

**Evaluation of the Parents Legal Centre
Summative Evaluation Report**

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Prepared for:

Legal Services Society of British Columbia

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Executive summary

This report presents the summative evaluation findings for the Legal Services Society (LSS) of British Columbia's Parents 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 summative evaluation considers the implementation and delivery of the pilot and its success in achieving its intended outcomes during its first year of operation. This report covers the pilot project's activities from February 23, 2015 to April 19, 2016. The lines of evidence for the process evaluation included a review of key documents (including financial information); an analysis of the project database; a review of child protection-related court data provided by the Court Services Branch; interviews with key informants (LSS personnel and external stakeholders); and interviews with clients who had received services from the pilot. The summative evaluation also included a systems efficiencies analysis that considered the potential impact of the PLC to avoid court costs through earlier and more efficient resolution of cases. The conclusions and recommendations for the summative evaluation are summarized below.

Conclusions on implementation and delivery of the PLC

The PLC generally operated as expected in Year 1. Any operational challenges experienced were primarily with respect to the start-up phase, and having all staff and infrastructure in place.

The PLC is generally perceived as having sufficient resources. Some concerns that one lawyer was not sufficient to handle volumes on list days existed, but it was expected that the recent addition of a second lawyer would help to address this concern.

The initial outreach conducted by the PLC was viewed as effective. Outreach and ongoing informal communications were viewed as effective for establishing good relationships. The PLC's plans for future outreach are expected to further facilitate increasing awareness and cultivating relationships.

The current PLC model is viewed as supporting effective and efficient delivery. The PLC staff composition is viewed as having an effective structure that allows the lawyers to focus on clients' legal needs while the advocate/paralegal can assist with other supports, and the administrator handles administrative matters.

Key considerations in continuing the Vancouver PLC or in establishing a PLC in other locations were with respect to staffing and community relationships. This included ensuring that PLC staff are experienced in child protection and establishing good communications and collaborations with community stakeholders, and have an established relationship with the community.

Conclusions on early indications of outcomes

The outcome evaluation of the PLC occurred at early stages in the pilot's operations. Consequently, the evaluation findings should be read with the caveat that the pilot project is still in its very early stages, and evidence of achievement of outcomes is preliminary and based on the best available evidence. Conclusions for outcomes are summarized briefly below:

- ▶ Many stakeholders appear to be aware of the PLC and are referring clients to the PLC. Social workers are considered key stakeholders and it appears that most are aware of the PLC and many are encouraging clients to contact the PLC, at least prior to court.
- ▶ The PLC is considered accessible to financially eligible people with child protection issues. Most stakeholders view the location of the PLC in the courthouse as accessible to clients. Clients themselves say the location is good and they are comfortable using the PLC.
- ▶ While there is some early evidence that clients are starting to contact the PLC earlier in their child protection matters, many still appear not to do so until court day. Although the PLC and some social workers are encouraging clients to contact the PLC early, many do not given a variety of capacity constraints.
- ▶ The PLC is generally considered to be helping clients engage collaboratively for resolving their child protection issues. The PLC model and approach for collaboration is viewed as fitting well within the Vancouver culture of collaboration over court routes.
- ▶ Collaborative processes are viewed as an effective and efficient means of resolving issues. The PLC can advocate for clients, help them understand the issues and the process, provide support, and help them in making decisions for moving forward.
- ▶ The PLC is providing clients with a good understanding of their legal issues and their rights and obligations, and clients are highly satisfied with the services received. It is not possible to make conclusions on the extent the PLC is assisting clients with early resolution, particularly as the majority of the files are still open.
- ▶ The advocate/paralegal position is viewed by many as a positive feature of the PLC for linking clients with appropriate referrals and support. However, some clarification of the position is still needed to inform stakeholders of the advocate's role and to ease any concerns of duplication.
- ▶ When clients are supported by the PLC there is the potential for more effective use of other service provider resources and justice services. The PLC's immediate availability in court assists in reducing adjournments, and making more effective use of court time and other resources, such as social workers and director's counsel.
- ▶ Data are not available to make conclusions on net system savings due to efficiencies gained; the evaluation used available data to make some estimates based on several scenarios, which translated to potential avoided court costs of \$8,206 to \$41,030.

Recommendations to further enhance the PLC

Recommendation 1: Look for ways to further enhance collaborations and communications with other stakeholders working with PLC clients, such as social workers, to further facilitate advocacy efforts.

Recommendation 2: Explore ways to increase the accessibility of the PLC to those clients who may have difficulties taking that first step to ask for assistance.

Recommendation 3: The LSS should continue to look for ways to address the concerns of private bar lawyers.

Recommendation 4: The LSS should look for ways to better track client outcomes to facilitate the assessment of whether the PLC is helping clients resolve their child protection matters collaboratively and earlier.

1.0 Introduction

This report presents the summative evaluation findings for the Legal Service Society (LSS) of British Columbia's Parents 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 both a process evaluation, with a focus of implementation and early progress toward achieving outcomes, and a summative evaluation, which focusses on delivery and outcomes achieved. The first stage of the evaluation — the process evaluation — covered the pilot project's activities from its implementation on February 23, 2015 to July 23, 2015, and it concluded on November 5, 2015. This summative report presents the findings of the summative evaluation and covers the pilot project's activities from its implementation to April 19, 2016.

The objectives of the summative evaluation are as follows:

- ▶ collect information regarding the efficiency and effectiveness of the pilot project in order to support recommendations
- ▶ assess and report on the client-focussed outcomes of the pilot project
- ▶ assess whether the PLC program is supporting clients in achieving early, durable, and collaborative resolutions to their child protection matters
- ▶ investigate the system efficiency at the program level for the pilot project

2.0 Methodology

A PLC Project Working Group (WG) is guiding the evaluation process. The WG includes representatives from the LSS, the British Columbia Ministry of Justice (MOJ), and the Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD). During the process evaluation, consultations were held with the PLC WG to refine the proposed approach and methodology, timelines, and expectations.

An evaluation matrix that linked together evaluation questions, indicators, data sources, and expected outcomes was developed for the process evaluation in consultation with the WG. The evaluation matrix has been revised somewhat for the summative evaluation, based on the experiences and lessons learned during the process evaluation and in consultation with the WG. Appendix A contains the logic model and Appendix B contains the revised evaluation matrix.

Below describes the methods used for the summative evaluation component; as well, a few limitations that affect the evaluation and the evaluation findings are identified.

2.1 Document and data review

Relevant pilot project documents were reviewed for the process evaluation, 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). As the pilot project continued to evolve, pilot forms were revised and provided for review for the summative evaluation.

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

- ▶ LSS provided an extract of the pilot database for all PLC applicants (including those accepted and not accepted as PLC clients) that were either provided brief services only or applied to the PLC from the time of implementation (February 23, 2015) to April 19, 2016.
- ▶ LSS provided financial information on the pilot, including actual costs for years 1 and 2.
- ▶ LSS also provided data on the number of *Child, Family and Community Service Act* (CFCSA) representation contracts provided annually from 2011–12 to 2015–16; this information was used to develop a profile of CFCSA cases at Vancouver Provincial Court and that is included in Section 4.0.
- ▶ MCFD-provided data to further contribute to the profile of CFCSA cases, including the numbers of family development responses (FDR), investigations, family case planning conferences (FCPC), mediations, new legal orders, new extended family program, children in care, and children under continuing custody orders. Data was provided for fiscal years 2012–13, 2013–14, 2014–15, and 2015–16.
- ▶ CSB provided data, including numbers of initiating and subsequent CFCSA applications filed at the Vancouver Provincial Court house between January 1, 2012 and October 31, 2015.

