



September 15, 2015

**Update Report
TAG – The Action Group on Access to Justice**

RECENT ACTIVITIES

Canadian National Exhibition

TAG coordinated an access to justice booth at the Canadian National Exhibition (CNE) on August 28th and September 3rd. The booth provided an opportunity to distribute a range of access to justice materials from the Law Society, Community Legal Education Ontario (CLEO), Legal Aid Ontario and the Law Commission of Ontario. Representatives from these organizations were also involved in staffing the booth and administering a short survey on iPads. This initiative serves as a public engagement pilot that will be refined and field-tested in sites across Ontario over the coming months. The ultimate goal is to increase circulation of plain language legal information and learn more about how the public manages law in their lives. Findings from the CNE survey will be shared this fall.

Family Dispute Resolution Week

Premier Kathleen Wynne has declared November 23-27, 2015 Family Dispute Resolution Week. Family Dispute Resolution Institute of Ontario (FDRIO) is a new non-profit organization of professionals that brings together a broad spectrum of dispute resolution services to families experiencing conflict. It aims to increase access to justice for families by providing the public with cohesive, affordable dispute resolution options. TAG is assisting with coordination, communications and program development including an academic panel session on November 25th at the Law Society. The panel will feature empirical research from CLEO and Osgoode Hall Law School. It is anticipated that involvement with FDRIO will advance the goals of related in-progress and in-development clusters focused on family law.

Reference Group

TAG is guided by the Reference Group, a selection of approximately 28 senior justice thought leaders from across the access to justice landscape. The Reference Group enhances TAG's network, builds its capacity, and identifies gaps that can be addressed through collaborative initiatives known as "clusters". The tenth meeting of the Reference Group is scheduled for September 17th.

CLUSTERS

Targeted Legal Services

“Targeted Legal Services & Access to Justice: We Are All Pieces of the Puzzle” is a series of three symposia organized by TAG, Social Justice Tribunals Ontario and the Law Society of Upper Canada. On September 16, the third and final symposium in this series will look to diverse panellists for practical insights on the business of providing legal services under a limited scope retainer. Archived webcasts from this series are available online.¹

Public Legal Information (PLE)

This cluster will facilitate information sharing and collaboration among PLE organizations in order to enhance impact and reduce duplication of resources. Emphasis will be placed on improving access to justice for low-income and disadvantaged communities. Cluster activities will be informed by CLEO’s Mapping Public Legal Education and Information in Ontario report which will be released in late 2015. The report found that with nearly 1700 PLE resources produced by approximately 180 providers there is significant need for greater coordination and collaboration among PLE providers. A meeting of strategic research advisors for this report will be held on October 5th at the Law Society. Outcomes from this meeting will inform future activities within this cluster.

Family Law Online - Shared Steps

Led by CLEO, Shared Steps brings together the Ontario Ministry of the Attorney General, the Ontario Superior Court of Justice, the Ontario Court of Justice, Social Justice Tribunals of Ontario, the Ontario Bar Association, Legal Aid Ontario, the Law Society of Upper Canada and a number of community legal clinics. This online resource will produce practical legal information that is accessible to the public and trusted intermediaries. Currently efforts are focused on finalizing content and developing a branding strategy to secure partners in the Shared Steps network. A presentation on TAG’s role in advancing Shared Steps will be made at the Innovation in Access to Justice Conference taking place in Montreal from October 1-2. Information about the conference can be found online.²

Access to Justice in Rural and Remote Libraries

Working with the Community Advocacy & Legal Centre, CLEO, LibraryCo Inc. and the Rural and Remote Access to Justice Boldness Project, this cluster will enhance the capacity of licensees and engage public, courthouse and academic law librarians to increase access to legal information and quality referrals to accessible clinics across Ontario. TAG will host a facilitated session on October 29th at the Law Society. The meeting aims to develop solutions to

¹ <https://www.lsuc.on.ca/targeted-legal-services/>

² <http://iaj2015.openum.ca/>

make legal information more accessible in rural community libraries. BC Courthouse librarian Janet Freeman will provide a keynote presentation and Legal Innovation Zone Executive Director Chris Bentley will also provide remarks.

Mental Health & Wellness

Currently there is a limited amount of training for licensees who work with clients that have mental health issues. This poses critical questions about how to proceed when there are concerns about a client's capacity and competency. Working in coordination with the Law Society's recently established Task Force to Create a Strategy to Promote Wellness and Address Mental Health and Addictions Issues, Legal Aid Ontario, Pro Bono Law Ontario, the Advocates' Society, the Ontario Bar Association and others, this cluster will respond to professional and ethical issues faced by licensees.

This response will be guided by outcomes related to a conference co-organized with the Canadian Institute for the Administration of Justice. Scheduled for November 20th at the Law Society, the program for this event will examine how justice professionals can establish self-care habits in ethically challenging and emotionally demanding work environments. Dr. David Goldbloom from the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH) will provide a keynote presentation. Current panellists include Dr. Graham Glancy (University of Toronto) and Dr. Deborah Goodman (Children's Aid Society of Toronto).