

**Evaluation of the Parent's Legal Centre  
Process Evaluation Report**

November 5, 2015

Prepared for:

Legal Services Society of British Columbia

## **Table of Contents**

Executive Summary .....	i
1.0 Introduction.....	1
2.0 Brief overview of the PLC.....	1
2.1 Profile of clients .....	4
3.0 Methodology.....	5
3.1 Document and data review.....	5
3.2 Key informant interviews .....	5
3.3 Client interviews .....	6
4.0 Findings.....	6
4.1 Implementation .....	6
4.2 Early indications of outcomes.....	11
5.0 Conclusions.....	23
5.1 Conclusions on implementation of the PLC .....	23
5.2 Conclusions on early indications of outcomes.....	24
6.0 Recommendations to further enhance the implementation process.....	26
Appendix A — PLC logic model	
Appendix B — PLC evaluation matrix	
Appendix C — Interview guides	

## Executive Summary

This report presents the process evaluation findings for the Legal Services Society (LSS) of British Columbia's Parent's Legal Centre (PLC) pilot project. The PLC assists eligible parents with achieving early and collaborative resolutions of their child protection issues. 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.

The PLC evaluation includes a process evaluation, with a focus on implementation and early progress toward achieving outcomes, and a summative evaluation, which will focus on outcomes achieved. This report presents the findings of the process evaluation and covers the pilot project's activities from February 23, 2015 to July 23, 2015. The lines of evidence for the process evaluation include a review of key documents and the project database; interviews with key informants (LSS personnel and external stakeholders); and interviews with clients who had received services from the pilot. The conclusions and recommendations for the process evaluation are summarized below.

### Conclusions on implementation of the PLC

**The PLC was primarily implemented as intended, with only a few divergences from the original model and its planned timelines:** The only divergences from the original model are that finding a suitable candidate for the PLC advocate position did not occur until after the PLC was launched, plus, it was determined that, at least in the initial stages of the PLC, there was not sufficient demand for filling the part-time lawyer position.

**The PLC has the support of external stakeholders:** While external stakeholders who have interactions with parents with *Child, Family and Community Service Act* (CFCSA) issues generally appear supportive of the PLC, it is still early in the pilot to state with certainty that most other relevant service providers are aware of the PLC.

**The PLC currently appears to have sufficient tools, resources, and capacity to meet demand, although some external stakeholders voiced some resource concerns:** Some external stakeholders expressed concern that one PLC lawyer position is not sufficient to meet the caseload volumes at the Vancouver Robson Square provincial courthouse. Any actual observed capacity constraint issues, to date, have been on list days. The support from the PLC advocate, who was not hired for the first three to four months of the PLC's operation, will assist in easing demands on the lawyer.

**Key informants believe the current PLC model supports its efficient and effective delivery:** The Vancouver provincial courthouse location is viewed as an ideal location, and the distribution of responsibilities between the three staff types is considered an efficient use of resources, although again there are concerns about whether one lawyer position is sufficient. Other positive features are that the PLC advocate provides a new level of support to CFCSA clients, and that the lawyer and advocate are available to assist clients in court and also provide continuity. The outreach to other service providers is also viewed as important for informing and gaining the support of other stakeholders.

**Key informants saw high value in implementing the PLC model at other locations:** Informants identified key considerations to do so successfully, which include knowledgeable and experienced staff who can form trusting relationships with clients and other stakeholders; an understanding of the caseload, characteristics, and needs of the selected area; and creative and effective ways to deliver services for any geographically large and rural/remote areas selected.

## Conclusions on early indications of outcomes

The intent of the process evaluation in considering early progress toward achievement of outcomes was primarily to assist in identifying any potential pilot improvements and ongoing quality assurance. As such, conclusions on early indications of outcomes are summarized briefly below in point form:

- ▶ Relevant stakeholders are becoming aware of the PLC and referring potential clients, although, as noted above, it is too early in the operation of the pilot to assess to what extent this is occurring. Ongoing outreach will be important for this area.
- ▶ The PLC is considered accessible to all financially eligible people with CFCSA issues who reside in the catchment area.
- ▶ Stakeholders see some potential benefits to parents with CFCSA issues accessing the PLC early in the process, although external stakeholders generally did not have a strong understanding of when in the CFCSA process the PLC would like parents to access their services.
- ▶ PLC clients are receiving some referrals for and assistance with collateral issues from the PLC, with the expectation that this assistance will increase now that the PLC advocate position is filled. However, some uncertainty exists with external stakeholders about the role of the advocate in this area.
- ▶ The PLC is providing clients with a good understanding of their legal rights and obligations, and clients appear satisfied with the services received.
- ▶ The PLC has already had an observable impact on the use of one type of collaborative approach, specifically the Family Case Planning Conferences (FCPCs) at the court, but it is too early in the implementation of the PLC to determine its contribution to the effectiveness and efficiency of other types of collaborative processes.
- ▶ The PLC is viewed as having potential for increasing the productivity of court appearances for clients and for making more effective use of other service provider and justice service resources. However, a more complete assessment of this outcome will need to be determined primarily through the summative evaluation.

## Recommendations to further enhance the implementation process

**Recommendation 1:** The PLC should continue and, in fact, expand outreach activities, particularly now that the PLC advocate has been hired.

**Recommendation 2:** The PLC should consult with other organizations that provide similar services to those of the PLC advocate, to ensure stakeholders are aware of the role of the advocate and to make the most effective use of the advocate position.

**Recommendation 3:** The PLC should consider making several additions to their forms and/or database to assist in tracking their services, such as how clients heard of or were referred to the PLC, and what collaborative approaches have been used.

## 1.0 Introduction

This report presents the process evaluation findings for the Legal Service Society (LSS) of British Columbia's Parent's Legal Centre (PLC) pilot project. This evaluation is one of five evaluations being conducted of pilot projects implemented under the Justice Innovation and Transformation Initiatives (JITI).

The PLC evaluation includes a process evaluation, with a focus on implementation and early progress toward achieving outcomes, and a summative evaluation, which will focus on outcomes achieved. This report presents the findings of the process evaluation and covers the pilot project's activities from February 23, 2015 to July 23, 2015.

## 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 resolutions of their child protection issues. The PLC is a three-year pilot project funded by the British Columbia Ministry of Justice (MOJ); it is located at the Robson Square provincial courthouse in Vancouver.

Assistance provided to parents includes legal information and advice, as well as support, advocacy, and referrals to other services, and representation in collaborative processes and at uncontested or procedural hearings. The overall objectives of the PLC, as articulated in the PLC Project Charter, are to achieve the following for eligible *Child, Family and Community Service Act* (CFCSA) matters in the PLC catchment area:<sup>1</sup>

- ▶ increase early access to information and advice about rights and obligations for parents involved in 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 served

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.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Legal Services Society, January 30, 2015. Justice Innovation and Transformation Initiatives. 05 PLC CFCSA – Parents Legal Centre, Project Charter, p.3.

<sup>2</sup> Legal Services Society. Justice Innovation and Transformation Initiatives. 05 PLC – Parent's Legal Centre. Communications Q&A Text, p.2.

CFCSA cases eligible for PLC assistance include those where:

- ▶ the applicant falls within the LSS financial criteria for a representation contract, or is eligible for discretionary coverage from the PLC<sup>3</sup>
- ▶ the applicant is the parent or guardian, or is standing in the place of the parent
- ▶ the case can be resolved consensually<sup>4</sup>

Types of CFCSA cases that are not provided assistance by the PLC include those where:

- ▶ 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.<sup>5</sup>

The PLC is comprised of the following personnel:<sup>6</sup>

- ▶ Administrator — manages clients that come to the PLC; provides administrative support to the PLC, including to the lawyer and advocate; 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 or for other legal services; maintains the PLC database; provides legal information and verified legal advice; and networks with other relevant service providers.
- ▶ Lawyer — responsible for overall PLC management, operations, and supervision of PLC staff; assesses cases for appropriateness; provides PLC services to clients, including brief legal advice at court through duty counsel services, representation, and attendance at case conferences, mediations, and court appearances as required; works collaboratively with other participants in the child protection system; liaises with court services and the Judiciary; networks and performs outreach with all relevant service providers; and works 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 — provides advocacy and support to PLC clients, including 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 lawyer for provision of advice; assists the lawyer 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.

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<sup>3</sup> 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.

<sup>4</sup> Legal Services Society. Justice Innovation and Transformation Initiatives. 05 PLC – Parent’s Legal Centre. Communications Q&A Text, p.2

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, p.4.

<sup>6</sup> Legal Services Society. Parents Legal Centre, Procedures Manual.

A brief summary of the process for PLC assistance is as follows:<sup>7</sup>

- ▶ A parent/guardian becomes aware of a CFCSA issue, such as through contact from a social worker or an application is 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, 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, or at the time of a court appearance.
  - The client approaches the PLC lawyer or the advocate while at court: The lawyer or advocate would first conduct a conflict check and then, if appropriate, send the client to LSS intake.
- ▶ The assessment for accepting a parent as a PLC client is as follows. LSS intake or the PLC administrator conducts a conflict check and, if none exists, 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 and/or lawyer continues the assessment process (e.g., if case is too complex, whether a collaborative process is an option, if an unresolved *Family Law Act* matter exists, if the client already has a long-established relationship with a tariff lawyer). Those not meeting financial eligibility criteria (even with discretionary eligibility) or that are not suitable for the PLC are referred to other sources (e.g., LSS intake if financially eligible 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 meet with the client to explain the process, the concerns of the MCFD, and 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 will assist the client.
- ▶ The PLC lawyer provides legal advice, attends court appearances and collaborative processes with the client, and represents the client. The advocate provides support to the client, engages with the social worker, and links the client to other relevant community resources.
- ▶ The PLC will provide the 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.”<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup>

Ibid.

<sup>8</sup>

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

## 2.1 Profile of clients

Table 1 gives a profile of the applications received by the PLC since its inception, February 23, 2015, up to July 23, 2015.

- ▶ The PLC has had 49 applicants since its inception, the majority (80%) of which are female.
- ▶ Most of these clients (79%) are 40 years of age and under, with 20% between the ages of 18 and 25 years, and another 20% between the ages of 26 and 30 years.
- ▶ Most clients (78%) are also single.
- ▶ Just over half (51%) of clients identify themselves as Aboriginal.
- ▶ Almost all clients are from Vancouver (88%), with only a small proportion from Burnaby (8%) or Surrey (4%).
- ▶ Only one client could not converse in English and required the interpreter services.

