

Justice Sector Constellation

Synopsis Update

June 2020



Background

The Justice Sector Constellation (the “**Constellation**”) seeks to intervene at the intersection of poverty and the legal system so that everyone facing a legal issue can access the justice sector resources and services he or she needs. The Constellation has been working to this end since April 2013, after issuing its report [*Intervening at the Intersection of Poverty and the Legal System*](#).

Update

Since the last Synopsis Update, the Constellation has advanced each of its Strategic Plan priority areas. The highlight has been the release of the Poverty and the Law Module, an Education and Engagement initiative which is described below.

Education and Engagement

The factors that make an individual or family vulnerable to poverty can also contribute to their vulnerability to legal issues. Conversely, having legal issues can make a person vulnerable to poverty. To increase awareness of this reality, the Constellation developed [Poverty and the Law: Expanding Perspectives](#), an educational module regarding the intersection of poverty and the legal system.

Although the Module is available to anyone, it was designed to sensitize post-secondary students in various disciplines to the issues that arise at the intersection of poverty and the legal system, to better equip them to serve their clients and communities on graduation. An [Instructor's Resource](#) is available to facilitate instruction of the Module.

The Module provides up to three hours of educational content, including learning outcomes, discussion questions, a Reflective Journal that participants can use to answer those and other application questions, and a Knowledge Check. Participants may print out a Certificate of Completion once they have successfully passed the Knowledge Check, which confirms they have completed the Module.

The Module is already being used by instructors in various faculties and departments in several post-secondary institutions in Calgary, including children and youth, criminal justice and criminology, education, psychology, social work and sociology. In addition, content from the Module has been included in the bar admission course for lawyers in Alberta, Manitoba, Nova Scotia and Saskatchewan.

Thanks to funding from the Enough for All Catalyst Fund, both the Module and the Instructor's Resource are available at no cost.

Coordination of Justice Sector Services

Individuals remanded in custody or serving time in custody must overcome many barriers to achieve reintegration into society after release. As part of the Post-release Issues Project, a group of University of Calgary Development Studies students worked with information collected by Constellation members to identify gaps in supports available to those released from custody. The students found that gaps most often arose for those released from remand rather than custody, in part because the shorter time spent in remand provides less time to prepare for release.

To help address these gaps, the students drafted Client Journey Maps for six areas of support: education, employment, housing, identification, mental health and addiction, and transportation. With assistance from a volunteer University of Calgary Social Work student, the Constellation is adding to and refining the maps. Once completed, the maps will be provided as a resource to those being released from remand, Remand Centre staff, justice serving agencies, and 211 and other service providers.

Accessibility of the Legal System

Under the Form Literacy Project, the Constellation is seeking to make legal forms easier to find and understand, and to make support for filling out legal forms more accessible.

The Constellation has been invited to provide input to the Residential Tenancies Dispute Resolution Service (“**RTDRS**”) on barriers tenants have encountered in accessing the RTDRS and how to adjust the language on RTDRS forms and webpages to make them easier to understand.

A working group of Constellation members is preparing a response, with input from vulnerable populations and service providers.

Sustainability

Thanks to funding from the Alberta Law Foundation, the Constellation’s work is being supported by a Project Coordinator and an Administrative Assistant in 2020. This support has increased the effectiveness of the Constellation, which should benefit vulnerable Albertans as the ultimate beneficiaries of the Constellation’s work.

The Constellation is currently undertaking an evaluation to try to gauge progress on its outcomes, seeking input from vulnerable populations, justice sector and other stakeholders, and Constellation members. This input will inform the Constellation’s strategic planning and operations.

For More Information

For more information on the Constellation and its work, please contact:

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