



Evaluation of the Parents Legal Centre

Evaluation Refresh Final Report

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Prepared for:

Legal Services Society of British Columbia

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Executive summary

This report presents the findings for the evaluation refresh of the Legal Services Society (LSS) of British Columbia's Parents Legal Centre (PLC) project. The evaluation refresh uses a similar methodology to the process and summative evaluations of the PLC, which were conducted in 2015 and 2016, respectively. The evaluation refresh was conducted to demonstrate the PLC's progress towards achieving its intended outcomes after two full years of operations. The evaluation covers the project's activities from February 23, 2015 to June 27, 2017.

Delivery of the PLC

The refresh evaluation reconfirms that the PLC model continues to work well to provide the expected services. Other stakeholders appear to have gained a good understanding of and are supportive of the model. Much of the success of the model is attributed to the types of positions that support it (lawyers, an advocate/paralegal, and an administrator), which, combined with the knowledge and experience of the staff members in these positions, allows for an effective and efficient distribution of responsibilities. Having the two lawyer positions allows for distribution of the workload between the lawyers, plus each lawyer can provide coverage when the other is not available (e.g. is tied up with a client). The advocate/paralegal position expands the services of the model beyond legal services, such as by supporting clients at meetings and assisting them with collateral concerns that may be affecting their *Child, Family and Community Service Act* (CFCSA) issue, which allows lawyers to focus on provision of legal services. The PLC's approach to working collaboratively with other stakeholders is also an identified positive feature of the PLC model. Collaboration and good communication are viewed as facilitating the process of moving forward in planning for families and in preventing unnecessary delays.

The PLC resources are generally viewed as sufficient to meet current demand. The addition of the second PLC lawyer has removed any resource concerns expressed in both the process and summative evaluations. And, in fact, there has been somewhat of a downward trend in accepted clients since the project was implemented, suggesting there may be potential for expanding services, given the availability of two lawyers compared to just the one for the first year of operation. As well, this downward trend does not align with the trend over the same time period for an increase in CFCSA applications filed and in Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD) new legal orders, suggesting this may be an area for LSS and the PLC to conduct further analysis.

Achievement of outcomes

Awareness of the PLC continues to grow, with most stakeholders involved in the child protection process believed to be aware of the PLC. As well, based on key informant perceptions, most MCFD and Vancouver Aboriginal Child and Family Services Society (VACFSS) social workers appear to be referring clients to the PLC. The PLC has just recently begun undertaking more outreach activities to further increase awareness amongst other organizations that might support or interact with families experiencing child protection issues.

The refresh evaluation further confirms the findings of the summative evaluation that the PLC is accessible to eligible parents. The downtown location at the courthouse is viewed as convenient, particularly for clients making a court appearance, and has good public transportation access. The PLC's outreach to Fir Square and Sheway, as well as the staff members' flexibility to meet clients or attend meetings offsite further contributes to their accessibility. Clients find the PLC accessible and have a high comfort level in using the services.

Based on available evidence, people with CFCSA issues are accessing the PLC, although when this occurs varies. While some clients contact the PLC prior to court, there are also some parents that do not connect with the PLC until the day of their court appearance or when a removal occurs, and some that face barriers in taking those steps to contact the PLC. The PLC and social workers take steps to try to ensure parents obtain access to the PLC services. Many key informants believe that parents are accessing the PLC early in their CFCSA matter, although there are varying views on what is "early." The PLC encourages contact as early as possible, such as when parents first learn of their child protection matter, in order to clarify concerns and misunderstandings, and potentially prevent escalation of a situation to where court involvement is required. While some external stakeholders also believe such pre-court contact is preferable, others believe it is early enough to involve the PLC when it appears or is clear there will be court involvement. Most clients interviewed believed they had contacted the PLC early enough with about half saying this contact occurred prior to court and about half on the day of court. Based on the PLC database, it does appear that the majority of clients are contacting the PLC prior to court processes and more are starting to contact the PLC when there is a risk of removal rather than when a removal has occurred.

The PLC does appear to be resulting in more parents with CFCSA matters taking part in collaborative processes. Family case planning conferences (FCPC) including FCPCs at court, appear to be the collaborative approach most frequently used, along with the more informal four-way collaborative meetings, both of which are viewed as useful in that, because they require less time, they can be scheduled in a timelier manner than mediation. Furthermore, the advocate/paralegal can attend those meetings that do not require lawyers, further facilitating the PLC's participation, as well as providing support to parents. And a most significant feature of such collaborative meetings is that they provide direction and next steps, thereby helping to move matters forward. Clients supported by the PLC at collaborative meetings found the support and advocacy helpful.

Recognition of the role and value of the advocacy services provided by the PLC appears to have increased from the summative evaluation. The advocate/paralegal position further complements the legal assistance provided by the lawyers through supporting and advocating for clients, and in assisting them in connecting with other services or supports to help them with underlying factors behind their child protection matter. Recognition of the role of the advocate/paralegal and appreciation of the value of this advocacy for supporting PLC clients appears to have increased since the summative evaluation.

The refresh evaluation found that the PLC is able to provide clients with a good understanding of their child protection matter, their rights and obligations, as well as the steps they can take to help resolve their matter. The PLC staff members were most frequently identified as the main reasons for the PLC's ability to provide this understanding. The lawyers and advocate/paralegal are all considered highly skilled and experienced in their respective areas, plus their knowledge of the CFCSA child protection issues are further considered to contribute to their ability to assist and inform clients. Furthermore the PLC is credited as being highly committed to their clients in that they work in their best interest and work towards a good line of communication with clients. Clients themselves report a high level of satisfaction with the services and with the help and support provided.

There appears to be increased recognition since the summative evaluation of the PLC's contribution to the successes achieved in collaborative processes. Although a client's CFCSA matter may not be completely "resolved" through such processes, they are perceived as valuable for achieving some type of positive result that moves the matter forward. The PLC's approach to encourage collaborative processes as well as their willingness to cooperate and communicate with other stakeholders (social workers and director's counsel) is perceived as contributing to an overall more collaborative approach to the benefit of children and families.

The PLC is assisting clients achieve resolution, as just over one third (38%) of the closed files of accepted clients were closed because services were complete and of these, most (84%) had a legal outcome suggesting some type of resolution had been achieved. That said, a fairly high proportion of accepted PLC clients' files (36%) are closed because of a change of counsel and with a referral to LSS intake, indicating these files could not be resolved through a collaborative process. Based on available information it is difficult to assess if clients' matters are getting resolved earlier, although there is general consensus that involvement by the PLC, and particularly earlier involvement, should assist parents in making positive steps towards resolution.

Similar to the summative evaluation, the perceptions are that when clients are supported by the PLC there is more effective use of other service providers and justice services. The immediate access of the PLC in court is viewed as decreasing adjournments to find a lawyer. The collaborative approach of the PLC enhances the ability of all service providers to work cooperatively and more effectively to support parents. And when parents take positive steps to move their matter forward through the guidance of the PLC this too should make more effective use of other service providers.

Available information suggests that net system savings due to efficiencies gained from the PLC’s operation should be occurring. While data are not available to make conclusive statements on system savings, key informants believe this is occurring due to the more effective use of other service providers and the court system in general when clients are assisted by the PLC. The refresh evaluation was able to update the cost avoidance scenarios estimated in the summative evaluation using the most recent PLC data and updated court costs provided by LSS.

Recommendations

- Recommendation 1:** Conduct further assessment on the trends in the numbers of accepted clients at the PLC to better understand why the number of PLC clients has not increased even though there are now two full-time PLC lawyers.
- Recommendation 2:** Better define what is expected and meant by “early” contact with the PLC, and relay those expectations to other stakeholders. Such a definition would assist in clarifying LSS expectations to other stakeholders regarding when potential clients should contact the PLC, as currently stakeholders have varying perspectives on what is considered “early,” and when parents should contact the PLC.
- Recommendation 3:** As with the summative evaluation, the refresh evaluation again suggests enhancing the tracking of client outcomes to facilitate the assessment of whether the PLC is assisting clients to resolve their CFCSA matter earlier and collaboratively. To facilitate this process, LSS should better define what is meant by earlier resolution and incorporate a means for measuring this expected outcome.
- Recommendation 4:** Consider making additional improvements to the project database (beyond the above suggested improvement in tracking client outcomes) to facilitate ongoing assessment of client services, as well as future studies. This could include, for example, improvements in tracking the following: PLC client referrals to other organizations; PLC advocacy services; PLC participation in collaborative processes on behalf of clients; brief advice services (e.g. time spent and type of services); and when in their child protection matter parents are first contacting the PLC.

1.0 Introduction

The British Columbia Ministry of Attorney General (the Ministry)¹ provided the Legal Services Society of British Columbia (LSS) with \$2 million of additional funding over a three-year period (2014–15 to 2016–17) to implement five pilot projects intended to help address access to justice in the province, collectively referred to as the Justice Innovation and Transformation Initiatives (JITI). These projects included the Expanded Family Duty Counsel (EXP FDC), Expanded Family LawLINE (FAM LL), Family Mediation Referrals (MED REF), the Expanded Criminal Duty Counsel (EXP CDC), and the subject of this report, the Parents Legal Centre (PLC). PRA Inc. was hired to conduct process and summative evaluations for the projects in 2015–16. The process evaluations focussed on the early implementation phase of the projects. The summative evaluations covered the entire period of project operations and considered issues related to implementation, achievement of outcomes, and efficiencies. For the PLC project, the time period covered by the summative evaluation was February 23, 2015 to April 19, 2016. As noted in the PLC summative evaluation report, the process and summative evaluations occurred primarily during the first year of the project's operations, which is an early stage for assessing achievement of outcomes. Evidence related to the achievement of intermediate and long-term outcomes is usually not available for at least two to three years. As a result, the summative evaluation report noted that evidence of achievement of outcomes is preliminary and based on the best available evidence.

Since the summative evaluation, LSS committed to updating the four evaluations for the projects that are continuing (EXP FDC, FAM LL, EXP CDC, and PLC) in order to demonstrate progress made toward achieving outcomes.² The replication of the summative evaluations is intended to provide more recent data on the degree to which projects are meeting their objectives and yielding efficiencies. In so doing, the evaluations will be able to consider another year of project operations. With the additional year of data, the evaluations should be able to at least partially address some of the methodological limitations to the summative evaluations, such as the short time horizon and the small number of closed files.

This report presents the refresh evaluation findings for the PLC project and covers the project's activities from February 23, 2015 to June 27, 2017.

¹ The Ministry of Attorney General was previously known as the Ministry of Justice prior to July 19, 2017.

² MED REF did not receive funding to continue beyond 2016.

2.0 Brief overview of the PLC

The PLC assists eligible parents involved in child protection issues with the British Columbia Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD) or a delegated Aboriginal agency (DAA). The PLC is intended to assist parents with achieving early and collaborative resolution to their child protection issues. The PLC has been operational since February 23, 2015 and is located at the Robson Square provincial courthouse in Vancouver.

Assistance provided to parents includes legal information and advice, as well as support, advocacy, referrals to other services, and representation in collaborative processes and at uncontested or procedural hearings. As stated in its project charter, the objectives of the PLC are the following:³

- ▶ increase early access to information and advice about rights and obligations for parents involved in *Child, Family and Community Service Act* (CFCSA) matters
- ▶ increase early referrals
- ▶ achieve earlier and more sustainable collaborative resolutions in child protection cases
- ▶ reach a collaborative resolution in more child protection cases
- ▶ facilitate more productive court appearances
- ▶ reduce the number of court appearances
- ▶ reduce the amount of court time required for list days
- ▶ decrease the number of trials in CFCSA cases
- ▶ provide services that are culturally appropriate to the community

Through the focus on collaborative planning and decision-making, the PLC is expected to improve the efficient use of justice system resources by avoiding lengthy hearings and improving the flow of cases through the justice system.⁴

CFCSA cases eligible for PLC assistance include those in which:

- ▶ the applicant falls within the LSS financial criteria for a representation contract, or is financially eligible under the pilot's discretionary coverage guidelines;⁵
- ▶ the applicant is the parent or guardian, or is standing in the place of the parent; and
- ▶ the case can be resolved collaboratively.⁶

CFCSA cases that are not assisted by the PLC include those in which:

- ▶ a conflict of interest exists;
- ▶ a legal aid lawyer is already assisting the client;
- ▶ the person is not the parent or primary caregiver; or
- ▶ the case cannot be resolved collaboratively.⁷

³ Legal Services Society, January 30, 2015. Justice Innovation and Transformation Initiatives. 05 PLC CFCSA – Parents Legal Centre, Project Charter, p.3.

⁴ Legal Services Society. Justice Innovation and Transformation Initiatives. 05 PLC – Parents Legal Centre. Communications Q&A Text, p.2.

⁵ According to the PLC Procedures Manual, “If the applicant is over the financial eligibility guidelines by no more than \$1,000 on income or assets, the PLC can issue the referral by applying discretionary coverage.” Legal Services Society. Parents Legal Centre, Procedures Manual, p.34.

⁶ Legal Services Society. Justice Innovation and Transformation Initiatives. 05 PLC – Parents Legal Centre. Communications Q&A Text, p.2

⁷ Ibid, p.4.

The PLC is comprised of the following personnel:⁸

- ▶ **Administrator.** The administrator manages clients who come to the PLC; provides administrative support to the PLC, including to the lawyers and advocate/paralegal; conducts intake functions, including screening and assessing potential clients for suitability and eligibility for PLC services; refers ineligible clients to other services, such as LSS intake; maintains the PLC database; provides legal information and verified legal advice; and networks with other relevant service providers.
- ▶ **Lawyers.** The PLC had one lawyer (the lead lawyer) for the first year of operation, with a second lawyer added near the beginning of the project's second year. The lead lawyer is responsible for overall PLC management, operations, and supervision of PLC staff. Both lawyers assess cases for appropriateness; provide PLC services to clients, including brief legal advice at court through duty counsel services; provide representation and attendance at case conferences, mediations, and court appearances as required; work collaboratively with other participants in the child protection system; liaise with court services and the judiciary; network and perform outreach with all relevant service providers; and work collaboratively with the PLC project team to develop and implement the pilot, including any related policies and procedures, and means for pilot improvement.
- ▶ **PLC advocate/paralegal.** The PLC advocate/paralegal provides advocacy and support to PLC clients, including the provision of legal information and support to clients in Collaborative Planning and Decision Making (CPDM) processes, at court, and during negotiations; conducts research and gathers information; consults with the PLC lawyers for the provision of verified legal advice; assists the lawyers in preparation for any collaborative or court proceedings; performs outreach with other relevant service providers; and provides clients with referrals to other service providers and resources.

A brief summary of the process for PLC assistance is as follows:⁹

- ▶ A parent/guardian becomes aware of a CFCSA issue, such as through contact from a social worker or an application made to the court.
- ▶ The parent may contact the PLC through various avenues:
 - LSS intake or the PLC directly: Clients may already know of LSS intake and/or the PLC or may be referred to one of these, either through a social worker, someone at the courthouse (including family duty counsel at court), or another agency. Clients may contact LSS intake or the PLC any time after the MCFD or a DAA has informed them of a protection concern (i.e., pre-removal or when a removal occurs) or at the time of a court appearance.
 - The client approaches the PLC lawyer or the advocate/paralegal while at court, as PLC lawyers also provide duty counsel services on CFCSA court list days. If no conflict exists, the PLC intake process will begin. If a conflict exists, then the client is referred to LSS intake, and may also receive duty counsel services at court by the LSS family duty counsel.

⁸ Legal Services Society. Parents Legal Centre, Procedures Manual.

⁹ Ibid.

- ▶ The assessment for accepting a parent as a PLC client begins with the conflict check. If the client is at the PLC, the administrator will conduct the check; if the client is at LSS intake, the PLC administrator will be contacted to conduct the conflict check. If no conflicts exist, LSS intake then assesses the client for financial eligibility. Applicants whose income exceeds the LSS financial eligibility criteria may still be considered by the PLC under discretionary coverage if they do not exceed the guidelines by more than \$1,000 on net monthly income or assets. The PLC administrator also begins the process of assessing for PLC suitability and urgency. The PLC advocate/paralegal and/or lawyer continue(s) the assessment process (e.g. to assess if the case is too complex, whether a collaborative process is an option, if an unresolved *Family Law Act* matter exists, or if the client already has a long-established relationship with a tariff lawyer). Those not meeting financial eligibility criteria (even with discretionary coverage) or who are not suitable for the PLC are referred to other sources (e.g. LSS intake, if financially eligible for a representation contract, or other legal services or resources).
- ▶ If the parent is accepted as a PLC client, a retainer letter is signed and PLC forms are completed. The lawyer and advocate/paralegal meet with the client to explain the process, the concerns of the MCFD, the role of the PLC, and how they can help them. The lawyer develops a plan, in consultation with the client, on how the lawyer and the advocate/paralegal will assist the client.
- ▶ The PLC lawyers provide legal advice to the client, attend court appearances and collaborative processes with the client, and represent the client. The advocate/paralegal provides support to the client, engages with the social worker, may attend collaborative processes with the client, and links the client to other relevant community resources.
- ▶ The PLC will provide child protection legal services “up to the point that the case cannot be resolved collaboratively or it is beyond the capacity of the PLC to manage.”¹⁰

Besides providing ongoing assistance to eligible clients, the PLC lawyers also provide duty counsel services on CFCSA court list days at Vancouver Robson Square Provincial Court. In addition to the PLC lawyer, there is also an LSS family duty counsel located at the Vancouver Justice Access Centre (JAC) who attends list days to provide brief advice assistance. The PLC lawyers also provide brief advice services to women at Sheway and Fir Square.¹¹

¹⁰ Legal Services Society, January 30, 2015. Justice Innovation and Transformation Initiatives. 05 PLC CFCSA – Parents Legal Centre, Project Charter, p.3

¹¹ Sheway, located in downtown Vancouver, is a pregnancy outreach program providing health and social service supports to women with drug and alcohol issues who are pregnant or have infant children. Fir Square, located at BC Women’s Hospital and Health Centre, is a combined care unit providing specialized services to women using substances and infants exposed to these substances.

2.1 Profile of PLC clients

Table 1 provides a profile of the applications received by the PLC since its inception on February 23, 2015 up to June 27, 2017.

- ▶ The PLC has had 362 applicants since implemented, the majority (81%) of which are female.
- ▶ Most of these clients (80%) are 40 years of age and under, with the largest proportion (42%) being between 31 and 40 years of age.
- ▶ Most clients (78%) report themselves as single.
- ▶ Just under half (48%) of clients self-identify as Indigenous.
- ▶ The majority of clients are from Vancouver (78%), with 12% from Burnaby, and a small proportion from Surrey (4%) or elsewhere (6%).
- ▶ English was the identified language for almost all of the applicants (97%) and only nine applicants required an interpreter.

Table 1: PLC applicant demographics (n=362)		
Element	Number of applicants	%
Gender		
Female	292	81%
Male	70	19%
Age		
18 to 25	61	17%
26 to 30	76	21%
31 to 40	149	42%
41 to 50	57	16%
Over 50	14	4%
No data	5	1%
Marital status		
Single	281	78%
Common-Law Marriage	32	9%
Married	23	6%
Separated	17	5%
Divorced	8	2%
Widowed	1	<1%
Indigenous ancestry		
Yes	174	48%
No	184	51%
No data	4	1%
City		
Vancouver	283	78%
Burnaby	42	12%
Surrey	14	4%
Other	23	6%
Language		
English	351	97%
Other	11	3%
Interpreter required		
Yes	9	3%
No	353	98%

Source: PLC database as of June 27, 2017.
 Note: Not all percentage totals add to 100% due to rounding.