<b>Table 1: PLC applicant demographics (n=49)</b>		
	<b>Number of applicants</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Gender</b>		
Female	39	80%
Male	10	20%
<b>Age</b>		
18 to 25	10	20%
26 to 30	10	20%
31 to 40	19	39%
41 to 50	6	12%
Over 50 years old	3	6%
Not given	1	2%
<b>Marital status</b>		
Single	38	78%
Married	5	10%
Separated	3	6%
Common-law	2	4%
Divorced	1	2%
<b>Aboriginal ancestry</b>		
Yes	25	51%
No	23	47%
No data	1	2%
<b>City</b>		
Vancouver	43	88%
Burnaby	4	8%
Surrey	2	4%
<b>Language</b>		
English	48	98%
Spanish	1	2%
Source: PLC database as of July 23, 2015.		
Note: Not all percentage totals add to 100% due to rounding.		



### **3.0 Methodology**

A PLC Project Working Group (WG) comprised of representatives from the LSS, the MOJ, and the MCFD is guiding the evaluation process. As a first step in the evaluation, consultations were held with the WG to review and make some revisions to the PLC logic model and to develop an evaluation matrix that outlines the evaluation questions and associated indicators and data sources. Appendix A contains the logic model and Appendix B contains the evaluation matrix. The evaluation matrix will be reviewed and revised as required for the summative evaluation. The WG also reviewed and approved the data collection instruments used for the process evaluation, with data collection instruments provided in Appendix C.

Below describes the methods used for the process evaluation component.

#### **3.1 Document and data review**

Relevant pilot project documents were reviewed, including: the project manual and charter; descriptions and diagrams of the PLC model; forms used by the pilot to collect information on its clients and the types of assistance provided; communication materials; and documents related to pilot implementation and quality improvement (e.g., WG materials, change timelines, decision-records). The data review for the process evaluation focusses on available data in the pilot project database, since the focus of the process evaluation is on the implementation of the pilot project. The summative evaluation will also include data from the LSS Client Information System (CIS) database (if relevant and available), as well as potential data from the MCFD and MOJ (e.g., Court Services Branch).

#### **3.2 Key informant interviews**

The process evaluation included interviews with key stakeholders who have some knowledge of the PLC and could provide their perspectives on the pilot project implementation and early evidence of outcomes. Interviews were conducted by telephone with the following:

- ▶ internal stakeholders (n=3)
  - PLC project lead, PLC lead lawyer, and PLC administrator
  
- ▶ external stakeholders (n=12)
  - three Director's Counsel
  - two managers of social workers from MCFD
  - three social workers from the Vancouver Aboriginal Child and Family Services Society (VACFSS)
  - one Collaborative Practice Facilitator from MCFD
  - one mediator
  - one social worker providing services to a community organization
  - one member of the Judiciary

Separate interview guides were developed for internal and external stakeholders (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.

### 3.3 Client interviews

In-person interviews were conducted with PLC clients June 29 and 30, 2015, at the Justice Access Centre (JAC) at the Vancouver provincial courthouse. Interviews took about 20 minutes using a structured interview guide (see Appendix C). Participants were assured that their responses were confidential and would only be reported in aggregate. Interviews were audio-recorded with permission. Interviewees were provided a \$25 honorarium for their time and to compensate them for any costs incurred. Interviews focussed on the clients' experience and satisfaction with the PLC services, and how the services might be improved. Clients were first sent a mail flyer, explaining the research and that they might be contacted for an interview. As of June 16, the PLC database had 31 applicants/clients. Of these, six had no telephone number or email contact information and three were not accepted as clients of the PLC. As well, one client had a caution flag, indicating a particularly vulnerable client, and thus no attempts were made to recruit this person as a client participant. This left 21 potential clients contacts, of which six agreed to participate in the interviews.

## 4.0 Findings

The process evaluation findings are presented based on the evaluation questions, which focus on the implementation of the pilot project and its early progress toward achieving its intended outcomes. Given that the PLC has only been operational for a short time and most of the files are still open, there is limited data available in the database<sup>9</sup> and, therefore, much of the findings are based on the key informant and client interviews.

### 4.1 Implementation

**1. Has the PLC been implemented as intended in Year 1? What challenges were met in implementation? How were challenges addressed and improvements made to the model?**

All key informants who could respond to this question believe the PLC has been implemented primarily as intended. Internal key informants directly involved in the PLC said it had been implemented as intended. Some external key informants commented that, based on the information they had been provided on the intent of the PLC and what they had observed to date, it appeared to have been implemented as planned, while others could not speak to the question.

One identified divergence from the intended implementation is that the PLC advocate position was not filled until mid-June and so was vacant for several months after the launching of the PLC. This was seen as mainly due to hiring logistics in searching for and ensuring the person hired had all the desired attributes for the position. While this has not significantly affected the implementation process, the advocate was not available to take part in the initial outreach activities or to provide services for the first few months of operation. Another divergence is that

<sup>9</sup> From the Procedures Manual (p.51), case summary information is not to be entered into the database until the case is closed or has been inactive for a time.

the original model included one full-time and one part-time PLC lawyer.<sup>10</sup> As a component of the ongoing monitoring and quality improvement process for the JITI projects, a decision was made May 29, 2015 not to hire a part-time lawyer, because the “volume does not appear to justify the need for added capacity at this time” and the budget was “needed by and reallocated into the overall JITI Project budget.”<sup>11</sup>

A factor seen as contributing to the successful implementation of the PLC was the inclusion of stakeholders knowledgeable in legal aid, CFCSA issues, and the court processes in the planning and development of the pilot.

One identified challenge encountered during implementation was in finding adequate space for the PLC in a suitable location. The PLC budget did not include rental costs, plus the desired location at the Vancouver Robson Square provincial courthouse was already short on space. However, according to key informants, the University of British Columbia Law Students' Legal Advice Program, in recognition of the value of the PLC pilot, agreed to give up some of their clinic space at the provincial courthouse to accommodate the PLC. Other minor challenges were just with respect to the logistics of having the infrastructure and technological supports in place in time for the PLC launch, such as phone lines, fax lines, and computer installations.

## **2. What external factors have influenced the implementation and success of the PLC?**

The support from social workers and MCFD staff is viewed as having positively influenced the success of the PLC. In particular, social workers, as front line workers, are often the first point of contact to parents when there is a child protection concern. Having these stakeholders supportive of and referring parents to the PLC is seen as a critical component for obtaining the goal of providing parents with PLC services early in the CFCSA process. Key informants commented that MCFD and VACFSS social workers, as well as Directors' Counsel, believe the PLC is a good service for parents and have been supportive of the pilot. Interviewed key informants are generally supportive of the PLC and believe it is filling a needed service to parents with CFCSA issues. A few key informants mentioned that the MCFD, as well as Directors' Counsel, are encouraging social workers to send clients to the PLC.

However, as described below in Section 4.2, given the PLC has only been in operation a short time, it is unclear to what extent all relevant stakeholders — particularly community organizations — are aware of the PLC and are referring parents to the PLC, as well as when in the CFCSA process they are referring parents.

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

<sup>11</sup> Legal Services Society, June 1, 2015. 05 PLC – Parents Legal Centre, Decision Record, p.2.

### **3. Did the PLC have sufficient tools, resources, and capacity to meet demand and any intended targets?**

Of the 49 PLC applicants identified in Table 1, 37 (or 76%) have been accepted as PLC clients, which amounts to approximately two new clients per week since the PLC's launching. Internal key informants believe the PLC has sufficient resources to meet demand and report that the pilot is gradually building its client base as more stakeholders learn of the available services. A gradual growth in clients is considered beneficial, as it has allowed staff to take part in the needed outreach activities for informing relevant stakeholders of the service. The expected case volume for the PLC was that it would handle approximately 100 cases per year.<sup>12</sup> The PLC will meet this expected target if it continues to build its client base at the current two files per week. If however, their client base grows more rapidly, as more stakeholders and parents learn of the service, they may exceed the expected volume.

Almost all external key informants expressed some resource concerns for the PLC. Key informants questioned whether one lawyer was sufficient to meet the high caseload of CFCSA matters in Vancouver, particularly as more service providers learn of and make referrals to the PLC. Some external key informants said that, to date, the PLC seems to be able to meet demand, and/or that the PLC has not been operational long enough to assess the sufficiency of the available resources. Most, however, did voice capacity constraint concerns for the future, based on their knowledge of the caseload at Vancouver Provincial Court.

A few key informants mentioned that they have already observed capacity issues on list days, with these constraints perceived to have impacts on both clients and other service providers, in terms of waiting and delays while the PLC lawyer was assisting other clients. Plus, there are concerns that, due to these constraint issues, clients are not getting sufficient time with the lawyer. However, it should be noted that, at the time of most of the interviews, the PLC advocate position had not yet been filled, and therefore, the PLC was not yet operating at its full staff complement. Plus, there is another LSS family duty counsel, located at the Vancouver JAC, who attends list days to provide brief advice assistance.

One further aspect that is viewed as adding to capacity issues is that Family Case Planning Conferences (FCPC) at court are held in the morning of list days. While FCPCs are considered beneficial, as will be discussed further in a later section, a few key informants mentioned that there have been times when proceedings on list days have been delayed, and clients and other service providers have had to wait because the lawyer was tied up in a FCPC. However, several key informants also mentioned that everyone involved has been flexible and has taken steps to try to minimize the disruption to the court process, such as by moving the FCPCs to earlier in the morning or even to a different day.

The clients interviewed expressed no concerns with the PLC resources, saying the PLC seemed to have enough staff and they were able to see the lawyer quickly with little wait time.

<sup>12</sup> Legal Services Society. Justice Innovation and Transformation Initiatives. 05 PLC – Parent's Legal Centre. Communications Q&A Text, p.4.

