us as our lawyer. Alex was previously the lawyer on the Refugee Pilot Project at the Clinique juridique francophone de l'Est d'Ottawa, with which Connecting Ottawa is collocated, so she came to us already familiar with our settlement and immigrant services partners and the legal clinic community in Ottawa.

Nevertheless, there will be another staffing change. David Hole, who has coordinated the development and delivery of the project from its beginnings in 2010, will be leaving effective 31 July 2015. He will be replaced by [Nico Koenig](#). Nico is a bilingual adult education and community development consultant who brings his experience in non-profit network management and commitment to relationship building to the position. His educational background includes a Masters in Adult Education; he has a strong interest in training development and is looking forward to strengthening future Public Legal Education initiatives at Connecting Ottawa. He has many years of experience supporting volunteers and trusted intermediaries and has a passion for creating training and professional development opportunities for them. In short, Connecting Ottawa will be in good hands.



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In the coming year Connecting Ottawa's direction will be to

- o continue with consultation support to our network partners,
- o address the growing interest and demand for PLE,
- o implement tools to enable trusted intermediaries to identify legal issues with confidence, and
- o train selected facilitators to initiate outreach activities to focus population communities.

Here is the final report of our progress so far. We thank the Law Foundation again for its continued encouragement, interest and support.

ACTIVITY REPORTS

➤ CENTRALIZED HUB FOR INFORMATION, ASSESSMENT AND REFERRAL

OUR CHALLENGE

To ensure that the first point of service for our focus populations becomes a “trusted intermediary” that *always* has the capacity to communicate with the client, assess the problem presented, provide comprehensive information about all facets of the problem presented, and take immediate steps to refer and connect the client to legal and other services that will resolve the problem.

OUR INTENT

- To support and promote *211 Eastern Ontario* (delivered by a partner, the Community Information Centre of Ottawa - CICO) as a centralized hub for information, assessment and referral (IAR) services for all partners
- To reach out to our partners to build awareness of *211* as not just another IAR resource but as the *default* source of information and referral services for issues that have a legal component
- To augment the already very comprehensive *211* database as necessary, to be assured that *all* local legal services have been described using the *211* taxonomy.

PROGRESS

The Community Information Centre of Ottawa (CICO) continues to be an important resource and valued partner. Connecting Ottawa has

- Continued to promote *211 Eastern Ontario* as the default information, assessment and referral (IAR) resource in all project communications, materials and activities, as well as through our use of social media.
- Reviewed the outcomes of a series of test calls to CICO’s IAR professionals to assess and refer persons who contact them with an issue that could be addressed by a legal service.
- Continued a training program for CICO staff to strengthen capabilities regarding legal services information, assessment and referral.
- Maintained a feed of the CICO database to the Connecting Ottawa/*Connexion Ottawa* web sites.
- Extended the reach of the [CICO Community Bulletin](#) by posting events on the Connecting Ottawa/*Connexion Ottawa* web sites.
- Renewed a Data Leasing Agreement with CICO until 30 June 2018.
- Developed a data collection template that would provide Connecting Ottawa with more information about callers who seek legal information and services.

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During the past 6 months (to 30 June 2015) there were 1,145 calls to CICO/211 related to legal issues. This would appear to exceed the total number of calls for the previous 12 months and would represent a 54% increase in call volume over the previous 6 month reporting period. However, 2015 data needs to be interpreted with extreme caution since 211 Ontario has changed its data taxonomy during the past year. Calls are now tracked using very different categories that do not readily correspond to the previous system of data collection. In effect, 2015 will set a new base line for future trend analysis. Connecting Ottawa has been consulting with CICO to develop and implement a data collection template that will allow us to learn more about who is calling about what legal issue, when and where they are being referred, and whether there was any follow up required by CICO’s IAR professionals. This template has yet to be implemented but we expect to be collecting data on this basis by September 2015.

Issue	2012	2013	2014	2015
Non Urgent Police Services	203	210	224	131
Legal Advice	136	140	184	347
Legal Aid Clinics	98	101	134	69
Law Information	120	121	161	309
Family Law	40	40	99	49
Mediation Services	4	4	3	16
Court issues	110	112	118	83
Probation & Parole issues	14	14	39	22
Human Rights	12	12	6	82
Detention Issues	15	15	23	37
TOTAL	752	769	991	1,145

We reported in *Activity Report #5 (January 2015)* that Connecting Ottawa had made weekly test calls to 211 in which we described a scenario taken from our *Legal Health Check Up*. Each of these scenarios involves an issue that requires access to legal information or other legal service to be effectively resolved. In almost all cases, the professional IAR agents at CICO responded appropriately to our caller by providing a referral or a source of further information. We have since met with CICO managers to discuss the results and possible implications for future training. This consultation provided important feedback on our test call process; if reinstated for another trial we will change our methodology to ensure that we capture not only the IAR professional’s response but also the day and time of the call and (if possible) an identifier for the IAR professional involved so that that managers can follow up if necessary.

➤ DEVELOP AND MAINTAIN A WEB SITE

OUR CHALLENGE

There are excellent public legal education and information (PLEI) resources available, especially given the leadership of Community Legal Education Ontario (CLEO) and their web site initiative, [Your Legal Rights](#). However, the fact remains that navigation of the legal system remains challenging for many front-line service providers in Ottawa.

OUR INTENT

To supplement the on-line information available from *Your Legal Rights* and the Community Information Centre of Ottawa (CICO) by developing a local web site resource that includes comprehensive and current information about local legal services, and by sharing information about the Connecting Ottawa project and the ways in which it can support project partners to ensure access to justice by our focus populations.

PROGRESS

We have established web sites in both English and French: the [English site](#) was launched on 9 January 2013 and the [French site](#) was launched on 19 February 2013. The domain registrations have been extended until November 2016.

During this period we have taken steps to develop the sites further by

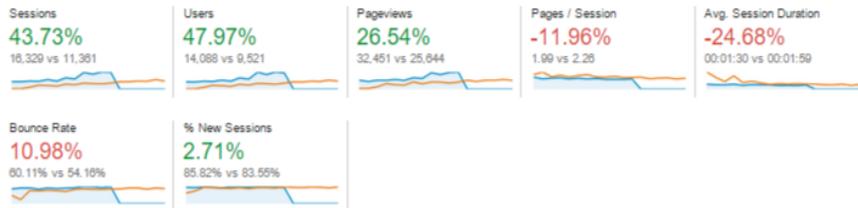
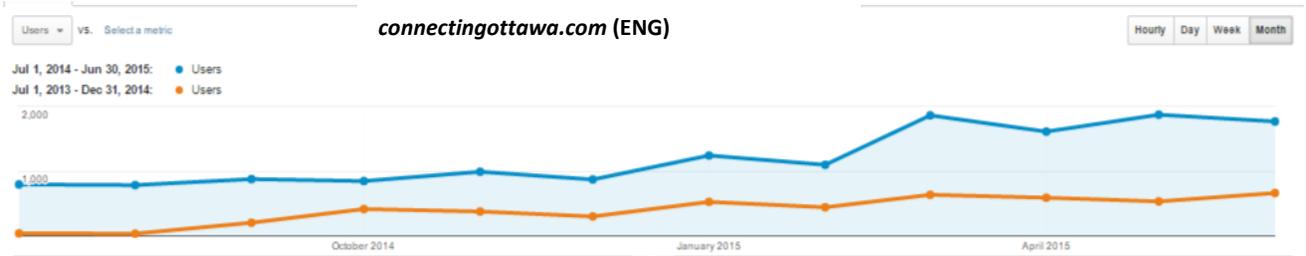
- Embedding [a brief video](#) about the Connecting Ottawa project to the *About Us* page.
- Launching the “Resources” menu to provide information about [Communication Accessibility Resources](#) and [Counselling Services for People with Precarious Immigration Status](#).
- Integrating client scenarios from our Legal Health Check List to better define legal issues/sub topics and referral services. (See a [screen capture](#))
- Maintaining a current "Events" calendar that shares information about workshops, public legal education sessions, conferences and other learning opportunities of interest to our partners. (See a [screen capture](#))
- Applying text analysis and spam filters, CAPTCHAs, and other [Mollom](#) services that automatically evaluate the quality of our content and protect us from robot users who “contact us”.
- Adding security updates.