For the CSB data, a series of meetings were held with CSB data analysts to discuss data availability for providing context information as well as for contributing to the efficiency analysis. CFCSA cases can be protracted and lengthy with respect to a family's involvement with the MCFD and the court system. In order to make some considerations for the characteristics of CFCSA cases heard at the Vancouver provincial courthouse, after consultation with CSB it was determined that an illustrative dataset would consider those applications that were initiated in 2012 and how they proceeded through the court system. CSB provided data on the number of initiating applications in 2012 as well as all subsequent applications arising from these initiating applications up to October 31, 2015, the latest date for which information could be provided. As well, CSB provided data on court characteristics for the 120 initiating applications for 2012, plus the 181 related subsequent applications that occurred in 2012. No characteristics data are provided for those subsequent applications occurring after 2012, as there would be greater likelihood that court activity related to these applications may still be ongoing and would not be represented in the court data.

2.2 Key informant interviews

The summative evaluation included interviews with key stakeholders who have some knowledge of the PLC and could provide their perspectives on the pilot project delivery and if the pilot is yet achieving expected outcomes. Interviews were conducted by telephone with the following:

- ▶ internal key informants (n=4)
 - PLC project lead, PLC lead lawyer, PLC advocate/paralegal, and PLC administrator
- ▶ external key informants (n=11)
 - two director's counsel
 - two social workers from MCFD
 - two social workers from the Vancouver Aboriginal Child and Family Services Society (VACFSS)
 - one Collaborative Practice Facilitator from MCFD
 - two mediators
 - two social workers providing services to a community organization (Sheway and Fir Square)¹

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

2.3 Client interviews

Interviews were conducted with PLC clients by telephone, over the period of March 10 to April 14, 2016. 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. 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 from the PLC, explaining the research and that they might be contacted for an interview. As of February 5, 2016, the PLC database had 124 applicants/clients. Of these, 61 were excluded for the following reasons:

- ▶ 22 were not accepted into the PLC
- ▶ 14 were included in the sample provided for the process evaluation, at which point they either were interviewed, declined, or could not be reached through the number provided
- ▶ 9 did not provide a phone number
- ▶ 16 were not interviewed due to language or other comprehension issues, or other vulnerabilities that would make it challenging for them to participate in an interview

¹ Sheway, located in downtown Vancouver, is a pregnancy outreach program providing health and social service supports to women with drug and alcohol issues who are pregnant or have infant children. Fir Square, located at BC Women's Hospital and Health Centre, is a combined care unit providing specialized services to women using substances and infants exposed to these substances.

This left 63 names for calling, plus an additional name that was added after the February extract. Once calling was initiated, 16 numbers were not in service and four were wrong numbers, leaving 44 viable numbers. The target was for 20 client interviews, which would have required a 50% response from these 44 viable numbers. Ten completed interviews were achieved.

2.4 System efficiency analysis

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

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

If the pilot is able to achieve its intended objectives (described in Section 3.0) then such reductions in court hours might be expected to occur, such as when the PLC involvement is able to help clients avoid court altogether when the PLC becomes involved at a pre-court stage; when it facilitates the resolution of clients' CFCSA matters through a collaborative process rather than a court trial; when it facilitates more productive use of court time during the court appearances that do occur and decreases the time required for these appearances; when it decreases the overall number of court appearances and court trials; and when it helps clients achieve more sustainable resolutions, thus avoiding further applications to court by the director.

Court activity data provided by CSB — described in Section 2.1 and used to develop the profile in Section 3.2 — can be used with pilot data and average court costs per hour to make some estimates around potential savings as a result of reductions in court hours. Hourly court costs provided by LSS include the cost for a court clerk, a deputy sheriff, a provincial court judge, and court registry staff for provincial family court, but do not include the cost of judicial support services, sheriff out-of-court activities, or court overhead.

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

It should be noted that it is not possible to make any conclusive statements on efficiencies gained or cost savings, as no data are available on the extent to which the pilot has actually resulted in such impacts as the diversion of cases from the court system or reduced appearances, adjournments, trials, or shorter court appearances. The efficiency analysis uses statistics on CFCSA cases at Vancouver Provincial Court, as provided by CSB, along with pilot data to make

some estimates of potential cost savings if the PLC could result in some of the impacts identified above, using different scenarios. Based on this information, estimates of potential future efficiencies (i.e., cost avoidance) are made based on a scale of success in reducing the number of court hours (lower rate of success, 10% reduction; medium rate of success, 30% reduction; higher rate of success, 50% reduction). Further detail on the calculations used is provided in the efficiency analysis section (evaluation question 14).

2.5 Evaluation limitations

There are several methodological limitations that affect the evaluation.

- ▶ Both the process and outcome evaluations occurred at early stages. Typically, only project implementation and its success toward achieving immediate outcomes would be explored within one year of a project's inception. Evidence related to the achievement of intermediate and long-term outcomes is usually not available for at least two to three years. Consequently, the evaluation findings should be read with the caveat that the pilot project is still in its very early stages, and evidence of the achievement of outcomes is preliminary and based on the best available evidence.
- ▶ With respect to the PLC database, 75% of the files of accepted clients are still open and services to these clients may still be ongoing. As a result, some database fields associated with these open files may be incomplete (e.g., services provided, legal outcome). Those tables provided in the evaluation that are based on data that may be affected by the case status show the data for either closed files only or clearly differentiate between closed and open files.
- ▶ Given the early time frame of the evaluation — and that child protection matters often require considerable time to resolve — no data were available at this stage to make any assessments on whether the pilot has had a measurable impact on the early resolution of clients' CFCSA matters. As well, no data are available to assess to what extent the PLC has been able to help clients resolve their matter without the need for a court trial, or any court involvement. Although the pilot database has a field on legal outcomes, this information is not completed until the file is closed, and 75% of the files of accepted clients are still open. Furthermore, the CSB data provided for the evaluation was intended to be used to illustrate the average characteristics of CFCSA cases at Vancouver Provincial Court. These averages were helpful for the system efficiency analysis for estimating potential cost savings, if various scenarios occurred as a result of the pilot. However, no conclusions can be made at this point regarding the extent to which these scenarios were or might be achieved.
- ▶ Certain limitations also existed with the information that could be obtained from the CSB data, due to the complexity and volume of court data, and how various court activities are accounted for on the Civil Electronic Information System (CEIS). For example, the number of adjournments could only be provided as adjournments that occurred prior to the scheduled appearance and not those that occurred on the day of a scheduled appearance. As well, data provided on court trials (protection hearings) for CFCSA matters are incomplete, as some protection hearings may be accounted for in a different manner in court data.