**4. To what extent do the current processes and structure of the PLC support its efficient and effective delivery?**

As noted above, key informants believe that the PLC has been implemented as planned, with the exception of not having the PLC advocate in place when the pilot was launched. Some identified positive features of the PLC's current processes and structures that key informants view as contributing to efficient and/or effective delivery include the following:

- ▶ The Vancouver provincial courthouse location is seen as a convenient and public location that most people would be comfortable attending.
- ▶ The support of the pilot administrator and the PLC advocate frees up time for the lawyer to concentrate on clients' legal issues. Furthermore, the PLC advocate provides a new level of service that was not available through LSS CFCSA services to clients in the past, such as supporting clients in meetings with social workers prior to court involvement, or linking clients with other needed services. However, as will be discussed in more detail in a later section, more clarification is required for the role of the advocate.
- ▶ The outreach activities inform other service providers of the PLC and its role and available services. These activities assist in spreading awareness of the PLC and in gaining support from relevant stakeholders. The support of other stakeholders involved in child protection matters is considered critical for effective and efficient delivery of PLC services.
- ▶ The LSS chose knowledgeable and experienced staff to operate the PLC. In particular, many key informants commented that the PLC lawyer is very knowledgeable and experienced in the CFCSA area of law, has established and congenial relations with social workers and Director's Counsel, and makes efforts to establish a trust relationship with clients. Furthermore, the administrator is knowledgeable and experienced in LSS intake and with CFCSA clients. And while the PLC advocate only recently started in the position, several key informants noted that the person chosen is experienced in working with CFCSA clients and has existing linkages with other relevant service providers that would be useful for the position.
- ▶ The PLC lawyer is available to help clients when they first attend court and provides continuity of service. This availability not only contributes to more effective services for clients, but also contributes to efficiencies through reductions in court adjournments.
- ▶ The PLC emphasizes collaborative solutions rather than the litigious route of a court trial. Such approaches are viewed as more efficient with respect to use of court services, and are less stressful for clients and families. Plus, collaborative approaches can also have positive impact on the relationship dynamics between clients and social workers.

The only concern expressed on the current structure of the PLC and how this might affect efficient and effective delivery is whether the one lawyer position is sufficient to handle the volume of potentially eligible CFCSA cases, particularly if stakeholders refer people to the PLC early in the CFCSA process. This is discussed further in a later section.

Few suggestions were made on improving the structure and processes of the PLC. One suggestion heard in key informant and client interviews was to have brochures available and distributed to other services, so that they are readily available to other service providers and potential clients. Given that the PLC has handouts, informing stakeholders of this availability could be an area for further outreach.

**5. What considerations related to the PLC model are necessary to successfully implement the model in a different site?**

Key informants saw high value in considering implementing the PLC model at other locations, with several observing that Surrey would be a good location, given the high number of CFCSA matters in that area. Considerations that key informants believe to be important for implementing the model in other locations include the following:

- ▶ *Ensuring that all the infrastructure requirements and staff are arranged and in place prior to launching:* Key informants believe that having the PLC in the provincial courthouse was key, as was ensuring that staff are knowledgeable and experienced in CFCSA matters. Key informants reiterated the qualities they believe to be critical for the PLC lawyer and that contribute to the success of the pilot. These include a high level of knowledge in this area of law, a willingness to take a collaborative approach to finding resolution, established relationships with and an understanding of the work of social workers and Director's Counsel, a hands-on approach, and the ability to develop trust with clients. Several key informants noted the importance for PLC staff to have cultural sensitivity training and, in order to properly advocate for clients, to have training and knowledge on other available services.
- ▶ *Having a good understanding of the caseload in the chosen area and matching the staffing level to the caseload:* On the one hand it will be important that the client volume is sufficient to sustain the level of staffing chosen. Alternatively, it may be challenging for one lawyer to meet demand in geographically large but sparsely populated areas with high travel requirements.
- ▶ *Looking at ways to deliver services in geographically large and rural areas:* Respondents noted that these would include such activities as video-conferencing and Skypeing.
- ▶ *Acknowledging and making allowances for rural areas where high staff turnover is a reality for all types of service providers:* PLC staff will need to be able to work with and make efforts to establish relationships with new staff in other relevant services.
- ▶ *Make consideration for the unique characteristics and needs of the selected location:* This includes, for example, ethnic influences and needs, specific challenges and issues communities are experiencing and how this affects child protection issues and the extent that the existing child protection stakeholders work together. A few key informants observed that not all locations put as much emphasis on working together and taking collaborative approaches as does Vancouver. It will be important for PLC staff in these locations to be able to establish trust relationships with social workers and Director's Counsel, as well as with clients.

## 4.2 Early indications of outcomes

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

**Outreach activities:** Outreach is a planned ongoing activity for PLC staff, with networking and relationship-building identified as roles and responsibilities for all three staff positions (administrator, lawyer, advocate), and particularly for the PLC advocate and the lawyer.<sup>13</sup> At the time of the interviews, the advocate was not yet hired and outreach activities had been conducted by the lawyer and administrator. The focus of outreach at that time had been to social worker management teams for MCFD and VACFSS, with the plan to conduct more outreach in the future and to include the advocate in these activities. External stakeholders that could speak to the outreach conducted found them informative and helpful for understanding the purpose of the PLC and the services provided.

**Awareness of the PLC:** Overall awareness of the PLC is difficult to assess at this point in time, particularly as the key informants chosen to include in interviews were those that had some knowledge and could speak to the services of the PLC. Internal key informants believe that relevant stakeholders are becoming more aware of the service, observing that some social workers seem to be directing clients to the PLC when at court. External stakeholders could primarily only speak to their own awareness. Several comments or suggestions given with respect to outreach included the following.

- ▶ Managers that had taken part in PLC presentations spoke of informing their relevant teams of social workers, but also commented the message may not be consistently and uniformly presented across all offices. However, one comment made was that social workers in Burnaby did not seem to have any knowledge of the PLC.
- ▶ Having written information to distribute around to workers who could, in turn, pass them along to clients, was viewed as useful for informing service providers and potential clients of the PLC. While some external stakeholders seemed to be aware of available communication materials, others did not. One suggestion was that a brochure explaining the PLC and how to access the services would be helpful for social workers and other relevant stakeholders for providing to clients who may be eligible for PLC services. As noted above, distributing available handouts and informing stakeholders of these materials may be an area for further outreach from the PLC.
- ▶ While most external key informants could not speak to whether non-government organizations agencies (e.g., shelters, transition houses, advocacy groups) knew of the PLC, several commented that it would be important for these agencies to be informed of the pilot.
- ▶ Because MCFD and outside agencies may experience high turnover, regular outreach is viewed as important to ensure workers remain aware of the PLC. Furthermore, social workers are often dealing with many different agencies, and they may have extended

<sup>13</sup> Legal Services Society. Parents Legal Centre, Procedures Manual, pp. 3-6.

periods where they do not have to go to court. Therefore, ongoing outreach is important to ensure that these workers keep the PLC in mind and refer potential clients to the service.

**Referring clients to the PLC:** Social workers, as the stakeholders that usually have the first contact with parents experiencing a CFCSA issue, are viewed as important for informing potential clients of the PLC services, particularly for the goal of having clients accessing the service early in the process. As noted above, internal stakeholders believe social workers are beginning to refer clients to the PLC. Judges are also perceived as informing people of the service. As shown in Table 2, eight of the applicants had been referred to the PLC by an MCFD social worker, and another eight by the LSS; however, the majority (67%) of clients had no source of referral identified. Of the clients participating in interviews, three had learned of the PLC from an MCFD or VACFSS social worker, one from a hospital counsellor, one from a support worker, as well as from a single mother's resource guide, and one from LSS.

Referred from	Number of clients	%
MCFD social worker	8	16%
LSS	8	16%
Not available*	33	67%

Source: PLC database as of July 23, 2015.  
Note: Total percentages do not add to 100% due to rounding.  
\*Data not available at time of process evaluation

External key informants generally could not speak to whether relevant stakeholders are referring people to the PLC, with a few mentioning that it was too early in the process to know. Some confusion also exists over the difference between the PLC and LSS intake and when to refer clients to each. As a result, several key informants said they continue to tell people to go to LSS intake and assume the intake staff will know the process that should be used. As well, some key informants are not clear on whether clients that have an existing relationship with a tariff lawyer from previous CFCSA issues must use the PLC or if they can apply for a representation contract.

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

**The PLC's location:** Generally all stakeholders believe that the PLC is in a convenient and accessible location. Key informants believe the Vancouver Robson Square provincial courthouse to be a good location for the PLC, with both the court and LSS intake in the same building. Because the courthouse is situated in downtown Vancouver, it is easy for clients to find and access it, with the sky train and buses close by. Plus, if service providers are at the court with potential clients, they can easily direct or take clients to the PLC. Interviewed clients found the LSS very accessible. All who could speak to going to the PLC,<sup>14</sup> said that it was easy to get to and in a convenient location; they said, for example, that it was right in the courthouse or that it was on a bus route.

**Hours:** No concerns were expressed regarding the PLC's hours. That they are open during the same hours as the courthouse was viewed as appropriate. It was also commented that clients can

<sup>14</sup> One interviewed client had only spoken to PLC staff by phone and had not yet visited the PLC in person.



leave a voicemail in the evenings. While not all interviewed clients were aware of the hours of operation, none had any concerns regarding their own appointment hours.

**Clients' comfort level in using the PLC:** A few key informants commented that some clients may be intimidated with the formality and/or bureaucratic nature of an office in a courthouse. Others commented that the Vancouver Robson Square provincial courthouse is not a busy or clinical environment; in fact, it is a public place where clients may be more comfortable attending, in comparison to a private lawyer's office. Several key informants commented on and appreciated the PLC's lawyer's willingness to provide outreach and meet clients in other locations.

Clients themselves said they were very comfortable going to the PLC, attributing this comfort to the attitude and helpfulness of PLC staff. For example, some comments made by clients include the following:

- ▶ *Everybody was approachable and non-judgemental and sympathetic.*
- ▶ *The lawyer and administrative person were nice and helpful.*
- ▶ *I wasn't comfortable at first. I was a little confused and scared of the outcome...the people at the PLC made me very comfortable, they were friendly and non-judgemental and welcoming.*
- ▶ *It was the people that made it comfortable – people talked to me and asked me how I was doing.*

A few key informants also commented that they had received feedback that the PLC is welcoming and supportive to clients.

**Culturally-appropriate service:** It appears that the main steps taken for ensuring culturally-appropriate services are through the knowledge and experience of the PLC staff. All staff members have worked with people from other cultures in the past, including First Nations peoples. Two of the three staff members are Aboriginal, which contributes to instilling a sense of trust and comfort with First Nations clients. As well, publications are available for clients of ethnic minority groups and interpreters are available in the provincial courthouse.

