



The *Alberta Legal Services Mapping Project (ALSMP)* is a province wide project aimed providing an understanding of the public’s legal needs and the current state of legal service provision. <http://cfci-fcjc.org/research/mapping-en.php>

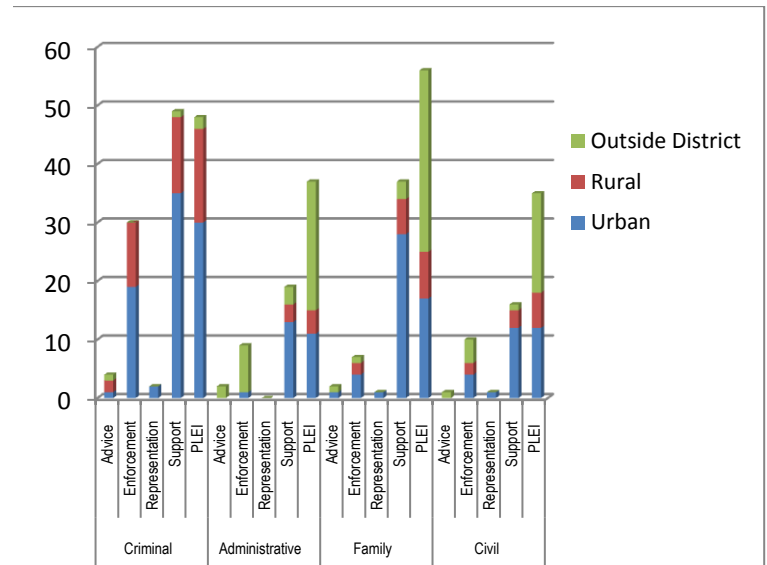
Medicine Hat Judicial District – SUMMARY OF KEY POINTS

The goals of the ALSMP are to:

- Collect and share information about existing legal services in Alberta.
- Gain a better understanding about the characteristics of people and communities across Alberta and their legal needs.
- Identify strengths and gaps in current legal service delivery and resources.
- Strengthen relationships between legal service providers through the sharing of knowledge and expertise.

All legal services were classified by the types of service available (advice, enforcement, representation, support and PLEI) and area of law (criminal, administrative, family and civil). Although this District has a good range of services (Table 1), there is a need to further develop their capacity.

Table 1 – Services by Area of Law



The Medicine Hat Judicial District

- The annual population growth has varied from 0% to 9%, averaging 2.2% a year for the past 10 years.
- The urban centre is the City of Medicine Hat, which currently has a population of approximately 61,097. Brooks, the second largest community in this District, has a population of 12,498.
- The total population of the Judicial District is approximately 97,250.
- The three largest employers by industry are: retail, health care & social assistance, and construction.
- The unemployment rate of residents of this District varies from 7.7% in Medicine Hat to 3% in Brooks

Understanding Legal Needs in the Medicine Hat Judicial District

There are three groups for which there is a need for specialized legal and related services:

Existing Legal Services

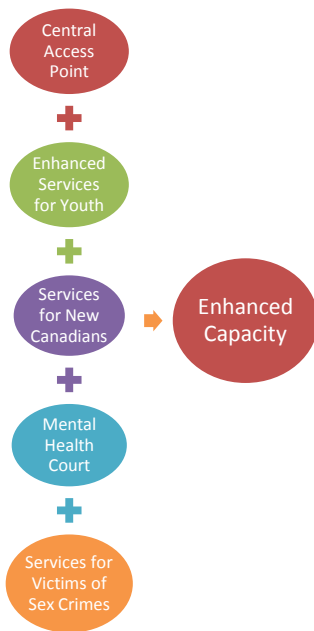
Of the 181 services that were mapped:

- 65 were sole purpose legal services.
- 59 offered legal as well as social or health components.
- 57 were related social and health services.

- Gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered people.
- New Canadians, particularly TFWs.
- People who have been impacted by domestic violence; victims and perpetrators.

Gaps and Priorities in Meeting Legal Needs

The gaps in legal service provision in the Medicine Hat Judicial District can be grouped into five categories, all of which are related to enhancing the capacity of existing services.



Challenges to Filling Legal Gaps

The most significant challenges that legal service providers face in filling these gaps are;

- lack of funding and resources, and
- philosophies and approaches to criminal law.

Improving Legal Service Delivery

Good Practices to Build On

- The provision of PLEI
- Networking among service providers

Creative Approaches

- Citizen Response to Abuse and Neglect of Elders (CRANE)
- Housing First and the Damp Mat Project
- Citizen Advocacy

Recommendations

Based on research findings we make 15 recommendations aimed at:

- supporting good practices,
- removing barriers, and
- filling gaps in legal services.

These are presented in Section 8 of the Report.

Where to Begin: Suggestions for Funders

The suggestion for legal services funders to focus on in order to have the greatest impact in removing barriers and filling gaps is:

- The creation of broad-based, one-stop entry point (such as a LInC and/or community clinic).

Some examples of other recommendations that ALF and Alberta Justice may choose to prioritize are:

1. Enhance victim's services by increasing Citizen Advocacy, SARC and/or JHS' capacity.
2. Consider proposals from existing organizations for funding staff positions for professionals who specialize in offering legal advice as well as support to children and youth who are in conflict with the law and their families.
3. Enhance networking opportunities for government and non-government services.
4. Increase access to free legal advice and representation by providing funding for law students to gain experience by working for terms (eg. Summer) for LAA.

Addressing any of these recommendations will have a significant positive impact on legal service delivery in the District.