

GTA LEGAL CLINICS TRANSFORMATION PROJECT

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

The GTA Legal Clinics Transformation Project intends to develop a model for re-structuring the delivery of services by geographically based general service community legal clinics in the Greater Toronto Area (the GTA Region as defined by Legal Aid Ontario). The GTA Transformation Project arose from a study done for the East End Toronto legal clinics which recommended re-structuring of the delivery of clinic law services and provided some principles to guide that re-structuring. After that report was issued, the East End Toronto clinics proposed that this should be a GTA-wide project and the Toronto Legal Clinic Managers Group agreed.

The study, along with other sources, identified the following weaknesses with the current structure of the geographically based community legal clinics in the GTA:

- The allocation of human resources among clinics does not recognize the changes that have occurred in the location of the GTA's low income population;
- Clinic catchment areas are not aligned with the needs of today's GTA and do not serve our clients in the best possible way.
- As small organizations, clinics are not able to develop administrative or technological systems to work more efficiently and thereby increase their service capacity in response to increasing demands; and,
- There is inconsistency in the range of services provided by Clinics which results in unequal access to services across the GTA.

The Transformation Project recognizes it is integrally related to the implementation of the Strategic Plan developed by the Association of Community Legal Clinics of Ontario, in particular, this commitment in the Plan:

We will collaborate to expand client and community access to poverty law services to address challenges such as changing demographics and the racialization of poverty, evolving service needs, and limited resources.

The Transformation Project is guided by the following **principles**:

- Any Clinic model developed must be community responsive and client-centered and governed by community Boards of Directors.
- There will be a continuation of a full range of community legal clinic services, including direct client services, law reform, public legal education and community development.
- The allocation of human resources among the clinics must recognize the changes which have occurred in location of the GTA low income populations.
- To expand and enhance service delivery and to leverage new resources, clinics need to be larger.

The Project is a joint endeavour of participating GTA clinics to determine the best model for replacing the existing geographically based general service community clinics with a smaller number of larger ones. The intent is to treat the GTA as a blank slate and envision what would be the best way to deliver clinic services to clients.

The Project will not determine operational issues, such as intake systems and service delivery models: those will be for the new clinics to decide upon.

The specific outcome of the Project will be to develop a model proposing:

- how many geographically based, general service community legal clinics there should be in the GTA;
- what their catchment areas should be;
- what principles should be used to allocate human resources among the newly established clinics; and
- an appropriate transition plan that identifies the critical transitional steps and issues, including governance issues.

By signing this Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), a clinic provides a serious expression of interest in the Project and support for its intended objective. At the end of the Project a report will be produced with recommendations and clinics will then need to indicate whether or not they support those recommendations. Signing the MOU does not commit a clinic to supporting the final report as the final recommendations are unknown and will evolve throughout the process.

The Transformation Project will be governed by a **Steering Committee** made up of one representative from each participating clinic. It is important to have a consistent representative, one who will serve as a liaison between the board of directors of the clinic and the Steering Committee.

The Toronto Legal Clinics Managers Group has struck a **Working Group** of eight Executive Directors to manage the project as directed by the Steering Committee:

- Marjorie Hiley (Flemingdon Community Legal Services)
- Jack de Klerk (Neighbourhood Legal Services)
- Christie McQuarrie (West Scarborough Community Legal Services)
- Stewart Cruikshank (East Toronto Community Legal Services)
- Jack Fleming (North Peel & Dufferin Community Legal Services)
- Jayne Mallin (Rexdale Community Legal services)
- Julius Mlynarski (South Etobicoke Community Legal Services)
- Nancy Henderson (Parkdale Community Legal Services)

Marjorie Hiley and Jack de Klerk were chosen to act as co-chairs of the Working Group.

The Project will apply for funding to hire consultants to work on various aspects of the project, including demographic analysis and community consultations. Ultimately, with the assistance of the consultants, the Steering Committee will produce a report which the clinics will be asked to endorse.

We support the GTA Legal Clinics Transformation Project:

Clinic: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Name and Position: _____

Our designated representative is: _____