**Eligibility and cases accepted:** While almost all clients (88%) applying to the PLC to date were financially eligible for a representation contract (Table 3), the fact that the PLC has some discretionary coverage is viewed as a positive aspect of the pilot. As commented by one key informant:

- ▶ *Some people are struggling, but they are not on income assistance, so they may be close to the cut-off point. We have seen so many families that are excluded that way, and it causes such a great deal of financial hardship.*

Table 3: Assessment results (n=49)		
Element	Number of applicants	%
<b>Financially eligible for a representation contract</b>		
Yes	43	88%
Not identified*	6	12%
<b>Accepted for PLC</b>		
Yes	37	76%
No	10	20%
Not identified**	2	4%
Source: PLC database as of July 23, 2015. *Of these six, three were not accepted as PLC clients and three were not identified either as being financially eligible for a tariff lawyer or for discretionary coverage. **The two not identified as to whether they were accepted as PLC clients were likely still in the assessment phase.		

From Table 3, of the 49 applicants to the PLC, 37 were accepted as clients, 10 were declined, and two were not identified in the database as being accepted or declined and were likely still in the assessment phase. Reasons for not accepting the 10 individuals as clients were as follows:

- ▶ Two had issues that were *Family Law Act* (FLA) matters only.
- ▶ One had issues not covered by the PLC.
- ▶ One had a lawyer conflict.
- ▶ One was not open to collaborative processes.
- ▶ One was out of jurisdiction.
- ▶ Four did not have the reasons identified for service decline in the client database.

Almost half (47%) of clients were informed of whether they were eligible for PLC services on the same day as their application (Table 4), although either no assessment completion dates or no dates at all were identified in 43% of the files.

Table 4: Days to complete assessment (n=49)		
Days	Number of clients	%
0	23	47%
1	1	2%
7–9	2	4%
28–31	2	4%
Not available*	21	43%
Source: PLC database as of July 23, 2015. *Data not available at time of process evaluation.		

**8. Are people with CFCSA issues accessing the PLC early in the process?**

**Whether clients are accessing the PLC early in the CFCSA process:** It is not possible this early in the PLC's operation to make any definitive statements on when in their CFCSA matter clients are accessing the PLC. Internal key informants believe that clients are just starting to come to the PLC early in their CFCSA matter, such as pre-removal or before court involvement. One observed challenge in encouraging parents to approach the PLC soon in the CFCSA process is that parents may not have a sense of urgency; they do not see the need for a lawyer's assistance if the matter is not yet at the court stage. External key informants either said they did not know when clients were accessing the PLC or that clients appeared to be accessing the PLC at the first court appearance stage. Plus, a few external key informants believe that clients accessing the PLC lawyer at the first appearance and then receiving ongoing assistance thereafter are receiving early access, in comparison to those who need to have their matter adjourned to apply to LSS for a representation contract.

Clients were asked how soon after a social worker contacted them they contacted either LSS or the PLC. A few said immediately, while others just said they were told to either go to court or to the LSS.

From the PLC database, the stage of the client's case when their file was opened was not identified for close to half (49%) of the PLC applicants to date (Table 5). Of the remaining 51%, 13 accessed the PLC when there was a risk of removal of the child, and 11 accessed the PLC at the presentation hearing when there had been a new removal.

Stage	Number of clients	%
Risk of removal	13	27%
New removal/presentation	11	22%
Extension	1	2%
Not given	24	49%

Source: PLC database as of July 23, 2015.  
 \*All files, including those not accepted as PLC clients.

When considering the legal issue or issues identified at the time of their application, 43% of PLC clients had a removal issue and 35% a risk of removal issue (Table 6).

Legal issue	Number of clients	%
Removal	21	43%
Risk of removal	17	35%
Access	5	10%
Family violence; protection order (family member)*	2	4%
Transfer of child to a non-parent*	1	2%
Not identified	6	12%

Source: PLC database as of July 23, 2015.  
 Note: Totals add to over 100%; clients may have more than one legal issue.  
 \*The two family violence and one transfer of child cases were not accepted into the PLC.

**When stakeholders think parents should be accessing the PLC:** Some confusion and differences of opinion appear to exist on when parents should first contact the PLC for assistance. While the intent of the pilot is for social workers and other services providers to refer people to the PLC early in the CFCSA process, and possibly even at the investigation stage, external key informant were not always clear on when they were expected to make referrals. Plus, stakeholders had varying opinions on when they believe is an appropriate time to involve the PLC. Several external key informants said the PLC lawyer should become involved either immediately upon removal of a child or when court involvement is initiated. One concern about earlier involvement is that if it was the PLC lawyer assisting the client during the investigation stage, social workers may feel compelled to also have lawyer representation during client meetings. The fear is that this lawyer involvement by both sides could prolong the process, make it more litigious, and create additional resource requirements.

However, some external stakeholders also gave examples of where they believe it could be beneficial to clients to obtain early advice and assistance from the PLC. Several examples given include the following:

- ▶ People often are confused about differences between criminal matters, family matters, and CFCSA matters. The PLC lawyer can help parents gain an understanding of the CFCSA and the mandate and obligations of the MCFD under the Act.
- ▶ Parents often have a mistrust of social workers and the MCFD, and they are more willing to accept explanations of the social workers' concerns from an independent lawyer. As a result, parents may be more cooperative, which may facilitate negotiations with social workers.
- ▶ Parents often want to know about their legal rights early in the process.
- ▶ Meeting with the PLC lawyer, when agreeing to a voluntary care agreement or an extended family placement, would be helpful for ensuring parents fully understand what they are agreeing to and signing. A few key informants observed it would be more appropriate to have the explanation come from someone the client would view as an independent third party, such as the lawyer, rather than the social workers themselves, particularly if the client was unclear of what they were agreeing to.

**9. Did PLC clients take a more collaborative approach to resolving their legal issue as a result of engaging with the PLC?**

The evaluation heard that stakeholders involved in the CFCSA process in the Vancouver area widely view collaborative approaches as beneficial alternatives to court trials and employ such alternatives as much as possible.

A few key informants believe it is too early in the PLC pilot process to determine if it is yet having a positive impact on the number of people taking part in collaborative approaches. The PLC database does not specifically have a field for identifying the collaborative approaches the client participated in, but does have a field that lists the services provided, including preparing for and attending some type of alternative dispute resolution (ADR) process. However, given that most files are still open, few of the records in the database have services identified to date.

Of the 37 clients accepted into the PLC, 12 had the services provided recorded in the PLC database. Of these, nine had received services for preparing for and attending some type of ADR process. According to internal stakeholders, the PLC has had the opportunity to assist in few mediations to date, so these nine are mainly other types of collaborative processes.

Several stakeholders involved in one type of collaborative approach used in Vancouver, the FCPC at court, have observed that FCPCs are being used more frequently since the PLC opened. According to the MCFD, an FCPC “is a strength-based, solution-focussed process to provide families with input into planning for their children. They are effective in creating interim or short-term plans and in generating an understanding of “next steps.” The process is used for planning at the initial stages of Ministry involvement or while waiting for a Family Group Conference.”<sup>15</sup>

While FCPC can be used throughout British Columbia, only Vancouver offers these processes in court, with sessions held in the mornings on list days. According to key informants, FCPCs at the courthouse are not available during Aboriginal list times (in the afternoon during regular list days), and instead are held elsewhere on other days. Key informants noted that FCPCs can be useful for information exchange, clarifying and/or addressing some issues, and setting some direction for moving forward. Prior to the PLC, unrepresented clients may have had access to a family duty counsel lawyer on these first appearance days, but the family duty counsel lawyers did not participate in FCPCs. The PLC is viewed as filling that gap, particularly as the PLC lawyer is also supportive of and encourages use of FCPCs. As noted in one observation, the PLC “enhances the model” already there, in that both the PLC lawyer and the FCPCs are readily available to clients at the courthouse.

Of the interviewed clients, three had participated in some type of collaborative process, with two saying they had participated in a family group conference and one in an FCPC. The PLC lawyer helped the clients through the process in all cases, but attended the session with the client only for the FCPC. Two of the clients mentioned it was the MCFD that had suggested the process, with the PLC also encouraging participation in the FCPC.

**10. Did PLC clients receive referrals to other service providers to assist them in addressing their underlying parenting concerns? Are they using these referrals?**

The evaluation was not able to assess the extent that clients are receiving and using referrals from the PLC to other service providers that can assist them in collateral issues, as this is one of the responsibilities of the PLC advocate who was only recently hired. Internal key informants mentioned making several referrals to date, such as to programs and advocacy groups, and to the JAC for family law issues. They also mentioned providing some support for collateral issues, such as by writing letters of support to assist clients with obtaining housing. External key informants could not comment on the extent PLC clients were receiving and using referrals.

Some uncertainty exists on the role of the PLC advocate with respect to providing support and referrals to clients. While additional support to clients can be helpful, several external key informants also cautioned about providing already available services, thus creating a duplication

<sup>15</sup> British Columbia Ministry of Child and Family Development. 2012/13 Annual Service Plan Report, p. 21. Retrieved from [http://www.bcbudget.gov.bc.ca/Annual\\_Reports/2012\\_2013/pdf/ministry/cfd.pdf](http://www.bcbudget.gov.bc.ca/Annual_Reports/2012_2013/pdf/ministry/cfd.pdf)

of services. For example, key informants noted that one role of social workers is to link clients to needed services. Close communication with other service providers, including with social workers, was considered important to ensure that there is clarity on the role of the advocate, that the PLC does not duplicate services provided elsewhere, and that clients are not over-served.

Of the clients, only one reported receiving a referral from the PLC to other services, with several saying that they likely did not receive a referral because they did not require any additional supports. The one that received a referral said she did not use it, because another agency that was helping her had already linked her with a variety of supports.

