


MULTI-DISCIPLINARY LEGAL PROBLEM RESOLUTION: SURVEY RESPONSES AND ANALYSIS

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The **Canadian Forum on Civil Justice** (CFCJ) is a national not-for-profit organization dedicated to civil justice reform and access to justice research and advocacy. Established by the Canadian Bar Association and affiliated with Osgoode Hall Law School, the CFCJ envisions an accessible, sustainable and effective justice system for all Canadians.

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A. SURVEY METHODOLOGY

The Multi-Disciplinary Legal Problem Resolution Survey was created to gain insight into challenges and perceptions of models for multi-disciplinary legal problem resolution in Canada. It further informs the discussion of holistic legal problem resolution in the *Crossing Boundaries: Exploring Multi-Disciplinary Models for Legal Problem Resolution* paper.¹ The survey was designed to be short. Survey response rates vary based on several factors but the completion rate of shorter surveys tends to be higher.² There were 16 questions in total included in the survey but no single respondent was asked every question. Skip logic –which allows for the path of a survey to change based on a respondent’s answers—was used to direct respondents to different questions based on: (i) whether they provide legal help to clients; and, (ii) whether they have collaborated with other professionals or organizations from other fields for multiservice problem resolution. With the exception of the first question and the last question, all questions included in the survey were multiple choice.³ For some questions, there was an option to choose multiple responses; other questions were limited to a single response. Questions also included an “Other (please specify)” selection where respondents could key in an answer if they found that none of the options provided matched their experience or perspective. With the total number of questions that respondents might answer and the multiple choice format, it was estimated that respondents could complete the survey in 5 minutes or less. Further, if respondents wanted to complete the survey over multiple sittings, the instructions provided indicated that it would be possible to save the survey and return to it at any time before it closed.

a.1. Dissemination

The Multi-disciplinary Problem Resolution Survey was disseminated through two main channels. Legal services organizations and community organizations were contacted directly using publicly available information from websites and directories. In total, 202 emails were sent through the Simple Survey tool that was used for data collection, of which 16 (or 7.9%) bounced and 3 (1.6%) unsubscribed from the survey email service. In addition to email invitations sent through Simple Survey, a survey collector link was generated to allow anyone with access to the link to respond to the survey. One of the main differences between both methods is that when individually generated emails are sent to respondents via the survey tool, reminder emails can be generated and sent only to those respondents who have not yet completed the survey. The questions in the survey were not likely to be applicable to every type of stakeholder in the legal sector so it was determined that the survey would not be shared more widely, for example via social media, where the response rate and incomplete rate would likely increase significantly and the quality of responses might be adversely affected.

In total, 40 respondents completed the survey over 2 1/2 weeks –20 respondents completed the survey from direct email invitations and 20 respondents completed the survey from a link that was shared through the Canadian Forum on Civil Justice’s Access to Justice Research Network.⁴ The survey could be completed in French or English using the same link, though email invitations were in both languages, and a separate collector link was created to direct respondents to the French version of the survey without first choosing the language selector at the top of the English version.

¹ See Lisa Moore, *Crossing Boundaries: Exploring Multi-Disciplinary Models for Legal Problem Resolution* (Toronto: Canadian Forum on Civil Justice, March 2022).

² See e.g. Rhonda G Kost and Joel Correa da Rosa, “Impact of Survey Length and Compensation on Validity, Reliability, and Sample Characteristics for Ultrashort-, Short-, and Long-Research Participant Perception Surveys” (2018) 2:1 *J Clin Transl Sci* 31.

³ The first question asked respondents to indicate the name of their organization. The last question asked respondents to add any additional information that they wanted to share. Both questions were optional.

⁴ The Access to Justice Research Network (AJRN) was created in 2013 with the goal of providing a platform where justice stakeholders could make connections, share information, identify emerging access to justice issues, and exchange ideas. The AJRN includes a website, listserv and blog. The Multi-disciplinary Problem Resolution Survey was shared with AJRN listserv members. To learn more about the AJRN, see Access to Justice Research Network, online: <www.ajrn.org>.