2.2 Cost of the PLC pilot

Table 2 provides pilot costs for fiscal years 2014-15 to 2016-17 and includes a calculation of the unit costs of providing its services in its two full years of operations (Years 2 and 3). For the purposes of the PLC, a unit is defined as an accepted client within the fiscal year; no calculations are made on unit costs for Year 1 as it is a partial year. For 2015-16, pilot costs were \$344,687 and there were 111 clients accepted, which relates to an estimated unit cost of \$3,105 per client.¹² With the addition of the second lawyer, pilot costs rose to \$481,727 in 2016-17 and the pilot accepted 100 clients, which relates to an estimated unit cost of \$4,817 per client.

Item	Year 1 2014-15 Actual	Year 2 2015-16 Actual	Year 3 2016-17 Actual
Lead PLC lawyer	\$45,500	\$120,000	\$120,000
Full-time lawyer	-	\$9,055	\$120,000
Full-time pilot administrator	\$9,450	\$64,741	\$52,914
Floater pilot administrators	-	\$7,557	-
Full-time advocate/paralegal	-	\$52,592	\$65,261
Office expenses	\$2,987	\$6,548	\$5,322
Subtotal for PLC expenses	\$57,937	\$260,493	\$363,497
In-kind: Overhead on lawyer salaries	\$8,242	\$29,069	\$46,230
In-kind: Office space	\$9,000	\$55,125	\$72,000
Total	\$75,179	\$344,687	\$481,727
Number of accepted PLC clients*		111	100
Unit cost		\$3,105	\$4,817

Sources: Calculations based on pilot database and LSS data
 *Number of clients accepted per fiscal year based on case opened date.

The above unit costs of \$3,105 in Year 2 and \$4,817 in Year 3 do not account for services provided to individuals who were not accepted into the PLC. These unaccepted clients do receive brief advice services, either through duty counsel services on list day or through community-based brief advice services. These services are valuable for unaccepted clients in their interactions with child protection services and may provide savings for LSS and the legal system in other areas. However, the costing of these services is not quantifiable at this time, as it was not anticipated to be a deliverable metric, and accurate data is not available on time spent on these services. As a result, all costs are attributed to accepted clients in Table 2 and the unit cost per accepted client per fiscal year is somewhat overstated.

¹² The PLC unit cost analysis is not intended for comparison to costs of other LSS services for similar matters, such as the regular duty counsel service or representation contracts. The unit cost analysis includes costs for LSS overhead, while tariff rates do not include similar LSS overhead costs (e.g. application processing, invoice processing). For the same reason, overall pilot costs are not intended for direct comparison with the court cost avoidance estimations conducted in a later section, which do not include costs avoided for comparable overhead (including facilities, out-of-court activities, etc.).

3.0 Methodology

The evaluation refreshes the methodology used in the summative evaluation of the PLC project and consists of four lines of evidence: a document and data review, interviews with key informants, interviews with clients, and a systems efficiency analysis.

Prior to commencing data collection, LSS and PRA reviewed and revised as appropriate the logic model and evaluation matrix, which are in Appendices A and B, respectively. PRA also revised the data collection instruments to update them, and LSS approved the data collection instruments used for the refresh evaluation. The data collection instruments are included in Appendix C.

3.1 Document and data review

Relevant project documents were reviewed for the refresh evaluation, including any updates that were made to the project manual and charter, descriptions and diagrams of the PLC model, and forms used by the pilot to collect information on its clients and the types of assistance provided.

The data review involves a review of available data from the pilot project database — as well as data provided by the MCFD and Ministry of the Attorney General, Court Services Branch (CSB) — as follows:

- ▶ LSS provided an extract of the pilot database for all PLC applicants (including those accepted and not accepted as PLC clients) from the time of implementation (February 23, 2015) to June 27, 2017. Accepted clients are those accepted to the PLC for provision of legal representation services; unaccepted clients are those not accepted as full clients, but who were provided brief advice services.
- ▶ LSS provided financial information on the PLC, including actual costs for years 1, 2, and 3, which included salaries, office expenses, overhead, and in-kind expenses (e.g. value of office space provided at no charge to LSS).
- ▶ LSS also provided data on the number of *Child, Family and Community Service Act* (CFCSA) representation contracts provided annually from 2011–12 to 2016-17; this information was used to develop a profile of CFCSA cases at Vancouver Provincial Court and that is included in Section 4.0.
- ▶ MCFD provided data to further contribute to the profile of CFCSA cases, including the numbers of family development responses (FDR), investigations, family case planning conferences (FCPC), mediations, new legal orders, voluntary care agreements, new extended family program, children in care, and children under temporary and continuing custody orders. Data was provided for fiscal years 2012–13 to 2016-17.
- ▶ CSB provided data to show some trends in court activity for each of 2012 and 2016, including the number of initiating CFCSA applications (i.e., applications opening a new case) filed at Vancouver Provincial Court between January 1 to December 31 for each of 2012 and 2016, as well as the subsequent applications (i.e., applications filed on an

existing file) arising from these initiating applications within that same timeframe. CSB also provided data on several elements of the applications for each of these years.

- ▶ CSB provided a separate set of data for the summative evaluation that was used for the system efficiency analysis and that is used again for that purpose for the refresh evaluation. This set of data provided the activity that occurred on all initiating CFCSA applications filed in 2012 at Vancouver Provincial Court up to October 31, 2015, as well as for the subsequent applications that arose from those initiating applications in 2012 only. As approximately three months are required for court data to stabilize, October 31, 2015 was the latest time period for which data could be provided at the time of the summative evaluation.

3.2 Key informant interviews

The refresh evaluation included 14 interviews with 15 key stakeholders who have some knowledge of the PLC and could provide their perspectives on the project and the impact of the project. Interviews were conducted by telephone with the following:

- ▶ internal key informants (n=4)
 - PLC project lead, PLC lead lawyer, PLC lawyer, and PLC advocate/paralegal
- ▶ external key informants (n=11)
 - two members of the judiciary
 - two director's counsel
 - one social worker from MCFD
 - two social workers from the Vancouver Aboriginal Child and Family Services Society (VACFSS)
 - one Collaborative Practice Facilitator from MCFD
 - one mediator
 - two social workers providing services to a community organization (Sheway and Fir Square)

Separate interview guides were developed for internal and external key informants (see Appendix C); interviewees received the interview questions in advance. Interviews were conducted by telephone and were audio-recorded with the interviewees' permission to facilitate note-taking. The key informant interviews occurred in May and June 2017.

3.3 Client interviews

Interviews were conducted with PLC clients by telephone, over the period of June 13-28, 2017. Interviews took about 20 minutes using a structured interview guide (see Appendix C), and were audio-recorded with permission. Interviews focussed on the clients' experience and satisfaction with the PLC services and how the services might be improved. A total of 20 clients were interviewed.¹³

3.4 System efficiency analysis

This analysis considers the potential of the PLC to achieve system efficiency by estimating the potential impact of the project contributing to reduced court costs through the earlier and more efficient resolution of cases. Early and more efficient resolution can be demonstrated, for example, by the following:

- ▶ an increase in cases that are resolved without court involvement
- ▶ a reduction in the number of court appearances and/or potentially more effective, and therefore reduced, use of court time during appearances, which should both result in reduced court hours
- ▶ a reduction in the time to resolution
- ▶ an increase in cases resolved without a trial

If the pilot is able to achieve its intended objectives (described in Section 2.0) then the above elements, and thus reductions in court hours, might be expected, such as when one or more of the following occurs:

- ▶ the PLC's involvement at a pre-court stage assists clients to avoid court altogether
- ▶ the PLC facilitates the resolution of clients' CFCSA matters through a collaborative process rather than a court trial
- ▶ the PLC's involvement results in more productive use of court time during the court appearances that do occur and decreases the time required for these appearances
- ▶ the PLC's involvement decreases the overall number of court appearances and court trials
- ▶ the PLC assists clients to achieve more sustainable resolutions, thus avoiding further applications to court by the director

¹³ PRA randomly contacted accepted clients who had not participated in, or declined interviews for, the summative evaluation, and who had a telephone number in the project database. As well, some clients identified as particularly vulnerable by the PLC were excluded from the calling list. The evaluation target for client interviews was met.

Court activity data provided by CSB (described in Section 3.1) is used with pilot data and average court costs per hour to make some estimates around potential savings as a result of reductions of court hours. The court activity data provided for the summative evaluation is again used for the refresh evaluation systems efficiency analysis as it provides a more complete picture of the activity that occurs on a file. As described in Section 3.1, this data gives activity that occurred for CFCSA applications filed in 2012, up to October, 2015. Applications filed in 2012 only include the initiating and any subsequent applications arising from initiating applications. This information was used in the summative for the systems efficiency analysis, as well as to provide a profile of CFCSA cases at Vancouver Provincial Court and is provided here as Appendix D. The CSB data provided later in Section 4.1 gives activity for a much narrower time frame for each of 2012 and 2016 and is intended primarily to show trends between the two years.

Hourly court costs provided by LSS include the cost for a court clerk, a deputy sheriff, a provincial court judge, and court registry staff for provincial family court, but do not include the cost of judicial support services, sheriff out-of-court activities, or court overhead. New to the refresh evaluation is that hourly court cost estimates now also include the court costs for director's counsel; these do not include any director's counsel costs associated with trial preparation.¹⁴

No estimates can be made on any savings related to less court time required for other service providers that may be involved in CFCSA cases, such as social workers and director's counsel preparing for or attending court, as no data is available on average time and cost requirements for these other service providers. As well, the estimates do not include other court-related costs that may be associated with CFCSA cases, such as court registry staff time, or additional costs associated with any increased participation in collaborative processes, such as for social workers, director's counsel, and mediators.

It should be noted that it is not possible to make any conclusive statements on efficiencies gained or cost savings, as insufficient data was available to the evaluation to make conclusive assessments on the extent to which the pilot has actually resulted in such impacts as: the diversion of cases from the court system; reduced appearances, adjournments, or trials; or shorter court appearances. The one year of pre-pilot and one year of post-pilot data provided by CSB is not sufficient to make such assessments. The efficiency analysis uses statistics on CFCSA cases at Vancouver Provincial Court, as provided by CSB, along with pilot data, to make some estimates of potential cost savings if the PLC could result in some of the impacts identified above, using different scenarios. Based on this information, estimates of potential future efficiencies (i.e., cost avoidance) are made based on a scale of success in reducing the number of court hours (lower rate of success—10% reduction; medium rate of success—30% reduction; higher rate of success—50% reduction). Further details on the calculations used are provided in the efficiency analysis section (Evaluation Question 11).

¹⁴ Director's counsel are the legal counsel for the Director; the Director represents BC's Ministry of Children and Family Development, the department responsible for child protection.

3.5 Evaluation limitations

There are several methodological limitations that affect the evaluation.

- ▶ Certain limitations existed with the information that could be obtained from the CSB data due to the complexity and volume of court data, and how various court activities are accounted for on the Civil Electronic Information System (CEIS). For example, the number of adjournments could only be provided as adjournments that occurred prior to the scheduled appearance and not those that occurred on the day of a scheduled appearance. As well, data provided on court trials (protection hearings) for CFCSA matters are incomplete, as some protection hearings may be accounted for in a different manner in court data.
- ▶ As noted above, the available data on court costs provide only some of the potential costs that might be avoided by the project's operations. The hourly court cost includes the cost for a court clerk, a deputy sheriff, a provincial court judge, court registry staff for provincial family court, and court costs for director's counsel but do not include the cost of judicial support services, sheriff out-of-court activities, or court overhead. Nor do the costs include the costs for social workers, either in court or for the time required for preparing for court, or for director's counsel costs for preparing for court.

4.0 Profile of CFCSA cases at Vancouver Provincial Court

To give some context of the environment in which the PLC is operating, this section provides a brief profile of CFCSA cases in Vancouver. The Vancouver Provincial Court is one of the busiest BC courthouses, handling 759 to 991 CFCSA applications annually between 2012 and 2016 (Table 3 and Figure 1). Subsequent applications account for the majority of total applications. While initiating and subsequent applications varied somewhat on an annual basis, both showed an overall upward trend over the time period shown, other than a decline in both in 2014. In each year, initiating and subsequent applications accounted for approximately 15% and 85% of total applications, respectively.

Year	Initiating applications	Subsequent applications*	Total applications
2012	119	672	791
2013	129	749	878
2014	110	649	759
2015	141	731	872
2016	139	852	991

Source: Data provided by Court Services Branch.
 *Includes all subsequent applications filed annually and may be related to applications initiated in earlier years.

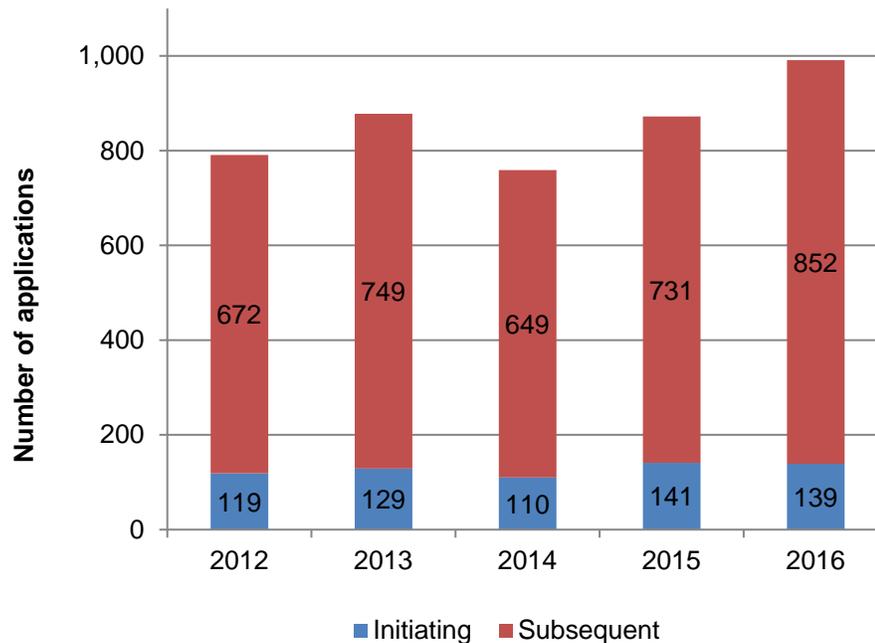


Figure 1: Number of CFCSA applications filed annually at Vancouver Provincial Court, January 1, 2012 to December 31, 2016

Source: Data provided by Court Services Branch.

Note: Subsequent applications include all subsequent applications filed annually and may be related to applications initiated in earlier years.

LSS also provided data on the number of applications for representation contracts for CFCSA matters that would be heard at Vancouver Provincial Court (Table 4). While these data are presented in fiscal years, compared to the CSB data presented in calendar years above, some comparisons can be made between fiscal year and the comparable calendar year (e.g. comparing calendar year 2012 to fiscal year 2012–13). In all cases, the number of representation contracts approved by LSS in each fiscal year is greater than the comparable calendar year’s initiating applications, indicating that some subsequent applications are also leading to representation contracts.

The number of service requests increased in 2013-14 and then declined somewhat between 2014–15 and 2015–16, but increased again in 2016-17. Representation contracts declined in 2015-16 and 2016-17 as a result of the PLC providing services to some individuals that would have requested and received a representation contract. When considering both representation contracts issued and accepted PLC clients together, the total numbers increase for the two full fiscal years of the PLC’s operation. Plus, the contract issue rate is fairly stable over the period shown in Table 4, other than a somewhat lower rate of 70% in 2014-15.

Year	Service requests	Representation contracts issued	PLC clients accepted*	PLC clients with a subsequent LSS contract	Total of contracts and accepted PLC clients	Contract issue rate
2011–12	303	238	n/a	n/a	238	79%
2012–13	311	253	n/a	n/a	253	81%
2013–14	340	261	n/a	n/a	261	77%
2014–15	313	211	9	2	218	70%
2015–16	302	176	111	40	247	82%
2016–17	361	191	100	16	275	76%

Sources: Calculations based on pilot database and LSS data
 * Number of clients accepted per fiscal year based on case opened date.

Looking at MCFD-provided child protection statistics, the number of closed investigations declined each year from 2012-13 to 2015-16 (from 497 to 172), but then increased to 203 in 2016-17 (see Table 5). Family development responses have increased annually over that period, from 1,320 in 2012–13 to 2,490 in 2016–17.¹⁵

Fiscal year	Closed family development responses	Closed investigations	Total
2012–13	1,320	497	1,817
2013–14	1,859	348	2,207
2014–15	1,972	277	2,249
2015–16	2,070	172	2,242
2016–17	2,490	203	2,693

Source: Data provided by MCFD.
 *Includes cases that would be within the geographical area under jurisdiction by the Vancouver Provincial Court.

¹⁵ Family development responses may come about after an initial assessment where there are concerns about the child’s safety, but it is determined that the concerns can be addressed without a full investigation and where the family is willing to access supports.
http://www.familylaw.lss.bc.ca/guides/childpro_ifSomeRepMin/ifSomeRepMin_howMinAssessRisk.php.

Total legal orders related to CFCSA show a similar trend as the CFCSA applications filed at Vancouver Provincial Court given in Table 3. Legal orders show an overall small upward trend between 2012-13 and 2016-17, other than a marked decline in all types of orders in 2014-15 (Table 6 and Figure 2). Supervision orders outnumber both temporary and continuing custody orders.

Fiscal year	Removals	Interim orders	Temporary custody	Continuing custody	Supervision	Total new legal orders
2012–13	195	135	174	44	318	866
2013–14	204	143	174	47	375	943
2014–15	158	105	169	39	262	733
2015–16	219	160	228	78	346	1,031
2016–17	209	177	267	41	331	1,025

Source: Data provided by MCFD.
 *Includes cases that would be within the geographical area under jurisdiction by the Vancouver Provincial Court.

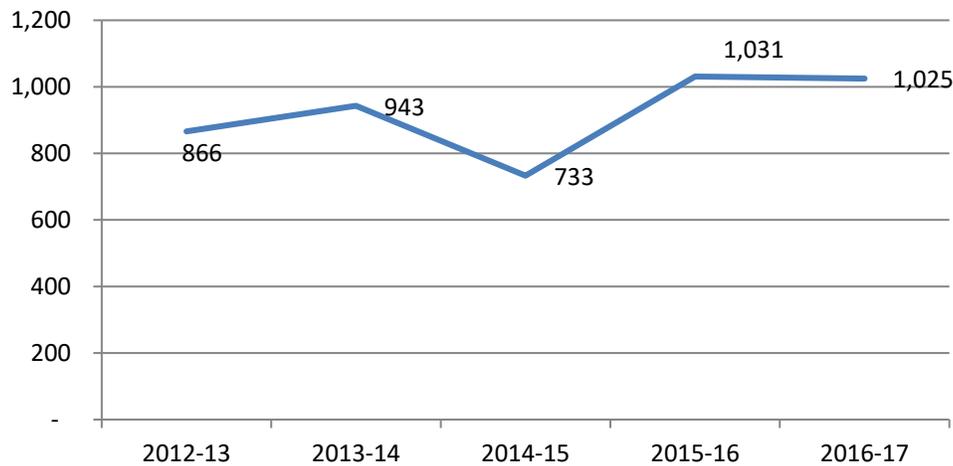


Figure 2: MCFD child protection statistics – total new legal orders*

Source: Data provided by MCFD.

*Includes cases that would be within the geographical area under jurisdiction by the Vancouver Provincial Court.

The number of FCPCs and mediations varied somewhat over the 2012-13 to 2016-17 time period, with the former showing an overall upward trend and the latter a slight overall downward trend (Table 7 and Figure 3). The number of voluntary care agreements has shown a bit of a downward trend, while the numbers for the new extended family program remained relatively stable, other than a sharp increase in 2014-15.

Table 7: MCFD child protection statistics – FCPCs, mediations, voluntary care agreements, and new extended family program*				
Fiscal year	Completed FCPCs**	Completed mediations	Voluntary care agreements	New extended family program
2012–13	190	83	318	36
2013–14	330	113	249	29
2014–15	272	86	255	54
2015–16	280	78	277	36
2016–17	335	70	220	33

Source: Data provided by MCFD.
 *Includes cases that would be within the geographical area under jurisdiction by the Vancouver Provincial Court.
 **Counts may be underestimated due to underreporting.