**11. Did PLC clients receive the level of service that they require to obtain an early resolution to their legal issues? Did they find the services to be fair and timely?**

**Whether clients receive a good understanding of their legal rights and obligations:** Key informants commented that assistance from the PLC is valuable in helping clients understand the concerns of the MCFD (or DAA), as well as their rights and obligations with respect to these concerns. Furthermore, the assistance available immediately at the courthouse on list days, as well as the consistency from continued involvement of the PLC, is viewed as a positive aspect of the pilot. Several external key informants said they based their belief that PLC clients received a good understanding of their rights and obligations from their observations of the PLC lawyer with clients and/or their past experiences working with the lawyer. Most key informants commented on the suitability of the lawyer in place at the PLC for that position, making comments such as the following:

- ▶ *She understands this area of law very well and is knowledgeable and experienced.*
- ▶ *She has established good working relationships with other involved service providers, such as social workers and Director's Counsel and is open to discussion and working collaboratively to consider meaningful options.*
- ▶ *She explains to clients about their rights and options, and advocates for her clients.*

Clients themselves said the assistance from the PLC was very helpful, in that the lawyer answered all their questions, explained their legal rights, and helped them understand their child protection issue and what they needed to do to resolve the issue. Clients also appreciated that the lawyer would promptly respond to their questions posed by telephone or email messages, often the same day, and would also assist them with forms and paperwork. Comments made by clients include the following:

- ▶ *It is difficult to deal with Justice. This was my first time and I had lots of questions....they helped me understand how the Justice system works.*
- ▶ *I already had a general idea of legal aspects. The information was helpful....helped understand the things I was not sure about.*
- ▶ *Was very good and clear and helpful...I had never had any legal issues before and did not know anything about them...They helped me navigate the system.*

A few external key informants, however, referred again to the number of clients requiring assistance on list days and expressed concerns that some people did not appear to be spending enough time with the lawyer on those days to receive a sufficient level of legal advice. However, these key informants did not comment on whether their observations were based on existing PLC clients, or on those waiting for brief advice from the PLC or other duty counsel attending list day.

**Client satisfaction of services received:** While not all key informants could comment on client satisfaction with services received, those that have been able to observe clients with the lawyer said they appeared to be satisfied with the legal advice and representation they were receiving. Clients appreciate having someone to support and advocate for them, particularly where there can be perceived power imbalances, when the MCFD is represented by one or more social workers and a Director's Counsel.

Clients all made various comments expressing their satisfaction with the services they had received from the PLC, starting with comments on the ease of applying for services and the short wait time in learning if they are eligible. Clients said the lawyer helped prepare them for court; spoke up and advocated for them in court and meetings; gave them good legal advice, including telling them of their options and helping them be part of the decision-making; and explained what to expect and what occurred in court. Several of the clients specifically commented that they were satisfied with the outcome of either their collaborative process or the court outcome.

**Early resolution of clients' legal issues:** While the evaluation heard that some PLC clients are finding early resolution through such processes as the FCPC, the pilot has not been operating long enough to make any definitive assessments or conclusions. From the PLC database, 95% of the case files of accepted clients are considered still open, with only two files having been closed. Both files were closed because the clients moved to a different jurisdiction and were then provided a representation contract for a tariff lawyer.

Table 7: File status of those accepted as PLC client (n=37)		
Status	Number of clients	%
Open	35	95%
Closed (client moved to different jurisdiction)	2	5%

Source: PLC database as of July 23, 2015.

Of those files still open, 60% have been open 75 days or less (Table 8).

Table 8: Number of days files open for those accepted as PLC client and files still open (n=35)*		
Days	Number of clients	%
10–25	3	9%
26–50	11	31%
51–75	7	20%
76–100	3	9%
101–125	5	14%
126–135	6	17%

Source: PLC database as of July 23, 2015.  
 \*From file opening date to July 23, 2015.

From the Procedures Manual (p.51), case summary information is not to be entered into the database until the case is closed or has been inactive for a time.

As well, and as was indicated in the introduction to Section 4.0, case summary information is not generally entered into the PLC database until files are closed. Therefore, minimal information on services provided to individual clients was available from the database at the time of the process evaluation.<sup>16</sup>

**12. Are collaborative processes more effective and efficient because of PLC support? Are PLC clients achieving more sustainable collaborative resolutions to their child protection case?**

Given the short timeframe that the PLC has been in operation, it is too early to determine if collaborative processes are more effective and efficient because of the PLC, as well as whether clients are achieving more sustainable collaborative resolutions. The PLC has been involved in few mediations to date (which are but one form of collaborative process that the PLC is expected to assist in), and, as shown in Table 7, most of the accepted clients' files are still open. Key informants mainly said that it was too early to comment on the expected outcomes of efficient and effective collaboration, or that they had not been involved in a collaborative process with the PLC, or that they expected the PLC to assist with achievement of these outcomes. A few reiterated that collaborative approaches are already widely used in Vancouver and that agreements can usually be negotiated through these processes. A few key informants expressed concerns over situations in which the client was supported by the PLC advocate during collaborative meetings and the social worker by a Director's Counsel. Such a scenario was viewed as unfair to the client, as the social worker would have access to legal advice at the meeting, but the client would not.

Where the PLC is seen as having an immediate impact is, as noted above in Question 9, with FCPCs. This is primarily because the availability of the PLC lawyer is resulting in greater usage of FCPCs at court. The PLC is viewed as filling a gap or, as suggested by one observation, providing a "one-stop shop." With the PLC located in the courthouse, the lawyer is available to assist clients in the FCPC and then at the first court appearance on the same day. As mentioned previously, FCPCs are viewed as valuable for information sharing, clarification of issues, and starting the planning process. A few key informants commented on the value of the PLC lawyer attending FCPCs with clients to assist and support them through the process.

The following consider how key informants believe the PLC is contributing or will contribute to the effectiveness and efficiency of collaborative processes:

- ▶ The effectiveness aspects are that the lawyer is able to support clients and articulate their concerns, help them understand the issues, help them negotiate conditions with social workers, and help them understand where it is in their best interests to come to agreements rather than going to a court trial. Several key informants commented that clients seem to come to these meetings prepared and looking to the PLC lawyer for support. The few interviewed clients that recalled participating in a collaborative meeting said the lawyer helped them understand the process and they felt prepared for the collaborative session.

<sup>16</sup> From the Procedures Manual (p.51), case summary information, including services provided, is not to be entered into the database until the case is closed or has been inactive for a time.



- ▶ The efficiency aspects of successful FCPCs are that parents are getting more timely access to legal advice and are able to plan, plus the PLC lawyer can often manage clients' expectations and help them come to agreements to avoid litigious and time-consuming court trials. As well, by assisting the client at the FCPC, the lawyer becomes familiar with the case and can then support the client at the court appearance on the same day. This precludes the need for adjourning the matter to allow the lawyer time to become familiar with the case or while the client tries to retain a lawyer.

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

**Whether court appearances are more productive when clients have PLC support:** PLC support to clients at court appearances would be for presentation or protection hearings on list days. Some key informants said they have not yet been able to or would not be in a position to observe whether PLC support results in more productive court appearance for clients. Some noted positive aspects of PLC support include the following:

- ▶ As already mentioned, the immediate availability of the lawyer can avoid adjournments and delays.
- ▶ The consistent attendance by the one PLC lawyer provides continuity, not only for existing PLC clients, but also for clients who may not be eligible for PLC services and who rely on duty counsel services.
- ▶ The PLC is staffed with an experienced lawyer knowledgeable in the child protection area of law, which contributes to effective services for clients.
- ▶ The PLC emphasis on collaborative approaches works toward resolution rather than litigation.

As noted previously, several key informants also believe that the caseload is too high on list days for the one PLC lawyer to manage, particularly in that the lawyer is conducting FCPCs, as well as providing services to existing PLC clients and as duty counsel.<sup>17</sup> These key informants expressed concerns that some clients do not appear to be getting sufficient time with the PLC lawyer on list days. Time with the lawyer prior to the court appearance is considered essential for responding to clients' questions and providing support and guidance, particularly for those parents who have never been to court before. As well, a few key informants wondered how client time with the lawyer on list days will be further affected as more people become aware of and seek out the PLC services.

**Effective use of other service provider resources and justice services:** As already noted, a few key informants have noted that FCPCs at court are being used more often and more effectively since the launching of the pilot. While a few key informants said it is too early to determine how the PLC will affect other justice resources, some provided examples of where they saw potential for the PLC support to lead to more effective use of other service providers

<sup>17</sup> As already noted, there is another LSS family duty counsel, located at the JAC, available to assist clients on list days. This duty counsel and the PLC lawyer will provide brief advice services for new unrepresented parents, some of whom may become clients of the PLC.

and justice services. For example, whenever the support provided by the PLC can lead to some type of resolution without a court trial, this will result in considerable time savings for all service providers concerned, including social workers, Director's Counsel, the Judiciary, and other court services. Furthermore, by ensuring that the PLC lawyer is knowledgeable, experienced, and efficient, as the current PLC lawyer is widely perceived by key informants, this will contribute to the efficiency of the entire court system. The availability of the full-time PLC lawyer will provide for more consistent services and lead to more timely and effective identification of the needed legal assistance, which should then result in more effective use of other service providers.

Although the PLC advocate position was only recently filled, some key informants saw potential for this position to complement the assistance that social workers and other advocates provide to clients. Support from the PLC advocate for linking clients with needed resources and services and attending meetings can assist in sharing workloads, which could ease the burden on social workers and other advocates who often carry a heavy caseload. However, as noted previously, some clarification is required on the PLC advocate's role. Plus, close communication with other service providers is required to prevent duplication of services and ensure the most effective use of the PLC advocate.

The perceived high caseload the PLC lawyer is managing on list days is, however, also viewed as having some impact on other service providers. A few key informants observed that the court has had to stand down, such as at presentation hearings, while the lawyer is busy with other clients, and which has an impact on all involved. However, a few of these key informants also noted that this would occur in the past with other lawyers as well.

A few key informants also noted that the PLC is requesting involvement in meetings between social workers and clients that, in the past, lawyers would not have participated in. Involvement in such meetings by the PLC lawyer necessitates the inclusion of Director's Counsel; this increased lawyer involvement is viewed as having the potential to formalize and add complexity to these meetings. Furthermore, trying to schedule meetings around everyone's schedules can lengthen the process, and may also add to the overall workloads for other service providers. However, as noted already, key informant interviews took place prior to the hiring of the PLC advocate. Providing client liaison and support is one of the responsibilities of the advocate, and, therefore, it would be expected that the advocate will assume some of these responsibilities for supporting clients in formal meetings with social workers.

**Cases that are transferred to a tariff lawyer when their matter cannot be resolved after given substantial services by the PLC:** Given the short time since the implementation of the PLC, no clients have yet been transferred to a tariff lawyer after receiving substantial services from the PLC. A few key informants wonder if, after developing a relationship with and having the continuity of the PLC lawyer, transferring to a tariff lawyer just before a trial will be disruptive to clients and will cause a breakdown in communication. Furthermore, these key informants believe it would be difficult for the tariff lawyer to represent a client whose issues and circumstances are new to them, and that it could cause inefficiencies as the lawyer familiarizes themselves with the case. However, another comment was that it seemed appropriate for the PLC to focus on those cases that can be resolved expeditiously, and to pass the more difficult cases on to a tariff lawyer. Plus, although no PLC clients have yet been transferred to a tariff lawyer because their matter could not be resolved collaboratively with PLC assistance, PLC representatives indicated that any such transfer would take place well before the trial.