B. SURVEY RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

b.1. Respondent Profiles

A majority (35%) of survey respondents identified as a legal clinic or legal aid provider, while almost a third (32.5% or 13 respondents) identified as a not-for-profit organization. Among the “other” types of respondents—which accounted for 15% of responses— there was a legal information centre, an organization that identified as both a legal aid provider and public legal education and information service, a law society, library, research organization, government service and an allied agency. Two of the 40 respondents were public legal education and information services. For the remaining respondent categories, there was one respondent each.

TABLE I: RESPONDENT TYPE

CATEGORY	PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS	NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS
Court, Administrative Board or Tribunal	2.5%	1
Pro bono legal service provider	2.5%	1
Legal clinic/Legal aid provider	35.0%	14
Medical-legal partnership	2.5%	1
Lawyer/Private practice	2.5%	1
Public Legal Education and Information service	5.0%	2
Not-for-profit organization	32.5%	13
Library	2.5%	1
Other (please specify)	15.0%	6
Total	100%	40

There was less variation in the age and jurisdictional scope of organizations⁵ that participated in the survey, with most respondents indicating that their organization had been in operation for twenty years or more (72.5% of respondents). Organizations in operation for more than ten years but less than twenty years accounted for 15% of respondents while younger organizations in operation for less than 10 years represented 12.5% of respondents.

⁵ The reference to respondent “organizations” in this discussion is used collectively to apply to all survey respondents, including the lawyer/private practice respondent.

TABLE II: YEARS IN OPERATION

NUMBER OF YEARS	PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS
Less than one (1) year	2.5%
One (1) year to four (4) years	2.5%
Five (5) years to nine (9) years	7.5%
Ten (10) years to nineteen (19) years	15.0%
Twenty (20) years or more	72.5%
Total	100%

Almost half of respondents indicated that they work at the provincial/territorial level (47.5%). There were no respondents carrying out work that is international in scope, while community-oriented organizations accounted for 37.5% of respondents, and organizations with a national scope represented 12.5% of respondents. One respondent indicated that while their direct services were provincial in scope, some policy work was carried out at the national level.


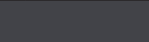














TABLE III: SCOPE OF WORK

SCOPE	PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS
International in scope	0.0%
National in scope	12.5%
Provincial/Territorial in scope	47.5%
Local in scope/community-oriented	37.5%
Other (please specify)	2.5%
Total	100%

b.2. Legal and Non-legal Services Provided by Respondents


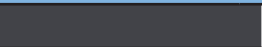

Survey respondents were asked to indicate if they provide legal assistance and, for what types of legal problems. With some exceptions, the legal problem categories provided in the survey largely mirrored the everyday legal problem categories referenced throughout this paper. Respondents were able to select multiple responses from the options provided. Housing matters (60%) and administrative law (55%) were the most common responses, followed by consumer problems (52.5%), employment matters (52.5%), and problems related to discrimination (52.5%). Several respondents specified other problem types, including domestic violence, provincial offences, and prisoner’s rights. The seven respondents (17.5%) who indicated that they do not provide legal assistance were directed to a series of questions aimed at better understanding the types of legal service providers and non-legal organizations that they have collaborated with as well as other views on holistic service delivery.