3.0 Brief overview of the PLC

The PLC assists eligible parents involved in child protection issues with the British Columbia MCFD or a delegated Aboriginal agency (DAA). The PLC is intended to assist parents with achieving early and collaborative resolution to their child protection issues. The PLC is a three-year pilot project funded by the British Columbia 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 CFCSA matters in the PLC catchment area:²

- ▶ 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

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.³

CFCSA cases eligible for PLC assistance include those in which:

- ▶ the applicant falls within the LSS financial criteria for a representation contract, or is financially eligible under the pilot's discretionary coverage guidelines;⁴
- ▶ the applicant is the parent or guardian, or is standing in the place of the parent; and
- ▶ the case can be resolved collaboratively.⁵

² Legal Services Society, January 30, 2015. Justice Innovation and Transformation Initiatives. 05 PLC CFCSA – Parents Legal Centre, Project Charter, p.3.

³ Legal Services Society. Justice Innovation and Transformation Initiatives. 05 PLC – Parents Legal Centre. Communications Q&A Text, p.2.

⁴ 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.

⁵ Legal Services Society. Justice Innovation and Transformation Initiatives. 05 PLC – Parents Legal Centre. Communications Q&A Text, p.2

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

- ▶ a conflict of interest exists;
- ▶ a legal aid lawyer is already assisting the client;
- ▶ the person is not the parent or primary caregiver; or
- ▶ the case cannot be resolved collaboratively.⁶

The PLC is comprised of the following personnel:⁷

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

A brief summary of the process for PLC assistance is as follows:⁸

- ▶ 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 (including family duty counsel at court), or another agency. Clients may contact LSS intake or the PLC any time after the MCFD or a

⁶ Ibid, p.4.

⁷ Legal Services Society. Parents Legal Centre, Procedures Manual.

⁸ Ibid.

- DAA has informed them of a protection concern (i.e., pre-removal) or at the time of a court appearance.
- The client approaches the PLC lawyer or the advocate/paralegal while at court as PLC lawyers also provide duty counsel services on CFCSA court list days: The lawyer or advocate/paralegal 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/paralegal and/or lawyer continue(s) the assessment process (e.g., to assess if the case is too complex, whether a collaborative process is an option, if an unresolved *Family Law Act* matter exists, or if the client already has a long-established relationship with a tariff lawyer). Those not meeting financial eligibility criteria (even with discretionary coverage) or that are not suitable for the PLC are referred to other sources (e.g., LSS intake if financially eligible for a representation contract, or other legal services or resources).
 - ▶ If the parent is accepted as a PLC client, a retainer letter is signed and PLC forms are completed. The lawyer and advocate/paralegal meet with the client to explain the process, the concerns of the MCFD, 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/paralegal will assist the client.
 - ▶ The PLC lawyer provides legal advice to the client, attends court appearances and collaborative processes with the client, and represents the client. The advocate/paralegal provides support to the client, engages with the social worker, and links the client to other relevant community resources.
 - ▶ The PLC will provide child protection legal services “up to the point that the case cannot be resolved collaboratively or it is beyond the capacity of the PLC to manage.”⁹

Besides providing ongoing assistance to eligible clients, the PLC lawyers also provide duty counsel services on CFCSA court list days at Vancouver Robson Square provincial court. In addition to the PLC lawyer, there is also another LSS family duty counsel located at the Vancouver Justice Access Centre (JAC) who attends list days to provide brief advice assistance. The PLC lawyers also provide duty counsel services to women at Sheway and Fir Square.¹⁰

⁹ Legal Services Society, January 30, 2015. Justice Innovation and Transformation Initiatives. 05 PLC CFCSA – Parents Legal Centre, Project Charter, p.3

¹⁰ See footnote 1.

3.1 Profile of PLC clients

Table 1 contains a profile of the applications received by the PLC since its inception on February 23, 2015 up to April 19, 2016.

- ▶ The PLC has had 163 applicants since its inception, the majority (83%) of which are female.
- ▶ Most of these clients (78%) are 40 years of age and under, with 16% between 18 and 25 years of age, and 20% between 26 and 30 years of age.
- ▶ Most clients (81%) report themselves as single.
- ▶ Just over half (52%) of clients self-identify as Aboriginal.
- ▶ The majority of clients are from Vancouver (81%), with 13% from Burnaby, and a small proportion from Surrey (3%) or elsewhere.
- ▶ Only three clients could not converse in English and required interpreter services.

Table 1: PLC applicant demographics (n=163)		
Element	Number of applicants	%
Gender		
Female	135	83%
Male	27	17%
No data	1	1%
Age		
18 to 25	26	16%
26 to 30	32	20%
31 to 40	69	42%
41 to 50	25	15%
Over 50	6	4%
No data	5	3%
Marital status		
Single	132	81%
Common-law	13	8%
Married	9	6%
Separated	6	4%
Divorced	3	2%
Aboriginal ancestry		
Yes	85	52%
No	78	48%
City		
Vancouver	132	81%
Burnaby	22	13%
Surrey	5	3%
Other	4	2%
Language		
English	160	98%
Other	3	2%
Source: PLC database as of April 19, 2016.		
Note: Not all percentage totals add to 100% due to rounding.		

3.2 Cost of the PLC pilot

Table 2 provides pilot costs for the first two years of the pilot and includes a calculation of the unit costs of providing its services in its first full year of operations (Year 2). For the purposes of the PLC, a unit is defined as accepted clients. Pilot costs were \$344,687 for 2015–16 and the pilot accepted 107 clients over the 2015–16 fiscal year, which relates to an estimated cost of \$3,221 per client.¹¹ This does not include or account for services provided to individuals who are not accepted into the PLC but are provided duty counsel services; no indication of time allocation between these two categories is available.

Item	Year 1 2014–15 Actual	Year 2 2015–16 Actual
Full-time lawyer(s)	\$45,500	\$129,055
Full-time pilot administrator	\$9,450	\$64,741
Floater pilot administrators	-	\$7,557
Full-time advocate/paralegal	-	\$52,592
Office expenses	\$2,987	\$6,548
Subtotal for PLC expenses	\$57,937	\$260,493
In-kind: Overhead on lawyer salaries	\$8,242	\$29,069
In-kind: Office space	\$9,000	\$55,125
Total	\$75,179	\$344,687
Number of accepted PLC clients	-	107
Unit cost	-	\$3,221

Sources: Calculations made based on pilot database and LSS data.

¹¹ The PLC unit cost analysis is not intended for comparison to costs of other LSS services for similar matters, such as the regular duty counsel service or representation contracts. The unit cost analysis includes costs for LSS overhead, while tariff rates do not include similar LSS overhead costs (e.g., application processing, invoice processing). For the same reason, overall pilot costs are not intended for direct comparison with the court cost avoidance estimations conducted in a later section, which do not include costs avoided for comparable overhead (including facilities, out-of-court activities, etc.).

4.0 Profile of CFCSA cases at Vancouver Provincial Court

To give some context of the environment in which the PLC is operating, this section provides a brief profile of CFCSA cases in Vancouver. The Vancouver Provincial Court is one of the busiest BC courthouses, handling 751 to 873 CFCSA applications annually for 2012 to 2014, and 701 applications in 2015 up to October 31 (Table 3). Subsequent applications account for the majority of total applications. Initiating and subsequent applications varied somewhat on an annual basis over the time period shown.