#### 14. Were there any unintended consequences or outcomes (positive or negative) of the PLC project identified in Year 1?

Most key informants could not identify any unintended consequences or outcomes of the PLC project to date. While not an unintended consequence, one observation made was that social workers have demonstrated an even greater positive response to the PLC than was expected and are encouraging clients to come to the PLC for assistance. Another unintended consequence mentioned by a few key informants was that the implementation of the PLC generated questions and concern amongst tariff lawyers who accept LSS referrals for CFCSA clients. These lawyers' concerns were mainly around what services the PLC was providing, how this would affect their practice as tariff lawyers, and if they would continue to receive CFCSA files. Both the PLC and other LSS staff have tried to address any questions and allay concerns.

## 5.0 Conclusions

This section presents some brief conclusions on the process evaluation, based on the data collection and analysis performed to date.

### 5.1 Conclusions on implementation of the PLC

**The PLC was primarily implemented as intended, with only a few divergences from the original model and its planned timelines:** Successful implementation has been attributed to having knowledgeable and experienced stakeholders involved in the planning and development phase. One divergence from the original model is that the PLC advocate position was not filled prior to the launching of the PLC, due to hiring logistics. While this does not appear to have significantly affected the implementation of the pilot, the advocate was not available for initial outreach activities or to provide services during the pilot's initial few months. Some uncertainty exists for external stakeholders on the role of the advocate; continued outreach activities by the PLC will assist in clarifying this role. Another change from the original PLC model is that the part-time lawyer position will not be filled because the one full-time lawyer position is considered sufficient to meet the volume of cases at this time.

**The PLC has the support of external stakeholders:** External stakeholders that have interactions with parents with CFCSA issues, such as social workers, Director's Counsel, and other services providers, are generally supportive of the PLC; however, at this early stage in the pilot, it is still uncertain as to what extent other service providers are aware of the PLC and the services they provide.

**The PLC currently appears to have sufficient tools, resources, and capacity to meet demand, although some external stakeholders voiced some resource concerns:** While the PLC expects to handle a caseload of about 100 CFCSA cases per year, external stakeholders commented on the high number of cases that are heard at the Vancouver provincial courthouse. They expressed concern on whether the one PLC lawyer position is sufficient to meet this high caseload. Any actual observed capacity constraint issues, to date, have been on list days, when the one lawyer is trying to meet demands for FCPCs at court and for duty counsel services, in addition to helping existing clients. The support from the PLC advocate, who was not hired for the first three to four months of the PLC's operation, will assist in easing demands on the lawyer.

As well, such concerns may diminish with time, as external stakeholders gain a greater understanding of the cases that the PLC will and will not be handling.

**Key informants believe the current PLC model supports its efficient and effective delivery:**

The Vancouver provincial courthouse location is viewed as an ideal location, and the distribution of responsibilities between the three staff types is considered an efficient use of resources. Furthermore, the PLC advocate provides a new level of support to CFCSA clients, and the availability of the lawyer and advocate to assist clients in court and to provide continuity are considered positive features. The outreach to other service providers is also viewed as important for informing and gaining the support of other stakeholders. Key informants also commended the LSS for ensuring the PLC is staffed with knowledgeable and experienced workers who can form trust relationships with other service providers and clients — features that are considered critical for such a service. The only concern expressed with the current model is whether the one lawyer position is sufficient, considering the volume of CFCSA cases that are heard at the Vancouver provincial courthouse.

**Key informants saw high value in implementing the PLC model at other locations:**

Opinions of key considerations to do so successfully include knowledgeable and experienced staff that can form trusting relationships with clients and other stakeholders; an understanding of the caseload, characteristics, and needs of the selected area; and creative and effective ways to deliver services for any geographically large and rural/remote areas selected.

## **5.2 Conclusions on early indications of outcomes**

**Relevant stakeholders are becoming aware of the PLC and referring potential clients:**

While many stakeholders do appear to be aware of the PLC, it is too early in the operation of the pilot to assess to what extent all relevant stakeholders are aware of and referring potential clients to the PLC. External key informants who could speak to the PLC outreach activities found these valuable for understanding the purpose and services of the PLC, but were not sure if the message was being conveyed consistently across all offices and organizations. Ongoing outreach to all types of stakeholders that may have interactions with CFCSA clients, including community organizations, is considered important to ensure continued awareness of the PLC, and could also help clarify whether stakeholders should refer potential clients to the PLC or to LSS intake. Written communications, such as brochures that can be distributed to both service providers and clients, are also viewed as valuable.

**The PLC is considered accessible to all financially eligible people with CFCSA issues who reside in the catchment area:** Key informants and clients report that locating the PLC in the Vancouver provincial courthouse is convenient and accessible. Transportation is close by, the hours of operation are good, and the court and LSS intake are within the same building. Clients are very comfortable using the PLC and attribute this to the PLC staff, who are welcoming, supportive, and non-judgemental. The PLC staff are experienced in providing services to people from a variety of cultural backgrounds. As well, some publications are offered in other languages besides English, and interpreters are available at the courthouse.

**Stakeholders see some potential benefits to parents with CFCSA issues accessing the PLC early in the process:** Internal PLC key informants believe that clients are just starting to come to the PLC early in the CFCSA matter; external key informants either do not know when clients

access the PLC or believe they do so when making a court appearance. External stakeholders generally did not have a strong understanding of when in the CFCSA process the PLC would like parents to access their services. While some external key informants were concerned about involving lawyers too early in the process, there are some instances where they also believe it could be beneficial for parents to obtain early advice from the PLC. This could include: to have someone other than the social worker provide clients with an understanding of the legal and child protection issues and of the obligations of the MCFD, and to help clients understand any conditions they are agreeing to in voluntary care agreements or extended family placements.

**The PLC approach of encouraging collaborative resolution for CFCSA matters fits in well with the existing culture in Vancouver:** It is early in the implementation of the PLC for assessing whether clients are taking a more collaborative approach to resolve their legal issue, particularly since most files are still open. However, stakeholders believe the PLC model complements the existing approach taken by Vancouver stakeholders for collaborative resolution over litigious court trials. One type of collaborative approach that stakeholders are able to confirm is being used more because of the PLC is with FCPCs at court, and which can be useful for information exchange, addressing some issues, and setting direction for next steps.

**PLC clients are receiving some referrals and assistance with collateral issues from the PLC, with the expectation that this assistance will increase now that the PLC advocate position is filled:** Referrals and connecting clients with other needed services is a primary responsibility of the PLC advocate, although some uncertainty exists with external stakeholders on the role of the advocate in this area. Close communication with other services providers is considered important for ensuring the PLC complements and supports, but does not duplicate, services already provided elsewhere.

**The PLC is providing clients with a good understanding of their legal rights and obligations and clients are satisfied with the services received:** While it is too early to determine to what extent clients are achieving early resolution for their CFCSA matter, the evaluation heard from both key informants and clients that the assistance from the PLC helps clients understand their legal issue and what they need to do to resolve their issue. Clients found the PLC to provide timely and responsive assistance, and believe they received sound legal advice and support.

**The PLC has already had an observable impact on the effectiveness and efficiency of one type of collaborative approach, specifically the FCPCs at the court:** A few key informants report that the availability of the PLC lawyer in the courthouse and the PLC's emphasis on collaboration has increased the usage of FCPCs at court. As well, the lawyer is able to make effective use of these sessions to the best interest of the client and to also manage client expectations, which contributes to the efficiency of these sessions. It is too early in the implementation of the PLC to determine its contribution to the effectiveness and efficiency of other types of collaborative processes.

**The PLC is viewed as having potential for increasing the productivity of court appearances for clients and for making more effective use of other service provider and justice service resources:** While an assessment of whether the PLC support to clients results in more productive court appearances and more effective use of other service provider and justices services will need to be determined primarily through the summative evaluation, stakeholders did see potential for

positive impacts on these areas. The consistent availability of a PLC lawyer at court who is experienced and places emphasis on collaborative approaches is viewed as having a range of positive benefits to clients, such as: avoiding adjournments and delays; providing effective legal representation with continuity; and facilitating early resolution and avoiding unnecessary trials. These benefits can, in turn, lead to time savings and more effective use of other justice service resources. Furthermore, the PLC advocate is viewed as having the potential to not only support clients, but also share workload with other service providers with respect to supporting clients. As noted already, though, the high caseload that the PLC lawyer is handling on list days is perceived as creating some court delays, which creates time issues for other justice services.

## **6.0 Recommendations to further enhance the implementation process**

***Recommendation 1: The PLC should continue and, in fact, expand outreach activities, particularly now that the PLC advocate has been hired.***

The outreach activities conducted by the PLC to date were considered informative and helpful by external stakeholders. With outreach as one of the intended ongoing activities, particularly for the PLC advocate, the PLC should consider expanding outreach to frontline workers, to ensure the message is communicated to those workers who would have the most contact with CFCSA clients. Outreach activities to community organizations that provide services to people who may experience CFCSA issues would also be valuable. Furthermore, outreach activities could assist in informing stakeholders of the PLC advocate's role. Increased use and distribution of brochures on the PLC could further contribute to outreach activities.

***Recommendation 2: The PLC should consult with other organizations that provide similar services as the PLC advocate, to ensure stakeholders are aware of the role of the advocate and to make the most effective use of the advocate position.***

Some external key informants did not have a good understanding of the role of the PLC advocate and were concerned about duplication of services. Consultation with other stakeholders, such as through the continued outreach mentioned in Recommendation 1, can assist in clarifying any misunderstandings. Consultation and planning with other relevant service providers can contribute to ensuring the advocate position complements, but does not duplicate, services provided to clients by other organizations.

***Recommendation 3: The PLC should consider making several additions to their forms and/or database to assist in tracking their services. Several suggestions include: asking on one of their forms how clients heard of or were referred to the PLC, and tracking the types of collaborative approaches with which the PLC assists clients.***

The PLC database does have a field to indicate how the client was referred to the PLC, although the referral source is not provided for the majority of the 49 applicants and does not appear to be asked on any of the PLC forms. This would be a useful addition to the forms completed at intake. Tracking referral sources could be useful for identifying what areas and/or organizations from the catchment area are not referring to the PLC to the extent desired, and it could assist in identifying where to focus outreach activities. Given that one of the objectives of the PLC is to encourage greater use of collaborative approaches, it would be useful for the PLC to track the types of collaborative approaches (e.g., FCPCs, FGCs, mediation) that clients are taking part in, how the PLC supported them, and the outcomes of these sessions.