We are still working on:

- Developing two video tutorials about how to make best use of the web site to (1) *Find Legal Services* and (2) *Find Accessibility and Counselling Resources*. Scripts are in first draft; we anticipate video previews by the end of September 2015.
- Adding video presentations of the keynote presentations from our Annual Conferences.
- Evaluating how the site is being used, via an embedded user survey.

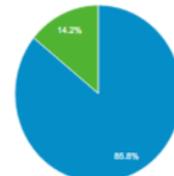
Google Analytics informs us that traffic to the sites continues to grow steadily. The charts below compare use data for two 18-month periods (1 July 2013 to 31 December 2014 and 1 July 2014 to 30 June 2015). The topics that appear to have been of greatest interest are refugees/people without status, youth diversion, the Public Guardian/Trustee, partner abuse, and child custody issues.

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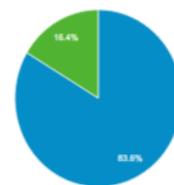


■ New Visitor ■ Returning Visitor

Jul 1, 2014 - Jun 30, 2015

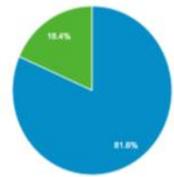


Jul 1, 2013 - Dec 31, 2014

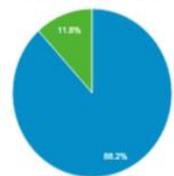


■ New Visitor ■ Returning Visitor

Jul 1, 2014 - Jun 30, 2015



Jul 1, 2013 - Dec 31, 2014



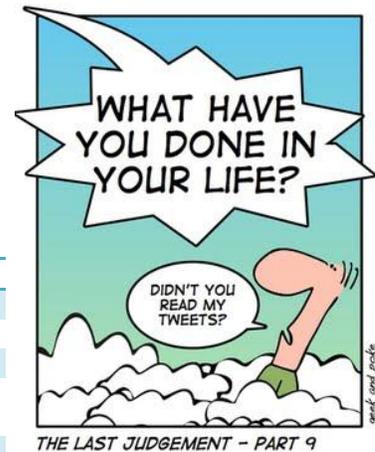
When we compare this activity reporting period (1 January to 30 June 2015) to the previous period (1 July to 31 December 2014), the number of users of the English web site has increased by 82% to 9,139; the number of users on the French web site has increased by 22% to 637. The number of sessions has increased by 80% (English) and 41% (French) respectively. The volume of page views has also increased - by 65% to 20,190 (English) and 40% to 1,211 (French) respectively. We are pleased to see that our bounce rate (which measures the volume of users who immediately leave the site) has dropped by about 8% (for both sites). 85% of traffic to the English site and 88% of traffic to the French site is comprised of new users.

During the coming year we plan to address serious issues with the French site. Many of the new features and content of the English site have not been translated or ported to the French site. Although our commitment to communicate with our partners in both Official Languages is unchanged, the analytics clearly tell us that the French user experience does not compare favorably with the English user experience.

Each of the sites contains links to the project’s presence on [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#). Social media is another vehicle for the project to share news and information related to our focus populations, their access to services, and emerging legal issues, especially concerning immigration, poverty, and accessibility for persons with disabilities. Twitter and Facebook are both “broadcast” media and it has been difficult for us to assess our impact aside from crude measures related to “follows”, “retweets”, “likes”, etc. Although we have been active contributors to the Twitter feed, the only posts to Facebook have been generated from that feed.

Between 1 April 2013 and 30 June 2015, Connecting Ottawa posted 1,383 tweets. During the current activity reporting period, we made 115 posts to Twitter (this does not include our retweets of other posts). 390 persons or organizations are now following us each day (up by 23.4% since our last activity report) and we are following 353 persons and organizations. Here is a summary of our Twitter activity during this period (Source: [SumAll](#)):

2015	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUNE
Tweets	16	21	1	9	45	23
Profile Visits	114	186	205	75	288	248
New Followers	16	23	14	10	23	14
Tweet Impressions ¹	2467	2979	1198	1004	4715	3322
Mentions	3	5	5	2	13	15



Social media platforms like Twitter can be important tools for Connecting Ottawa to promote the project and deliver PLE messages. However, to date we have not developed a strategy for our use of social media. Although we thought that Twitter could be an appropriate medium to reach out to our Network we have yet to assess the extent to which this has been successful (in fact, few of our organizational partners are our Followers, although some individuals from those organizations may be). Although we thought that Twitter and Facebook could drive traffic to our primary PLE vehicle – the web site – we cannot say with any certainty that the increase in web site use is attributable to our use of social media. Other tools are available to help us to identify and meet our communication goals (for example, [Buffer](#) and [Hootsuite](#)). With whom do we want to communicate and about what? How will this contribute to the project’s primary objectives? How will we know whether the “right” connections have been made using the “right” information? With more focused and structured messaging campaigns (using the Legal Health Check Up as an example) our communications can become much more effective.

¹ The delivery of a post or tweet to an account’s Twitter stream (includes retweets of posts). Analytics tend to focus on retweets and mentions because they have reach, appearing in the timelines of our followers’ followers, thereby accessing a Twitter segment that may not be following Connecting Ottawa.

➤ DEVELOP A POOL OF FACILITATORS AS INFORMED AND TRUSTED INTERMEDIARIES TO CONNECT CLIENTS

OUR CHALLENGE

For many clients – and particularly among our focus populations - a gap can exist between the point of referral and the point of legal services delivery; clients never actually connect with the services to which they have been referred. This gap can be bridged by trusted intermediaries who are volunteer facilitators trained and supported to problem solve with the client to systematically overcome the barriers to connection.

OUR INTENT

Connecting Ottawa will recruit, train, and pay honoraria to a pool of volunteer facilitators who can be effective trusted intermediaries and who can be matched with clients on the basis of gender, culture, languages spoken, and availability.

PROGRESS

Connecting Ottawa has continued to promote opportunities for multilingual persons to volunteer their time and experience to facilitate access to needed services by our focus populations. Our screening and orientation process includes interviews, information sessions, a positive Ottawa Police Service Record Check appropriate for volunteers working with vulnerable populations in community non-profit agencies, and completion of a full-day of training prior to assignment with a client. This training offers not only a shared learning experience re: active listening, problem solving, cultural competencies, privacy and confidentiality, maintaining personal boundaries, roles and responsibilities, etc., but also creates an opportunity for project staff to assess the capacities and capabilities of prospective Facilitators in a dynamic setting. Successful volunteers sign a Volunteer Agreement that describes the expected relationship between Facilitators and Connecting Ottawa. We have developed a Policy Manual that appropriately manages risk associated with this activity; for example, permitted use of personally owned vehicles while on assignment, and ways to establish appropriate personal boundaries with clients.