Year	Initiating applications	Subsequent applications*	Total applications
2012	120	671	791
2013	129	744	873
2014	110	641	751
2015 (up to October 31)	114	587	701

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

CSB further provided the number of applications filed between February 23, 2015 (the time of the PLC implementation) and October 31, 2015, which included 90 initiating and 498 subsequent applications for a total of 588 applications. The PLC had 82 accepted clients' cases opened during that same time. The PLC does not generally take on clients that have already been working with another private lawyer under a representation contract. Therefore, assuming that most of the PLC clients would be those with an initiating application, the PLC's 82 cases opened for accepted clients closely mirrors the 90 initiating applications over this time frame.

LSS also provided data on the number of applications for representation contracts for CFCSA matters that would be heard at Vancouver Provincial Court (see Table 4). While these data are presented in fiscal years, compared to the CSB data above presented in calendar years, some comparisons can be made between fiscal year and the comparable calendar year (e.g., comparing calendar year 2012 to fiscal year 2012–13). In all cases, the number of representation contracts approved by LSS in each fiscal year is greater than the comparable calendar year's initiating applications, indicating that some subsequent applications are also leading to representation contracts. The number of service requests declined somewhat (7%) between 2014–15 and 2015–16 as a result of the PLC providing services to some individuals that would have requested and received a representation contract.

Year	Service requests	Representation contracts approved	Percent approved
2011–12	310	242	78%
2012–13	312	254	81%
2013–14	350	268	77%
2014–15	325	222	68%
2015–16	303	156	51%

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

Looking at MCFD-provided child protection statistics, the number of investigations has declined each year, from 497 closed investigations in 2012–13 to 172 in 2015–16 (see Table 5). FDRs have increased annually over that period, from 1,320 in 2012–13 to 2,070 in 2015–16.¹²

Table 5: MCFD child protection statistics – closed family development responses and closed investigations*			
Fiscal year	Closed family development responses	Closed investigations	Total
2012–13	1,320	497	1,817
2013–14	1,859	348	2,207
2014–15	1,972	277	2,249
2015–16	2,070	172	2,242

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

Legal orders related to CFCSA show no discernible trends; all new legal orders increased from 2012–13 to 2013–14, then declined in 2014–15 and increased again in 2015–16 (see Table 6). Supervision orders as well as voluntary care agreements (VCA) outnumber both temporary and continuing custody orders.

Table 6: MCFD child protection statistics – new orders*						
Fiscal year	All new legal orders	Removals	Temporary custody	Continuing custody	Supervision	VCA
2012–13	1,675	195	174	44	318	318
2013–14	1,709	204	174	47	375	249
2014–15	1,521	158	169	39	262	255
2015–16	1,901	219	228	78	346	277

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

¹² Family development responses may come about after an initial assessment where there are concerns about the child’s safety, but it is determined that the concerns can be addressed without a full investigation and where the family is willing to access supports.
http://www.familylaw.lss.bc.ca/guides/childpro_ifSomeRepMin/ifSomeRepMin_howMinAssessRisk.php.

4.1 Characteristics of 2012 applications

CFCSA cases can be protracted and lengthy with respect to the family’s involvement with the MCFD and the court system. In order to make some considerations of the characteristics of CFCSA cases heard at the Vancouver provincial courthouse, after consultation with CSB it was determined that an illustrative dataset would consider those applications that initiated in 2012 and how they proceeded through the court system up to October 31, 2015. The rationale for this time period was that the 2012 applications should have had sufficient time by October 31, 2015 for achieving some type of resolution.

As shown in Table 7, 120 applications were initiated in 2012, and from these another 355 subsequent applications were filed up to October 31, 2015, with 51% (181) of these filed in 2012 and 34% (120) in 2013. On average, 3.0 subsequent applications were filed for every initiating application.

Table 7: Number of CFCSA initiating applications filed at Vancouver Provincial Court in 2012 and number of subsequent applications filed annually to October 31, 2015 on those applications initiated in 2012		
Year	Number	
2012 initiating applications	120	
Subsequent applications from the initiating applications	Number	Percent of total
2012	181	51%
2013	120	34%
2014	36	10%
2015 (up to October 31)	18	5%
Total	355	100%
Average subsequent applications per case	3.0	
Source: Data provided by Court Services Branch.		

Table 8 outlines the characteristics of the 120 initiating applications for 2012, plus the 181 related subsequent applications that occurred in 2012. Those subsequent applications occurring after 2012 are not considered, as there would be greater likelihood that court activity related to these applications may still be ongoing and would not be represented in the court data.

From Table 8, each initiating and subsequent application had an average of 2.8 and 2.1 scheduled appearances, respectively, as well as 0.7 and 0.1 adjournments. However, the data on adjournments are limited in that it only includes those adjournments that occurred in advance of the appearance time and does not include, for example, those occurring at the time of the appearance, which can be significant.

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

Table 8: Court activity of CFCSA cases at Vancouver Provincial Court – average activity up to October 31, 2015 for applications initiated in 2012 and their subsequent applications occurring in 2012			
Element	Initiating applications	Subsequent applications	Total applications
Number of applications	120	181	301
Average scheduled appearances	2.8	2.1	2.4
Average number of adjournments that occurred prior to a scheduled appearance*	0.7	0.1	0.3
Average days to first appearance**	1.6	5.5	3.9
Average days to first order***	11.9	22.8	18.6
% of first presentation reports with order granted****	43.1%	38.9%	42.5%
% of applications going to trial+	1.7%	1.1%	1.3%
Average days to first and last trial appearance+	24.5	262.5	143.5
Average court hours per application++	0.27	0.35	0.32

Source: Data provided by Court Services Branch.
 *Includes adjournments that occurred up to a court hearing, including those occurring the same day as the hearing but not adjournments that occurred at the court hearing.
 **Of 118 initiating and 174 subsequent applications that had a first appearance.
 ***Of 94 initiating and 153 subsequent applications that had a first order.
 ****Of 116 initiating and 18 subsequent applications that had a first order granted at a first presentation appearance.
 +Of two initiating and two subsequent applications that had a trial/hearing; for the four trials/hearings, the days to first and last trial appearance were the same, indicating trials lasted no more than one day.
 ++Court hours include time for all appearances for 118 initiating and 174 subsequent applications.

Wait times for half-day as well as two-day or more child protection hearings at Vancouver Provincial Court declined somewhat between 2014 and 2015, as shown in Table 9.

Table 9: Wait time for child protection appearances at Vancouver Provincial Court for 2014 and 2015		
Type of court appearance	Wait times as of October in months	
	2014	2015
Case conference	2	2
Half-day child protection hearing	7	4
Two-day or more child protection hearing	10	5

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

5.0 Findings

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

5.1 Implementation and delivery

1. Did the PLC operate as expected in Year 1? What, if any, challenges were met in Year 1, and how were these addressed?

Key informants generally believed the PLC operated as expected over Year 1. The initial period after launching, when the pilot was not yet operating at capacity, provided PLC staff an opportunity to conduct outreach activities. Outreach activities were conducted with MCFD and VACFSS to inform their staff of the PLC and its services, and to ask social workers to refer clients to the PLC and to encourage clients to seek the PLC's assistance prior to court.

The experience and professionalism of the PLC staff was viewed as a contributing factor to the successful implementation and operation of the pilot. PLC staff members were viewed as working well as a team, with all team members having a high level of commitment to PLC clients.