TABLE IV: TYPES OF LEGAL PROBLEMS HANDLED BY RESPONDENTS

LEGAL PROBLEM CATEGORY	PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS	NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS	
Family matters	32.5%	13	
Immigration/Refugee matters	32.5%	13	
Disability support	42.5%	17	
Consumer problems	52.5%	21	
Debt problems	47.5%	19	
Employment matters	52.5%	21	
Discrimination	52.5%	21	
Wills and incapacity support	25.0%	10	
Administrative law	55.0%	22	
Housing matters	60.0%	24	
Problems with neighbours	25.0%	10	
Medical treatment	15.0%	6	
Social assistance	42.5%	17	
Criminal matters	27.5%	11	
We do not provide legal assistance	17.5%	7	
Other (please specify)	25.0%	10	

Respondents who indicated that they provide legal assistance were asked if they follow up with clients after a problem has been resolved. Across multi-disciplinary models discussed in the “Crossing Boundaries: Exploring Multi-Disciplinary Models for Legal Problem Resolution” paper, following up with clients even after the legal aspect of the problem had been resolved has been contemplated as important for some types of cases and clients. While social workers have generally taken the lead on post-case contact with clients, this question was included to gauge the extent to which legal service providers also engage in this type of post-service exchange with clients after a problem has been resolved. Respondents who selected the ‘other’ option (15.6% of respondents) largely indicated that whether they follow up with clients depends on the specific case. Of these responses, one respondent indicated that feedback is gathered from a certain portion of cases while another respondent indicated that while they do not actively seek out clients to follow up with them after a problem has been resolved, they do communicate to clients that they can contact the service provider in the future if the problem resurfaces.

















TABLE V: PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS WHO FOLLOW-UP WITH CLIENTS AFTER A LEGAL PROBLEM HAS BEEN RESOLVED

FOLLOW-UP WITH CLIENTS	PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS	
Yes	46.9%	
No	37.5%	
Other (please specify)	15.6%	

The same subset of survey respondents who indicated that they provide legal assistance were asked if they provide services that are tailored to specific groups or areas. Of the fifteen options that were provided to respond to this question, respondents could select all the options that applied to their organization. There was also an option to indicate that the organization did not offer services that were tailored to specific groups. A majority of respondents (75.9%) indicated that they provide services that cater to the needs of low income communities. This significant percentage is likely due in large part to the number of legal clinic/legal aid service provider respondents in the survey. More than half (59.1%) of the organizations that identified as legal clinics indicated that they provide services tailored to low-income communities. Legal clinics also accounted for a majority of respondents who indicated that they provide services tailored specifically to address disability rights (64.3% of respondents who selected this option) and a majority of respondents who indicated that they provide services tailored to mental health needs (57.1% of respondents who selected this option).

Across the areas and specific groups of focus of respondents, there was some variation. A significant number of respondents indicated that they provide targeted services for mental health matters (48.2%), disability rights (48.2%), and Aboriginal/Indigenous persons (44.8%). A slightly lower percentage of respondents indicated that they provide services specifically tailored to racialized communities (37.9%), human rights issues (34.5%), and self-represented litigants (34.5%). Other tailored service areas and groups—identified by almost 21% of respondents— included services tailored to French-speaking populations, access to justice as a specific focus, services for homeless populations accused of crimes, services for library staff, and services specifically for victims of different crimes.

TABLE VI: PERCENTAGE OF LEGAL SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS OFFERING SERVICES TAILORED TO SPECIFIC GROUPS

AREA/COMMUNITY OF FOCUS	PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS	
Children/youth	13.8%	
Mental health	48.3%	
Disability rights	48.3%	
Racialized communities	37.9%	
Refugees/Immigrant communities	31.0%	
Elderly persons	31.0%	
Women (equality rights)	31.0%	
Human rights	34.5%	
Gender/sexual orientation	27.6%	
Self-represented litigants	34.5%	
Low-income communities	75.9%	
Aboriginal/Indigenous persons	44.8%	
Civil law reform (non-family)	13.8%	
Family law reform	6.9%	
My organization does not offer services tailored to specific groups	10.3%	
Other public interest focus not listed above (please specify)	20.7%	

The same question was asked of respondents who indicated that their organization does not provide legal assistance. Almost one third of those respondents also indicated that they do not offer services that are tailored to specific groups. Other responses within this subset revealed a mix of focus areas, including mental health services (28.6%), Aboriginal/Indigenous persons (28.6%) and family law reform (28.6%). One respondent each indicated that their organization provides services tailored to racialized communities (14.3%), human rights (14.3%) and civil law (non-family) reform (14.3%).