Our Facilitators are a highly diverse group, ethnically, culturally, linguistically and in terms of their “Canadian experience” in the work force. Many have chosen to volunteer as another step in the process of finding meaningful paid employment where they can use their professional skills. We are always pleased to support the employment aspirations of our Facilitators and we celebrate with them when those aspirations are realized, even though their success will deplete our volunteer pool. Some Facilitators have yet to receive their first assignment because their cultural and linguistic profiles do not match the needs of the client or because of their limited availability or because there has been a temporary decline in the number of referrals for Facilitator support. Other Facilitators have experienced many assignments and are now in a position to mentor newer recruits.

Our social worker (Erin Fitzpatrick) continues to bring energy and focus to develop and sustain relationships with our volunteers. Facilitators attended a training session in March. Veteran volunteers assisted with the orientation of those volunteers who had just joined us; all volunteers received further training in the new outreach role. Staff

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communicates with Facilitators between training sessions via monthly newsletters and opportunities to meet to share their experiences as volunteers. Our roster of Facilitators is now current, with only volunteers who have recommitted to the program and updated their availability for assignment.

There are now 15 facilitators available for assignment, with the capacity among them to speak 19 languages. Another seven are new applicants who are still in the process of documentation (including police reference checks) and orientation. Five volunteers have withdrawn from the program and one was terminated. We have continued to respond to referrals for facilitators to accompany clients to legal and non-legal service appointments and have also used two CILAT-certified Facilitators (English, French, Spanish, Arabic) as paid interpreters whenever appropriate. During this period Facilitators received 32 assignments. Three Facilitators participated in PLE activities related to the Youth Criminal Justice Act. 46 clients have been assisted by our volunteer Facilitators since April 2013.

➤ CONNECT LEGAL SERVICES AND SOCIAL SERVICES

OUR CHALLENGE

The challenge was set by Thomson and Kohl:

- Develop a multi-sectorial network of organizations with the potential to build sufficient capacity for legal services to work in closer cooperation with community health and social services, local agencies serving immigrants, and services for disabled persons with a view to ensuring a more integrated service response for clients from the our focus populations, and
- Build the capacity to advocate at a systemic level whenever the system itself has created barriers to accessible legal services.

OUR INTENT

At an inaugural conference in Ottawa in January 2011, Connecting Ottawa developed a multi-sectorial network of local service organizations committed to finding new ways of working to ensure access to justice for our focus populations. They endorsed a plan that would add staff resources to the network: a social services worker and a legal services worker that would be available to advise and consult with front-line providers of information, assessment and referral services to people with issues that would benefit from legal services. Our intent is not to relieve the overflow of demand for case management services, but to strengthen the existing capacity for competent case management among our partners and, where appropriate, support advocacy efforts for system-level changes.

PROGRESS

- The [network of partners](#) currently includes 49 organizations: 18 community service agencies, 10 agencies serving immigrants, 11 organizations providing legal services, 7 agencies serving people with disabilities, and 3 organizations that offer placements to students interested in access to justice issues. The project also reaches out to additional organizations that could contribute to successful outcomes and liaises with other networks and coalitions (including Local Agencies Serving Immigrants [LASI], the Ottawa Local Immigration Partnership [OLIP], the Ottawa Sanctuary City Network, and the Coalition of Community Health and Resource Centres).

We have recognized that organizations engage differently with the project; partners participate according to their capacity and resources. To better manage our relationship with the network we have categorized the partners according to the quality and extent of their engagement (Levels 1-3). Organizations in Category 1 are integral to the success of the project; they are fully engaged in decision making processes and contribute time and resources. Organizations in Category 2 communicate regularly with the project,

frequently consult concerning clients, and share their perspectives about our focus and direction. Organizations in Category 3 have expressed an interest in our activities and wish to be kept informed about access to justice issues and opportunities for cross-sectorial collaboration. All organizations receive our communications (information, newsletters, events calendar, etc.), have access to the web site, and are invited to our annual conference and other learning opportunities.

We have met regularly with our service partners to assess how our legal issue awareness and system navigation tools can be improved, determine the training priorities for trusted intermediaries within these organizations, and consulted about access to justice for our focus populations. In addition, we reviewed our partnership agreements with Category 1 to be assured that our working relationships will remain productive.

- Further to our Partnership Agreement, office accommodations and human resources services continue to be provided by [Centre de services communaires de Vanier](#), a Community Resource Centre that is already home to la [Clinique juridique francophone de l'Est d'Ottawa](#). CSC Vanier is the “employer of record” for project staff, manages payroll and benefits administration, offers the security of mature personnel policies and other human resources infrastructure, and provides office accommodations.
- Connecting Ottawa currently has the following staff under contract: Alexandra-Marjorie Derisier LLL, LLB and Erin Fitzpatrick MSW, LLB, RSW. They are both bilingual in English and French; Alex is also fluent in Spanish and Creole. David Hole MSW has been the independent consultant under contract to provide project management services during this reporting period. He will be replaced by Nicholas (Nico) Koenig, BA, MEd effective 1 August 2015.

During this period we

- Reached out to our partners to
 - Raise awareness and promote use of project services.
 - Discuss ways in which the project can build local capacity for case management for clients from our focus populations
 - Share best practices when responding to issues raised by these populations
 - Understand partners’ history and experience when referring to legal services
 - Explore ways that the project can improve this experience
 - Explore PLE and shared training opportunities
 - Determine the most effective ways to maintain productive liaison with partners and other stakeholders.
- Provided case consultation and advice to network partners. Staff primarily responds to requests for service but our lawyer and our social worker are regularly collocated with partner organizations with consultation hours weekly for one half-day at [Catholic Centre for Immigrants](#) and one half-day at Ottawa Community Immigrant Services Organization ([OCISO](#)).

Partner organizations consult with us about hard-to-serve client who face barriers to communication; we provide information and advice but no longer provide direct casework services on even an interim basis - we assess the legal issues and communication challenges, connect the client with needed services, and identify an ongoing case manager before terminating our involvement. The daily workload remains dominated by these casework activities. Although we understand that consultation and advice alone is

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insufficient support for overburdened front-line service providers who are often poorly prepared to respond to the additional demands of clients who have difficulties communicating their issues, by reverting to our original consultation role our staff will have more time available to allocate to training and organizational capacity building. Our goal at this point is to ensure that each case consultation is an opportunity to build the referring organization’s capacity to better respond to the needs of our focus populations and to ensure that case managers on the front lines refer to legal services appropriately.

An emerging issue is that case managers are referring to our lawyer to sign affidavits prepared by or on behalf of their clients. These affidavits respond to critical issues and are also often time sensitive. Our lawyer reports that all too frequently the affidavits are incomplete, inaccurate, or poorly prepared and consequently *not* ready for signature. Additional time is spent redrafting the affidavits (and other important supporting documents) to better ensure a just outcome for the client when the legal issue is dealt with. We will attempt to respond to this issue via PLE and training for front-line workers and will explore the potential benefits of a “forms clinic” in partnership with the community legal clinics.