The PLC is viewed as providing clients with good services and consistent representation by some external key informants. A few external key informants, however, believed that while the intent is to involve the PLC pre-court, many parents are not taking that step and therefore are mainly engaging with the PLC on court day. A few also commented that the PLC is not reducing adjournments as was expected. This will be elaborated on in later sections. A few external key informants said they could not comment, as they were somewhat unclear about the intent of the PLC.

Any operational challenges experienced were primarily with respect to the start-up phase and having all staff and infrastructure in place. The advocate/paralegal position was not filled for the first few months of operation due to hiring logistics in recruiting and retaining the appropriate person. As noted in the process evaluation, this was not viewed as significantly affecting the implementation of the pilot. However, internal key informants noted that because the outreach activities also served to introduce staff and their positions to other stakeholders, it would have been helpful to have included the advocate/paralegal in these activities.

As described in the process evaluation, as a component of the ongoing monitoring and quality improvement process for the JITI projects, a decision was made on May 29, 2015 not to hire the planned 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."¹³ However, as the PLC built its client base, it was quickly operating at capacity and it was determined that sufficient budget existed to add another full-time lawyer to the pilot team. While it was observed that it would have been helpful to have more legal support earlier, finding space for the additional lawyer was challenging as space is always a constraint at the courthouse.

¹³ Legal Services Society, June 1, 2015. 05 PLC – Parents Legal Centre, Decision Record, p.2.

Another challenge mentioned by both internal and external key informants was continued concerns from private lawyers regarding the PLC. Private lawyers who accept representation contracts for CFCSA clients had concerns over the loss of CFCSA files and the PLC's potential effect on clients' choice of counsel. It was suggested that more education and communications with private lawyers are required. LSS management are aware of this, and have made efforts to hold several meetings to answer questions and discuss concerns.

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

The PLC has had 163 applicants up to April 19, 2016, of which 117 have been accepted as a PLC client.¹⁴ Between the beginning of March 2015 and end of March 2016, the PLC accepted 116 clients, or an average of nine clients per month. Figure 1 shows the number of clients accepted per month, according to the case open date.

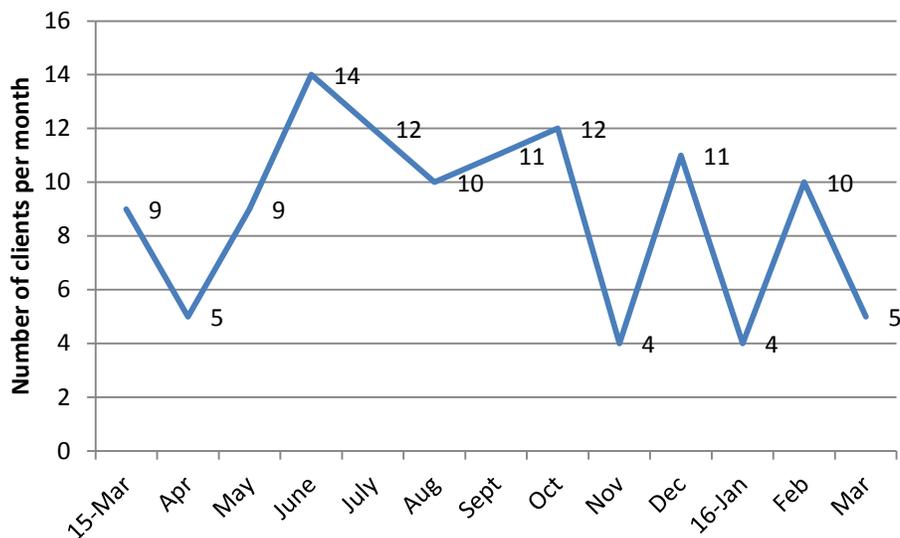


Figure 1: PLC clients accepted per month (based on case opened date)

Source: PLC database as of April 19, 2016

Over the first few months of operation, the PLC was staffed by the lead lawyer and an administrator, with the advocate/paralegal position filled in June 2015, and an additional full-time lawyer hired at the beginning of March 2016. Internal key informants believe the PLC is now adequately staffed to meet the demand for services. As reported in the previous evaluation question, while it would have been helpful for the advocate/paralegal to have been available at the outset for outreach and training purposes, this did not affect services to clients, as the PLC was still building their client base over this period. Although the PLC was reported as working at capacity for several months before the second lawyer was hired, this was not considered to affect the provision of services and no clients were declined services due to resource constraints. Although the part-time lawyer was not hired immediately, the intention was to add a part-time lawyer at some point; this was changed to a full-time lawyer, due to demand and available funds.

¹⁴ April 19, 2016 is the date of the database extract provided for the data review analysis.

Key informant interviews for the summative evaluation took place right at the time when the second lawyer position was added to the PLC. As a result, external stakeholder perceptions on resources are based on observations made when only one lawyer was available to provide legal services. External key informants could mainly comment on resources for providing services on list days or for attending meetings with clients outside of the PLC. External key informants generally could not comment on the sufficiency of resources for providing services to accepted PLC clients on an ongoing basis, other than that most believed clients were well represented.

As with the process evaluation, the main concerns voiced with resources were with regard to list days. Some external key informants mentioned that while social workers and the PLC strive to have clients access the PLC prior to court, most are not doing so and list day is often the first time the lawyer has an opportunity to speak with the client. As a result, on list days, the one PLC lawyer was providing services to potential new clients and existing clients, as well as duty counsel services to parents who may only receive brief advice services.¹⁵ External key informants said this presented resource constraints and court was often getting backed up and the judge would have to stand matters down to give the lawyer an opportunity to speak with clients prior to the appearance. It was observed that this situation had intensified since the process evaluation, as the PLC gained more clients. There were also concerns expressed that some clients did not appear to be having sufficient time with the lawyer and, as a result, were not always aware of their options. A few key informants also commented that when there was just the one PLC lawyer, this also presented challenges for attending meetings with other stakeholders or providing services at Sheway or Fir Square.

However, all external key informants expected the addition of the second lawyer to help address the resource constraints, observing that one lawyer can attend court appearances with clients while the second lawyer speaks with other clients. As well, with two lawyers now available, this should reduce scheduling conflicts with respect to availability for meetings or providing services to Sheway or Fir Square.

Of the clients interviewed, eight believed the PLC had enough staff members to give them the help they needed and two did not. The two that did not commented that it seemed that the lawyer could use more help; one client said that, while the lawyer was very helpful, at times it was difficult to contact her and she seemed to have a high workload.

¹⁵ However, besides the PLC lawyer, there is another family duty counsel from the Vancouver Justice Access Centre providing duty counsel services for CFCSA matters on court list days.

3. How effective has the PLC's communication strategy been for informing other relevant stakeholders of their services? Are there ways to improve communication/outreach?

Key informants who could speak to the PLC's communication strategy mainly commented on the initial outreach activities conducted at the implementation of the pilot and the ongoing informal communications the PLC has with relevant stakeholders. Key informants believed the initial outreach activities that were mainly targeted at MCFD and VACFSS were helpful for informing social workers of the PLC, and encouraging them to refer clients for services and to do so early in the process. Ongoing informal communications with stakeholders is viewed as valuable for building relationships and facilitating collaborative approaches that will benefit the client.