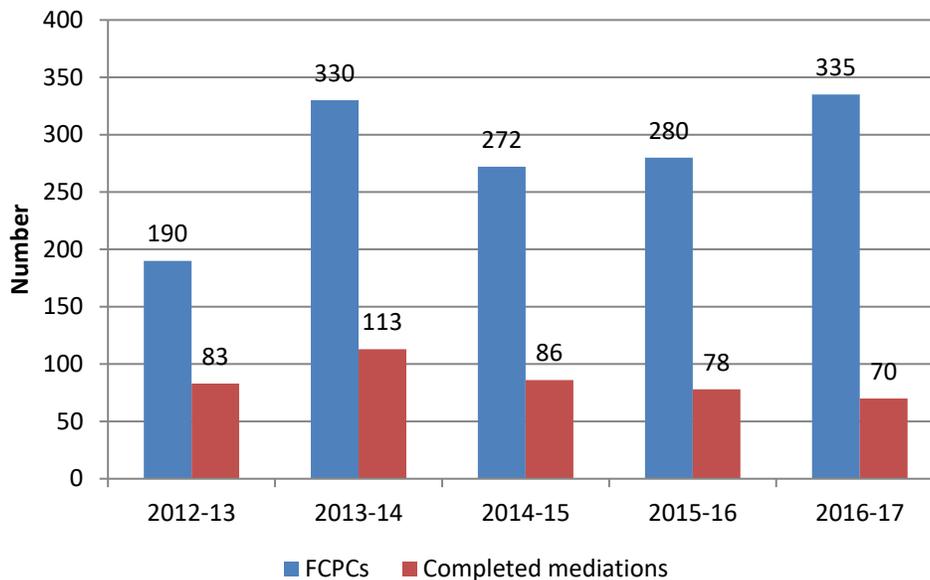


Figure 3: MCFD child protection statistics – FCPCs and completed mediations*

Source: Data provided by MCFD.

*Includes cases that would be within the geographical area under jurisdiction by the Vancouver Provincial Court.

4.1 Trends in CFCSA cases at Vancouver Provincial Court (2012 and 2016)

In order to provide some perspective of CFCSA cases at Vancouver Provincial Court post-pilot compared to pre-pilot, CSB provided some illustrative data elements for each period, with 2012 chosen as the pre-pilot period and 2016, the first full year of the pilot, as the post-pilot period. For each of these years, CSB provided an illustrative data set to show the activity that occurred for the initiating applications filed, as well as the subsequent applications that arose from the initiating applications only within that year. It is important to note that because CFCSA cases can be protracted and lengthy, activity on an application can occur for a number of years after the initiating application is first filed, including additional subsequent applications. The information provided below is only for activity that occurred in 2012 for applications filed in 2012, and only for activity that occurred in 2016 for applications filed in 2016.

Activity on the 2012 and 2016 CFCSA applications is given in Table 8. Average subsequent applications generated per case in just the relevant fiscal year were 1.5 in 2012 and 1.4 in 2016. For the most part, only slight changes have occurred between 2012 and 2016 for most elements shown in Table 8. However, it is difficult to assess the extent that the implementation of the PLC has or has not affected this data, as many factors may affect court activity; for example, for child protection cases the CFCSA dictates the time requirements for certain court appearances. Plus, more than two years of data would be required to detect any noticeable trends.

The average time to the first presentation report appearance is very similar between 2012 and 2016 (1.8 days and 1.2 days, respectively), as is the proportion of first presentation report appearances with an order granted (49% and 50%, respectively), the average time to the first order (12 days and 13 days, respectively), and the average court time per case (0.3 hours and 0.2 hours, respectively). Similarly, based on this data, the proportion of applications that went to trial in the year that the application was filed was very low for both years (0.7% and 1.5%, respectively).

Table 8: Vancouver Provincial Court activity on initiating and subsequent CFCSA applications, 2012 and 2016						
Elements	2012			2016		
	Initiating	Subsequent	All	Initiating	Subsequent	All
Number of applications	119	179	298	139	198	337
Average days to first presentation report appearance	1.7	2.4	1.8	1.2	1.2	1.2
Percent of first presentation report appearances with an order granted	49%	50%	49%	53%	23%	50%
Average days to first order	9	13	12	14	13	13
Average scheduled appearances	2.6	1.9	2.2	3.1	2.0	2.4
Average court hours	0.3	0.4	0.3	0.2	0.2	0.2
Percent that go to trial	1.7%	-	0.7%	2.9%	0.5%	1.5%

Source: Data provided by Court Services Branch.

Wait times for case conferences and for half-day, as well as two-day or more, child protection hearings at Vancouver Provincial Court declined somewhat between 2014 and 2015, but varied little between 2015 and 2016 other than the wait for case conferences increasing to three months in 2016 from two months in both of 2014 and 2015, as shown in Table 9.

Type of court appearance	Wait times as of October in months		
	2014	2015	2016
Case conference	2	2	3
Half-day child protection hearing	7	4	4
Two-day or more child protection hearing	10	5	5

Source: Data provided by Court Services Branch, with permission of the Office of the Chief Judge, provincial court of British Columbia.

5.0 Findings

The evaluation refresh findings are presented based on the evaluation questions, which focus on the delivery of the project and progress toward achieving its intended outcomes.

5.1 Delivery of the PLC project

1. How well is the PLC model working for providing the expected services since the summative evaluation? What, if any, changes or improvements have been made to the model or how it operates?

Key findings: The refresh evaluation confirms that the PLC model continues to work well to provide the expected services. Other stakeholders appear to have gained a good understanding of the model and are supportive of the PLC. Much of the success of the model is attributed to the types of positions that support it (lawyers, an advocate/paralegal, and an administrator), which, combined with the knowledge and experience of the staff members in these positions, allows for an effective and efficient distribution of responsibilities.

How the model is working

Key informants were all very positive on how well the PLC model is working for providing the expected services. Internal key informants attributed the success of the model to several factors, including the type of positions and resources available, and that the team in place work well together to support each other in providing the needed services to clients. In comparison to when the project was first implemented and there was only one lawyer, having the two lawyer positions allows for distribution of the workload between the lawyers, plus each lawyer can provide coverage when the other is not available (e.g. is tied up with a client). The advocate/paralegal provides legal information and advocacy services to clients, as well as assistance and support to the lawyers. These advocacy services expand the services the model can provide to clients, such as supporting clients at meetings and assisting them with collateral issues that may be affecting their CFCSA issue. Furthermore, such support and assistance from the advocate/paralegal allows the lawyers to focus on clients' legal issues, making more effective use of lawyer time. Similarly, the administrator manages the administrative aspects of the model,

freeing up the other positions to focus on their responsibilities, and also, by serving as a point of first contact at the PLC office, is able to establish a good rapport with clients.

A few internal key informants also commented that other stakeholders now have a greater understanding of what the PLC does, which has increased efficiencies in that referrals of matters outside the scope of the PLC have declined, and has also garnered increased support for the model from other stakeholders. Indeed, no external key informants spoke of any confusion or uncertainties on the function or purpose of the PLC or of any of the PLC staff positions.

Several external key informants who could speak to how the model was functioning since the time of the summative evaluation specifically commented that the addition of the second lawyer has resulted in significant improvements. Key informants report that with the two lawyers, clients are receiving more timely services. For example, the court delays on list day that occurred when there was only one lawyer, and that was identified in the process and summative evaluations, are no longer an issue. As well, allocation of files between the two lawyers means that meetings with social workers and/or their lawyers are no longer dependent on one lawyer's availability and can be held in a more timely fashion.

External key informants also identified the collaborative approach the PLC takes as a positive aspect of the model. Several of these stakeholders commented on the PLC's willingness to establish relationships, to communicate and work with social workers, and to assist parents in addressing their child protection issues. Working collaboratively and good communication are viewed as facilitating the process of moving forward in planning for the families and in preventing unnecessary delays. As well, the PLC is viewed as accessible, which also assists in moving matters forward in a timelier manner. Key informants gave several such examples of this accessibility, such as having the PLC at the courthouse and the lawyers available in court on list days to immediately start helping families, as well as through their outreach, such as to women at Fir Square. In the latter case, women may receive assistance from the PLC even prior to court involvement, which facilitates planning and can affect outcomes for families.

Many of the external key informants also attributed the knowledge, experience and skills of the PLC staff as playing a large role in the success of the model. Key informants observed that both lawyers and the advocate/paralegal were experienced and knowledgeable on the CFCSA and that this assisted them in effectively representing/assisting clients. Others commented that all of the PLC staff are compassionate, respectful to their clients, and that the lawyers will strongly advocate for the clients. At the same time, the lawyers are also viewed as reasonable and realistic, and have good relations with other stakeholders such as social workers, director's counsel, and judges.

One identified challenge of the model is that the PLC cannot assist clients once their matter moves on to the trial stage. Several external key informants view this as a service lapse, in that clients establish a relationship with and gain trust in the PLC and then are transferred to a new lawyer and have to build a new relationship. It was also commented that feedback had been received from private lawyers that files are received for a trial, but they do not have familiarity with the case. However, internal key informants reported that every attempt is made to hand off such files in a timely manner and that files include all disclosures.

There were few reported changes made to the model since the summative evaluation. While not a change to the model, but rather an operational improvement, the PLC has implemented a system of monthly meetings to review the status of files for identifying any needed actions and keeping all staff members informed and up-to-date on file activity.

2. Does the PLC have sufficient resources, supports, and capacity to meet demand?

Key findings: The addition of the second PLC lawyer has removed any resource concerns expressed in both the process and summative evaluations. The PLC resources are now generally viewed as sufficient to meet current demand. Clients themselves had no concerns with the availability of resources to assist them in their matter.

Figure 4 shows the number of clients accepted per month since the project's implementation, according to the date of first service.¹⁶ The PLC has had 362 applicants up to June 27, 2017, of which 239 have been accepted as a PLC client. The number accepted per month ranged between a low of two and a high of 14, with an average of nine clients accepted per month.¹⁷

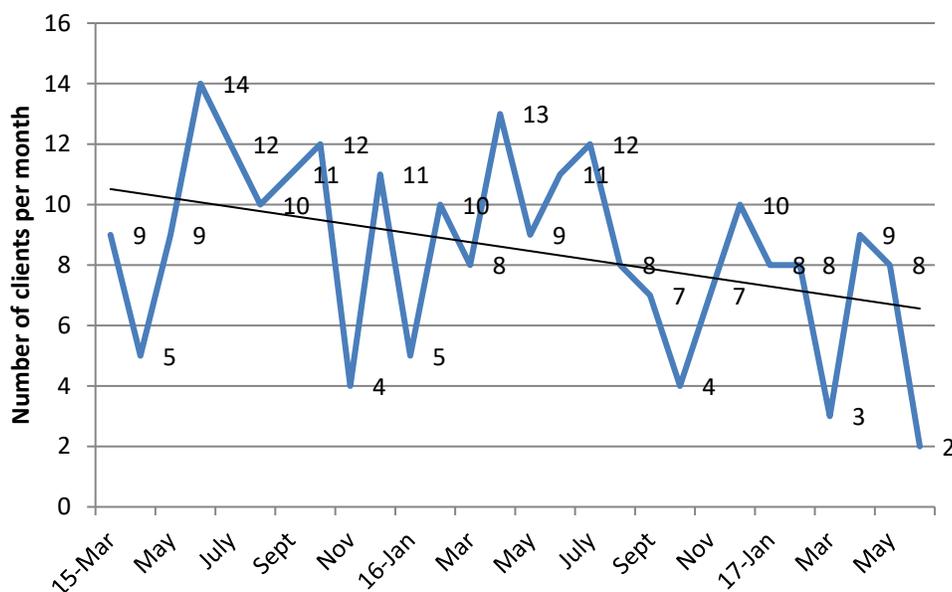


Figure 4: PLC clients accepted per month, March 2015 to June 27, 2017 (based on case opened date)

Source: PLC database as of June 27, 2017

¹⁶ Does not include the first partial month of the PLC, February, 2015.

¹⁷ June 27, 2017 is the date of the database extract provided for the data review analysis. Therefore the month with two clients accepted per month, which was June, 2017, is not quite a full month.

From Figure 4, there has been somewhat of a downward trend in accepted clients since the project’s implementation, even though the PLC is now supported by two full-time lawyers. From CSB data, however, there was a small increase in CFCSA applications filed at Vancouver Provincial Court between 2014 and 2015 and again between 2015 and 2016 (see Table 3). However, the increase between 2015 and 2016 was due to an increase in subsequent applications; the number of initiating applications was very similar between the two years (141 and 139, respectively). It is unclear to what extent the PLC would be assisting individuals involved in subsequent applications, which are applications that arise from an existing file. This may be an area for LSS and the PLC to conduct further analysis — to consider why trends in the numbers of accepted clients are not in alignment with those of CFCSA applications. The trends in clients accepted also suggest that there is potential for the PLC to expand its services in terms of the volumes served. The PLC does appear to recognize this potential additional capacity, as it is currently undertaking additional outreach activities, as discussed in the next evaluation question.

The remaining 123 individuals would have been provided brief advice, either at the Vancouver Provincial courthouse, or through outreach at Sheway or Fir Square. Of these 123 applicants, 117 were not accepted as PLC clients and six were still being assessed for acceptance as a PLC client. Figure 5 shows the overall numbers assisted per month based on the case opened date and which includes both those accepted and not accepted as PLC clients.¹⁸ These numbers ranged between five and 24 clients per month, with an average of 12 clients assisted per month.

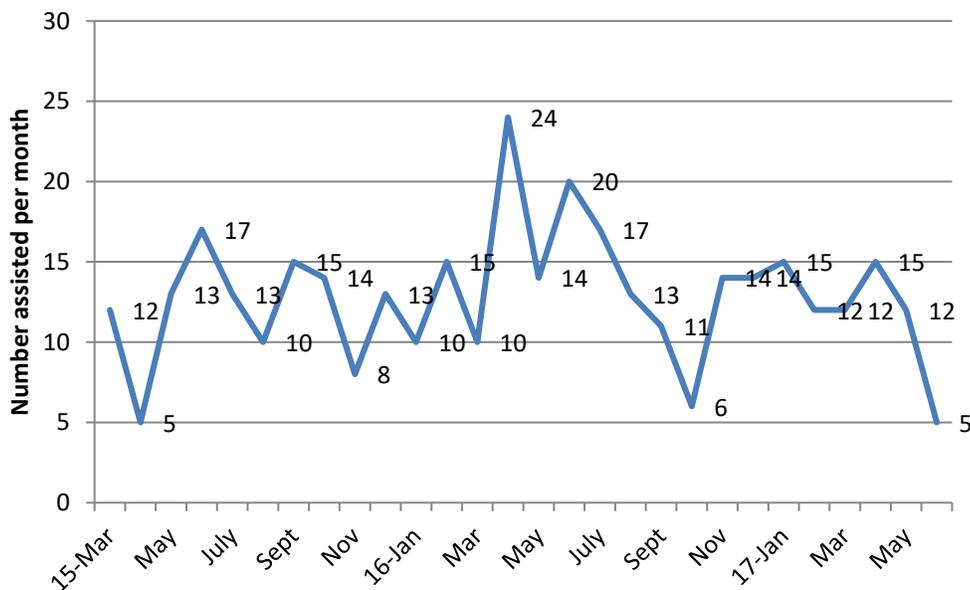


Figure 5: Numbers assisted per month (accepted and unaccepted), March 2015 to June 27, 2017 (based on case opened date)

Source: PLC database as of June 27, 2017

¹⁸ Does not include the first partial month of the PLC, February, 2015.

Most key informants that could speak to resources believe that the PLC now has sufficient numbers of staff to meet the current demand. Some external key informants said that they were not in a position to comment on resources, or that while they could not speak to the demand for PLC services, they had not had any experiences where the PLC could not provide services due to resources. As noted above in Evaluation Question 1, key informants report that the addition of the second lawyer has significantly improved the ability of the PLC to meet demand. Internal key informants believe they have sufficient resources for meeting current demand, noting that the second lawyer has assisted in distributing workload and ensuring the PLC can continue to provide quality legal services to clients.

Although there is always another family duty counsel available on list day, external key informants said in the summative evaluation that court would often be stood down while the one PLC lawyer was trying to see existing or new clients prior to their court appearance. External key informants observed that the second lawyer has eased this concern and that now one of the PLC lawyers is usually available and can provide assistance. A few external key informants noted that there still can be a bit of delay, but did not appear to find it significant. Additionally, the availability of the advocate/paralegal to attend those meetings with the client that do not require a lawyer is viewed as helpful to clients and a good use of resources, although one comment was that the advocate/paralegal was not always available when needed and that it would be helpful to have another advocate knowledgeable on CFCSA matters.

Key informants were generally uncertain as to whether the current staff complement would be sufficient to cover any increased demand for services. One observation was that many of the families that would be provided services by the PLC struggle with a high number of barriers, and that there seem to be an increasing number of families in such situations in the Vancouver area, which could in turn increase demand for PLC services.

Of the clients interviewed, almost all (19 of 20) believe the PLC had enough staff members to give them the help they needed. A few clients commented that the office always seemed to have several people available, or that if the lawyer was not available, then there was another staff member to address any issues, or that the PLC was able to accommodate the client, or address their matter in a timely fashion. One client commented that their matter occurred during the time of the addition of the second lawyer, and that having access to two lawyers facilitated the process for the client.

Internal key informants generally believe the PLC staff receive any needed supports, with any comments being minor, such as occurrence of an office supply shortage.

5.2 Achievement of outcomes

3. Are all relevant stakeholders aware of the PLC and referring potential clients to the PLC early in the CFCSA process?

Key findings: Awareness of the PLC appears to continue to grow, with most stakeholders involved in the child protection process believed to be aware of the PLC, and many of them making referrals to the PLC. The PLC has just recently begun undertaking more outreach activities to further increase awareness amongst other organizations that might support or interact with families experiencing child protection issues.

Awareness of the PLC

There appears to be good awareness of the PLC with key stakeholders, particularly MCFD and VACFSS social workers. A few external key informants were not sure about the general awareness of the PLC, but stated that the stakeholders they interact with most, such as social workers, judges, and other justice service providers, are aware of the PLC. A few external key informants mentioned the outreach activities at Sheway or Fir Square, and that these efforts were helpful in increasing awareness of the services.

Internal key informants report that the PLC has just recently begun undertaking further outreach activities. While the focus of outreach efforts during the implementation of the PLC was frontline social workers, the PLC is now extending outreach to other workers and organizations that would interact with potential clients of the PLC. Examples given include community centres, supportive housing, neighbourhood houses, Indigenous organizations, non-profit organizations that provide counselling services, immigration and multicultural organizations, and the Children's hospital. As well, the PLC is considering partnering with other organizations to provide advice clinics similar to those provided at Fir Square and Sheway. A few key informants (internal and external) also commented on the high turnover of social workers and that efforts, such as outreach, are needed to ensure that new social workers know of the PLC. Another perception was that there could be greater awareness in Burnaby, with the suggestion that more outreach in Burnaby would be worthwhile.

Potential clients getting referred to the PLC early in the CFCSA process

Internal key informants spoke of the importance of families with a child protection issue contacting the PLC early in the process. Early contact increases the opportunities for the PLC to assist families so that the matter does not escalate, and to seek collaborative resolutions, and keep the matter out of court. Internal key informants said that this is the message they consistently try to relay to social workers and other stakeholders. As well, one of the identified purposes of the outreach activities is to ensure potential clients are aware of and encouraged to contact the PLC as early as possible in their child protection matter.