All consultation activities are logged, with source and reasons for referral, legal and communication issues tracked, and case notes maintained. The extent of our involvement varies greatly: in some instances we are consulted without clients being identified or our consultations are relatively brief, in many other instances our staff is extensively involved with researching a legal issue, determining appropriate connections to services and other time-intensive support activities. There were 220 cases opened during this activity period, 52% more than reported during the last six month period. A total of 642 clients and their families have benefited (directly or indirectly) from interventions by Connecting Ottawa over the past three years. The value of collaborative practice and a holistic response has been demonstrated by the 75 cases that have required a shared response from both the lawyer and the social worker. In 20 cases (to date) Connecting Ottawa has facilitated access to interpretation services, and in 34 cases (to date) a volunteer Facilitator has been assigned.

CASELOAD ANALYSIS

	# Cases 01-06 2013	# Cases 07-12 2013	# Cases 01-06 2014	# Cases 07-12 2014	# Cases 01-06 2015	# Cases Total	# Orgs Referring	# Interpretn Arranged	# Facilitators Assigned
Social Worker	14	28	12	51	90	195	11	3	20
Lawyer	20	67	103	72	130	392	18	16	9
Shared	8	13	13	22	19	75	6	1	5
TOTAL	42	108	128	145	239	642		20	34

The cases presented a full range of legal and social issues. Altogether, 9 different organizations referred cases to our *lawyer* who responded to 14 different legal issues, of which 65% related to immigration, 12% to family law, 5% to wills and powers of attorney, 4% to criminal matters, and 4% to housing. 57% of referrals originated from Catholic Centre for Immigrants; 20% were self-referred. Altogether, 10 different organizations referred cases to our *social worker* who responded to 14 different issues, of which 18% related to health, 18% to family, 15% to housing, 14% to immigration, 7% to employment, 7% to wills and POAs, 6% to criminal, and 3% to consumer issues (12% “other”).

We have presented [two case studies](#) as examples of the services delivered by our lawyer and social worker.

- Further consolidated our relationship with Pro Bono Students Canada (PBSC) by accommodating three students on placements. PBSC provides us with the opportunities to have a more sustained relationship with a student than is the case with interns, albeit for fewer hours each week. Kristina Bezprozvannykh joined us in October 2014 and provided us with excellent research in support for the Ottawa Sanctuary City Network until May 2015. Her extraordinary hard work and dedication were recognized by a Volunteer Award at the year-end reception held by Legal Links & Bridges and Pro Bono Students Canada (Common Law & Civil Law). Monica Befu was placed at Catholic Centre for Immigrants under the supervision of our lawyer. Natalie Jean Charles has supported case work and independent research at our office at Vanier Community Service Centre.

There were no student interns from the University of Ottawa Faculty of Law placed with the project during this period.

There was a MSW (Masters of Social Work) student, Jocelyn Wattam, from Carleton School of Social Work who joined us for a placement from 5 January until 24 April 2015. Connecting Ottawa has always aspired to demonstrate the value of holistic approaches to delivering legal services to vulnerable populations and the collaboration of legal and non-legal workers in collocated settings. This placement provided an opportunity for Jocelyn to split her practicum between Connecting Ottawa and South Ottawa Community Legal Services and to receive mentorship and peer supervision from our social worker and the South Ottawa CLS paralegal, who is also a Registered Social Service Worker. Jocelyn provided casework support, assisted with Facilitator training and development, and research in support of the Ottawa Sanctuary City Network.

- Explored implementation strategies for our *Legal Health Check Up* (LHCU), a flagging tool that front-line workers can use to identify whether the problems presented by their clients may have a legal solution. The LHCU is a comprehensive compendium of 234 problem statements (4,649 words) organized into 13 legal issues and 71 legal subtopics. Trusted intermediaries have told us that in order to provide legal information to clients, they first need to be able to recognize when a legal issue exists – “most of the time we don’t recognize if it is a legal issue unless the client emphasizes the they need a lawyer or if they talk about how severe the problem is” [front-line worker].

Having developed an accessible, simple and versatile tool that corresponds to the taxonomy of our websites, the LHCU has now added problem statements that correspond to the areas of law and legal topics; e.g. when a user explores “Elder Abuse” they are provided with a list of common problems, such as “When my son starts shouting I’m afraid that my son might hit me”. The intent is to encourage trusted intermediaries to take a holistic approach to the complex issues presented by their clients. (See the screenshot, below.)

In addition, our plan is to develop PLE materials that utilise the LHCU statements, initially by designing and producing posters and brochures for the top 5 legal issues referred by our partners and later by incorporating the LHCU as an integral part of our trusted intermediary training and PLE workshops.

Effective communication
Accessible justice

Français

TOPICS

- Aboriginal Issues +
- Abuse and Family Violence -**
 - Abuse and family violence can take the form of physical, psychological, sexual, financial, or emotional abuse. Abuse happens in all kinds of families, including people of all income levels, ethnocultural backgrounds, and sexual orientations.
 - Abuse of people with disabilities
 - Child abuse and neglect
 - Elder abuse**
 - Partner abuse
 - Peace bonds and restraining orders
- Consumer Law +
- Criminal Law +
- Education Law +

Elder abuse

Services

Includes physical, emotional, and financial abuse of seniors by relatives and caregivers.

What the clients may say:

- "Sometimes I am left alone by the people who I depend on for help with my basic needs."
- "I have concerns about how my money is being spent since others have started assisting me with my finances."
- "My son has refused to fill a prescription for the heart medication I need, because he says it is too expensive."
- "My daughter refuses to allow me to have visitors at home and I am feeling very lonely."
- "When he starts shouting I am afraid that my son might hit me."

LEGAL SERVICES
Barbra Schlifer Commemorative Clinic
Offers legal help, counselling and language interpretation to women who have experienced violence.

- Participated in learning opportunities, workshops and conferences:
 - Legal Aid Ontario (LAO) – *Eastern Ontario Spring training*
 - Ontario Project for Inter Clinic Community Organizing (OPICCO) – *Annual Forum*
 - Ontario Association of Social Workers and Social Service Workers (OASWSSW) – *Education Day*
 - CLEO - Connecting Communities Symposium
- Made presentations and collaborated with other groups on complementary initiatives:
 - University of Ottawa, Faculty of Law
 - Using a Holistic Approach*
 - Refugees and Social Interveners*
 - Ticket Defence Program*
 - Presentations about Connecting Ottawa and our services to EDEFO and to South-East Ottawa Community Health Centre (International Women’s Day event),
 - Service Coordination for People with Developmental Disabilities – PLE Evening – *Powers of Attorney and Guardianship*
 - Catholic Centre for Immigrants – PLEs to staff
 - The difference between legal advice and legal information*
 - Sponsorships*
 - Recognizing conflicts of interest*
 - World Skills Community Leadership Network for Families - Train the Trainer: *What Parents Should Know About that Youth Criminal Justice Act*
 - Ottawa Public Library - PLE sessions

LAW FOUNDATION OF ONTARIO – CONNECTING REGION INITIATIVE – PHASE 2

Cessation for Refugees with Permanent Residency Status

Changes in Refugee and Immigration Laws

- Crime Prevention Ottawa (Community Adult Justice Network) – Outreach and Table
 - Ontario Project for Inter Clinic Community Organizing (OPICCO) – *Legal Health Check Up*
 - YMCA-YWCA - World Refugee Day - Outreach and Table
 - CLEO Connecting Communities Symposium – *Presentation*
 - Law Society of Upper Canada – The Action Group (TAG) – *Presentation*
-
- Continued contributions to the work of CHI-COP (Collaborative-Holistic-Integrated Community of Practice) – CLEO
 - Continued contributions to the work of the Connecting Communities Advisory Committee
 - Partnered with the Association des juristes d’expression française de l’Ontario (AJEFO) in support of the opening of the [Centre d’information juridique d’Ottawa](#).
 - Provided logistical and other supports to the continuing development of the Ottawa Sanctuary City Network.