## Appendix A — PLC logic model

**PLC Logic Model**

Program activities		Program outputs	Short-term outcomes	Medium-term outcomes
<b>REFERRALS, SCREENING, AND ASSESSMENT</b>	Parents with CFCSA matters are referred to PLC early in the process (as soon as the client knows there is a child protection concern); parents are screened for financial eligibility and their CFCSA matter assessed for appropriateness for PLC services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• # and type of information disseminated about the PLC services to LSS intake and other LSS services (e.g. LawLINE, Duty Counsel, other JITI project), MCFD, DAA, court services, FJC, JAC, other JAC partners, and other agencies</li> <li>• # and type of outreach activities by PLC</li> <li>• # of referrals to PLC from other sources</li> <li>• Stage of process when parents are referred to the PLC</li> <li>• Cases are screened and assessed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Relevant stakeholders in pilot site are aware of the PLC and refer potential clients to the PLC at an early stage in the process</li> <li>• Eligible parents with appropriate CFCSA files are able to access PLC services</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Achieve more sustainable collaborative resolutions in child protection cases</li> <li>• Decrease the number of trials in CFCSA cases</li> <li>• Maximize the effective use of judicial, lawyer and social worker resources</li> </ul>
	<b>PLC SUPPORT TO PARENTS FOR EARLY AND COLLABORATIVE RESOLUTION</b>	Legal information and advice to parents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• # of PLC clients receiving legal advice and information pre- and post-removal</li> </ul>	
	Preparing the client for collaborative meetings <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide information and resources to clients</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• # of PLC clients receiving preparation support for collaborative meetings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clients are prepared for collaborative meetings</li> <li>• Clients have a better understanding of the collaborative meeting process</li> </ul>	



Program activities		Program outputs	Short-term outcomes	Medium-term outcomes
	Representation and support, as appropriate, at collaborative meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• #, type of collaborative processes</li> <li>• # of PLC clients attending collaborative meetings</li> <li>• Amount of time spent in collaborative process (lawyers, advocate)</li> <li>• # and types of collaborative meetings where PLC client has PLC lawyer or advocate attend with them</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More parents participate in collaborative approaches</li> <li>• More child protection cases reach collaborative resolutions</li> <li>• Clients are supported during collaborative meetings</li> <li>• Collaborative meetings are more effective because of PLC support</li> <li>• Collaborative meetings are more efficient because of PLC support</li> </ul>	
	Representation at contested and uncontested hearings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• # of uncontested hearings where representation is provided</li> <li>• # of contested procedural hearings where representation is provided</li> <li>• # of court appearances (C)</li> <li>• # of adjournments (C)</li> <li>• Duration of case (days?) (C)</li> <li>• Amount of time before child is returned to parent, post-removal (C)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Court appearances are more productive for clients with PLC support</li> </ul>	
	Referrals to supportive social service agencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• # of clients receiving referrals to supportive social service agencies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Underlying parenting concerns are addressed</li> </ul>	
	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"> <li>• # of cases that received PLC services and were subsequently transferred to a tariff lawyer</li> <li>• Amount of time required by tariff lawyer to resolve matter</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cases that are transferred to a tariff lawyer after receiving substantial PLC services require less time for the tariff lawyer to resolve</li> </ul>	

## Appendix B — PLC evaluation matrix

<b>Evaluation matrix for the Parents Legal Centre pilot project</b>		
<b>Questions</b>	<b>Indicators</b>	<b>Data sources</b>
<b>Implementation questions</b>		
1. Has the PLC been implemented as intended in Year 1? What challenges were met in implementation? How were challenges addressed and improvements made to the model?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Stakeholder opinion on challenges/improvements</li> <li>Decision-records of changes made to improve model</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Key informant interviews</li> <li>Document review</li> </ul>
2. What external factors have influenced the implementation and success of the PLC?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Stakeholder opinion</li> <li>PLC WG meeting minutes documenting external factors</li> <li>Evidence that decisions, actions, policies of external organizations/stakeholders affect the PLC</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Key informant interviews</li> <li>Document review</li> </ul>
3. Did the PLC have sufficient tools, resources, and capacity to meet demand and any intended targets?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li># of CFCSA cases accepted by the PLC</li> <li># of CFCSA cases accepted by the PLC compared to CFCSA cases receiving legal aid referrals in previous years (for catchment area)</li> <li>Stakeholder opinion that the PLC has sufficient tools and resources to satisfactorily meet demand</li> <li>Client opinion on the level of assistance provided by the PLC</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>PLC database</li> <li>LSS CIS database</li> <li>Key informant interviews</li> <li>Client interviews</li> </ul>
4. To what extent do the current processes and structure of the PLC support its efficient and effective delivery?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Stakeholder opinion on the current processes and structure to support the project</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Key informant interviews</li> </ul>
5. What considerations related to the PLC model are necessary to successfully implement the model in a different site?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Stakeholder opinion on factors to be considered for expansion to other locations/lessons learned/best practices</li> <li>Documentation/data related to Q1 to Q3</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Key informant interviews</li> <li>Document review</li> </ul>
<b>Outcome questions</b>		
6. 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"> <li>Evidence of communication activities to inform stakeholders of the PLC</li> <li>Key informant opinion on awareness and understanding of the role of the PLC by relevant stakeholders and community agencies</li> <li>Key informant opinion on extent other stakeholders are referring people with CFCSA matters to the PLC</li> <li>Proportion of PLC clients that were referred from another agency/organization</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>PLC database</li> <li>Key informant interviews</li> <li>Client interviews</li> </ul>
7. Is the PLC accessible to all financially eligible people in the catchment area with CFCSA issues?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Client and stakeholder opinion on accessibility of services (location, hours, client comfort level is using, language issues addressed, etc.)</li> <li>Evidence of steps taken by the PLC for culturally-appropriate services (e.g. staff training, publications in other languages, access to translation services)</li> <li>Number of screened and assessed cases the PLC accepts and reasons for denial</li> <li>Number of PLC cases compared to overall number of CFCSA cases in pilot site over same time period</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Document review</li> <li>PLC database</li> <li>Key informant interviews</li> <li>Client interviews</li> </ul>

Evaluation matrix for the Parents Legal Centre pilot project		
Questions	Indicators	Data sources
8. Are people with CFCSA issues accessing the PLC early in the process and getting advice and information?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stage of their CFCSA matter that PLC clients are accessing the services</li> <li>• % of clients who were represented by the PLC at presentation hearings (C)</li> <li>• Stakeholder opinion on whether people with CFCSA matters are accessing the service early in their CFCSA matter</li> <li>• Client input on when they access the PLC</li> <li>• Client input on how the PLC helped them understand their CFCSA matter, the legal processes, and their rights and obligations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PLC database</li> <li>• Key informant interviews</li> <li>• Client interviews</li> </ul>
9. Did PLC clients take a more collaborative approach to resolving their legal issue as a result of engaging with the PLC?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Proportion of PLC clients making use of collaborative approaches and what types</li> <li>• Comparison of % of overall CFCSA cases where collaborative approaches are used since PLC was implemented</li> <li>• Comparison of proportion of PLC clients making use of collaborative approaches to CFCSA legal aid referrals in previous years that used collaborative approaches for the catchment area</li> <li>• Key informant opinion on extent that PLC clients use collaborative approaches compared to before the implementation of the PLC</li> <li>• Client input on decisions to take part in collaborative processes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PLC database</li> <li>• MCFD data</li> <li>• Key informant interviews</li> <li>• Client interviews</li> </ul>
10. Did PLC clients receive referrals to other service providers to assist them in addressing their underlying parenting concerns? Are they using these referrals?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Proportion of PLC clients receiving referrals</li> <li>• Client input on use and helpfulness of referrals</li> <li>• Stakeholder opinion on client use and helpfulness of referrals</li> <li>• % of PLC clients who have addressed Director's underlying parenting concerns (C)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PLC database</li> <li>• Key informant interviews</li> <li>• Client interviews</li> </ul>
11. Did PLC clients receive the level of service that they require to obtain an early resolution to their legal issues? Did they find the services to be fair and timely?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Types of assistance clients receive from the PLC</li> <li>• Proportion of clients represented by PLC at collaborative meetings, court hearings</li> <li>• Client input on satisfaction of services received from the PLC and level of support for collaborative processes and court appearances</li> <li>• Client opinion on whether they have a voice in the resolution of their CFCSA matter</li> <li>• Stakeholder opinion that PLC clients are supported for collaborative processes and other court processes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PLC database</li> <li>• Key informant interviews</li> <li>• Client interviews</li> </ul>

Evaluation matrix for the Parents Legal Centre pilot project		
Questions	Indicators	Data sources
12. Are collaborative processes more effective and efficient because of PLC support? Are PLC clients achieving more sustainable collaborative resolutions to their child protection case?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Stakeholder and PLC client opinion on the extent clients understood and were prepared for the collaborative processes they participated in</li> <li>Stakeholder opinion on effectiveness and success of collaborative approaches that PLC clients are participating in</li> <li>Stakeholder opinion on whether collaborative processes operate more efficiently when clients are supported by the PLC</li> <li>Client feedback on satisfaction with collaborative approaches they participate in and the outcome</li> <li>Comparison of % of CFCSA cases that reach collaborative resolutions pre- and post-PLC implementation</li> <li>Proportion of overall PLC clients reaching resolution through collaborative processes</li> <li>Proportion of PLC clients who take part in collaborative processes that are able to reach resolution (as opposed to going on to full legal aid referral)</li> <li>% of cases where child is returned to parent</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>MCFD data</li> <li>Court data</li> <li>PLC database</li> <li>Key informant interviews</li> <li>Client interviews</li> </ul>
13. 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"> <li>Stakeholder opinion that court appearances are more productive for clients with PLC support</li> <li>% of PLC CFCSA cases that go to trial compared to a non-PLC control group (C)</li> <li>Amount of time for tariff lawyers to resolve cases that go on for a full legal aid referral after substantial PLC service</li> <li>Court time required for resolving cases not resolved through collaborative processes</li> <li>Comparison of average wait time for half-day and two-day hearings pre- and post-PLC</li> <li>Stakeholder opinion that MCFD, DAA resources (Directors Counsel, social workers), and court resources are being used more effectively because of PLC involvement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>PLC database</li> <li>LSS data</li> <li>Court data</li> <li>Key informant interviews</li> </ul>
14. Were there any unintended consequences or outcomes (positive or negative) of the PLC project identified in Year 1?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Stakeholder opinion on unintended consequences or outcomes of the PLC</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Key informant interviews</li> </ul>

## Appendix C — Interview guides

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

**Interview guide for internal stakeholders  
(Project lead, PLC lawyer, PLC administrator)**

The Legal Services Society (LSS) of British Columbia requires an evaluation of the Parent Legal Centre (PLC) pilot 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 your notes or hear your recording.