Key informants generally believe that most relevant stakeholders that are aware of the PLC are also referring potential clients to seek out their assistance, although a few said they could not comment on the extent that this was occurring. In particular, many key informants believe that most MCFD and VACFSS social workers refer clients to the PLC. All of the social workers interviewed spoke of referring clients to the PLC, with several commenting that their colleagues do as well. Several external key informants also commented that it is helpful to have a specific location to refer parents to, and that it is more likely parents will follow up on the referral rather than just being told to talk to a lawyer.

From the PLC database, just over one third (35%) of the total applicants were referred to the PLC by either MCFD (21%) or a DAA (14%), and 14% were referred by a hospital (primarily Fir Square), while 40% of applicants came to the PLC without a referral (see Table 10).

Table 10: Who referred clients to the PLC (n=362)		
Referred from	Number of applicants	%
MCFD	76	21%
Hospital	51	14%
DAA	50	14%
Support agency	25	7%
Lawyer	13	4%
Friends/family	2	1%
Court	1	<1%
No referral	143	40%
No response	1	<1%
Source: PLC database as of June 27, 2017.		
Note: Total percentages do not add to 100% due to rounding.		

As well, of the 20 clients interviewed, just over one third (n=7; 35%) said that they were told about the PLC by a social worker. Five participants (25%) said they found out about the PLC through online searches, three through legal aid, one through a judge at their court appearance, two through someone else at the courthouse, and one through a private lawyer.

The extent to which stakeholders are referring individuals with a child protection matter early in the process is difficult to assess, particularly as there appears to be differing perceptions of what early referral represents. This is discussed in more detail under Evaluation Question 5. A few external key informants mentioned referring clients to the PLC when it appeared that the matter would be going to court.

4. Is the PLC accessible to all financially eligible people in the catchment area with CFCSA issues?

Key findings: The refresh evaluation further confirms the findings of the summative evaluation that the PLC is accessible to eligible parents. The location in the courthouse is convenient, particularly for clients making a court appearance, and is in an accessible downtown location. The PLC's outreach to Fir Square and Sheway, as well as the staff members' flexibility to meet clients or attend meetings offsite further contributes to their accessibility. Clients find the PLC accessible and have a high comfort level in using the services.

The PLC's location and hours

As with the summative evaluation, the courthouse is considered a convenient and accessible location for the PLC and the hours are also seen as convenient. Key informants made such comments as: the courthouse is in an accessible downtown location with good public transportation; most people know how to get to the courthouse; and people can easily access the PLC when they have a court appearance. A few external key informants commented that many of the parents experiencing a CFCSA issue are facing multiple or complex barriers and are easily challenged when presented with additional barriers, such as having to call a service for an appointment, or travel to a different location to access the service. Having the PLC right there at the courthouse for them to access on the day of court is viewed as important for reducing barriers in obtaining the needed assistance. A few key informants referred to the PLC as a one-stop shop. And a few key informants also commented that the PLC's outreach to Fir Square and Sheway also contribute to increasing accessibility of the services.

A few concerns were expressed regarding hours and location. One was that some clients may be intimidated by the courthouse environment and that meeting clients offsite would be helpful. Another was that being located in the courthouse requires the PLC to keep the same hours as the courthouse (weekdays until 4:00 p.m.) which can be challenging for some clients. However, the PLC tries to be flexible and the lawyers have met clients offsite and also after hours. While not a locational concern, it was also commented that the PLC could have more of an online presence, as comments had been received that it is difficult to find their contact information online.

Of the 20 clients interviewed, 17 said the PLC location was convenient and 15 said the hours were convenient (two said "don't know" or gave no response for the latter). Reasons clients see the location as convenient include that it is close to the SkyTrain station, it is right in the courthouse, or that it is close to where they live. A few clients mentioned that parking is difficult, or that they had to take their child with them on the bus to access the PLC, or that it was somewhat difficult to find in the building. A few clients also mentioned that it would be helpful if the PLC could be open later.

Clients' comfort level in using the PLC

The PLC appears to make efforts to increase clients' comfort level during the difficult process of dealing with a child protection issue. Key informants who experienced interactions between the PLC and clients report that clients appear to be comfortable using the PLC. Internal key informants commented that clients visiting the PLC on the day of a court appearance appreciate the ability to meet with the lawyers in private at the PLC offices rather than in a busy hallway, and that all staff try to make clients as comfortable as possible. A few external key informants also commented on the positive relationship between the PLC staff and clients, noting, for example, that PLC staff treat clients with respect, that they give them privacy to discuss their matter, and that they take time to build relationships with clients and to familiarize themselves with the clients' situations.

Almost all (18 of 20) clients said that they felt comfortable getting help from the PLC. Several clients said they felt comfortable because they never felt that they were judged by the lawyers or other staff. A few said it was because the lawyer understood their situation, while many commented that the staff were friendly or personable, welcoming, relaxed, and easy to talk to. Some specific examples given by clients on why they felt comfortable included:

- ▶ *They are friendly, straightforward and trustable.*
- ▶ *They are not judgemental. I never felt judged by them and they tried to understand us and help us.*
- ▶ *It is very comfortable and useful; the staff are reasonable and understanding.*
- ▶ *The lawyer and staff were very informative and supportive. I never felt judged.*
- ▶ *[The lawyer] was open about my rights and would call me out when I did things wrong.*
- ▶ *If one lawyer was not available the other would be....both knew my case.*
- ▶ *They were thorough and friendly.*
- ▶ *[The staff member] was always available to come to meetings and respond to my calls.*
- ▶ *I needed someone to tell me about my rights. They were nice to me and made me feel comfortable. I did not feel nervous at all.*

Culturally-appropriate service

Internal key informants commented that all staff are aware of and keep in mind the impact of the residential school system on their Indigenous clients, and also that their staff complement are culturally diverse, which is believed to add to clients' comfort level. External key informants who could comment on culturally-appropriate services primarily made observations that having an Indigenous lawyer was helpful for building trust and comfort for Indigenous clients.

Eligibility and cases accepted

Most PLC applicants (95%) were financially eligible for a representation contract, with only 5% not financially eligible (Table 11). However, of the 18 that were not financially eligible, 10 were financially eligible with discretionary coverage, with the result that 98% were financially eligible. The majority of applicants (67%) were accepted as PLC clients.

Table 11: Assessment results		
Element	Number of applicants	%
Financially eligible for a representation contract*	(n=341)	
Yes	323	95%
No	18	5%
Financially eligible when discretionary coverage considered	333	98%
Accepted for PLC**	(n=356)	
Yes	239	67%
No	117	33%

Source: PLC database as of June 27, 2017.
 *Does not include 17 applicants who were not accepted as clients for reasons other than financial eligibility and therefore no financial eligibility assessment was conducted, and four applicants who were still being assessed for eligibility as PLC clients at the time of the data extraction.
 **Does not include six applicants who were still being assessed for eligibility as PLC clients at the time of the data extraction.

The main reason for not accepting applicants as PLC clients was that their matter was outside the scope of the PLC, accounting for 42% of the 117 applicants not accepted (Table 12).

Table 12: Reasons why not accepted into PLC (n=117)		
Reason	Number of applicants	%
Outside the scope of PLC*	49	42%
No contact with client/client abandoned	25	21%
Client's interests are better served by a referral	21	18%
Not eligible	15	13%
Client not open to collaborative processes	11	9%
Legal/factual complexity	8	7%
Other	8	7%
Missing	7	6%

Source: PLC database as of June 27, 2017.
 Notes: Totals do not add to 100%; multiple reasons could be selected.
 *Outside of scope of PLC includes, for example, where applicants have a hearing that day, have a pre-trial conference or hearing scheduled, or are not the parent, or have other complicating factors.

PLC clients had little wait time to find out if they were accepted as PLC clients, with 53% of assessments completed on the same day as initiated (Table 13). Overall, over three quarters (77%) were completed within 25 days. The time required to complete an assessment is primarily dependent on the client’s provision of needed information, including information for determining financial eligibility. The PLC will continue to provide brief advice services to these clients while their assessment is pending. As well, LSS indicates that they plan to conduct a training refresher with PLC staff to better understand why some assessments may be delayed and what steps can be taken to facilitate the process.

Days	Number of applicants	%
0	190	53%
1-10	50	14%
11-25	34	10%
26-50	31	9%
51-100	19	5%
Over 100	32	9%

Source: PLC database as of June 27, 2017.
 *Does not include six applicants whose assessments were not completed at the time of the data extraction.

Most clients had no concerns about their wait times for appointments with the PLC. Of 16 clients who said they were given an appointment time, 14 thought their wait time was reasonable.

5. Are people with CFCSA issues accessing the PLC and are they doing so early in the process?

Key findings: Based on available evidence, people with CFCSA issues are accessing the PLC, although it is unclear if all potentially eligible clients are accessing the services, particularly for those that do not have court involvement. Most key informants believe that clients are accessing the PLC early enough in their child protection matter, although stakeholders have varying views on what is “early,” with some saying that it should be as early as possible, such as when they first learn of their child protection matter, and others saying not until it is clear that there will be court involvement. Most clients interviewed believed that they had contacted the PLC early enough, although approximately half also said that it would have been helpful to receive their help earlier.

Accessing the PLC and doing so early in the CFCSA process

Most key informants believe that potential PLC clients are accessing the PLC. A few key informants commented though that some parents struggling with addiction or mental health issues may be challenged in accessing the PLC services. Some social workers, for example, will take clients to the PLC themselves or will ask family preservation workers to do so, to ensure that they are linked to the services. As well, as was discussed already under Evaluation Question 2, there was somewhat of a downward trend in accepted clients between the first and second full fiscal year of the PLC’s operation, despite the addition of the second lawyer in the second fiscal year, as well as somewhat of an increase in CFCSA applications filed at Vancouver Provincial court between 2015 and 2016. However, again, most of the increase for the latter is for subsequent applications, and the extent to which the PLC is able to assist individuals dealing with subsequent applications is unclear.

Many key informants also believe that some clients are accessing the PLC early in their child protection matter, and that they are accessing the PLC early enough. Internal and some external key informants observed that the PLC is being contacted prior to court, but that there are also some parents that do not connect with the PLC until the day of their court appearance or when a removal occurs.

However, there are also differences in key informants' viewpoints on what is "early" in the process and, therefore, when they believe parents should contact the PLC. Internal key informants and a few external key informants believe parents should contact the PLC as early as possible. These key informants saw the value of having the PLC involvement even prior to court involvement, such as when parents are first contacted by a social worker. This early contact is viewed as an opportunity to provide legal advice, clarify concerns and misunderstandings, and facilitate a more collaborative approach between parents and social workers to prevent escalation of a situation and hopefully to avoid court involvement. An example provided is that many parents do not understand the powers and duties provided to social workers through the CFCSA and may refuse to allow social workers to question their child in private. Parents may then be perceived as uncooperative and as "trying to hide" something, which can cause an escalation of the situation. Key informants observed that parents may be more willing to listen to the explanations and advice of their lawyer than from a social worker. And another comment was that if the matter does escalate to court involvement, the parent has already established a relationship with the PLC.

A few other key informants indicated that parents should access the PLC either when it appears the matter will go to court or when there is court involvement. And a few also commented that it depends on the parents, with some wanting legal advice immediately, or some first needing to obtain programming to stabilize their substance abuse condition.

Several key informants, both in the summative and again in this refresh evaluation, spoke of challenges and barriers some parents may face in accessing the PLC, such as transportation issues, substance abuse or mental health issues, or a distrust or fear of stakeholders involved in the child protection and justice system due to traumatic past experiences. Key informants identified a variety of ways in which they try to reach such parents and ensure that they are linked with the PLC services. One specific example is the outreach services provided to women at Sheway and Fir Square. These services are viewed as useful in that they often provide legal assistance to women, even prior to court involvement. Other examples key informants gave, some of which have already been discussed elsewhere, include:

- ▶ Some social workers will inform the PLC of parents that they think could use their assistance and the PLC will take the steps to make the contact.
- ▶ Social workers will take such measures as walking a client over to the PLC or the PLC lawyer, or will call the PLC while the client is at their office and have them speak to PLC staff.
- ▶ PLC lawyers will contact the social workers to enlist their assistance if they cannot locate or contact an existing PLC client. Social workers, in turn, use a variety of means to locate and engage with their clients, such as through Facebook, emails, texting, or going to their homes.

- ▶ Although some clients are challenged in scheduling and attending meetings, such as for collaborative meetings, PLC lawyers have been willing to conduct such meetings at social workers’ offices.
- ▶ Some parents may be reluctant to follow up on the social workers’ suggestion to contact the PLC, fearing that the PLC is connected with MCFD. Social workers and other service providers will make the effort to assure parents that the PLC is completely separate from MCFD.

According to the PLC database, most applicants (73%) are contacting the PLC prior to court processes (Table 14). However, the “prior to court processes” category includes applicants who contact the PLC both before, as well as on the day of, the first court appearance. The inclusion in this category of those applicants who contact the PLC when they come to court for their first appearance does not give a complete measure of the extent to which parents are contacting the PLC prior to court involvement.

Table 14: When applicants first contacted the PLC (n=362)		
When PLC contacted	Number of applicants	%
Prior to court processes	265	73%
After court processes	86	24%
Missing	11	3%

Source: PLC database as of June 27, 2017.

Almost half (47%) of total files are opened when there is a risk of removal, while 40% are opened when there has been a new removal (Table 15). Looking at files opened in the more recent period (April 20, 2016 and later) compared to the earlier period covered by the summative evaluation (February 23, 2015 to April 19, 2016) provides some confirmation that more clients are coming to the PLC earlier in their CFCSA matter. As shown in Table 15, for the more recent period, a slightly higher proportion of files are opened when there is a risk of removal (49% versus 45% for the earlier period) and a slightly lower proportion when there has been a new removal/presentation (35% versus 45% for the earlier period).

Table 15: Stage of case when file opened			
Stage	Files opened April 19, 2016 or earlier (n=174)	Files opened April 20, 2016 or later (n=188)	Total (n=362)
Risk of removal	45%	49%	47%
New removal/presentation	45%	35%	40%
Protection	1%	6%	4%
Continuing custody order (CCO)	3%	3%	3%
Extension	3%	2%	3%
Transfer of child to a non-parent	1%	3%	2%
Cancellation of CCO	-	1%	1%
Not given	2%	1%	1%

Source: PLC database as of June 27, 2017.
 Note: Column totals may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

As well, from the legal issues addressed, as shown in Table 16, the higher proportion of legal issues addressed, for all files, are identified as removal (49%), followed by risk of removal (49%). Again looking at files opened in the more recent period, the legal issue addressed was risk of removal for just over half (54%) of files and removal for 43% of files. These proportions were almost reversed for files opened in the earlier period covered by the summative evaluation, with 43% having risk of removal as the legal issue and 56% having removal.

Legal issue	Files opened April 19, 2016 or earlier (n=174)	Files opened April 20, 2016 or later (n=188)	Total (n=362)
Removal	56%	43%	49%
Risk of removal	43%	54%	49%
Access	16%	24%	20%
Transfer of child to a non-parent	3%	11%	7%
Family violence	2%	3%	2%
Parenting issues	1%	3%	2%
Cancellation of CCO	1%	1%	1%
Child support	1%	1%	1%
Denial of parenting time	1%	2%	1%
Protection order (family member)	1%	2%	1%
Relocation	1%	-	<1%
Spousal support	-	1%	<1%
Not identified	2%	-	1%

Source: PLC database as of June 27, 2017.
 Note: Totals add to over 100%; clients may have more than one legal issue.
 *All files, including those not accepted as PLC clients.

Of the 20 clients interviewed, 14 said that they had to go to court; eight of these clients said that they contacted the PLC before court, six said on the same day as court, and one could not recall when they contacted the PLC.¹⁹ Of the 14 clients that either did not go to court and/or that contacted the PLC prior to court, six said they contacted the PLC within a few days of first learning of their child protection matter, one said in a week, one said in a month, and the others could not recall or did not respond. Clients said that they contacted the PLC when they did mainly because they recognized that they needed some legal assistance and/or representation, or they needed to learn about their rights, or that they could not afford to hire a lawyer. Most clients (17 of 20) believe they got help from the PLC early enough in their child protection matter, but approximately half (9 of 20) said it would have been helpful to get their help earlier, such as to have more time to prepare, or learn about the process and what to expect, or to resolve their matter earlier.

¹⁹ One client said they contacted the PLC both before and on the day of court.

6. Are PLC clients taking a more collaborative approach to resolving their legal issue as a result of engaging with the PLC?

Key findings: The PLC does appear to be resulting in more parents with CFCSA matters taking part in collaborative processes and, in particular, FCPCs and informal collaborative meetings. A helpful feature of the PLC is the advocate/paralegal who can attend those meetings that do not require lawyers, providing support to parents and further facilitating the PLC's participation. Clients supported by the PLC at collaborative meetings found the support and advocacy helpful.

Collaborative approaches for addressing child protection issues are viewed as preferable to the court process, which is seen as more confrontational, lengthy, traumatic, and intrusive to families. While internal key informants observed that pursuing collaborative approaches is the mandate of the PLC, external key informants were also positive on the extent that the PLC will encourage collaborative approaches as appropriate to the client. Those external key informants who could comment on the pre-PLC environment report that, although most members of the justice system value and encourage collaborations, the PLC is assisting in directing more parents to such approaches.

As with the summative evaluation, FCPCs, including FCPCs at court, appear to be the approach most frequently used, along with the more informal four-way collaborative meetings that involve only the client, social worker, and the lawyers (director's counsel and PLC). Both of these types of meetings are viewed as useful in that, because they require less time, they can be scheduled in a timelier manner than mediation. Such meetings are identified as helpful in that they facilitate better communication; clarify the child protection concerns to the parent; provide encouragement to the parent to be more willing to work with, rather than against, social workers; and work to address immediate issues (e.g. access or a family member as the caregiver). What is viewed as most significant, however, is that they provide direction and next steps — everyone goes away from the session with assigned next steps, which are followed up on, thereby helping to move matters forward.

FCPCs at court are useful because they take place on list day and can be held on the same day that parents come for their court appearance, facilitating the establishment of next steps and timelines for parents with new court involvement, or following up on progress for those already in the court process. FCPCs are also held outside of court day at other locations, such as a social worker's office, with a few key informants mentioning that lawyers are not always required at these meetings, and that clients can often be supported instead by the PLC advocate/paralegal. This too is viewed as a useful process; the scheduling of the meeting does not have to consider lawyers' availability, so the client benefits from the support of the advocate/paralegal, who can, in turn, keep the PLC lawyer informed on the outcome of the meeting. While FCPCs involve a facilitator and formal note-taking, as noted above, the more informal four-way collaborative meetings only involve the client, social worker, and the lawyers (director's counsel and PLC).

Mediations are reported as the more formal and the least used of the collaborative processes, although a few key informants observed that there are also a sizeable number of mediations taking place. MCFD data discussed in section 4.0 further supports these observations, with an overall upward trend in completed FCPCs shown between 2012-13 and 2016-17 and a small overall downward trend in completed mediations (see Table 7). Mediations are more time consuming, requiring a half day or longer for the mediation itself, and therefore are more difficult to schedule; the timing is dependent on the availability of the mediator, social workers, the director’s counsel, the parent’s lawyer (the PLC), as well as the other parent’s lawyer if applicable. Mediations are reportedly useful when matters are more complex or substantial, such as whether parents will agree to a temporary custody order or a continuing custody order, or when there is a high level of conflict between the social worker and parent that could benefit from a facilitator. Other types of collaborative approaches mentioned include: family group conferences, which are viewed as more family driven, can take a full day, and do not include lawyers; or family case conferences, which involve a judge.

For each of the available collaborative approaches, key informants identified how the PLC lawyer or advocate will support parents through the process, such as in helping them to understand the benefits of the collaborative approach, helping them prepare for the meeting, answering any questions, helping reduce their anxiety, helping them understand their options, and also helping them understand what they have agreed to at these meetings and the need to follow through on those agreements.