➤ SUBSIDIZE COSTS OF CONNECTING CLIENTS WITH LEGAL SERVICES

OUR CHALLENGE

Because our focus populations are invariably living with incomes below the poverty level (LICO), their access to justice is limited not only by their relative inability to communicate their issues and navigate the legal service system, but also by the costs of actually accessing affordable legal services and translation/interpretation services, and even public transit fares and child care.

OUR INTENT

To advocate for measures that will ensure the affordability of legal services for all persons accessing justice, and to manage a modest fund that could purchase interpretation and translation services that are not eligible for LAO subsidy; sign language interpretation, assisted and augmentative communication services for people with disabilities, and language translation and interpretation services for allophones that are just beginning their navigation of the system (often via contact with a community health or social service partner organization).

PROGRESS

There has been little activity related to this, and given that access to the project fund is intended as an option of “last resort” this has probably been a good thing. During this period the only expenses related to the purchase of bus tickets to facilitate client transit to appointments and ASL interpretation.

At the outset, Connecting Ottawa had identified the need for skilled interpretation and translation as potentially a significant barrier to accessing justice. However, immediately prior to Year 1 of the project LAO announced the availability of funding to community legal clinics to purchase interpretation services. This has greatly assisted allophones to access the legal services they require and reduced the anticipated demand for the kinds of subsidies that we were prepared to make available. The exceptions remain the Family Law Information Centre (FLIC), LAO Duty Counsel, and services provided by Pro Bono Law, where clients continue to experience barriers because of an inability to speak one of the Official Languages. In addition, the majority of non-legal services have extremely limited budgets (if any) to allocate to interpretation for clients. Most commonly, clients are asked to bring a family member or friend to provide interpretation at the cost of confidentiality and privacy concerns.

In our approach we will continue to try to strike a balance between encouraging trusted intermediaries to ensure that clients have access to interpretation provided by CILAT-certified interpreters when necessary without opening the flood-gates to a demand for interpretation subsidies that could be beyond our budget. Meanwhile, we encourage LFO to work with LAO to make interpretation services more readily available to FLIC and Duty Counsel.

We have successfully negotiated the services of a network partner, [Community Interpretation Services for Our Community](#) (CISOC) at a preferred rate that is considerably reduced from their established rate (almost \$70/hr). Further, we have arranged to purchase interpretation services directly from three of our Facilitators who are CILAT-certified. Finally our network partners that provide services to persons with disabilities have briefed us on the high

LAW FOUNDATION OF ONTARIO – CONNECTING REGION INITIATIVE – PHASE 2

costs of interpreters, interveners and other augmentative communication services required by this population. We will promote AODA accessibility compliance with all our partners but will continue to reserve funds to purchase communication services, again only as a last resort.

➤ COORDINATE ALL ACTIVITIES, MANAGE PROGRAMS, EVALUATE OUTCOMES

OUR CHALLENGE
 To manage a project that will move from being “a good idea” to being a demonstration of “good practice” and excellent outcomes.

OUR INTENT
 Our purpose is to strengthen the capacity of network partners without creating another organization, by resourcing and coordinating activities, evaluating performance and outcomes, ensuring that all partners understand their contribution and role over time, and communicating regularly and effectively with our network partners and other stakeholders.

PROGRESS

The project coordinator provides progress reports at every meeting of the Advisory Group, consults with project staff weekly, approves all project expenditures, works with the bookkeeper (at South Ottawa CLS) to ensure the project’s financial health, and is always available for consultation about the many and varied issues that emerge with almost frightening regularity.

- During this reporting period, the Advisory Group met on 12 March 2015 and again on 11 June 2015 (at which the contents of this Activity Report were received). It will meet again on 17 September 2015. The current membership of the Advisory Group is as follows:

NAME	SECTOR	ORGANIZATION
Gary Stein [CHAIR]	Legal Services	South Ottawa CLS
Daniel Gagnon	Legal Services	CLS Ottawa Centre
Christine Sharp	Community Services	CIC / 211
Christine Gagné	Community Services	CMHA (Ottawa)
Aloys Sirabahenda	Immigrant Services	CÉSOC
Michel David	Services to Persons with Disabilities	Canadian Hearing Society
Siffan Rahman	Community Services	Somerset West CHC
Mohamoud Hagi-Aden	Community Services	South-East Ottawa CHC
Maria-Teresa Garcia	Immigrant Services	Catholic Centre for Immigrants
STAFF		
Alexandra Derisier	[Lawyer]	Connecting Ottawa
Erin Fitzpatrick	[Social Worker]	Connecting Ottawa
David Hole	[Secretariat]	Connecting Ottawa

- There will be a change in project coordinator, effective 1 August 2015. Project management (referred to as “Secretariat”) has been the responsibility of David Hole from the outset. He developed the original proposal to the Law Foundation to fund a Connecting Region project in Ottawa and has coordinated

operations over the past three years. With the project now assured of continued funding beyond the initial 3-year term, David has decided to move on to other projects.

We advertised using Charity Village job postings, use of social media, and mobilization of our partnership networks. We received 35 applications, shortlisted seven candidates, interviewed five of these, and engaged a freelance community development and education consultant, [Nico Koenig](#). After studying Physical Education at The University of Western Ontario, Nico spent a couple of years coordinating local and international volunteers and managing community sport projects in South Africa and Zambia. Since completing a Masters in Adult Education and Community Development at the University of Toronto, he has managed multiple roles as community educator, organizer and capacity builder. Notably Nico has taught civic education programs in Chicago and New York, researched innovative post-secondary schools in Sweden and co-founded the first “barter for knowledge” Trade School in Canada. He will be relocating to Ottawa from Toronto where he was the Training and Capacity Building Coordinator for the Toronto Drop-in Network, coordinating and facilitating training for 50 community centres across Toronto that work on issues related to the homeless services sector, community engagement and advocacy. Most recently he has been developing the curriculum for [Jane’s Walk](#) and establishing a community building enterprise that organizes free public workshops run by local neighbourhood businesses, [Skillshop](#).

- All partners have signed a Partnership Agreement that is valid until 1 October 2015. We are currently reviewing the language of the Agreement now that our funding has been confirmed for 2015-16. Proposed amendments will approved by the Advisory Group in September 2015.
- Work has continued to develop and improve administrative systems required (role descriptions, program descriptions, eligibility requirements, work flow, invoicing and payments, records management and administration), and to provide the logistical and administrative support services necessary to build the overall capacity of the Connecting Ottawa Network.

➤ SHARE LESSONS LEARNED

OUR CHALLENGE

To share our experience – good and not so good - with peers and colleagues so that the system of legal services is strengthened and is more readily accessed by our focus populations.