With the addition of the second lawyer, the PLC now plans on conducting further outreach not only with social workers but also with other organizations and services that may provide services to the same client base as the PLC. This might include family support organizations, Aboriginal support organizations, or health care services, such as doctors and emergency room facilities. In reaching out to these organizations, the PLC hopes to encourage clients experiencing child protection issues to contact them. Further outreach to social workers is expected to help reach new social workers. A few external key informants believed it would be beneficial to also include social workers themselves in outreach activities and not just their team leaders, as was done in the initial outreach; this then relied on team leaders to pass along the messaging.

Another observation was that it would be helpful to have pamphlets to distribute, rather than just informational sheets.

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

Key informants were asked their opinion on whether the current structure and processes of the PLC support effective and efficient delivery. Most key informants provided positive examples of how they perceived this was occurring, as summarized below.

- ▶ The staff composition of the PLC is effective and provides efficiencies in that the administrator and advocate/paralegal provide supports to clients and lawyers and allows the lawyers to focus on clients' legal issues. Plus, as was mentioned in evaluation question 1, PLC staff is viewed as working well as a team, which would be expected to provide further efficiencies.
- ▶ Allowing clients to come to or call the PLC directly to apply rather than having to direct clients back to LSS intake is viewed as streamlining the application process; plus when clients do apply through LSS intake, intake staff can contact the PLC administrator immediately to check for any lawyer conflict.

- ▶ With respect to the pilot forms, while the efforts for consistency between all the pilot forms is viewed as creating some challenges with respect to clarity and applicability to the PLC, it is appreciated that the improvements to the forms have also been made.
- ▶ The PLC has established good communications with other stakeholders that have interactions with PLC clients, such as social workers and director’s counsel. Good communications are expected to add to efficiencies by facilitating relationships, information flow, and collaborations.
- ▶ External key informants again mentioned the resource constraints with the one lawyer trying to serve all the clients, but both external and internal key informants noted that the addition of the second lawyer should help to address capacity issues.
- ▶ While the concept of providing services to people early in their child protection matter is good, the concern is that people are still not contacting the PLC when they should. However, a few external key informants believed that just having the PLC physically at the courthouse and immediately available on list days helped clients in accessing legal assistance earlier. And, as was described in the process evaluation, the availability of the lawyer and advocate to assist clients first in court and then on an ongoing basis provides continuity of services.
- ▶ Having the advocate is useful for supporting the client in ways the lawyer would not have time to do, providing continuity of service and supporting clients through various challenges.
- ▶ Having the option of referring clients to a distinct service (the PLC) is viewed as more effective than just telling people to see a lawyer. And the spectrum of services available in terms of not just legal services but also advocacy services and the willingness of the PLC to take a collaborative approach is viewed as effective for the client.
- ▶ One concern expressed is when, after accepting a client and providing a certain level of services, the PLC has to close the file if the matter cannot be resolved collaboratively and, if applicable, refer to client to LSS intake to apply for a representation contract. As in the process evaluation, the concerns are with the impact on the client in changing lawyers after establishing a relationship with a PLC lawyer, and with the potential inefficiencies in requiring another lawyer to become familiar with the file. More is said on this in evaluation question 13.

5. What are the lessons learned for continuing the Vancouver PLC and for establishing the PLC in other locations in the province?

The lessons learned as identified by key informants are similar to those identified in the process evaluation. Lessons learned identified by key informants include the following:

- ▶ *Infrastructure and staff:* Ensure that all needed infrastructure is in place and all planned staff are hired and trained prior to opening the service to the public.
- ▶ *Understand the community:* Have a good understanding of the characteristics and needs of the community, including the cultural environment, and ensure that a sufficient number of staff are hired to meet those needs. Also ensure that staff have the requisite skills, given that the characteristics and needs of communities will vary.
- ▶ *Experienced staff:* In all locations, PLC staff need to have a good understanding of and be experienced in child protection issues.
- ▶ *Hire staff that have an established relationship with the community:* Key informants said it was essential that PLC staff have a good knowledge of the community, including a good understanding of other resources available, and that they have established community contacts.
- ▶ *Informing community stakeholders:* Provide community stakeholders with a good understanding of the services and purpose of the PLC, as well as the roles and responsibilities of each of the staff positions. In particular, ensure stakeholders understand the role of the advocate/paralegal, as this is a new service that LSS has not provided in the past. And be prepared to respond to any concerns, such as those from the private bar.
- ▶ *Promote and ensure good communications and collaborations with other stakeholders:* The communications and collaborations that the PLC pilot undertakes with other stakeholders is viewed as one of the factors contributing to the success of the pilot. It was identified that this should be a feature of PLCs considered for other areas of the province.
- ▶ *Flexibility:* The PLC and their staff need to be adaptable and willing to work with other stakeholders.

5.2 Achievement of outcomes

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

As discussed in previous evaluation questions, the PLC conducted outreach activities to social workers at the implementation of the pilot, conducts ongoing communications with various stakeholders, and is planning further outreach activities in the near future, including to organizations that might work with clients pre-removal. Key informants believe that the key stakeholders (i.e., social workers and representatives of services offered at Sheway and Fir Square) are aware of the PLC. As well, both internal and external key informants commented that social workers from both MCFD and VACFSS are referring clients to the PLC. For example, social workers will bring information about the PLC with them when they visit a client, or have information available at their office. However, one comment was that encouraging people to contact the PLC early in their process is something of a cultural change for social workers, and that there may still be some reluctance to involve a lawyer. From external stakeholder comments, it does appear that social workers mainly tell parents they should contact the PLC when it appears there may be a need to go to court.

From the PLC database, over half (56%) of the total applicants were referred to the PLC by either an MCFD social worker (31%) or a DAA (25%), while 38% came to the PLC without a referral (see Table 10). As well, of the 10 clients interviewed, four said they were told about the PLC by a social worker, one by a judge, two by someone else at the courthouse, one by a native court worker, one by the Aboriginal Mother Centre Society, and one could not recall how they found out about the PLC.

Referred from	Number of applicants	%
No referral	62	38%
MCFD social worker	50	31%
Delegated Aboriginal agency	41	25%
Support agency	5	3%
Hospital	3	2%
Private lawyer	2	1%

Source: PLC database as of April 19, 2016.
Note: Total percentages do not add to 100% due to rounding.

Several external key informants also commented that it is helpful to have a specific location to refer parents, and that it is more likely parents will follow-up on the referral rather than just being told to talk to a lawyer.

Of note is the awareness that PLC is growing beyond parents with child protection issues and justice service providers involved in these CFCSA matters. An April 5, 2016 article in the Vancouver Sun highlighted the PLC, stating that it shows promise for resolving child protection issues out of court.¹⁶

¹⁶ Vancouver Sun, April 5, 2016. *Ian Mulgrew: Pilot legal aid project supporting families*. Retrieved from <http://vancouversun.com/opinion/columnists/pilot-legal-aid-project-supporting-native-families>

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

The PLC's location and hours. Most key informants believed that the courthouse is a convenient and accessible location for the PLC. Clients that are going to court can easily access the PLC, which they might not do otherwise if they had to travel to a different location. A significant number of the Vancouver population base that may be financially eligible for the PLC lives in the downtown area close to the Vancouver Robson Square courthouse. And for those that do not, public transportation is readily available, with the courthouse close to bus routes and the sky train. As well, the PLC's visits to Shewey and Fir Square for providing brief advice and their willingness for external meetings is viewed as facilitating accessibility for clients. A few external key informants believed that getting downtown to the courthouse could be challenging for some clients and commented that it would be helpful if the PLC could come into the community even more than it does already to meet with clients.