From the PLC database, just over one third of clients (39%) accepted into the PLC and whose files are now closed were provided services related to preparing for mediation and/or consensual dispute resolution, and the same proportion for attendance at such processes (Table 17). A slightly higher proportion of clients whose files are still open were provided both of these services (43% and 44%, respectively). These percentages are lower than would be expected given the PLC’s objective to pursue collaborative resolutions, and are likely because the full range of collaborative processes are not being fully accounted for in the PLC database. LSS indicates that the project is considering ways to better capture the various types of Collaborative Processes and Decision Making (CPDM) meetings and approaches in which the PLC may participate to assist clients.

Collaborative service	Accepted clients (n=238)		Unaccepted clients (n=106)	Total** (n=349)
	Closed files (n=135)	Open files (n=103)		
Preparation for mediation and/or consensual dispute resolution	39%	43%	7%	30%
Attendance for mediation and/or consensual dispute resolution	39%	44%	7%	29%

Source: PLC database as of June 27, 2017.
 *Only includes clients where services beyond brief advice were provided.
 **Total includes five clients that have not yet been assessed but were provided some type of service beyond brief advice.

Of the 20 interviewed clients, 15 said that they had taken part in some type of collaborative process as follows:²⁰

- ▶ 13 in an FCPC
- ▶ 9 in mediation
- ▶ 6 in a traditional decision-making process²¹
- ▶ 3 could not recall what type

Ten of these 15 clients said that they took part in the collaborative process after first getting help from the PLC and of these, five said that they were first informed of this option by the PLC and five by a social worker. Clients mainly said that they participated because it seemed like the best or quickest way to move forward, and nine of the 10 clients said someone at the PLC encouraged them and helped them in their decision to participate.

Clients said that the PLC helped them with these meetings by explaining the process to them and answering their questions (8 of 10); helping them understand what was going to happen at the meetings and what to expect (10 of 10); and helping them understand what they needed to do in the collaborative process (10 of 10). Most clients (8 of 10) said that this information was helpful to them in feeling prepared for the meeting. A further 8 of 10 respondents said that someone from the PLC attended some of the meetings with them, and 7 of these 8 respondents said that it was helpful to have someone from the PLC with them. Some specific examples given by clients as to why it was helpful to them to have the PLC with them at these meetings included the following:

- ▶ *It was helpful because it was a very stressful emotional time, and I can get upset, talk too much or get angry when I'm talking.*
- ▶ *[They were] able to provide understanding. [They] would stop to explain the meeting to make sure I understood.*
- ▶ *I did not feel alone.*
- ▶ *[They] told me how to act and keep my composure.*
- ▶ *[The lawyer] mediated most of the conversations which made it easier.*

²⁰ Clients could indicate more than one collaborative process.

²¹ Traditional decision-making processes are for Indigenous families and include community involvement. See <http://familylaw.lss.bc.ca/resources/pdfs/pubs/Parents-Rights-Kids-Rights-eng.pdf>

7. To what extent are the advocacy services provided by the PLC facilitating resolution of clients' CFCSA matter and assisting them in addressing their underlying parenting concerns?

Key findings: Recognition of the role and value of the advocacy services provided by the PLC appears to have increased from the summative evaluation. There appears to be a greater understanding of and support for the advocating role of the advocate/paralegal position, and belief that this position further complements how the lawyers advocate for clients.

Provision of support, advocacy, and representation at collaborative processes and uncontested or procedural hearings are part of the mandate of the PLC.²² PLC lawyers will advocate for their clients with other members of the justice system and during legal procedures and representation. The advocate/paralegal position further complements the legal assistance through supporting and advocating for clients. Recognition of the role of the advocate/paralegal and appreciation of the value of this advocacy for supporting PLC clients appears to have increased since the summative evaluation. While a few key external informants report having little interaction with the advocate, most were aware of the purpose of the position. Furthermore, those that did interact with the advocate/paralegal were positive on how the position is helpful to clients, the lawyers, as well as to other service providers, such as social workers.

As noted in the previous evaluation question, the advocate/paralegal will often attend meetings with clients where lawyers are not required. This support is helpful to clients, with key informants reporting that it provides clients with emotional support so that they do not feel as intimidated and have a higher comfort level with the knowledge that someone is advocating for them. As well, the advocate/paralegal takes notes at each meeting, which is helpful in informing the lawyer on what occurred at the meeting, and also helpful to the social workers, as they do not have to spend time answering questions from lawyers on decisions made. Furthermore, the PLC advocate's solid understanding of the CFCSA is viewed as helpful in meetings for understanding the context of child protection matters; advocates of other support organizations often reportedly do not have a solid understanding of the CFCSA. Only three of the 20 clients interviewed could recall the advocate/paralegal coming with them to a meeting with a social worker, but all three said it was helpful for them to have the advocate/paralegal at the meeting. Clients said this was helpful because:

- ▶ *A lot of it was in a legal jargon that I did not understand. They explained what was being said and acted as my voice. We'd talk about it before the meetings and plan what we wanted to do beforehand.*
- ▶ *She was able to take notes on everything said, so the lawyer could understand what happened during the meetings.*

²² 05 PLC – Parents Legal Centre, Project Charter, February 28, 2017

According to key informants, the advocate/paralegal will also refer clients to other supports, and assist them in connecting with other services or supports to help them with underlying issues that may be affecting, or may be a causative factor, behind their child protection matter. This assistance might include: writing letters on their behalf; helping with finding suitable housing and completing housing applications; and accessing drug and alcohol programs, counsellors, support programs, or health services. Accessing and engaging in such services are viewed as critical in demonstrating to the MCFD or DAA that the client is making positive changes to deal with the underlying factors behind their child protection matter. The PLC advocate may also coordinate with social workers or advocates from other organizations that are working with the client to assist them in linking with the appropriate services and supports.

The advocacy and support provided through the advocate/paralegal position is viewed as a positive feature of the PLC that many private lawyers do not have access to and do not themselves have time to provide.

One of the mandates of the PLC and the responsibilities of the advocate/paralegal is to provide referrals to other services. Based on key informant interviews, as noted above, these referrals are occurring, however, the PLC database does not provide a good indication of the extent of referrals. As shown in Table 18, the database identifies PLC clients as receiving few referrals beyond those to LSS intake. As well, just over half (51%) of accepted clients and just over one third (37%) of unaccepted clients received no referrals to another service/organization. LSS and the PLC may want to examine why referrals are not being fully captured and if any changes are required in recording and tracking such referrals.

Table 18: Other services applicants/clients are referred to – closed files only				
Services	Accepted clients (n=135)		Not accepted as PLC client (n=117)	
	Number	%	Number	%
Legal Aid/LSS Intake	58	43%	67	57%
Advocate or community agency	8	6%	3	3%
LSS Family Duty Counsel	3	2%	4	3%
Other government agency	2	1%	1	1%
Access Pro Bono	1	1%	1	1%
Family Justice Counsellor	1	1%	1	1%
Immigrant settlement of multicultural organization	1	1%	-	-
Online/Internet	1	1%	-	-
Private lawyer	1	1%	3	3%
Social worker	1	1%	-	-
Health professionals	-	-	1	1%
JAC Resource Room/Self-help	-	-	2	2%
Law students' clinic or program	-	-	1	1%
None	69	51%	43	37%

Source: PLC database as of June 27, 2017.
 Note: Totals do not add to 100%; clients could be referred to more than one service.

From the database, of the closed files, the majority were closed either because the applicant was not accepted as a PLC client or there was a change of counsel at some point after they were accepted as a client. As a result, the main area of referrals for closed files is to legal aid intake (57% for unaccepted files and 43% for accepted clients) (see Table 18). Of the 125 applicants referred to legal aid intake, just over half (54%) were not accepted as a PLC client. Referrals to legal aid intake could be for the purposes of applying for a representation contract in CFCSA or family law, or possibly as a referral to the LSS intake call centre to get advice from the Family LawLINE.

Five of the 20 interviewed clients said that the PLC referred them to places they could go for help with other things besides their legal issues and only one of the clients said they made use of the referrals. Five of the 20 clients said that the PLC wrote letters to other organizations on their behalf and four of the five said that these letters were helpful for advocating for their needs.

8. Do PLC clients receive the legal information, advice, and assistance they need to understand and help them resolve their CFCSA matter?

Key findings: As with the summative evaluation, the refresh evaluation found that the PLC is able to provide clients with a good understanding of their child protection matter, their rights and obligations, as well as the steps they can take to help resolve their matter. Much of this ability to impart this understanding was again attributed to the PLC staff members. The lawyers and advocate/paralegal are all considered skilled, experienced, and committed to their clients, plus their knowledge of the CFCSA child protection issues are further considered to contribute to their ability to assist and inform clients. Clients themselves report a high level of satisfaction with the services and with the help and support provided.

Clients' understanding of their legal issue, their rights and obligations, and their options

Key informants believe that the PLC is able to provide clients with a good understanding of their legal issues, their rights and obligations, and their options. Key informants frequently credited this ability to the knowledge, skills, and empathy of the PLC lawyers and advocate/paralegal. The lawyers are viewed as experienced lawyers who are supportive and work in the best interest of their clients. They listen to their clients and strive to ensure that the client understands their child protection matter, why it is happening, the process, what might occur, and their options on how their legal matter might be addressed. Plus, key informants said that clients are more likely to listen to and be willing to accept the information provided by their lawyer, as opposed to from the social worker. The lawyers and the advocate/paralegal are all viewed as having a good understanding of the CFCSA, which is considered important for fully understanding the complexities of child protection matters; as well as being able to understand and explain the child protection concern to parents and to provide optimal support and services to clients. A few external key informants reported that, based on their past experiences, parents' lawyers require a good understanding of the CFCSA and child protection matters in order to provide optimal services to clients and make effective use of court time. The PLC staff are also credited with having a good line of communication with clients in terms of responding to questions and returning phone calls. One specific observation provided is that since the implementation of the PLC, the manner in which Indigenous families are provided legal information and representation has improved, and there is better rapport between clients and lawyers. Some of these improvements are attributed to

the PLC having Indigenous representation on their legal staff, which adds to the comfort level of Indigenous clients, and facilitates establishing a trust relationship.

Internal key informants report that clients are often relieved and thankful for the assistance received, as many do not understand what is happening or the powers and duties that the CFCSA provides to social workers, nor do they understand their own rights. Staff will strive to explain the process in an understandable manner, and will also draw on available resources that will assist clients in better understanding their matter, with two examples given including a chart on the child protection process, as well as an LSS produced graphic novel titled *Emily's Choice* that outlines one woman's experiences with the child protection system.²³

Interviewed clients echoed much of this, with most being very positive on the assistance provided by the PLC for understanding and helping them resolve their CFCSA matter. Of the 20 clients interviewed, 19 said that the PLC answered their questions, and 17 said that the PLC explained and helped them understand the concerns of the social worker, with 16 of these clients saying that the information was helpful to them. Reasons clients gave for why this information was helpful in understanding the concerns of the social worker included the following:

- ▶ *It reminded me what the social worker was asking for.*
- ▶ *I understood why [they had a child protection concern.]*
- ▶ *I had no idea what to expect, as I had never been in this type of situation....it was worrisome, but they told me that as long as I abided by the rules, it would work out.*
- ▶ *I didn't know what was going on, had no clue when they took my son, and [they] explained everything that was happening.*

As well, 16 of the clients said that the PLC explained their legal rights to them and helped them understand what they could do to resolve their child protection matter, and 15 of these clients said this information was helpful to them. Some reasons clients gave for why this information was helpful included the following:

- ▶ *It was a voice to speak for mewhen I didn't know what was going on.*
- ▶ *It made me realize the rights that I had in this situation.*
- ▶ *If I had any questions, I was able to contact them via email or fax and they always responded very quickly.*
- ▶ *It was basically everything that I needed to do.*
- ▶ *They told me what to do if I disagreed with a social worker.*
- ▶ *It was helpful in that I knew what to expect if I were to either oppose or give my consent.*
- ▶ *So you know how to act and your rights.*
- ▶ *It gave me a clear idea of what to do and how to proceed.*
- ▶ *I have to thank the lawyer if it goes as I want.....I listened to their advice and followed their advice.*

²³ See <http://lss.bc.ca/publications/pub.php?pub=469>

Of the 20 interviewed clients, 14 said they had to go to court and 12 of these said the PLC lawyer attended and helped them at the court appearance before a judge. Most of the interviewed clients that went to court (13 of 14 clients) said that the PLC gave them some assistance to prepare for court, such as answering their questions about court (13 clients), explaining what to expect in court (12 clients), and helping them to complete forms (12 clients). All 13 clients said the information provided was helpful to them. Some reasons clients gave for why this was helpful included the following:

- ▶ *The lawyer was helpful because I was able to then explain the direction I wanted to go and [the lawyer] was then able to proceed in that fashion.*
- ▶ *It was an emotional time for me and they let me know beforehand what the other lawyer would be doing...that was helpful.*
- ▶ *This was my first time in court and they told me how to act and what to expect.*
- ▶ *The paperwork was done.*
- ▶ *I knew what to expect and not to have high expectations.*

Clients also found it helpful to have the PLC attend a court appearance with them for the following reasons:

- ▶ *Because they speak the same language as the judge, they're able to speak on my behalf.*
- ▶ *They explained everything.*
- ▶ *It was supportive to have them there...I did not have much family here, so I appreciated having them with me.*
- ▶ *I do not have to stand in front of the judge by myself.*
- ▶ *They were always supportive...I liked having a familiar person there for me...they were kind, and assertive when they had to be...they explained what was going on and made sure that I fully understood what was going on.*
- ▶ *They helped me to understand what was going on as my English is not too good.*
- ▶ *I needed them to speak on my behalf...I certainly was not able to speak with a judge on my own.*

Services provided to accepted clients

As shown in Table 19, accepted clients are receiving a range of services beyond brief advice, with most receiving such services as general preparation (98%) and attendance at court processes (87%), as well as a range of services provided as part of general preparation, including interviews with the client to take instruction (98%), provision of advice (97%), and preparing correspondence (81%).

Service provided	Accepted clients		
	Closed files	Open files	Total
Services provided in addition to brief advice	(n=135)	(n=103)	(n=238)
General preparation	100%	95%	98%
Attendance for court processes	89%	85%	87%
Attendance for mediation and/or consensual dispute resolution	39%	44%	41%
Preparation for mediation and/or consensual dispute resolution	39%	43%	40%
Collateral issues	7%	13%	10%
Additional preparation if an FLA application is required	4%	9%	6%
Referral to non-LSS service	4%	2%	3%
Preparing written agreements	1%	-	1%
Services provided – general preparation subcategories	(n=135)	(n=103)	(n=238)
Interviewing the client and taking instructions	98%	98%	98%
Providing advice	98%	96%	97%
Preparing correspondence	77%	85%	81%
Preparing for hearings	71%	83%	76%
Preparation prior to removal	15%	43%	27%
Negotiating settlements or plan of care agreements	19%	37%	26%
Preparing for pre-trial conferences or case conferences	20%	31%	25%
Drafting consent orders	8%	6%	7%
Preparing written arguments	5%	7%	6%
Preparing and filing pre- and post-hearing applications	3%	6%	4%
Source: PLC database as of June 27, 2017.			
*Only includes clients where services beyond brief advice were provided.			

Lawyer and advocate time on files

Table 20 gives the total lawyer and advocate hours provided to accepted PLC clients for services beyond brief advice, as recorded in the PLC database. Lawyer time accounts for 71%, and advocate time 29%, of recorded time overall. Average total hours per file are somewhat higher for accepted client files that are still open (15.5 hours) compared to closed files (12.2 hours), suggesting that some files may still be open due to a more complex matter requiring more lawyer time.

Table 20: Total recorded lawyer and advocate time for accepted PLC clients			
File status and element	Lawyer	Advocate	Total
Total hours by file status			
	Hours		
Accepted and closed (n=135)	1,119	531	1,651
Accepted and open (n=88)	1,020	348	1,368
Total (n=223)	2,139	879	3,019
Average hours/file			
	Hours		
Accepted and closed (n=135)	8.3	3.9	12.2
Accepted and open (n=88)	11.6	4.0	15.5
Total (n=223)	9.6	3.9	13.5
Source: PLC database as of June 27, 2017. Note: N sizes based on number of files for each file status where the lawyer, or advocate, or both have allocated time to a file. Totals may not add due to rounding.			

Of the time spent on the various service areas for closed accepted client files, lawyers and advocates are spending the majority of the time on general preparation followed by attending court (Table 21).

Table 21: Proportion of lawyer and advocate/paralegal time spent per service area for accepted clients, closed files only		
Service area	Percent of time spent per service area*	
	Lawyer (n=134)*	Advocate (n=126)*
General preparation	61%	58%
Attend court	24%	28%
Attend mediation	10%	12%
Preparation for mediation	3%	2%
Family Law Act preparation	2%	<1%
Collateral issues	-	-
Source: PLC database as of June 27, 2017. Note: Totals may not add to 100% due to rounding *Lawyer time only based on files where lawyer has allocated time; advocate time only based on files where advocate has allocated time.		

A small amount of time was also recorded in the PLC database for unaccepted, or brief advice, clients (166 hours in total). LSS indicates that this time would have been entered in error, as these clients would have received only brief advice and the database is intended to track time only for services beyond brief advice. While minor, such discrepancies identify that clarification and training on input of time data may be beneficial, as might be a review of the services provided to unaccepted brief advice clients. LSS has indicated that it is planning a review of its data collection approach and, as mentioned earlier, additional staff training.

Client satisfaction of services received

Of the 20 clients interviewed, eight were very satisfied with the help that they received from the PLC, nine were satisfied, and only one was unsatisfied, while two said they did not know how satisfied they were. Clients' reasons for a high level of satisfaction were similar to those given above as to why the PLC was helpful, such as: they were considerate and provided support, they answered their questions and provided advice, they were knowledgeable, and they gave the client advice and told them how respond in court. A few said that it was because they did everything the client expected them to do or what the PLC said they would do.

Few clients had suggestions for how to improve the PLC services. Most said the services were good. The few suggestions given were: more lawyers, later hours, an additional office located somewhere else, or a request to provide more information on the PLC services available, such as the advocate/paralegal and what they can do to assist clients.

9. Are PLC clients' cases being resolved through collaborative processes, without the need for a court trial? Are they getting resolved earlier?

Key findings: While the previous process and summative evaluations illustrated that there is widespread support for collaborative processes, the refresh evaluation revealed that there appears to be greater recognition of the PLC's contribution to these successes. Although a client's CFCSA matter may not be completely "resolved" through such processes, they are perceived as valuable for achieving some type of positive result that moves the matter forward. The PLC's approach to encouraging collaborative processes, as well as their willingness to cooperate and communicate with other stakeholders (social workers and director's counsel), is perceived as contributing to an overall more collaborative approach to the benefit of children and families. Based on available information, it is difficult to assess if clients' matters are getting resolved earlier, although there is general consensus that involvement by the PLC, and particularly earlier involvement, should assist parents in making positive steps towards resolution.

Resolution through collaborative processes

Most of the evidence on the extent the PLC is able to assist clients achieve resolution through collaborative processes is anecdotal, based on key informants' observations. Furthermore, key informants observed that child protection issues can be lengthy and difficult for achieving "resolution." Key informants appeared to measure success more in making decisions and moving a file forward, such as in parents gaining access to their children, or agreeing to and participating in needed programs (e.g. for substance abuse), or arranging family caregivers rather than the children being placed with strangers in foster care. While key informants in the summative evaluation often spoke of the successes that can be achieved through collaborative processes, for this refresh evaluation there appears to be an increased recognition of the PLC's contribution to these successes. Furthermore, many key informants again attributed the progress made on files with the PLC staff members themselves, citing their knowledge and skills, their compassion and commitment to their clients, as well as their willingness to establish good relations and to work in a collaborative manner with social workers and director's counsel.