OUR INTENT

We will not only host an annual conference for network partners and interested stakeholders but also to seek out conferences, symposia and other opportunities to make presentations, participate on panels, offer workshops, and poster lessons learned to audiences of our peers and colleagues in community services, especially legal services. In addition, to further develop and inform our network of partners, the project will produce and electronically distribute a newsletter (the *Communiqué*) periodically.

PROGRESS

- Annual Conference – We have typically hosted a conference for our partners and other stakeholders in March each year. However, because of staff disruptions (a change in lawyers in January) we postponed conference planning activities until we had the resources available. In consequence our 2015 conference was held on the morning of 27 May at our customary venue, Centre Richelieu-Vanier in Ottawa.

To maximize opportunities for participation and dialogue we capped registrations at 85 persons. In reality 87 people registered and 72 people actually attended. Generally speaking the event was well organized and well received. Once again participants were not charged a fee to attend because we realize that some organizations in our Network – notably the settlement agencies – have very limited staff development budgets. However, it was disappointing that not all registrants actually came, especially because we had refused many people who had wanted to register. For future conferences we may reconsider charging a fee as a means to increase registrants’ commitment to participate (the principle being “you get what you pay for”).

Participants were asked to evaluate the conference using an on-line survey; 23 people responded. Feedback suggested that our keynote speaker was not well received although the content of her presentation was valued and the panel discussion that immediately followed was “very good”. Participants once again requested that additional time be allocated to discussion, although the Legal Health Check Up small group exercises were rated as “very good”. There were times when the morning felt rushed but on balance it was felt that our half-day conference format is preferred.

This year the conference program was promoted as *How’s Your Legal Health?* and intended as an opportunity to explore the relationship between the determinants of health and legal capability. We also wanted to showcase our *Legal Health Check Up* and to highlight the accomplishments of the Connecting Ottawa project over the past three years.

Kristina Brousalis (CLEO) delivered the plenary keynote presentation, *Linking Health Literacy and Legal Capability* which summarized CLEO Centre for Research & Innovation’s 2015 research paper titled *Don’t Smoke, Don’t be Poor, Read Before Signing*².

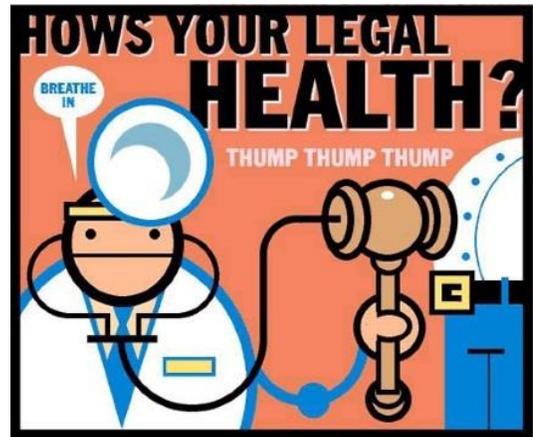
The keynote was immediately followed by a panel of respondents - Colleen Sym (Halton CLS), Ryan Fritsch (LAO Mental Health Strategy), and Jack McCarthy (Somerset West CHC, Ottawa) – and open discussion of the issues raised.

After the break there was a brief presentation about Connecting Ottawa that featured our introductory [video](#) and celebrated our successes. We described our Legal Health Check Up (LHCU) and our plans to build a PLE strategy around its use. Participants then entered into small group exercises that challenged them to discuss up to 4 statements from the LHCU and recommend a holistic response to the issues raised:

- ❖ What is the issue raised by this client?
- ❖ What would you recommend as a helpful response?
- ❖ What are the possible challenges or barriers to implementing your recommended intervention?
- ❖ What How could these challenges/barriers be overcome?

The plenary discussion that followed the small group exercises provided opportunities not only to share legal information about the issues presented but also to share information about non-legal services available to support the client to a holistic solution. The outcome was a realization that the development of “social determinants of civil justice” would assist justice organizations to design strategies that can help people from vulnerable communities to address their legal problems.

- Connecting Ottawa has produced and distributed a newsletter (*Communique*) for our partners and project stakeholders/contacts. However, there were no newsletters produced during this reporting period.
- Connecting Ottawa has produced and distributed promotional materials to our partners and other referral sources: rack cards, posters, and sticky notes.



² Available at <http://www.plelearningexchange.ca/linking-health-literacy-and-legal-capability>

FINANCIAL
REPORT

[1 JANUARY TO 30 JUNE
2015]

CONNECTING OTTAWA		2520	
STATEMENT OF OPERATIONS FOR THE YEAR ENDED JUNE 30, 2015			
	Budget	Actuals	
REVENUE			
2.0 Law Foundation of Ontario			
412 Received During Year	271,008	242,143.20	
412 From Deferred Revenue (Prior Year's Surplus)	-	44,326.89	
	271,008	286,470.09	
EXPENSES			
3.1 Promotion 211/Training			
545 Materials and Supplies	500	-	
615 Travel	600	-	
555 Training/Professional Development	1,000	-	
	2,100	-	
3.2 Website Hosting, Management and Administration			
595 Translation	200	434.25	
625 Website Hosting, Management and Administration	6,000	4,636.69	
	6,200	5,070.94	
3.3 Facilitators to Connect Clients and Legal Services			
590 Training	900	304.74	
620 Volunteer (IPL) Honoraria	2,700	586.24	
615 Travel	1,000	65.10	
	4,600	956.08	
3.4 Legal Worker/Social Worker Connection			
515 Allocated Administration	10,000	11,666.67	
530 Cloud/Mobile Services	2,000	1,877.88	
540 Equipment Purchases	1,500	3,232.35	
545 Materials and Supplies	1,200	2,249.78	
550 Meeting Costs	600	506.37	
557 Professional Fees	1,500	-	
56X Salaries and Benefits	150,600	139,543.48	
585 Staffing Costs	-	351.25	
590 Training/Professional Development	2,500	906.19	
595 Translation/Interpretation	2,000	2,454.26	
615 Travel	5,000	1,935.56	
699 Sundry	-	-	
	176,900	164,723.79	
3.5 Overcoming Barriers to Accessibility			
545 Materials and Supplies	-	-	
595 Translation/Interpretation	6,000	-	
610 Transportation/Child Care, Etc	1,000	-	
	7,000	-	
3.6 Secretariat			
550 Meeting Costs	250	736.60	
560 Purchased Services	50,000	46,773.00	
615 Travel	1,000	570.09	
	51,250	48,079.69	
3.7 Shared Lessons Learned			
520 Annual Conference	4,000	2,700.30	
550 Conferences, etc	1,500	-	
615 Travel	2,500	-	
	8,000	2,700.30	
3.8 Administration			
542 Lead Agency Stipend	5,000	5,000.00	
527 Bookkeeping	1,000	1,039.40	
525 Bank Charges	50	69.00	
522 Auditing	800	800.00	
799 Contingency	8,108	154.99	
	14,958	7,063.39	
Total Expenses	271,008.00	228,594.19	
EXCESS OF REVENUE OVER EXPENSES (EXPENSES OVER REVENUE)	0.00	57,875.90	

NOTES

- At the end of this year, all project activities operated within budget.
 - *Salaries and Benefits* were under budget due to a vacancy in the lawyer position; the unplanned *Staffing Costs* were required to recruit a replacement.
 - *Translation and Interpretation (3.4.595)* expenses appear to be higher than budgeted but all costs were consolidated to this line; *Translation and Interpretation (3.5.595)* shows no expenses against a sizable budget. The change in accounting practice is intended to align the 2014-15 budget with the 2015-16 budget as approved by LFO. Similarly, we have consolidated *Materials and Supplies* expenses to 3.4.545.
 - The *Lead Agency Stipend* is paid to South Ottawa CLS to compensate for their time sponsoring and supporting this project.

