

GTA LEGAL CLINICS' TRANSFORMATION PROJECT

Monthly Newsletter

March 2014

Building a New Model of Service Delivery

Now that the research phase of the transformation project is complete, we are at a critical and very exciting turning point in the work plan. After many months of collecting and analyzing data, the Steering Committee turned to the task of distilling that information and imagining how it could be used to develop a new model of legal clinic service delivery.

This process started by looking at best practices, not only in the research, but also in the current ways that we deliver services. We looked at what is working well, what we want to protect and expand on in the current system, as well as what we want to change and how best practices from other models may be incorporated. We also took stock of the gaps in service and discussed ways that we could fill those.

The Steering Committee created and committed to a set of 30 Principles, which include:

- working in teams because that allows for staff to better support each other;
- specialization in an area of law gives staff the ability to provide more in depth service;
- flexibility in our structures allows for professional development and for staff to rotate or change the areas of law in which they specialize;
- flexibility also allows for ongoing changes in programming responsive to community needs;
- we need dedicated community development and advice staff;
- we need to provide core areas of law so that the same service can be accessed through a clients' local clinic no matter where they live;
- the need for formalized community partnerships to provide gateways for clinic services; and
- local community governance must continue to be an integral component of the system.

The complete Principles document can be read here: www.gtaclinics.ca/the-model.

Building upon these Principles, we imagined what they could begin to look like in practice. We added a layer to the Principles in the form of Decision Points that are accompanied by a more descriptive Discussion Paper and organized into four broad areas: Relationship to Community; Transforming Service Delivery; Community Partnerships & Access Points; and Clinic Structure.

The Decision Points and Discussion Paper can read here: www.gtaclinics.ca/the-model.

The Steering Committee discussed, debated, amended, and adopted the set of decision points at the full day retreat at the end of March.

Next Steps

Following from the decision points, the Steering Committee is now developing a sample organizational chart to show what a typical model general service legal clinic could look like. All components of the model clinic stem from the principles and decision points, for instance, the structure will be built on the main areas of law and the teams that will deliver these services. Which areas of law and the size of the teams will have implications on how big clinics need to be. This in turn has an impact on how many clinics there will be across the GTA. The Steering Committee will be taking all this into account as they think about, discuss, and decide on model recommendations.

At the next meeting, the Steering Committee will be asked to review and adopt a detailed updated project time line.

All project documents can be found at www.gtaclinics.ca.

Recapping Communication and Decision Making

The project has been structured in a way that seeks to maximize input and communication from all clinics and communities. The discovery process has followed incremental steps. As research is gathered and outcomes are learned, the expectation has been that the Steering Committee members communicate with their respective clinics and boards of directors and reports the input back. Similarly the Board meetings our Project Leads have attended and the staff meetings they have organized have given more input into the process. At the end everyone should see the outcome as the next logical step in a series of decisions they have seen unfold over the past several months.

Now that we are at the stage of decision making, it is important to remember to keep the communication flowing both ways. Steering Committee members must feel empowered to move the process forward by making recommendations based on input from their clinic and their community. As well, when it is time for the boards of directors to review and approve the final draft of the report, they should already be familiar with the recommendations in it, having had those prior opportunities to contribute.

If you have questions about the process, the data or the results so far please give your feedback through the input link here: www.gtaclinics.ca/your-input.