Key informants were positive on the success and value of collaborative meetings, with most saying that some constructive results are achieved at such meetings, such as for clarifying the child protection concerns to the parents, presenting the parent's perspective and situation to social workers and director's counsel, improving relations between the client and social worker, and identifying what parents may need to do address the child protection concerns. Meetings where formal notes are taken, such as FCPCs, provide a document to all involved outlining next steps that assist in follow-up to ensure everyone stays on track with what was agreed upon in the meeting. Furthermore, the support and guidance from the PLC assists in keeping the client informed, which facilitates their participation in the process.

Some key informants report that they have observed that some matters find resolution or agreement through these collaborative processes. A few said that there appears to be fewer trials taking place, but were unclear if this could be attributed to the PLC or other factors. Furthermore, if the PLC has had early involvement with the client, such collaborations can assist in better communication and understanding between social workers and parents, and facilitate identifying and taking measures that prevent court involvement. Based on key informant comments, however, the greatest benefit of these collaborative approaches appears to be not so much that child protection matters are "resolved" at these meetings, but rather that they are addressed and next steps identified to move files forward. A few key informants commented that such positive activity appears to happen quicker now on files since the implementation of the PLC, particularly since the PLC can become involved immediately at the first court appearance, as opposed to the past when matters would be adjourned while the parent sought legal aid and assignment of a tariff lawyer.

Beyond participation in the collaborative approaches mentioned, what came through in the interviews is that simply working together in a more collaborative manner fosters better relations between all involved, assists in establishing greater trust and more willingness to cooperate, and increases the potential to reach agreement on positions and directions. Key informants spoke of the good relations that the PLC has not only with their clients, but also with social workers and director's counsel; they are respectful and willing to collaborate in the best interests of the client. Several examples given are that some social workers are now more willing to share information with the PLC lawyer, or even have a meeting with the lawyer without their own counsel present, with the knowledge that they will be respected and the information shared will not be used for the purpose of discrediting the social worker. Key informants were generally in agreement that such cooperation and collaborations strengthens opportunities to make decisions that ensure the safety of children and assist parents in taking the necessary steps to address the child protection concerns. Such steps assist in making progress towards resolution.

Of the 10 clients interviewed that took part in a collaborative process after they first went to the PLC, five were satisfied with the results, four were not, and one did not respond to the question. The few clients that gave reasons for their dissatisfaction mainly were unhappy with MCFD decisions made either at, or after, the sessions and/or the overall results of their child protection matter. Four clients said they felt the process gave them a chance to have a say in the decisions made for their child's care and five did not (one did not know), with most of the latter five saying that they did not feel listened to, or again expressing dissatisfaction with the results of their child protection matter.

The database does not provide sufficient data for assessing the extent that PLC clients' cases are being resolved without the need to go to a court trial, given that 30% of the files are still open and of the 135 accepted clients whose files are now closed, only 38% were closed because services were complete (Table 22 and Table 23).

Table 22: File status of PLC clients		
Status	Number of clients	%
All clients	(n=362)	
Closed	252	70%
Open	110	30%
Only clients accepted into PLC	(n=239)	
Closed	135	57%
Open	104	44%
Source: PLC database as of June 27, 2017. Note: Totals may not add due to rounding.		

The majority (62%) of accepted clients' files are closed either because of a change in counsel (36%), or the file is inactive (19%), or the matter is out of scope for the PLC (7%).²⁴

Table 23: Reasons for closing files, accepted clients only (n=135)		
Reasons	Number of clients	%
Services completed	51	38%
Change of counsel	49	36%
Inactive	25	19%
Out of scope	10	7%
Source: PLC database as of June 27, 2017.		

Of those 49 accepted clients from the table above whose files were closed due to change of counsel, 94% were referred to legal aid or LSS intake.

²⁴ LSS has indicated that some file closings are being placed into the inactive category in error when they should have been identified as services complete (e.g. where there is no continuing protection concern, the order has lapsed, or MCFD did not seek a further application). As noted earlier, LSS plans to conduct refresher staff training to ensure consistent and accurate data collection and recording.

Legal outcomes are entered into the PLC database only after files are closed. As shown in Table 24, the majority of the closed files of accepted clients have a legal outcome of unresolved or unknown (60%), primarily because most of these files (73 of the 81) were closed due to change of counsel, inactivity, or because they were out of scope for the PLC.²⁵ Of those files with some type of resolved legal outcome, the client was able to retain or regain custody of their child/children in a third (33%) of the cases, either without or with supervision (27% and 7%, respectively).

Table 24: Legal outcomes of closed files for accepted PLC clients (n=135)		
Legal outcome	Number	%
Child with client: no supervision	36	27%
Child with client: supervision	9	7%
CCO granted	3	2%
Child transferred to non-parent	3	2%
Child in care	2	1%
Child with other parent	1	1%
Unresolved or unknown	81	60%
Source: PLC database as of June 27, 2017.		
*Note: Totals may not add due to rounding		

The majority (55%) of the accepted clients with an unresolved legal outcome were referred to legal aid or LSS intake.

Looking only at accepted clients whose files were closed because services were completed gives a more distinct picture of legal outcomes and whether some type of resolution was achieved. Based on the legal outcomes identified in the PLC database, most (84%, n=43) of the 51 accepted clients whose file was closed because their services were completed achieved some type of resolution, while 16% (n=8) had a legal outcome indicating that their matter was unresolved (Table 25). The majority of these clients also had a legal outcome where the child was with the client; with 61% with no supervision and 16% with supervision (two of the latter files are considered as unresolved).

Table 25: Legal outcomes of closed files – accepted PLC clients with files closed because service completed (n=51)		
Legal outcome	Number	%
Child with client: no supervision	31	61%
Child with client: supervision	6	12%
Child transferred to non-parent	3	6%
CCO granted	2	4%
Child with other parent	1	2%
Unresolved or unknown	8	16%
Source: PLC database as of June 27, 2017.		
*Note: Totals may not add due to rounding		

Understandably, most (85%) unaccepted clients are identified as having an unresolved legal outcome. As well, the majority of both accepted and unaccepted clients with an unresolved legal outcome were referred to legal aid/LSS intake (55% and 62%, respectively).

²⁵ Almost all were identified as unresolved; only one file identified only as unknown.

Early resolution of clients’ legal issues

Data is not available at this point to assess whether PLC’s clients’ matters are getting resolved earlier, plus most key informants also said they did not have sufficient information to assess if this was occurring. LSS has indicated that it is in the process of finalizing additional data metrics to incorporate into the PLC database for measuring resolution milestones.

Table 26, for example, illustrates the length of time that the files of accepted clients are open; however, there are no baselines available upon which to measure the length of time that files are open to assess if earlier resolution is occurring. For accepted clients, just over one quarter (27%) of now closed files were open for up to five months, and 61% were open between five and 15 months (Table 26). For those accepted clients whose files are still open, 27% have been open for up to five months and 54% between five and 15 months. About one-fifth of these files have been open between 15 and 27 months.

Table 26: Length of time files of accepted clients are open		
Time open	Accepted clients file closed (n=135)	Accepted clients file open* (n=104)
	%	
One day or less	1%	-
Up to 2 months	7%	13%
2.1 to 5 months	19%	14%
5.1 to 10 months	33%	25%
10.1 to 15 months	29%	29%
15.1 to 20 months	9%	9%
20.1 to 27 months	3%	11%
Source: PLC database as of June 27, 2017.		
*From file opening date to June 27, 2017.		
Note: Totals may not add due to rounding.		

Many key informants, however, believe that earlier resolution should be occurring, for a variety of reasons. For example, the process of assisting clients can begin sooner when clients access the PLC early in their matter, which can help parents understand the need to address the concerns of MCFD or the DAA and even possibly avoid court altogether. When all involved stakeholders work together more collaboratively and cooperatively, as described above, there should be fewer delays caused by conflict or inaction, which should contribute to earlier resolution. A few key informants also commented that the proactive approach of the PLC should help to achieve earlier resolution. Examples given include that the PLC maintains contact with the client; keeps the client and themselves informed on what is happening, such as asking social workers for family plans; and keeping clients accountable for actions they were supposed to be taking. A few key informants observed that when the PLC is involved, parents seem to access resources more for addressing concerns. Another observation was that PLC clients seem to come to court with direction and there are fewer adjournments. And when there are adjournments, they are usually done for taking specific actions, with some type of progress occurring between appearances. All of these are expected to contribute to earlier resolution of CFCSA matters. However, as a qualifier, another comment was that the underlying issues that some parents experience that lead to their CFCSA matter are also becoming more complex.

Of eight clients interviewed that said they had reached some type of resolution or agreement, all said it took seven months or less to achieve this resolution from the time they first found out they had a child protection issue.²⁶ Specifically, two clients said it took close to one month, and the others said it took from two to three or five to seven months. However, there are no baselines against which to measure whether these would be considered “earlier” resolutions, particularly given the nature of CFCSA matters and the variations in families’ circumstances.

Seven of the eight clients that have resolved their matter said the assistance from the PLC was helpful to them in doing so (one did not respond). Reasons given for why the PLC was helpful included the following:

- ▶ *They helped to come up with an agreement which allowed me to see my children.*
- ▶ *It helped us in that they were supportive during this situation...they helped to keep us together as a family.*
- ▶ *It was really helpful in that they realised that I was a good parent...this was established.*

Of the five interviewed clients that, according to the PLC database, were referred to LSS intake, one said they did not get another lawyer to help them with their matter. Of the four clients that did get another lawyer, three said their matter is still ongoing and one said it was resolved in about five months after they started working with the new lawyer.

10. Is there more effective use of other service provider resources and justice services for cases that were supported by the PLC?

Key findings: Similar to the summative evaluation, the perceptions are that when clients are supported by the PLC there is more effective use of other service providers and justice services. The immediate access of the PLC in court is viewed as decreasing adjournments to find a lawyer. The collaborative approach of the PLC enhances the ability of all service providers to work cooperatively and more effectively to support parents. And when parents take positive steps to move their matter forward through the guidance of the PLC, this too should make more effective use of other service providers.

Whether court appearances are more productive when clients have PLC support

As noted earlier, the addition of the second PLC lawyer has removed any concerns that existed in the summative evaluation regarding court delays on list day due to the one PLC lawyer trying to see all clients. And as was mentioned in the summative evaluation, the ability of clients to access the PLC immediately at court is viewed as making better use of court time, as clients do not need to adjourn their matter to apply for legal aid and wait to get a lawyer. As noted above, some key informants believe that there are fewer overall adjournments, and that when these do occur it is to take a specific action, which makes for better use of court time. And as with the summative evaluation, it was observed that parents experiencing child protection issues are often facing multiple barriers. Prior to the immediate availability of the PLC, many of these parents found it difficult to take that step to apply

²⁶ Of the 20 clients interviewed, five were indicated in the database as having been referred to LSS intake. Of the remaining 15 clients, eight said their matter was resolved and/or that they came to some kind of agreement, and seven said it was still ongoing.

for legal aid and retain a lawyer in a timely manner, even after the first appearance, thereby leading to further adjournments.

Effective use of other service provider resources and justice services

As with the summative evaluation, most key informants commented positively that communications and collaborations with social workers and director's counsel enhances information exchange and makes for more effective use of other service providers to work together to assist clients. Furthermore, the support and guidance provided by the PLC assists clients in moving their matter forward, which should also result in more effective use of other service providers' time. And where, through the assistance of the PLC, the client is able to avoid court involvement at all, or at least avoid a court trial, efficiencies are created in that court time can be used for other matters, and the court preparation time for lawyers and social workers is also reduced.

Cases that are transferred to a tariff lawyer when their matter cannot be resolved after given substantial services by the PLC

As with the summative evaluation, little information is available on clients that are transferred to a tariff lawyer when their matter cannot be resolved with assistance from the PLC. Internal key informants said this usually occurs when the parent does not want to resolve their matter collaboratively and wants to go to a contested hearing, or if they are abusive or threatening to the PLC, or are determined to work with a lawyer they had used in the past. As was mentioned previously, a few key informants expressed concern on the impact on the client and their matter when they had established a trust relationship with the PLC and then had to transfer and start again with a new lawyer. However, as with the summative evaluation, internal key informants said the PLC ensures the client's file is complete and the incoming lawyer has all the necessary and available information to ensure a smooth transition and to avoid delay.

The challenge in transferring to a new lawyer appears to depend on the individuals, and perhaps their situations. Of the four interviewed clients that said they had to go on to work with another lawyer after the PLC, two said it was easy to start working with the new lawyer, with one saying the new lawyer was friendly, and the other saying the new lawyer was informed of their matter by the PLC lawyer. Two clients said it was difficult to start working with the new lawyer, with one saying they had to start all over, and the other saying they had to re-explain everything from the beginning and establish a new relationship.

11. To what extent has the PLC pilot led to net system savings, due to efficiencies gained for LSS and/or other areas of the justice system?²⁷

Key findings: While, as with the summative evaluation, data are not available to make conclusive statements on net system savings due to efficiencies gained, key informants believe that this is occurring due to the more effective use of other service providers and the court system in general when clients are assisted by the PLC. The refresh evaluation was able to update the cost avoidance scenarios estimated in the summative evaluation using the most recent PLC data and updated court costs provided by LSS.

This section looks at potential efficiencies gained for LSS and/or other areas of the justice system as a result of the PLC and considers what costs might be avoided by the efficiencies gained from the operation of the project. As was noted in the methodology section, it is not possible to make any conclusive statements on efficiencies gained or costs avoided due to the PLC, as no data are available on the extent to which the pilot has resulted in such impacts as diversion of cases from the court system; or in reduced appearances, adjournments, or trials; or in shorter court appearances. Therefore, this section uses some statistics on CFCSA cases at Vancouver Provincial Court, as presented in the profile given in Appendix D, along with data from the PLC database, to make some estimates of potential costs avoided if the PLC could affect certain changes, and using different scenarios. No information is available to attach any monetary values to other potential savings on other areas of the justice system outside of court costs (e.g. reduced court or preparation time to social workers or preparation time to director's counsel).

In order to estimate savings on an annual basis, the PLC client data from the most recent fiscal year 2016–17 is used. According to CSB data, almost all applications result in a court appearance, which would be expected for CFCSA applications as the legislation has specific requirements depending upon the actions taken by the director. As is shown in Table 2, Appendix D, initiating applications require an average of 0.27 hours of court time and subsequent applications an average of 0.35 hours. These include court appearances for any reason. From data provided by LSS, court costs per hour are approximately \$753 for Provincial Family Court for CFCSA cases.²⁸

The PLC accepted 100 clients in fiscal year 2016–17. For the purposes of these estimates, each PLC accepted client file is treated as an initiating application. Also, CFCSA cases are often long-term files and take a considerable amount of time to reach some type of resolution. For this reason, the estimates below are based on average court time not only for the initiating application, but also for all of the subsequent applications that may arise from that one initiating

²⁷ We understand that any efficiency created in the system will be backfilled by cases waiting for a hearing. Thus, any court savings are at best costs avoided by these cases. The language in the question above has not been changed, as it was approved during consultations for development of the summative evaluation matrix, on which the refresh evaluation matrix provided in Appendix B is based.

²⁸ Court cost data were provided by LSS, working with George McCauley, an independent consultant, and are based on Ministry data. Family provincial court costs are estimated to be \$753 per court hour and include the cost of a court clerk, a deputy sheriff, a provincial court judge, court registry staff and a director's counsel. It does not include the cost of judicial support services, sheriff out-of-court activities, or court overhead.

application. From CSB data, each initiating application has an average of three subsequent applications (see Table 1, Appendix D).

From this information the following estimates can be made in Table 27. Based on these calculations, each CFCSA matter requires approximately 1.32 hours of court time. Therefore, the 100 clients accepted in 2016–17 would have required an estimated 132 total court hours, for an estimated \$99,396 in total court costs.

Row #	Item	Vancouver provincial court		
		Initiating applications	Subsequent applications	Totals
1	Number of PLC clients accepted in 2016-17	100		
2	Number of PLC clients (initiating applications), number of subsequent applications per initiating application and total applications (total=100+(100*3))	100	3 per initiating	400
3	Average court hours per application that makes a court appearance	0.27	0.35	
4	Court hours/PLC client*	0.27	1.05	1.32
5	Total court hours for the 100 clients (row 1 x row 4)	27.0	105.0	132.0
6	Court costs per hour**	\$753	\$753	\$753
7	Total court costs (row 5 x row 6)	\$20,331	\$79,065	\$99,396

Sources: Calculations made based on pilot database, LSS provided court costs, and CSB data.
 Note: Numbers may not calculate exactly due to rounding.
 *Court hours for subsequent applications calculated as 3 subsequent applications/file multiplied by 0.35 hours per subsequent application
 **Court cost data were provided by LSS, working with George McCauley, an independent consultant, and are based on Ministry data.

Based on these estimated total court costs for these 100 PLC clients, we can make some estimates based on various scenarios. Below we provide some potential annual impacts of the pilot, based on what might be considered low, medium, and high impacts if the services from the PLC were able to reduce the number of court hours per file by 10%, 30%, and 50%. These estimates are provided in Table 28, and range from a potential of \$9,940 to \$49,698 of avoided costs annually for Vancouver Provincial Court, depending on the scenario.

Item	Vancouver Provincial Court
Total court costs	\$99,396
Reduce court hours by:	Total annual court costs avoided
10%	\$9,940
30%	\$29,819
50%	\$49,698

Sources: Calculations made based on pilot database, LSS provided court costs, and CSB data.
 Note: Numbers may not calculate exactly due to rounding.

Therefore, based on these estimates, and based on the current volumes handled by the PLC, the pilot has the potential for avoided court costs of \$9,940 annually if court hours per file are reduced by 10%, and up to \$49,698 if court hours are reduced by 50%; this is assuming a similar number of client files is handled annually by the PLC as in 2016–17, and that the averages used hold. The estimates would be the same if, instead of reducing court hours, the scenarios considered diverting these same percentages from court altogether.

The number of accepted clients in 2016-17 (100) was very similar to the numbers used in the summative evaluation simulation (107), therefore any changes in costs (and savings) from the summative evaluation are due to changes in estimated court costs, which rose from \$518 per hour in 2015-16 to \$753 per hour in 2016-17. This is primarily because, as was described in section 3.4, hourly court cost estimates now include court costs for director's counsel; these costs were not available for the summative evaluation estimates. Overall estimated court costs for 2015-16 were \$82,060 and avoided court costs ranged from \$8,206 if court hours per file were reduced by 10% up to \$41,030 if they were reduced by 50%.

Unfortunately, no scenarios could be estimated on reducing the number of court trials related to CFCSA cases, as complete data on the proportion of CFCSA cases that go to trial (protection hearing) in Vancouver was not available.

The ability of the pilot to create substantial efficiencies is affected by the volume of clients the pilot can serve, as well as the extent to which it can achieve its desired objectives. The number of accepted clients is similar between 2015-16 when there was only one lawyer and 2016-17 when there were two lawyers, indicating that the PLC does have capacity to increase the number of clients served. Unless there is an increase in the volume of CFCSA cases going through Vancouver Provincial Court, any increase in clients would have to be primarily through clients that access the PLC before court involvement. The addition of the second lawyer as well as the outreach activities the PLC is now conducting should increase the opportunities to reach this group of clients. Expansion of the pilot to other locations of the province also has the potential to add to efficiency gains in terms of increasing volumes as well as additional costs to LSS for providing the service.

6.0 Conclusions

This section presents the conclusions of the refresh evaluation.