- Our financial position at year end is shown below.

CONNECTING OTTAWA	
FINANCIAL POSITION AS AT JUNE 30, 2015	
ASSETS	
110 Cash	117,164.41
120 Due from General Fund	-
150 Prepaid Expenses	-
LIABILITIES	
120 Due to General Fund	(34,702.25)
210 Accounts Payable	(24,586.26)
230 Deferred Revenue	-
FUND BALANCE	57,875.90

APPENDIX 1

PROPOSED SURVEY (RESOURCE GUIDE)



Effective communication
Accessible justice

Thank you for taking the time to fill out our survey. The purpose of this survey is to gather information on your work with *immigrants who are lacking or have less than full Canadian immigration status*. The results collected will assist us to compile a Resource Guide and to provide insight into some of the challenges the community sector may be facing when providing essential services for this population.

The survey has been divided into two sections.

- **Questions in Section A will help to determine which of your agency's programs and services are accessible to non-status immigrants.**
- **Questions in Section B deal with organizational policies and difficulties that workers may face in providing services to immigrants that fall into this category. Your responses for this section will be kept strictly confidential.**

We thank you for your continued support and cooperation.

SECTION A: AGENCY INFORMATION

Name of community agency or organization: (Please DO NOT skip this question as we need to know which organizations have responded)*d

Address*Required

Please provide your contact information:*Required

Does your organization require any form of identification from participants who would like to use any of your programs/services?*

- Yes
- No

If you answered 'yes' to the last question (#4), please select the forms of identification that you require in order to access services at your agency/organization/centre?

- Driver's license
- Health card
- Passport
- SIN card
- Work permit
- Landing papers
- Refugee papers
- Permanent residency card
- Student card
- Birth certificate
- Other:

Does your agency or organization provide services/programs (either with a fee or without) for any of the following people?* Please select all that apply

- Failed refugee/humanitarian & compassionate grounds, permanent residency claimants.
- Those with an expired work permit
- Those with an expired student or visitor's visa
- Immigrants whose immigration sponsorship has broken down
- Immigrants awaiting immigration decision (a refugee claim, humanitarian & compassionate grounds, etc.)
- Immigrants without any documentation
- No, we do not provide services to immigrants in these situations
- Other:

SECTION B: ORGANIZATIONAL POLICIES

Your responses for this section will be kept strictly confidential.

Do you inquire into a person's immigration status in order for them to access your agency's programs or services?

- Yes
- No

If yes, which of your programs or services require you to collect a person's immigration status information?

If you do collect details on a person's immigration status, do you keep a record (either in writing or on a computer database) of this information?

- Yes
- No

Please indicate which of your agency's programs and services are available to all residents regardless of immigration status or the ability to provide identification

Under which circumstances would you share a client's immigration status to external agencies or groups? Please select all that apply

- If an issue of domestic violence is reported
- If the safety and security of a child is in question
- If a person has been issued a deportation order

- If a person is dealing with an issue of criminality
- If a person is dealing with mental illness
- If a person is dealing with addiction issues
- If a person is a danger to themselves or to others
- If a person is intending to overstay their visa (work, student, travel)
- If a person is intending to violate a deportation order
- If I am referring a client to another community agency or organization
- If I was asked to do so by law enforcement or other government department
- Under no circumstances would I share an individual's immigration status
- Other:

Please identify which groups or agencies you would share an individual's immigration status with? Please select all that apply.

- Police
- Canada Border Services Agency
- Hospital/clinic
- Children's Aid Society
- Citizenship and Immigration Canada
- Another community agency or organization
- Other:

Is there a waiting list for people lacking immigration status to access services or programs at your agency?

- Yes
- No

If you do have a waiting list, what is the approximate wait time in weeks? For example: "3 weeks", "18 weeks", etc.

Please indicate if you have a quota for people without immigration status that you can serve. For example: number per day ("8/day"), percent of total clients ("5%"), etc.

Are there fees or any other costs to be paid by participants in any of your services and programs? (Please describe.)

Are there any additional fees or costs to be incurred by participants who have no health insurance (OHIP) coverage, or who are considered just a visitor, or who are only temporarily in Canada? (Please describe.)



Are there any other criteria that a person lacking immigration status must meet in order to access your programs or services?For example: income, age, gender, live within your catchment area, etc.



What languages are spoken most frequently by the clients to whom you provide services?Please select all that apply

- English
- French
- Arabic
- Bengali
- Chinese/Cantonese/Mandarin
- Dari
- Farsi
- Greek
- Hindi
- Italian
- Korean
- Macedonian
- Pashto
- Portuguese
- Punjabi
- Russian
- Somali
- Spanish
- Swahili
- Tagalog
- Tamil
- Urdu
- Vietnamese
- Other:

Has your agency adopted any formal policy regarding the provision of services to non-status immigrants? This is often known as a 'Don't Ask, Don't Tell' policy. It is a policy in which an organization would not ask a person to disclose his/her immigration status, and if such information is voluntarily offered by the person the organization would not share this with any third party.

- Yes
- No

If yes, briefly describe the process that your organization went through on how and why you developed such a policy? For example, why your agency felt one was needed, how was the policy developed, did you receive any assistance for other groups in developing it, etc.

If no, would your organization be interested in working with other groups to develop one?

- Yes
- No

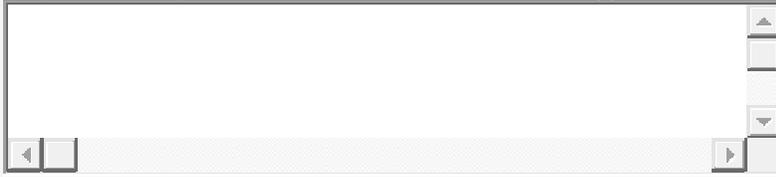
What barriers exist that prevent your organization from adopting a formal policy that assists clients who may lack immigration status? Please select all that apply.

- Unfamiliar with the issue
- Funding rules and restrictions (i.e. funding from CIC, HRSDC/ESDC, or other government body)
- Reluctance by the board/management
- Inability to handle a possible increase in clients or cases
- Such a policy is not required in our agency
- Other:

What barriers or challenges have you encountered when helping clients who lack immigration status? Please check all that apply

- Increased workload
- Lack of resources
- Agency or organization policies that prohibit it
- Difficulties in identifying where to refer such clients so they can get the help they need
- Funding restrictions that do not allow services to be provided to immigrants lacking status. Example: funding from Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) or Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC, formerly HRSDC)
- Other:

Do you have any other comments on this issue, or suggestions on how we can improve the survey?



Who else do you think should complete this survey? Example: a colleague, a supervisor/manager, etc. If you can, please include their contact information.