Nine of the 10 clients interviewed believed that the PLC was in a convenient location and was easy to get to. The one client that disagreed said the PLC was not conveniently located to where they were living at the time. Others said it was convenient because they could easily walk to the courthouse.

No concerns were expressed regarding the PLC hours, with some external key informants commenting they were not aware of the hours. Nine of the 10 interviewed clients agreed that the PLC hours are convenient for them and one could not remember the hours.

Clients' comfort level in using the PLC. Most key informants who commented on clients' comfort level believed that clients are comfortable using the PLC, commenting that because the PLC is at the courthouse clients would be comfortable accessing it or that clients appear comfortable in their interactions with PLC staff members. A few external key informants commented that the courthouse is an institutional location that can be uncomfortable for some people or trigger bad memories, and suggested that it may be more accessible if it was located within a community-focussed facility, such as a community centre.

All interviewed clients said that they felt comfortable getting help from the PLC. Clients gave a variety of reasons for this comfort level, such as the following:

- ▶ The PLC staff helped reduce their stress.
- ▶ They felt supported by all the PLC staff.
- ▶ The staff were nice, pleasant, easy to talk to, and non-judgemental.
- ▶ The PLC helped them, gave them good advice, explained things in a way they could understand, and advocated for them.
- ▶ The PLC has Aboriginal staff.

Culturally-appropriate service. The PLC is viewed as providing culturally-appropriate service primarily because several of the staff members are Aboriginal. That is helpful in establishing a trust relationship with clients, many of whom are Aboriginal (52%; see Table 1). As noted above, one client commented that they are comfortable using the PLC because it has Aboriginal staff.

Eligibility and cases accepted. Most PLC applicants (98%) were financially eligible for a representation contract, with only 2% not financially eligible (Table 11). As well, the majority of applicants (78%) were accepted as PLC clients.

Table 11: Assessment results		
Element	Number of applicants	%
Financially eligible for a representation contract*	(n=145)	
Yes	142	98%
No	3	2%
Accepted for PLC**	(n=150)	
Yes	117	78%
No	33	22%

Source: PLC database as of April 19, 2016.
 *Does not include nine applicants that were not accepted for other reasons and therefore no financial eligibility assessment was conducted, and nine applicants that were still being assessed for eligibility as PLC clients at the time of the data extract.
 **Does not include 13 applicants that were still being assessed for eligibility as PLC clients at the time of the data extract.

The main reason for not accepting applicants as PLC clients was that their matter was outside the scope of the PLC, accounting for 58% of the 33 applicants not accepted (Table 12).

Table 12: Reasons why not accepted into PLC (n=33)		
Reason	Number of applicants	%
Outside the scope of PLC*	19	58%
Client not open to collaborative processes	5	15%
Legal/factual complexity	5	15%
<i>Family Law Act (FLA) only</i>	2	6%
Out of jurisdiction	2	6%
Client's interests are better served by a referral	1	3%
Lawyer conflict	1	3%
Not financially eligible	1	3%
Youth, Attorney General to appoint counsel	1	3%

Source: PLC database as of April 19, 2016.
 Notes: Totals do not add to 100%; multiple reasons could be selected.
 *Outside of scope of PLC includes, for examples, where applicants have a hearing that day, have a pre-trial conference or hearing scheduled, or are not the parent, or have other complicating factors.

PLC clients had little wait time to find out if they were accepted as PLC clients, with 80% of assessments completed on the same day as initiated (Table 13).

Table 13: Days to complete assessment (n=147)*		
Days	Number of applicants	%
0	117	80%
1–5	6	4%
6–10	9	6%
11–15	3	2%
16–20	2	1%
21–25	3	2%
26–30	2	1%
>30	5	3%

Source: PLC database as of April 19, 2016.
 *Does not include 16 applicants whose assessments were not completed at the time of the data extract.

As well, clients had no concerns about their wait times for appointments with the PLC; four of the interviewed clients said they were given an appointment time with the PLC and all thought the wait time for the appointment was reasonable.

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

Whether clients are accessing the PLC early in the CFCSA process

Internal key informants believed that more people are contacting the PLC at an earlier stage than what might have occurred in the past, with not as many people coming to the PLC on their first court day. As mentioned previously, while social workers are referring people to the PLC, it seems they are mainly doing so when it appears that a court appearance will be involved and not as soon as the MCFD or DAA becomes involved with a family. And external key informants mainly believe most people are not accessing the PLC until their first court appearance. However, given the PLC is available on court days to immediately start providing clients with assistance, this is still viewed as earlier access to legal assistance than what would have occurred in the past. Prior to the PLC, most people would come to court on list days with no legal representation, and their matter would have to be adjourned to give them time to apply for legal aid and, if eligible, be assigned a lawyer.

As also previously mentioned, social workers are encouraging parents to contact the PLC, and particularly to do so and obtain their advice and guidance prior to court. A few key informants also noted that some social workers will inform the PLC of potential clients, who the PLC will in turn try to contact. However, individual's situations and capacity constraints often inhibit their ability to contact services such as the PLC on their own, or to respond to offers of assistance. Such constraints can include, for example, lack of telephones or adequate housing, mental health or addiction issues, or distrust in service providers due to previous experiences. A few key informants suggested it could be helpful for stakeholders to work together to seek alternative means of making the PLC accessible to these people, such as for the PLC to come into the community to meet with potential clients prior to list day.

A new field recently added (February 2016) to the PLC forms indicates if the client first contacted the PLC prior to or after court processes (Table 14). For the applicants who identified when they first contacted the PLC, 45 out of 59 or 76% did so prior to court processes; prior to court processes includes where the client contacted the PLC before or on the first court appearance date.

When PLC contacted	Number of applicants	%
Prior to court processes	45	76%
After court processes	14	24%

Source: PLC database as of April 19, 2016.

Looking at the stage of the case when the file is open, however, indicates that almost half (45%) are opened when there has been a new removal, with just over a third (36%) when there is a risk of removal (Table 15). As well, from the legal issues addressed, as shown in Table 16, the higher proportion of legal issues are identified as removal (42%), followed by risk of removal (34%).

Table 15: Stage of case when file opened (n=163)*		
Stage	Number of applicants	%
New removal/presentation	73	45%
Risk of removal	58	36%
Continuing custody order (CCO)	5	3%
Extension	5	3%
Protection	2	1%
Transfer of child to a non-parent	1	1%
Not given	19	12%
Source: PLC database as of April 19, 2016. *All files, including those not accepted as PLC clients.		

Table 16: Legal issue(s) addressed (n=163)*		
Legal issue	Number of applicants	%
Removal	69	42%
Risk of removal	55	34%
Access	11	7%
Relocation	1	1%
Not identified	37	23%
Source: PLC database as of April 19, 2016. Note: Totals add to over 100%; clients may have more than one legal issue. *All files, including those not accepted as PLC clients.		