6.1 Conclusions on delivery of the PLC

The refresh evaluation reconfirms that the PLC model continues to work well to provide the expected services. Other stakeholders appear to have gained a good understanding of and are supportive of the model. Much of the success of the model is attributed to the types of positions that support it (lawyers, an advocate/paralegal, and an administrator), which, combined with the knowledge and experience of the staff members in these positions, allows for an effective and efficient distribution of responsibilities. Having the two lawyer positions allows for distribution of the workload between the lawyers, plus each lawyer can provide coverage when the other is not available (e.g. is tied up with a client). The advocate/paralegal position expands the services of the model beyond legal services, such as by supporting clients at meetings and assisting them with collateral concerns that may be affecting their CFCSA issue, which allows lawyers to focus on provision of legal services. The PLC's approach to working collaboratively with other stakeholders is also an identified positive feature of the PLC model. Collaboration and good communication are viewed as facilitating the process of moving forward in planning for families and in preventing unnecessary delays.

The PLC resources are generally viewed as sufficient to meet current demand. The addition of the second PLC lawyer has removed any resource concerns expressed in both the process and summative evaluations. And, in fact, there has been somewhat of a downward trend in accepted clients since the project was implemented, suggesting there may be potential for expanding services, given the availability of two lawyers compared to just the one for the first year of operation. As well, this downward trend does not align with the trend over the same time period for an increase in CFCSA applications filed and in MCFD new legal orders, suggesting this may be an area for LSS and the PLC to conduct further analysis.

6.2 Conclusions on achievement of outcomes

Awareness of the PLC continues to grow, with most stakeholders involved in the child protection process believed to be aware of the PLC. As well, based on key informant perceptions, most MCFD and VACFSS social workers appear to be referring clients to the PLC. The PLC has just recently begun undertaking more outreach activities to further increase awareness amongst other organizations that might support or interact with families experiencing child protection issues.

The refresh evaluation further confirms the findings of the summative evaluation that the PLC is accessible to eligible parents. The downtown location at the courthouse is viewed as convenient, particularly for clients making a court appearance, and has good public transportation access. The PLC's outreach to Fir Square and Sheway, as well as the staff members' flexibility to meet clients or attend meetings offsite further contributes to their accessibility. Clients find the PLC accessible and have a high comfort level in using the services.

Based on available evidence, people with CFCSA issues are accessing the PLC, although when this occurs varies. While some clients contact the PLC prior to court, there are also some parents that do not connect with the PLC until the day of their court appearance or when a removal occurs, and some that face barriers in taking those steps to contact the PLC. The PLC and social workers take steps to try to ensure parents obtain access to the PLC services. Many key informants believe that parents are accessing the PLC early in their CFCSA matter, although there are varying views on what is “early.” The PLC encourages contact as early as possible, such as when parents first learn of their child protection matter, in order to clarify concerns and misunderstandings, and potentially prevent escalation of a situation to where court involvement is required. While some external stakeholders also believe such pre-court contact is preferable, others believe it is early enough to involve the PLC when it appears or is clear there will be court involvement. Most clients interviewed believed they had contacted the PLC early enough with about half saying this contact occurred prior to court and about half on the day of court. Based on the PLC database, it does appear that the majority of clients are contacting the PLC prior to court processes and more are starting to contact the PLC when there is a risk of removal rather than when a removal has occurred.

The PLC does appear to be resulting in more parents with CFCSA matters taking part in collaborative processes. FCPCs, including FCPCs at court, appear to be the collaborative approach most frequently used, along with the more informal four-way collaborative meetings, both of which are viewed as useful in that, because they require less time, they can be scheduled in a timelier manner than mediation. Furthermore, the advocate/paralegal can attend those meetings that do not require lawyers, further facilitating the PLC’s participation, as well as providing support to parents. And a most significant feature of such collaborative meetings is that they provide direction and next steps, thereby helping to move matters forward. Clients supported by the PLC at collaborative meetings found the support and advocacy helpful.

Recognition of the role and value of the advocacy services provided by the PLC appears to have increased from the summative evaluation. The advocate/paralegal position further complements the legal assistance provided by the lawyers through supporting and advocating for clients, and in assisting them in connecting with other services or supports to help them with underlying factors behind their child protection matter. Recognition of the role of the advocate/paralegal and appreciation of the value of this advocacy for supporting PLC clients appears to have increased since the summative evaluation.

The refresh evaluation found that the PLC is able to provide clients with a good understanding of their child protection matter, their rights and obligations, as well as the steps they can take to help resolve their matter. The PLC staff members were most frequently identified as the main reasons for the PLC’s ability to provide this understanding. The lawyers and advocate/paralegal are all considered highly skilled and experienced in their respective areas, plus their knowledge of the CFCSA child protection issues are further considered to contribute to their ability to assist and inform clients. Furthermore the PLC is credited as being highly committed to their clients in that they work in their best interest and work towards a good line of communication with clients. Clients themselves report a high level of satisfaction with the services and with the help and support provided.

There appears to be increased recognition since the summative evaluation of the PLC's contribution to the successes achieved in collaborative processes. Although a client's CFCSA matter may not be completely "resolved" through such processes, they are perceived as valuable for achieving some type of positive result that moves the matter forward. The PLC's approach to encourage collaborative processes as well as their willingness to cooperate and communicate with other stakeholders (social workers and director's counsel) is perceived as contributing to an overall more collaborative approach to the benefit of children and families.

The PLC is assisting clients achieve resolution, as just over one third (38%) of the closed files of accepted clients were closed because services were complete and of these, most (84%) had a legal outcome suggesting some type of resolution had been achieved. That said, a fairly high proportion of accepted PLC clients' files (36%) are closed because of a change of counsel and with a referral to LSS intake, indicating these files could not be resolved through a collaborative process. Based on available information it is difficult to assess if clients' matters are getting resolved earlier, although there is general consensus that involvement by the PLC, and particularly earlier involvement, should assist parents in making positive steps towards resolution.

Similar to the summative evaluation, the perceptions are that when clients are supported by the PLC there is more effective use of other service providers and justice services. The immediate access of the PLC in court is viewed as decreasing adjournments to find a lawyer. The collaborative approach of the PLC enhances the ability of all service providers to work cooperatively and more effectively to support parents. And when parents take positive steps to move their matter forward through the guidance of the PLC this too should make more effective use of other service providers.

Available information suggests that net system savings due to efficiencies gained from the PLC's operation should be occurring. While data are not available to make conclusive statements on system savings, key informants believe this is occurring due to the more effective use of other service providers and the court system in general when clients are assisted by the PLC. The refresh evaluation was able to update the cost avoidance scenarios estimated in the summative evaluation using the most recent PLC data and updated court costs provided by LSS.

7.0 Recommendations to further enhance the PLC

Recommendation 1: Conduct further assessment on the trends in the numbers of accepted clients at the PLC.

The evaluation found there has been a slight downward trend in accepted clients since the project's implementation, even though the PLC now has two full-time lawyers, and also that there has been a slight increase in CFCSA applications filed at Vancouver Provincial Court. A further analysis of why the trends in accepted clients do not align with those of CFCSA applications may provide some insight into the current trend in accepted client numbers. As well, considering there were 111 accepted clients in the first full fiscal year of the PLC (2015-16) when there was only one lawyer and 100 clients in the second fiscal year (2016-17) where there were two lawyers suggests that the PLC has capacity to expand services. The additional outreach activities the PLC is currently undertaking should assist in this area, but the suggested assessment may also assist in identifying other areas for outreach.

Recommendation 2: Better define what is expected and meant by “early” contact with the PLC, and relay those expectations to other stakeholders.

Internal and some external key informants believe that it would be beneficial for parents to contact the PLC as early as possible in their child protection matter. However, the evaluation revealed that stakeholders had varying perspectives on what is considered “early,” and when exactly parents should contact the PLC. It would be helpful for LSS to better define what they consider “early” PLC contact and under what circumstances, and when, parents should contact the PLC, and then relay those expectations to stakeholders. The outreach activities that the PLC is currently undertaking should help to relay messages around early contact.

Recommendation 3: As with the summative evaluation, the refresh evaluation again suggests enhancing the tracking of client outcomes to support the assessment of whether the PLC is assisting clients to resolve their CFCSA matter earlier and collaboratively. To facilitate this process, LSS should better define what is meant by earlier resolution and incorporate a means for measuring this expected outcome.

The objectives of the PLC include resolving more child protection cases collaboratively and achieving collaborative and sustainable results earlier. However, it is difficult to assess the extent to which the PLC is able to attain these objectives based on the pilot's database. While key informants commented positively on the PLC's role in collaborative processes, currently, given that child protection cases can be ongoing for lengthy periods of time, LSS should better define what is meant by earlier resolution and incorporate a means for measuring this expected outcome. Furthermore, the database could be improved to assist in identifying whether the PLC assisted the client in resolving their matter collaboratively. This could be incorporated into the legal outcomes field. Alternatively, a new field could be created for such purposes. Furthermore, the evaluation found that although a client's CFCSA matter may not be completely “resolved” through collaborative approaches, the PLC does assist in moving the matter forward. Incorporating a way of tracking these progressive steps taken could further identify how the PLC is assisting clients. Plus, as the PLC continues to increase its volume of clients who access the pilot prior to the court involvement stage, better tracking of client outcomes will be useful for assessing if these clients were able to avoid court involvement.

Recommendation 4: Consider additional improvements to the project database to facilitate ongoing assessment of client services, as well as future studies.

Beyond the suggestion in Recommendation 2 for improved tracking of outcomes, the evaluation offers the following suggestions to enhance the project database for tracking of client services. These improvements will further assist in assessing how the services are assisting clients.

- ▶ More complete tracking of other organizations to which the PLC is referring clients, such as for assistance with collateral issues.
- ▶ Improved tracking of advocacy services provided, such as writing letters, linking clients to other services, attending meetings with clients.
- ▶ Improved tracking of the types of collaborative processes the PLC is assisting clients with, such as FCPCs, the informal four-way collaborative meetings, and mediations.
- ▶ Improved tracking of clients provided only brief advice services, including the time spent on brief advice services, and the type of services provided for unaccepted (i.e. brief advice) clients.
- ▶ Improved tracking of when applicants first contact the PLC — currently the prior to court processes field includes when applicants contact the PLC when they come to court for their first appearance, which does not give an accurate measure of those clients that approach the PLC prior to any court involvement.

Appendix A — PLC logic model

PLC Logic Model

	Program activities	Program outputs	Short-term outcomes	Medium-term outcomes
REFERRALS, SCREENING, AND ASSESSMENT	Parents with CFCSA matters are referred to PLC early in the process (prior to court involvement); parents are screened for financial eligibility and their CFCSA matter assessed for appropriateness for PLC services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> # and type of information disseminated about the PLC services to LSS intake and other LSS services (e.g. LawLINE, Duty Counsel, other JITI projects), MCFD, DAA, Court Services, FJC, JAC, other JAC partners, and other agencies # and type of outreach activities by PLC # of referrals to PLC from other sources Stage of process when parents are referred to and access the PLC Cases are screened and assessed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Relevant stakeholders in pilot site are aware of the PLC and refer potential clients to the PLC at an early stage in the process Eligible parents with appropriate CFCSA files are able to access PLC services 	
PLC SUPPORT TO PARENTS FOR EARLY AND COLLABORATIVE RESOLUTION	Legal information and advice to parents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> # of PLC clients receiving legal advice and information pre- and post-removal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parents with CFCSA matters receive early access to information and advice about their rights and obligations and help with understanding their CFCSA matter 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> PLC clients achieve resolution to their CFCSA matter without the need for a court trial Maximize the effective use of judicial, lawyer and social worker resources
	Preparing and supporting/representing clients at collaborative meetings, as appropriate <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide information and resources to clients Representation and support, as appropriate, at collaborative meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> # of PLC clients receiving preparation support for collaborative meetings # of collaborative meetings where PLC client has PLC lawyer or advocate attend with them Amount of time spent in collaborative process (lawyers, advocate) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clients feel prepared for and supported in collaborative meetings More parents participate in collaborative approaches More child protection cases reach collaborative resolutions 	
	Representation at uncontested hearings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> # of court appearances (C) # of adjournments (C) Duration of case (days) (C) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Court appearances are productive for clients with PLC support 	
	Referrals to supportive social service agencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> # of clients receiving referrals to supportive social service agencies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Underlying parenting concerns are addressed 	
	CFCSA matters that cannot be resolved through PLC even after receiving substantial PLC services are transferred to a tariff lawyer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> # of cases that received PLC services and were subsequently transferred to a tariff lawyer 		

Appendix B — PLC evaluation matrix

Evaluation matrix for the Parents Legal Centre pilot project		
Questions	Indicators	Data sources
Delivery questions		
1. How well is the PLC model working for providing the expected services since the summative evaluation? What, if any, changes or improvements have been made to the model or how it operates?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stakeholder opinion on the model or aspects of the model and how well it works Stakeholder opinion on any changes/improvements made and how well these have worked Stakeholder suggestions for improvements to the model or how it operates Decision-records of changes made to improve model 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Key informant interviews Document review
2. Does the PLC have sufficient resources, supports, and capacity to meet demand?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> # of CFCSA cases accepted by the PLC and number provided duty counsel brief advice services only # of CFCSA cases accepted by the PLC compared to CFCSA cases receiving legal aid referrals in previous years (for catchment area) Stakeholder opinion that the PLC has sufficient resources to satisfactorily meet demand Client opinion on the level of assistance provided by the PLC 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> PLC database LSS CIS database Key informant interviews Client interviews
Outcome questions		
3. Are all relevant stakeholders aware of the PLC and referring potential clients to the PLC early in the CFCSA process?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> # and types of communication and outreach activities Key informant opinion on awareness and understanding of the role of the PLC by relevant stakeholders and community agencies Key informant opinion on extent other stakeholders are referring people with CFCSA matters to the PLC and when in the CFCSA process they are doing so Proportion of PLC clients that were referred from another agency/organization Client input on how they learned of/were referred to the PLC 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> PLC database Key informant interviews Client interviews
4. Is the PLC accessible to all financially eligible people in the catchment area with CFCSA issues?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Client and stakeholder opinion on accessibility of services (location, hours, client comfort level in using the PLC, language issues addressed, etc.) Evidence of steps taken by the PLC for culturally-appropriate services (e.g. publications in other languages, access to translation services) # of screened and assessed cases the PLC accepts and reasons for denial 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Document review PLC database Key informant interviews Client interviews
5. Are people with CFCSA issues accessing the PLC and are they doing so early in the process?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stage of their CFCSA matter that PLC clients are accessing the services (from database) # of PLC cases compared to overall number of CFCSA cases in pilot site over same time period Stakeholder opinion on whether people with CFCSA matters are accessing the service early enough in their CFCSA matter Evidence of steps taken by PLC (and other stakeholders) to reach all potential clients, including those facing challenges in accessing the PLC Client input on when they access the PLC and if they are doing so early enough 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> PLC database MCFD data Key informant interviews Client interviews

Evaluation matrix for the Parents Legal Centre pilot project		
Questions	Indicators	Data sources
6. Are PLC clients taking a more collaborative approach to resolving their legal issue as a result of engaging with the PLC?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proportion of PLC clients making use of collaborative approaches and what types • Key informant opinion on extent that PLC clients use collaborative approaches compared to before the implementation of the PLC • Stakeholder and PLC client opinion on the extent clients understood and were prepared for the collaborative processes they participated in • Client input on decisions to take part in collaborative processes and satisfaction with the approach and outcomes • Proportion of overall PLC clients reaching resolution through collaborative processes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PLC database • LSS CIS data • MCFD data • Key informant interviews • Client interviews
7. To what extent are the advocacy services provided by the PLC facilitating resolution of clients' CFCSA matter and assisting them in addressing their underlying parenting concerns?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stakeholder input on PLC's advocacy process and collaborations with other service providers • Client input on value of advocacy support provided by the PLC (e.g. attendance at meetings and hearing, liaison services provided by PLC) • Client and stakeholder input on extent the PLC assists clients with collateral issues • Proportion of PLC clients receiving referrals from the PLC to other organizations/services • Client input on use and helpfulness of referrals • Stakeholder opinion on client use and helpfulness of referrals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PLC database • Key informant interviews • Client interviews
8. Do PLC clients receive the legal information, advice, and assistance they need to understand and help them resolve their CFCSA matter?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Types of assistance clients receive from the PLC • Proportion of PLC clients represented by PLC at collaborative meetings, court hearings • Client input on how the PLC helped them understand their CFCSA matter, the legal processes, and their rights and obligations • Client input on satisfaction of services (information, advice, assistance) received from the PLC and level of support for collaborative processes and court appearances • Client opinion on whether they have a voice in the resolution of their CFCSA matter • Stakeholder opinion that PLC clients are supported for collaborative processes and other court processes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PLC database • Key informant interviews • Client interviews
9. Are PLC clients' cases being resolved through collaborative processes, without the need for a court trial? Are they getting resolved earlier?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stakeholder opinion on effectiveness of PLC supported collaborative processes and the extent clients CFCSA matters are getting resolved through collaborative processes, without the need for a trial • Comparisons of orders by consent pre- and post-PLC implementation • Number of agreements (e.g. voluntary care agreements) pre- and post-PLC implementation • Number of PLC clients that reach an outcome through a collaborative process, without having to be transferred to a tariff lawyer • Stakeholder opinion on whether CFCSA matters are getting resolved earlier when clients are supported by the PLC • Client satisfaction on their outcome and the length of time to reach an outcome 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MCFD data • Court data • PLC database • Key informant interviews • Client interviews

Evaluation matrix for the Parents Legal Centre pilot project		
Questions	Indicators	Data sources
10. Is there more effective use of other services provider resources and justices services for cases that were supported by the PLC?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comparison of average wait time for half-day and two-day hearings pre- and post- PLC • Stakeholder opinion that MCFD, DAA resources (Directors Counsel, social workers), and court resources are being used more effectively because of PLC involvement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PLC database • LSS data • Court data • Key informant interviews
11. To what extent has the PLC pilot led to net system savings, due to efficiencies gained for LSS and/or other areas of the justice system?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PLC average cost per case • Cost implications of estimates of avoided court costs based on costs of actual court activity • Comparison of budget allocation versus expenditures • Success of project in reaching clients (relative to commitments/expectations) • Key informant opinion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PLC data • CSB data • Key informant interviews

Appendix C — Interview guides

**Legal Services Society of British Columbia
Parents Legal Centre Project Evaluation Refresh**

**Interview guide for internal stakeholders
(Project lead, PLC lawyers, PLC advocate)**

The Legal Services Society (LSS) of British Columbia requires an update evaluation of the Parents Legal Centre (PLC) project, which has been implemented under the Justice Innovation and Transformation Initiative (JITI). LSS hired PRA Inc., an independent research company, to assist in the evaluation. One component of the evaluation is to conduct telephone interviews with stakeholders who are familiar with the PLC. The interview should take no more than one hour. The information we gather through the interviews will be summarized in aggregate form. With your permission, we will audio-record the interview for the purpose of note-taking. No one outside of PRA will see these notes or hear the recording.

A process evaluation that focussed on the implementation of the PLC project and a summative evaluation that considered outcome achievement and efficiencies were completed in 2015 and 2016, respectively. LSS committed to updating (or refreshing) the evaluation to support the request to the British Columbia Ministry of Justice for the continuation and possible expansion of the project. This interview is for the refresh evaluation component and will consider delivery of the PLC project and progress in achieving the expected outcomes. We realize you may not be able to answer all of the questions; please let us know, and we will skip to the next question.

Delivery of the PLC project

1. Please briefly describe your role in the delivery of the PLC project.
2. Since we last conducted interviews for the summative evaluation (March 31, 2016), how well would you say the model has worked for providing the expected services? Please explain what you believe has contributed to the model working well or to any challenges encountered.
3. Have any changes or improvements been made to the model since the summative evaluation? If any changes have been made, how well have these worked?
4. In your opinion, does the PLC have sufficient resources and capacity for providing the expected level of services to all eligible PLC clients? Please explain why or why not. Have demands for services changed since the summative evaluation and, if so, how has this affected resources and capacity? Do staff (administrator, advocate, lawyers) receive the needed supports for providing the expected services? What steps have the PLC taken to overcome any resource challenges?