APPENDIX 2

CASE STUDIES

AALIYAH

REASON FOR REFERRAL Aaliyah is an Arabic-speaking refugee from Gharb Darfur in Western Sudan. She speaks limited English but understands it fairly well. She has applied for permanent resident status on humanitarian and compassionate (H&C) grounds; the application is still pending. She was referred by a social worker at The Ottawa Hospital. She has been diagnosed with multiple myeloma and associated acute renal failure. The hospital administration will no longer absorb the costs of her outpatient dialysis and prescription medications, including expensive injectable chemotherapy. Aaliyah has no health insurance and has no means to pay for her treatment. An additional legal and financial pressure relates to a \$350 ticket issued to Aaliyah by the hospital for parking in a restricted area during a dialysis treatment.

ASSESSMENT Aaliyah is critically ill with cancer and her kidneys are shutting down. Continued treatment is essential. Current income is insufficient to pay for outpatient care and inpatient care is not an option. Although she is eligible for care under the Interim Federal Health (IFH) program she is classified as Type 4, which limits her benefits to PHPS prescription medications (“*only if required to prevent or treat a disease posing a risk to public health or to treat a condition of public safety concern*”).³ The Immigrant and Refugee Board (IRB) may refuse all services under the Refugee Protection Claimant Document – a ‘medical refusal’ based on evidence that Aaliyah “might reasonably be expected to cause excessive demand on health or social services”. Aaliyah’s stress levels are high and she has limited social supports. Her financial stresses are further complicated by the inability to pay the outstanding parking ticket fine.

ACTIONS TAKEN

- Referred Aaliyah to la [Clinique juridique francophone de l'Est d'Ottawa](#) (CJFEO) for legal advice.
- CJFEO provided a letter and medical documentation to request “Ministerial Discretion” and reclassification to a Type 2 IFH plan that would include prescription drugs and dialysis. A volunteer Facilitator accompanied Aaliyah to medical appointments to gather the necessary documentation.
- Referred Aaliyah to [South-East Ottawa Community Health Centre](#) for primary health care/management and counselling, home support services, and to facilitate an application for benefits available under the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) and for hospice care when needed.
- Supported Aaliyah to respond to the parking ticket by requesting a trial, thereby deferring any payment of a penalty for at least six months. Referred Aaliyah to [Reach Canada](#) for pro bono legal advice on this issue (since community legal clinics do not provide this service).
- Liaised with Aaliyah’s settlement counsellor at [Catholic Centre for Immigrants](#) regarding ongoing case management.

OUTCOMES

- The Ottawa Hospital is now billing the IFH program for costs related to Aaliyah’s drug treatment and dialysis.
- Aaliyah is awaiting a trial date related to the parking ticket.

³ [Interim Federal Health Program: Summary of Benefits](#)

- Aaliyah has access to counselling supports and an application has been made to ODSP to try and relieve at least some of her financial stresses.
- Aaliyah remains in critical condition and will require palliative care at some point.

COMMENTARY This case is a reminder of the complexity of issues faced by many refugees in Canada. Aside from the language and cultural differences, precarious employment, unaffordable housing, and family issues, a serious health problem can be crippling financially as well as medically. Negotiating immigration, health care and social service systems can be daunting even for people who are literate and able to speak English or French. Simple misunderstandings (like where to park) can mushroom into significant life events. Hospitals (and other institutions that operate with restricted budgets) may provide excellent care but only at a price for vulnerable persons who lack health insurance coverage. Aaliyah's case illustrates the issues addressed by the Supreme Court of Canada when it declared cuts to the IFH program unconstitutional. (The federal government has filed an appeal of this decision.)

MAY LE KYAW

REASON FOR REFERRAL May Le Kyaw is registered in Canada as a refugee from Burma. She moved to England when she was 8 and is a British citizen. Although her mother tongue is Myanma, she is Deaf and communicates using British Sign Language (BSL). She is literate in English. May Le Kyaw was referred by the Canadian Hearing Society because she wanted to change the Birth Certificate for her Canadian-born daughter.

ASSESSMENT May Le Kyaw's hearing disability has made her vulnerable to controlling family members who have acted as interpreters for critical life events during her stay in Canada. Pregnant, she and her Deaf Laotian husband arrived as visitors to see her mother and brother living in Ottawa and extended their stay at the mother's insistence. May Le Kyaw's daughter was born at an Ottawa hospital with her brother interpreting and completing the birth registration on her behalf but using a fictitious name. The brother also applied for refugee status for her and her husband but again used fictitious names. In consequence all of May Le Kyaw's primary documents in Canada are in another name, as are those of her husband and daughter. To change her daughter's Birth Certificate she will need to first establish her true identity and that she is the biological mother. Her husband has left Canada and now resides in Thailand. He too will need to provide documentary evidence of paternity if he is to be included in the birth registration. These steps will have to be taken without the interference of May Le Kyaw's brother who has his own reasons for wanting to avoid contact with immigration authorities. The brother is reported to have intercepted correspondence about appointments and hearings related to her immigration status; in consequence May Le Kyaw is uncertain whether the Canadian Border Services Agency (CBSA) will have cause to intervene when she begins the document verification process.

ACTIONS TAKEN

- We investigated and determined that May Le Kyaw's immigration status was not under active review. No hearings or other time sensitive events had been missed.
- We initiated the document verification process: obtaining primary documents that showed May Le Kyaw's true identity (a UK Naturalization Certificate, student ID cards, etc.) and DNA maternity testing results.
- We documented the efforts made (unsuccessfully) to meaningfully communicate with the Deaf husband in Thailand and to obtain DNA paternity test results.
- We normalized May Le Kyaw's communications with the systems she was attempting to navigate by declaring that our lawyer would be the only recognized correspondent on document verification issues (not

the brother) and that interpretation required May Le Kyaw's prior approval (again, not the brother or any other family member that may not act in her or her daughter's best interests).

- We referred May Le Kyaw to [Immigrant Women's Services Ottawa](#) (IWSO) for counselling and settlement services supports. This agency has access to interpretation services.

OUTCOMES

- My Le Kyaw's dependency on her family has lessened. Counselling and interpretation supports continue to be available from Canadian Hearing Society and IWSO is available to provide case management services related to immigration issues. If immigration law services are required, she will be referred to South Ottawa Community Legal Services.
- The document validation process is ongoing. May Le Kyaw needs to provide evidence that she is living in her true identity for a longer period of time before her daughter's Birth Certificate can be altered.
- My Le Kyaw has de facto sole custody of her daughter.

COMMENTARY

This case illustrates some of the vulnerabilities of Deaf persons who require the assistance of interpreters and interveners to interact with services. Without aural clues My Le Kyaw experiences significant communication challenges. For example, in our face-to-face interactions with her she would share information with a Canadian Hearing Society (CHS) counsellor who had some understanding of British Sign Language; the CHS counsellor would relay the information to an Ontario Interpretation Service (OIS) interpreter using American Sign Language; the OIS interpreter would relay the information to our lawyer using speech. It was difficult to unravel the complexities of the case and clarify the myriad of identity issues using such convoluted exchanges. Nevertheless, it is clear under AODA that organizations have an obligation to accommodate Deaf, deaf, deafened and hard of hearing clients when they access their services. If the hospital maternity unit had taken more care to inform My Le Kyew about her parental rights and the birth registration process there would have been no need to change the Birth Certificate. Further, My Le Kyew's mother and brother fraudulently intervened to apply for refugee status on her behalf using a fictitious name, apparently without her knowledge, and exposed her to unwarranted risks. All too frequently service providers – including the IRB – request that people bring family members or friends to interpret if they have difficulty understanding the process in English or French, with no guarantees that accurate information will be relayed.