TABLE VII: PERCENTAGE OF NON-LEGAL SERVICE PROVIDERS OFFERING SERVICES TAILORED TO SPECIFIC GROUPS

AREA/COMMUNITY OF FOCUS	PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS
Children/youth	0.0%
Mental health	28.6%
Disability rights	0.0%
Racialized communities	14.3%
Refugees/Immigrant communities	0.0%
Elderly persons	0.0%
Women (equality rights)	0.0%
Human rights	14.3%
Gender/sexual orientation	0.0%
Self-represented litigants	0.0%
Low-income communities	0.0%
Aboriginal/Indigenous persons	28.6%
Civil law reform (non-family)	14.3%
Family law reform	28.6%
My organization does not offer services tailored to specific groups.	28.6%
Other public interest focus not listed above (please specify)	14.3%

b.3. Multi-disciplinary Collaboration

Between respondents who provide legal assistance and respondents who do not provide legal assistance, a larger percentage of respondents who indicated that they do not provide legal assistance also indicated that they have not collaborated with other organizations than respondents who provide legal assistance (42.9% of non-legal service providers compared with 14.8% of legal service providers). However, almost half of respondents (42.9%) who indicated that they do not provide legal assistance also indicated that they have collaborated with legal service professionals or alternative dispute resolution service providers to facilitate holistic service delivery. Organizations that do not provide legal assistance also indicated that they have collaborated with other types of service providers and professionals, including social workers (28.6%), medical services organizations (14.3%), and mental health organizations (42.9%). One respondent indicated that they had collaborated with law societies, law libraries and other types of service providers.

TABLE VIII: PERCENTAGE OF NON-LEGAL SERVICE PROVIDERS COLLABORATING WITH OTHER SERVICE PROVIDERS

SERVICE PROVIDER	PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS
Social workers/social work organizations	28.6%
Medical services organizations	14.3%
Mental health organizations/mental health professionals	42.7%
Family services organizations	28.6%
Religious organizations	0.0%
Legal services professionals/alternative dispute resolution services	42.9%
We have not collaborated with others.	42.9%
Other (please specify)	14.3%

Organizations that provide legal assistance were asked a similar question about holistic service delivery, although the question did not include an option for collaborations with other legal service providers. Almost three quarters of respondents (70.4%) indicated that they had collaborated with social workers or social work organizations. This was followed by 59.3% of respondents who indicated that they had collaborated with mental health organizations/mental health professionals to facilitate holistic service delivery. A significant percentage (40.7%) of respondents indicated that they had collaborated with medical service organizations, followed by 29.6% of respondents who indicated that they collaborated with family service organizations. No respondent indicated having worked with religious organizations though one respondent indicated that one of the 'other' types of service providers with whom they had collaborated were churches. 'Other' entries by legal service respondents who indicated that they had collaborated with organizations or professionals included: public legal service organizations, newcomer organizations, other lawyers and outreach workers, MPs and MLAs, government ministries, law schools, community colleges, welfare departments, shelters and housing providers, domestic violence organizations, anti-poverty groups, police, food banks, workers groups, public libraries, court registries, and family services groups. Shelters and housing groups were mentioned by multiple respondents. One respondent clarified that their efforts with other service providers mainly entailed client referrals.