The current evaluation focusses on the implementation of the PLC project to identify early issues and make recommendations to assist LSS management in improving/refining project implementation. This evaluation will also examine early indicators of success in meeting the project's objectives. We realize you may not be able to answer all questions; please let us know, and we will skip to the next question.

**Implementation and delivery of the PLC pilot**

1. Please briefly describe your role in the implementation and/or delivery of the PLC pilot project.
2. In your opinion, has the project been implemented as planned? If not, why not?
3. Have any factors or stakeholders external to the PLC project affected, either positively or negatively, the implementation and success of the model? (*Probe: social workers, Directors Counsel, mediators, court administration, Judiciary, etc.*) If yes, how has the project responded to mitigate problems or use opportunities?
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. What steps has the PLC taken to overcome any resource challenges? (*Probe: enough staff, staff have all the needed tools.*)
5. Are all relevant stakeholders aware of the PLC and referring potential clients to the PLC? What more, if anything, is needed to increase awareness? (*Probe: how effective have communication activities been? Who is referring people to the PLC?*)
6. Is the PLC accessible to all financially eligible people with CFCSA matters? Why or why not? (*Probes: the PLC location and hours are convenient? Clients are comfortable using the services? The PLC has taken steps to ensure culturally-appropriate services?*)

7. What, if any, other challenges were encountered during the implementation of the PLC? How were they addressed? What, if any, other improvements not already discussed have been made to the model? What differences have these improvements made?

### **Progress toward achieving objectives**

8. Are people with CFCSA issues getting referred to and accessing the PLC early enough in their process? Please explain why you believe they are or are not accessing the services early enough. How soon in their CFCSA matter should people be accessing the PLC?
9. From your perspective, is the PLC able to give clients a good understanding of their legal issue and their rights and obligations? Of the options available to them for resolving their CFCSA issue (e.g., *collaborative processes versus court*)? Please explain.
10. Is the PLC yet resulting in more people with CFCSA issues taking part in collaborative processes? How does the PLC encourage people to take part in collaborative processes? Which collaborative processes are clients using the most and why?
11. In your opinion, how effective and successful are the collaborative processes that PLC clients take part in? Is the PLC able to effectively prepare clients for and support them through the collaborative process? Is the process more efficient than without PLC support? Why or why not?
12. Are you able to comment on how satisfied clients are with the outcome of their collaborative process? Do they feel like they are part of the decision-making process? Why or why not?
13. How does support from the PLC assist clients with other court appearances? How, if at all, does this support help the client and improve the effectiveness and efficiency of court appearances?
14. In your opinion, 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.*) Please explain why or why not.
15. Can you comment on what happens to PLC clients if, after given substantial services by the PLC, they are not able to resolve their CFCSA matter? How many go on to receive a legal aid referral? For those that do, are they more prepared for the process? Does their process take less time for resolution than if they had not first received the PLC support?



16. What kind of other services does the PLC refer clients to for helping them address other issues that may be contributing to their CFCSA issue? Do clients make use of these referrals? Do they help clients with resolving their underlying parenting concerns that are contributing to their CFCSA matter?
17. To your knowledge, have there to date been any unintended outcomes from the PLC pilot project, either positive or negative? If yes, what have these outcomes meant to the client? To the PLC or other stakeholders?
18. Do you have any other comments on how the current structure and operational aspects of the PLC pilot has affected the effectiveness and/or the efficiency of the project itself? Do you have any suggestions for improving the pilot?
19. What considerations should LSS make in any decisions to implement the PLC in other locations in the province?

**Thank you for your participation.**

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

**Interview guide for external stakeholders  
(Mediators, social workers, Directors Counsel, other representatives of the MCFD,  
VACFSS, community agencies)**

The Legal Services Society (LSS) of British Columbia requires an evaluation of the Parent Legal Centre (PLC) pilot 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 your notes or hear your recording.

The current evaluation focusses on the implementation of the PLC project to identify early issues and make recommendations to assist LSS management in improving/refining project implementation. This evaluation will also examine early indicators of success in meeting the project's objectives. We realize you may not be able to answer all questions; please let us know, and we will skip to the next question.

**Implementation and delivery of the PLC pilot**

1. Please briefly describe your involvement with the PLC pilot project or with clients of the PLC pilot project.
2. Are you able to comment on whether the project been implemented as planned? If you believe it has not been implemented as planned, to what do you attribute this?
3. To your knowledge, have any factors or stakeholders external to the PLC project affected, either positively or negatively, the implementation and success of the model? (*Probe: social workers, Directors Counsel, mediators, court administration, Judiciary, etc.*) If yes, how has the project responded to mitigate problems or use opportunities?
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. Are you aware of any steps the PLC/LSS have taken to overcome any resource challenges? (*Probe: enough staff, staff have all the needed tools.*)
5. In your opinion, are all relevant stakeholders aware of the PLC and referring potential clients to the PLC? What more, if anything, is needed to increase awareness? (*Probe: how effective have communication activities been? Who is referring people to the PLC?*)

6. Is the PLC accessible to all financially eligible people with CFCSA matters? Why or why not? (*Probes: the PLC location and hours are convenient? Clients are comfortable using the services? The PLC has taken steps to ensure culturally-appropriate services?*)
7. Do you know of any other challenges that have been encountered in implementing and delivering the PLC? How were they addressed? Do you know of any improvements made to the pilot and if they have had an impact?

### **Progress toward achieving objectives**

8. Do you believe people with CFCSA issues are getting referred to and accessing the PLC early enough in their process? Please explain your answer. How soon in their CFCSA matter should people be accessing the PLC?
9. From your perspective, is the PLC able to give clients a good understanding of their legal issue and their rights and obligations? Of the options available to them for resolving their CFCSA issue (*e.g., collaborative processes versus court*)? Please explain.
10. Is the PLC yet resulting in more people with CFCSA issues taking part in collaborative processes? How is the PLC able to encourage people to take part in collaborative processes? Which collaborative processes are clients using the most and why?
11. In your opinion, how effective and successful are the collaborative processes that PLC clients take part in? Is the PLC able to effectively prepare clients for and support them through the collaborative process? Is the process more efficient than without PLC support? Why or why not?
12. Are you able to comment on how satisfied clients are with the outcome of their collaborative process? Do they feel like they are part of the decision-making process? Why or why not?
13. How does support from the PLC assist clients with other court appearances? How, if at all, does this support help the client and improve the effectiveness and efficiency of court appearances?
14. In your opinion, does support from the PLC result in more effective use of other service provider and justice services resources? (*e.g., social workers, Directors counsel, mediation, the Judiciary.*) Please explain why or why not.

15. Can you comment on what happens to PLC clients if, after given substantial services by the PLC, they are not able to resolve their CFCSA matter? How many go on to receive a legal aid referral? For those that do, are they more prepared for the process? Does their process take less time for resolution than if they had not first received the PLC support?
16. Based on your observations, is assistance from the PLC linking clients with other services to help them address issues that may be contributing to their CFCSA matter? Do clients make use of these referrals? Are clients making progress in resolving their underlying parenting concerns that are contributing to their CFCSA matter?
17. To your knowledge, have there to date been any unintended outcomes from the PLC pilot project, either positive or negative? If yes, what have these outcomes meant to the client? To the PLC or other stakeholders?
18. Do you have any other comments on how the current structure and operational aspects of the PLC pilot has affected the effectiveness and/or the efficiency of the project itself? Do you have any suggestions for improving the pilot?
19. What considerations should LSS make in any decisions to implement the PLC in other locations in the province?

**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:** Thank you very much for agreeing to come in and talk to me today. I am (NAME) and I am 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. 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, and that's why you were asked to take part in this interview. The PLC is just down the hall from the courtroom. The lawyer's name is Katrina Harry; another person who might have helped you at the PLC is Kirk Long.

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 the LSS in identifying how the project can be improved.

The interview should take about 20 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 your notes or hear your recording. No one connected to your child protection matter, such as a social worker or any other person involved will find out 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. How soon after the social worker contacted you did you contact either legal aid or the PLC? If you didn't contact them right away, was there any particular reason why not? (*Probe: didn't know about it or legal aid? Didn't know they should?*)
3. Did you get help from the PLC right away, or were you given an appointment. If you got an appointment, was the wait time reasonable? Why or why not? Do you think you got their help early enough? Why or why not? If not, when would you have like to have gotten their help?

4. 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 their 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?
5. 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?*) 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?
6. 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? )
7. 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?
8. 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?
9. Once you decided to take part in this collaborative process, what kind of help did the PLC give you?
  - a. How well did they explain the process to you and answer your questions?
  - b. How did they help you understand what was going to happen and what to expect?
  - c. How did they help you understand what you needed to do in this process?
  - d. 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?
10. How did you find the collaborative process you took part in? How well did it work for you and your family? How satisfied were you with the results of this collaborative process? Did you feel like you were part of the decision-making process? Why or why not?

11. Did the PLC help you with any other court appearances? If yes, 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.*)
12. Sometimes the PLC will tell clients about other organizations that could help them. For example, this could be organizations that help people with things like housing issues, income assistance, addictions or substance abuse issues, anger management or domestic violence, or some type of other counselling.
  - a. Did you get a referral to anything like that from the PLC (you don't need to tell me which ones)? If yes, were these organizations helpful to you? Did the help they gave you help with your child protection matter?
13. (*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?
  - a. If yes, do you know why? (*Probe: matter did not get resolved, had to go to a court trial.*)
  - b. When you started working with that lawyer, did you think you already had a good understanding of your child protection matter? If yes, was that because of the help you had gotten from the PLC?
  - c. Once you started working with the lawyer, how much longer did it take to resolve or settle your child protection matter?
14. 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.**  
(Provide honorarium.)