Progress towards achieving objectives

5. Are all relevant stakeholders aware of the PLC? What communication and outreach activities has the PLC engaged in over the past year? How effective have these been for increasing awareness of the PLC?
6. Are all relevant stakeholders referring potential clients to the PLC? Has the number of people or organizations making referrals to the PLC or the overall volume of referrals changed since the summative evaluation? Which stakeholders are primarily making referrals to the PLC? If some are not referring clients, do you know why? What more, if anything, is needed to encourage stakeholders to refer clients to the PLC?
7. Is the PLC accessible to all financially eligible people with CFCSA matters? Why or why not? Have any changes been made over the past year that have affected accessibility (either positively or negatively)? (*Probes: Are the PLC location and hours convenient? Are clients comfortable using the services? Has the PLC taken steps to ensure culturally-appropriate services?*)
8. Are all potential clients with CFCSA matters accessing the PLC as expected? Why or why not? Are they accessing the PLC early enough in their process? Why or why not? When in their CFCSA matter are clients generally accessing the PLC? How soon in their CFCSA matter should people be accessing the PLC?
9. Has the PLC, LSS, and/or other stakeholders (e.g., social workers) taken any steps to try to further encourage people with a CFCSA matter to contact the PLC early in the process? (*Probe: Any steps or collaborative efforts to reach those who may be particularly challenged in reaching out to the PLC for help?*)
10. From your perspective, is the PLC able to give clients the legal information, advice, and assistance they need to achieve a good understanding of their legal issue and their rights and obligations? Please explain. How about of what they need to do and the options available to them for resolving their CFCSA issue (e.g., *early advice and information, assistance in court*)? Please explain.
11. Is the PLC resulting in more people with CFCSA issues taking part in collaborative processes? Has this changed at all over the past year? How does the PLC encourage people to take part in collaborative processes? Which collaborative processes are clients using the most and why? Again, has this changed over the past year? Is the PLC able to effectively prepare clients for and support them through the collaborative process?
12. In your opinion, how successful are the collaborative processes that PLC clients take part in? Are more CFCSA cases being resolved collaboratively since the implementation of the PLC? Why or why not? Any changes over the past year?
13. Since the PLC was implemented, are CFCSA cases that go to Vancouver Robson Square getting resolved earlier? How has the PLC affected or not affected this process? Are parents satisfied with the process and the outcome when they are supported by the PLC?

14. How do the advocacy services provided by the PLC facilitate this process and help clients resolve their CFCSA matter? (*Probe: provide support at meetings and hearings; provide liaison services; link them with other needed services; assist with collateral issues; make referrals to other organizations?*) What collaborations and communications does the PLC engage in with other services to further facilitate advocacy efforts?
15. In your opinion, has the PLC created efficiencies for LSS? For other areas of the justice system? For example, does support from the PLC result in more effective use of other service providers and justice services resources (*e.g., social workers, Directors counsel, mediation, the judiciary, court administration*)? Please explain why you believe the model has or has not created these efficiencies and what the impact has been.
16. Under what situations would the PLC recommend a change of counsel to an accepted client? How does this affect their matter to be first provided services by the PLC and then by a tariff lawyer? (*Probe: Are they more prepared for the process? Does their process take less time/more time for resolution than if they had not first received the PLC support?*)
17. Do you have any other comments about the PLC project? Any other suggested improvements for the PLC model or for any operational aspects of the model that have not already been mentioned?

Thank you for your participation.

**Legal Services Society of British Columbia
Parents Legal Centre Project Evaluation Refresh**

**Interview guide for external stakeholders
(Mediators, social workers, director's counsel, other representatives of the MCFD,
VACFSS, community agencies, judiciary)**

The Legal Services Society (LSS) of British Columbia requires an update evaluation of the Parents Legal Centre (PLC) project, which has been implemented under the Justice Innovation and Transformation Initiative (JITI). LSS hired PRA Inc., an independent research company, to assist in the evaluation. One component of the evaluation is to conduct telephone interviews with stakeholders who are familiar with the PLC. The interview should take no more than one hour. The information we gather through the interviews will be summarized in aggregate form. With your permission, we will audio-record the interview for the purpose of note-taking. No one outside of PRA will see these notes or hear the recording.

A process evaluation that focussed on the implementation of the PLC project and a summative evaluation that considered outcome achievement and efficiencies were completed in 2015 and 2016, respectively. LSS committed to updating (or refreshing) the evaluation to support the request to the British Columbia Ministry of Justice for the continuation and possible expansion of the project. This interview is for the refresh evaluation component and will consider delivery of the PLC project and its progress in achieving the expected outcomes. We realize you may not be able to answer all of the questions; please let us know, and we will skip to the next question.

Delivery of the PLC project

1. Please briefly describe your involvement with the PLC project or with clients of the PLC project.
2. Since we last conducted interviews for the summative evaluation (March 31, 2016), how well would you say the model has worked for providing the expected services? Are you able to comment on what has contributed to the model working well or to any challenges encountered?
3. In your opinion, does the PLC have sufficient resources and capacity for providing the expected level of services to all eligible PLC clients? Please explain why or why not. To your knowledge, have demands for services changed since the summative evaluation and, if so, how has this affected resources and capacity? Are you aware of any steps the PLC/LSS have taken to overcome any resource challenges?

Progress towards achieving objectives

4. Do you know if all relevant stakeholders are aware of the PLC? Are you aware of any communication and outreach activities that the PLC has engaged in over the past year? How effective have these been for increasing awareness of the PLC?
5. Are all relevant stakeholders referring potential clients to the PLC? Which stakeholders are primarily making referrals to the PLC? If some are not referring clients, do you know why? Do you personally refer parents to the PLC? Why or why not? What more, if anything, is needed to encourage stakeholders to refer clients to the PLC?
6. Is the PLC accessible to all financially eligible people with CFCSA matters? Why or why not? Are you aware of any changes made over the past year that have affected accessibility (either positively or negatively)? (*Probes: Are the PLC location and hours convenient? Are clients comfortable using the services? Has the PLC taken steps to ensure culturally-appropriate services?*)
7. Are all potential clients with CFCSA matters accessing the PLC as expected? Why or why not? Are they accessing the PLC early enough in their process? Why or why not? When in their CFCSA matter are clients generally accessing the PLC? How soon in their CFCSA matter should people be accessing the PLC?
8. Are you aware of whether the PLC, LSS, and/or other stakeholders (e.g., social workers) have taken any steps to try to further encourage people with a CFCSA matter to contact the PLC early in the process? (*Probe: Any steps or collaborative efforts to reach those who may be particularly challenged in reaching out to the PLC for help?*)
9. Can you comment on whether the PLC is able to give clients the legal information, advice, and assistance they need to achieve a good understanding of their legal issue and their rights and obligations? Please explain. How about of what they need to do and the options available to them for resolving their CFCSA issue (e.g., *early advice and information, assistance in court*)? Please explain.
10. Is the PLC resulting in more people with CFCSA issues taking part in collaborative processes? Has this changed at all over the past year? How is the PLC able to encourage people to take part in collaborative processes? Which collaborative processes are clients using the most and why? Again, has this changed over the past year? Is the PLC able to effectively prepare clients for and support them through the collaborative process?
11. In your opinion, how successful are the collaborative processes that PLC clients take part in? Are clients satisfied with the process and the outcome? Are more CFCSA cases being resolved collaboratively since the implementation of the PLC? Why or why not? Any changes over the past year?
12. Since the PLC was implemented, are CFCSA cases that go to Vancouver Robson Square getting resolved earlier? How has the PLC affected or not affected this process? Are you aware of parents' satisfaction with the process and the outcome when they are supported by the PLC?

13. Can you comment on how the advocacy services provided by the PLC facilitate this process and help clients resolve their CFCSA matter? (*Probe: provide support at meetings and hearings; provide liaison services; link them with other needed services; assist with collateral issues; make referrals to other organizations?*) Are you aware of collaborations and communications that the PLC engages in with other services to further facilitate advocacy efforts?
14. In your opinion, has the PLC created efficiencies for other areas of the justice system? For example, does support from the PLC result in more effective use of other service provider and justice services resources (*e.g., social workers, director's counsel, mediation, the judiciary, court administration*)? Please explain why or why not and what the impact has been.
15. Do you have any other comments on the PLC project? Any other suggested improvements for the PLC model or for any operational aspects of the model that have not already been mentioned?

Thank you for your participation.

**Legal Services Society of British Columbia
Parent Legal Centre Pilot Project Evaluation**

Interview guide for clients

(Clients will not receive the interview guide in advance or at the interview – interviewer will ask the questions as part of a discussion.)

Interviewer will verbally discuss the introduction with the client prior to the beginning of the interview: My name is (NAME) and I am calling from PRA, an independent research company. The Legal Services Society of British Columbia, you might know them as legal aid, has hired us to help them on a study of one of their services, the Parents Legal Centre. The Parents Legal Centre — I'm going to call it the PLC — helps people with child protection matters and gives them legal advice and other assistance.

If are not sure about what the PLC is: The PLC is just down the hall from the courtroom at Vancouver Robson Square. The lawyers that might have helped you are Katrina Harry or Todd McPherson. The Parent's Legal Centre is available to help people who have a child protection matter and gives them legal advice and other assistance.

Legal aid wants to know how well the PLC is working for clients. We understand you were or still are a client of the PLC. The form you filled out when you first obtained services from the PLC indicated you may be contacted with questions about their services. That's why I'm calling today, to invite you to participate in a short survey. Your participation is voluntary. I'd like to ask you some questions about the help you got at the PLC. Please be assured that I will not ask you anything personal about your child protection matter, only about the PLC services you received and how helpful these were to you. This information will help legal aid in identifying how the project can be improved. The interview should take about 15 minutes. The information from your interview will be combined with other interviews and reported all together, so your name will not be mentioned. With your permission, I will audio-record the interview for the purpose of note-taking. No one outside of PRA will see these notes or hear the recording. No one connected to your child protection matter, such as a social worker or any other person involved, will find out that you participated or what you said here. If you cannot answer a question, let me know and we will skip to the next question.

1. How and when did you find out about the Parents Legal Centre, or the PLC, as I am going to call it? Did someone or some organization tell you about the PLC? Or did you find out about it when you first applied for legal aid? Or at the courthouse?
2. After you contacted the PLC were you given any appointments, where you had to come in on a certain date and time? If you got an appointment, was the wait time reasonable? Why or why not?

3. How soon after the social worker contacted you did you contact either legal aid or the PLC? Did you have to go to court for your matter? If so, did you already have a court date when you first contacted either legal aid or the PLC? Or did you contact legal aid or the PLC on the day of your first court appearance? Or after the first appearance?
 - a. (If they contacted PLC before the court date) What made you decide to contact legal aid or the PLC when you did?
 - b. (If they contacted the PLC on the day of court or after) If you didn't contact legal aid or the PLC right away, was there any particular reason why not? (*Probe: didn't know about it or legal aid? Didn't know they should?*)
4. Do you think you contacted and got help from the PLC early enough in your child protection matter? Why or why not? Would it have been helpful to get their help earlier? Why or why not? When would you have liked to have gotten their help?
5. How easy was it to get to the PLC and use their services?
 - a. Was the PLC easy to get to? Is it in a convenient location?
 - b. Are the hours they are open good? Are they convenient?
 - c. How comfortable were you going to the PLC? What made it either comfortable or uncomfortable?
 - d. Did they seem to have enough staff members to give you the help you needed? If not, why not?
6. Who did you first talk to from the PLC? Was it the lawyer or someone else? (*Probe: did you see them in court or go to their offices, which are down the hall from the court room?*)
7. Did someone from the PLC explain and help you understand the concerns of the social worker (or the Ministry or Vancouver Aboriginal Child and Family Services Society)? How helpful was this information to you?
8. Did they answer your questions? Explain your legal rights? Did they help you understand what you could do to help you resolve your child protection matter? How helpful was this information? Did they explain things well to you?
9. Did anyone at the PLC talk to you about taking part in what is called collaborative processes instead of having to go to court? This could have been for something called a family case planning conference, or a family group conference, or mediation, or traditional decision-making process (*Probe: explain each as necessary*). If yes, did they help you understand what this meant to you and how it could assist you and your family with your child protection matter? How helpful was this information?
10. Did you decide to take part in one of these? If yes, do you recall which one? What made you decide to take part in this process? How did the PLC staff members encourage and help you in this decision?

11. Once you decided to take part in this collaborative process, what kind of help did the PLC give you?
 - a. Did they explain the process to you and answer your questions?
 - b. Did they help you understand what was going to happen and what to expect?
 - c. Did they help you understand what you needed to do in this process?
 - d. If yes to any of the above, after receiving this help from the PLC did you feel prepared for your meeting?
 - e. Did anyone from the PLC attend any of these meetings with you? If yes, how helpful was that to you? If they didn't attend these meetings with you, do you know why?

12. How did you find the collaborative process you took part in? Were you satisfied with the results of this collaborative process? Did you feel it gave you a chance to have a say in the decisions made for your child's care? Why or why not?

13. (For those who said in Q3 that they had to go to court). About how many times in total did you have to go to court for this specific child protection matter? Did all of these court appearances occur after you became involved with the PLC or did some occur before you started getting help from the PLC?

14. Did the PLC lawyer attend and help you at any court appearances before a judge? If yes, how many of them? What kind of help did they give you and how helpful was this assistance? Do you think the PLC help made the court proceedings go better? Why or why not? Were you satisfied with the outcomes? (*Probes: prepared them for court, answered questions, helped them complete forms, attended court with them.*)

15. The PLC has another staff person, an advocate (provide names if necessary) who will sometimes go with clients to meetings with social workers. Did the advocate attend any meetings with social workers with you? If yes, was it helpful to you to have the advocate attend the meeting or meetings with a social worker with you and why or why not?

16. Sometimes the PLC will write letters to other organizations on behalf of clients, to help them with things like housing, or income assistance, or for some type of program or counselling. Did the PLC write any letters for you (you don't need to tell me who the letters were to or what they were about)? If yes, was it helpful to you to have them write a letter on your behalf? Why or why not?

17. Sometimes the PLC will also help clients link up with other organizations that can help them with other things besides their legal issue. These could be organizations that help people with things like housing, income assistance, or some type of program or counselling.
 - a. Did anyone at the PLC help you to make contact with another organization that could help you? For example, did they:
 - i. tell you about another organization that you can go to on your own for other types of help (you don't need to tell me which ones)?
 - ii. arrange a meeting or an appointment for you with another organization that could help you?
 - b. If yes, did you make use of their referral?
 - c. Were these organizations helpful to you?

18. Has your child protection matter been resolved, or were you able to come to some type of agreement, or is it still ongoing? If it has been resolved, or you came to some type of agreement, how did this happen? Was it:
- (asked only if took part in a collaborative process) through one of the collaborative processes I asked you about earlier?
 - at your first court appearance?
 - at a trial or protection hearing?
 - something else (specify)?

How helpful was the PLC in this process? Did you feel that you had a voice in the decisions made for resolving your child protection matter? Why or why not?

19. About how long did it take to resolve your child protection matter?
- About how long was it from when you first found out you had a child protection matter until it was resolved?
 - About how long was it from when you first started getting help from the PLC until your matter was resolved?
20. *(This question would only be asked if we know the client got a referral to a legal aid lawyer after receiving help from the PLC.)* After you got help from the PLC, did you still have to get another lawyer to help you with your child protection matter, such as a referral to a legal aid lawyer?
- If yes, do you know why? *(Probe: matter did not get resolved, had to go to a court trial.)*
 - Was it easy or difficult to you and your child protection matter to start working with a new lawyer? Why or why not?
 - When you started working with that lawyer, did the help you had got from the PLC already give you a good understanding of your child protection matter?
 - Once you started working with the lawyer, how much longer did it take to resolve or settle your child protection matter, or is it still ongoing?
21. Overall how satisfied are you with the help you got from the PLC? Do you have any suggestions on how the Legal Services Society could improve the PLC to better assist clients such as yourself?

Thank you for your participation.

Appendix D — Profile of 2012 CFCSA applications at Vancouver Provincial Court

To give some context of the environment in which the PLC is operating, this section provides a brief profile of CFCSA cases at Vancouver Provincial Court. This information is also used for systems efficiency analysis. CFCSA cases can be protracted and lengthy with respect to the family’s involvement with the court system. In order to make some considerations of the characteristics of CFCSA cases that are dealt with at the Vancouver Provincial Court, after consultation with CSB at the time of the summative evaluation, it was determined that an illustrative data set would be to consider 2012 initiating and subsequent applications and how these proceeded through the court system up to October 31, 2015. The rationale for this time period was that the 2012 applications should have had sufficient time by October 31, 2015 for achieving some type of resolution.

Table 1 below illustrates the number of subsequent applications that can be generated from initiating CFCSA applications at Vancouver Provincial Court. From the 120 initiating applications filed in 2012 another 355 subsequent applications were filed up to October 31, 2015, with 51% (181) of these filed in 2012 and 34% (120) in 2013. On average, 3.0 subsequent applications were filed for every initiating application.

Table 1: Number of CFCSA initiating applications filed at Vancouver Provincial Court in 2012 and number of subsequent applications filed annually to October 31, 2015 on those applications initiated in 2012		
Year	Number	
2012 initiating applications	120	
Subsequent applications from the initiating applications	Number	Percent of total
2012	181	51%
2013	120	34%
2014	36	10%
2015 (up to October 31)	18	5%
Total	355	100%
Average subsequent applications per case	3.0	
Source: Data provided by Court Services Branch.		

Table 2 outlines the activity that occurred up to October 31, 2015 on the 120 initiating applications for 2012, as well as on the related 181 subsequent applications that occurred in 2012. Those subsequent applications occurring after 2012 are not considered, as there would be greater likelihood that court activity related to these applications may still be ongoing and would not be represented in the court data.

From Table 2, each initiating and subsequent application had an average of 2.8 and 2.1 scheduled appearances, respectively, as well as 0.7 and 0.1 adjournments. However, the data on adjournments are limited in that it only includes those adjournments that occurred in advance of the appearance time and does not include, for example, those occurring at the time of the appearance, which can be significant.

There was an average of 1.6 days between filing an application and the first appearance for initiating applications, and an average of 5.5 days for subsequent applications. An order was granted at first presentation appearances in 43% of initiating applications and 39% of subsequent applications. The average court times required per application and including all appearances associated with an application were 0.27 hours for initiating applications and 0.35 for subsequent applications. Considering each initiating application has an average of 3.0 subsequent applications, each case that has some type of court appearance requires approximately 1.3 hours of total court time.

Table 2: Court activity of CFCSA cases at Vancouver Provincial Court – average activity up to October 31, 2015 for applications initiated in 2012 and their subsequent applications occurring in 2012			
Element	Initiating applications	Subsequent applications	Total applications
Number of applications	120	181	301
Average scheduled appearances	2.8	2.1	2.4
Average number of adjournments that occurred prior to a scheduled appearance*	0.7	0.1	0.3
Average days to first appearance**	1.6	5.5	3.9
Average days to first order***	11.9	22.8	18.6
% of first presentation reports with order granted****	43.1%	38.9%	42.5%
% of applications going to trial+	1.7%	1.1%	1.3%
Average days to first and last trial appearance+	24.5	262.5	143.5
Average court hours per application++	0.27	0.35	0.32
Source: Data provided by Court Services Branch.			
*Includes adjournments that occurred up to a court hearing, including those occurring the same day as the hearing but not adjournments that occurred at the court hearing.			
**Of 118 initiating and 174 subsequent applications that had a first appearance.			
***Of 94 initiating and 153 subsequent applications that had a first order.			
****Of 116 initiating and 18 subsequent applications that had a first order granted at a first presentation appearance.			
+Of two initiating and two subsequent applications that had a trial/hearing; for the four trials/hearings, the days to first and last trial appearance were the same, indicating trials lasted no more than one day.			
++Court hours include time for all appearances for 118 initiating and 174 subsequent applications.			