TABLE IX: PERCENTAGE OF LEGAL SERVICE PROVIDERS COLLABORATING WITH OTHER SERVICE PROVIDERS

SERVICE PROVIDER	PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS
Social workers/social work organizations	70.4%
Medical services organizations	40.7%
Mental health organizations/mental health professionals	59.3%
Family services organizations	29.6%
Religious organizations	0.0%
We have not collaborated with others	14.8%
Other (please specify)	33.3%

As a follow up to the question regarding collaborations, legal service organizations who indicated that they had collaborated with others were asked if those collaborative efforts were in the form of any of three specific types of actions discussed in the Crossing Boundaries paper: colocated service delivery, client referrals, or internships/student placements. A majority of respondents indicated that they engaged in client referrals while an equal percentage of respondents indicated that their collaborations included internships or student placements, or colocated services delivery. More than half of the respondents to this questions specified other types of collaborative efforts, namely: information and knowledge exchange; sharing of resources; development of community resources as well as consultations and other coordinated service delivery; public-facing reports and materials for clients; trainings for public library staff; working groups; and community advisory committees. Two respondents noted that they had worked with other organizations to integrate access to legal counsel, including with a service provider assisting with mental health matters.

TABLE X: TYPES OF COLLABORATION AMONG LEGAL AND NON-LEGAL ORGANIZATIONS

TYPE OF COLLABORATION	PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS
Internships or student placements	48.15%
Collocated services delivery	48.15%
Client referrals	77.78%
Other (please specify)	55.56%

Respondents were also asked about challenges that they might have experienced when working collaboratively with other service providers or organizations. The main challenge cited by respondents related to funding (74.1%). A large percentage of respondents also indicated that staffing was a significant challenge (59.3%), followed by slightly more than half of respondents who indicated that competing professional standards or obligations created challenges in their work with others (51.9%). Respondents also indicated that location or office space limitations were an issue (48.2%), as were barriers to information sharing (44.4%). Two respondents indicated that they had not faced any challenges while one respondent indicated that they had experienced challenges in all areas listed but had managed to address the barriers to information sharing and issues related to competing professional standards and obligations. The respondent also noted that cross-disciplinary discourse is an issue, as is distrust of lawyers.

Examining the challenges identified based on respondent type reveals that an equal number of not-for-profit organizations and legal clinics cited funding and barriers to information sharing as challenges in collaborating with others, however a higher proportion of legal clinic respondents (42.9%) indicated that competing professional standards/obligations were challenging compared with 30.8% of not-for-profit respondents. Challenges related to staffing were cited as a concern by 50.0% of legal clinic respondents compared with a slightly lower proportion of not-for-profit organizations (46.2%) that indicated this was an issue in collaborations. A similar dynamic played out with respect to location/space limitation challenges. A greater percentage of legal clinic respondents (42.9%) than not-for-profit respondents (38.5%) indicated that space limitations were a challenge. The pro bono service respondent indicated that funding, competing professional standards/obligations, space limitations and staffing were all challenges, while the library respondent indicated that competing professional standards/obligations and barriers to information sharing were challenges in collaborating with others.

TABLE XI: CHALLENGES FACED IN COLLABORATIONS BETWEEN LEGAL SERVICE PROVIDERS AND OTHER ORGANIZATIONS

TYPE OF CHALLENGE	PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS
Funding challenges	74.1%
Competing professional standards/obligations	51.9%
Barriers to information sharing	44.4%
Location/office space limitations	48.2%
Staffing	59.3%
We have not faced any challenges	7.4%
Other (please specify)	3.7%

For respondents who indicated that they provide legal assistance, the final multiple choice question in the survey asked if they track the results of client matters involving a multi-disciplinary team. A larger percentage of respondents indicated that they do not track the results of client matters involving multi-disciplinary teams (44.4% of respondents) than respondents who indicated that they track the results of matters involving a multi-disciplinary team (37.0% of respondents). Several respondents entered written responses through the 'other' option. A majority of these respondents indicated that it depends, with multiple respondents stating that whether results were tracked varied based on the type of collaboration and whether it was a special or formal project versus a more informal exchange. One respondent noted that tracking of client matters was subject to the needs of the client at the time.

TABLE XII: PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS WHO TRACK CLIENTS MATTERS INVOLVING MULTI-DISCIPLINARY TEAMS

TRACKING OF RESULTS ON MULTI-DISCIPLINARY TEAMS	PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS
Yes	37.0%
No	44.4%
Other	18.5%

Respondents who indicated that they do not provide legal advice were asked several questions to better understand their views on multi-disciplinary service teams. In response to a question on the type of multi-disciplinary model that the respondent would be most interested in participating in, a majority of respondents (42.9% of respondents) indicated that they would be most interested in a social work-legal partnership. This was followed by 28.6% of respondents who indicated that they would be interested in a mental health-legal partnership. While no respondents indicated an interest in a medical-legal partnership or a multi-disciplinary family services team, one respondent did specify that they would be most interested in working with a team of lawyers to solve the access to justice problem of unaffordable legal services.

TABLE XIII: INTEREST IN COLLABORATIVE MODELS AMONG ORGANIZATIONS THAT DO NOT PROVIDE LEGAL SERVICES

TYPE OF COLLABORATIVE MODEL	PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS
Medical-legal partnership	0.0%
Social work-legal partnership	42.9%
Mental health-legal partnership	28.6%
Multi-disciplinary family services team	0.0%
Other (please specify)	28.6%

As a follow-up to this question on collaborative models, respondents were asked to indicate how feasible they thought it might be for them to work within a collaborative model to facilitate holistic problem resolution. A majority of respondents (85.7%) indicated that it would be somewhat feasible while one respondent indicated that it would be very feasible.

TABLE XIV: FEASIBILITY OF COLLABORATION AMONG ORGANIZATIONS THAT DO NOT PROVIDE LEGAL ASSISTANCE

FEASIBILITY OF COLLABORATION	PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS
Somewhat	85.7%
Very	14.3%
It would not be feasible	0.0%

In the first of two remaining questions limited to organizations that indicated that they do not provide legal assistance, respondents were asked to indicate the type of concerns that they would have in working with professionals from other disciplines. A majority of respondents (71.4%) indicated that funding challenges would be an important concern. An equal percentage of respondents (42.9%) indicated that they were concerned about barriers to information sharing and time constraints, while 28.6% of respondents indicated that location or office space limitations would be a concern. One respondent indicated that they would be concerned about competing professional standards or obligations. Among the 'other' concerns indicated, one respondent expressed concerns related to the potential to collaborate with others to provide services in French, while another respondent noted their concern about others in a collaborative model being sufficiently invested in working to improve access to justice.

TABLE XV: CONCERNS OF NON-LEGAL ORGANIZATIONS IN WORKING IN A MULTI-DISCIPLINARY TEAMS

TYPE OF CHALLENGE	PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS
Funding challenges	71.4%
Competing professional standards/obligations	14.3%
Barriers to information sharing	42.9%
Location/office space limitations	28.6%
Time constraints	42.7%
We do not have any concerns	0.0%
Other (please specify)	42.9%

Respondents who do not provide legal assistance were also asked if they provide clients with information pertaining to any of several, specific types of services. The goal of this question was to gauge whether any of the organizations that indicated that they do not provide legal assistance might provide referrals to the types of services or organizations that are common within the multi-disciplinary legal problem space. Responses varied. While a majority of respondents (57.1%) indicated that they provide clients with information about community services organizations, responses were on the lower end for medical or healthcare organizations, mental health organizations and social service organizations at 14.3% of respondents each. A slightly higher percentage of respondents (28.6%) indicated that they provide clients with information pertaining to Aboriginal/Indigenous organizations.

TABLE XVI: NON-LEGAL SERVICES INFORMATION PROVIDED BY ORGANIZATIONS THAT DO NOT PROVIDE LEGAL ASSISTANCE

ORGANIZATION	PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS
Medical or healthcare organizations	14.3%
Mental health organizations	14.3%
Social workers/Social service organizations	14.3%
Aboriginal/Indigenous organizations	28.6%
Community services organizations	57.1%
We do not provide clients with supplementary information/materials	14.3%
Other (please specify)	28.6%