Six of the 10 clients interviewed said they contacted the PLC before they had to go to court, and four said they contacted them on the same day as court. The reasons clients gave for contacting the PLC prior to court were mainly that they were advised to do so by a social worker or a lawyer, or they recognized they needed help and advice.

Eight of the 10 clients believed that they contacted and got help from the PLC early enough in their child protection matter. Clients mainly said they believed this because the PLC started assisting them right away, giving them information, helping them reduce their risks, and helping them resolve their issue. Two did not believe they contacted the PLC early enough, with one saying they had thought they would receive more support from the Ministry and another that they were unaware of their legal rights.

Of the 10 clients, three said it would have been helpful to have received the help of the PLC earlier, saying that:

- ▶ They might have been able to get their children back earlier.
- ▶ It would have given them a greater peace of mind.
- ▶ It would have given them more knowledge of the process and their rights.

When stakeholders think parents should be accessing the PLC

As with the process evaluation, there are continued differences in opinions on when parents should first access the PLC. Internal key informants and a few external key informants believed this should occur as soon as there is MCFD or DAA involvement (i.e., as soon as they are contacted by a social worker). The cited benefits of this early involvement are that the PLC can:

- ▶ help parents to understand the concerns and the issues contributing to these concerns;
- ▶ advise parents of their legal rights and obligations;
- ▶ inform parents of the resources available; and
- ▶ assist parents in taking positive steps to prevent more serious escalation (e.g., court involvement if that has not yet occurred).

Other external key informants believed this should occur mainly when it appears legal action is being considered or is being taken. Accessing the PLC at this time can not only give parents access to legal advice, but also assist in preparing them for the next steps, or can facilitate communication with the MCFD or DAA to work out a resolution that may eliminate the need to go to court.

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

Key informants generally believed that the PLC is helping clients engage collaboratively for resolving their child protection issues. As with the process evaluation, a few key informants observed that collaborative approaches are common and encouraged in Vancouver, with stakeholders widely viewing them as a more positive alternative for the families and the justice system than a litigious court trial. PLC involvement in these processes provides support to the parents. They can also coach parents through the process and assist them in preparing for the sessions. As well, some sessions do not require the involvement of a lawyer, so the advocate/paralegal can attend and provide support to the client. It was also appreciated by external key informants that the PLC supports and encourages these approaches.

PLC involvement with collaborative approaches are occurring through more formal routes, such as with FCPCs, as well as more informal meetings and communications with stakeholders, such as social workers and director's counsel. FCPCs, both at court and outside of court, appear to be one of the most commonly used collaborative approaches. As with the process evaluation, some key informants noted that the use of FCPCs has increased since the implementation of the PLC. 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."¹⁷

¹⁷ 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

Several internal and external key informants also mentioned that another type of process, simply called collaborative meetings, has been occurring more frequently and that mediations are being used less frequently. Collaborative meetings involve group discussions between social workers and parents and each of their lawyers, without a facilitator. FCPCs, collaborative meetings, and informal communications are viewed as useful for discussion and planning. However, one suggestion was that the more informal collaborative meetings should involve someone to specifically take notes and record decisions, to ensure everyone comes away with a common understanding.

From the PLC database, just over one third of clients (34%) accepted into the PLC and whose files are now closed were provided services related to preparing for mediation and/or consensual dispute resolution, and the same proportion for attendance at such processes (Table 17). Close to one quarter (24%) of clients whose files are still open were provided both of these services, recognizing that because these files are still open, services may not yet be completed.

Status	Closed files (n=29)*		Open files (n=97)	
	Number of clients	%	Number of clients	%
Preparation for mediation and/or consensual dispute resolution	10	34%	23	24%
Attendance for mediation and/or consensual dispute resolution	10	34%	23	24%

Source: PLC database as of April 19, 2016.
*Only includes clients accepted to the PLC.

Five of the 10 interviewed clients said they had taken part in some type of collaborative process, with three participating in an FCPC, two in mediation, one in a family group conference, and one in a traditional decision-making process. Two of these clients said they were told about these processes by someone at the PLC, one said a social worker told them about it, and one said they found out about the process on their own. Several reasons given for participating in these sessions were that they were suggested as a good option or that they can be helpful for coming to decisions.

Clients said that the PLC helped them with these meetings by explaining the process to them and answering their questions; helping them understand what was going to happen at the meetings and what to expect; and helping them understand what they needed to do in the collaborative process. Clients said that this information was helpful to them in preparing for their meeting. Two of the clients said that someone from the PLC attended these meetings with them and said that was also helpful to them.

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

Internal key informants said the PLC refers clients to a variety of organizations that can assist them and facilitate the process of them getting help from other supports. Referrals to and linkages with other services are viewed as mainly the role of the advocate. Internal and some external key informants view the advocate/paralegal position as a valuable component of the PLC. The advocate/paralegal and lawyer can coordinate efforts to assist clients with their legal needs as well as collateral issues that may be affecting their legal issues. Having this assistance together in one location is convenient and helpful to clients, creating something of a one-stop shop. As well, a few key informants commented that clients are more likely to be open to suggestions from and be more trusting of the PLC than social workers who represent the MCFD and DAA. And, as mentioned previously, when the advocate/paralegal is able to attend some meetings with clients where a lawyer is not required, such as with social workers, the client is provided support and the lawyers can focus their efforts on legal matters.

Some confusion, however, still exists on the role of the advocate/paralegal, particularly among social workers. Some believe that the advocate/paralegal position is a duplication of what social workers or other social services are already providing clients. Counter to this belief are opinions that there are an insufficient number of advocacy services available and any assistance the PLC can provide in this area would be of benefit to the clients and can also help to ease the burdens on social workers. Another concern is if the advocate/paralegal oversteps the role of advocating and takes on roles more appropriate for the lawyer. A few social workers suggested the need for even more collaboration and communication between social workers and the PLC with respect to the advocacy and support services to ensure that all are working in a complementary fashion and in the best interests of the client and the children.

The PLC database is not, at this point, an informative source of information on referrals to other services, as this information is not entered until after files are closed; open files account for 60% of files. Of the closed files, the majority were closed either because the applicant was not accepted as a PLC client or there was a change of counsel at some point after they were accepted as a client. As a result, the main area of referrals for closed files is to legal aid intake (55%), and 39% received no referral (Table 18). Of the applicants referred to legal aid intake, 20 out of 36 or 56% were not accepted as a PLC client. Referrals to legal aid intake could be for the purposes of applying for a representation contract in CFCSA or family law, or possibly as a referral to the LSS intake call centre to get advice from the Family LawLINE.

Table 18: Other services applicants/clients are referred to – closed files only*		
Services	Number (n=66)	%
Legal Aid/LSS intake	36	55%
Advocate or community agency	4	6%
Family justice counsellor	1	2%
Immigrant settlement or multicultural organization	1	2%
JAC resource room/self-help	1	2%
Law students' clinic or program	1	2%
LSS family duty counsel	1	2%
Private lawyer	1	2%
Access Pro Bono	1	2%
Social worker	1	2%
Online/internet	1	2%
None	26	39%

Source: PLC database as of April 19, 2016.
 Note: Totals do not add to 100%; clients could be referred to more than one service.

Five of the 10 interviewed clients said that the PLC referred them to places they could go for help with other things besides their legal issues and three of the clients said they made use of these referrals. Four of the clients also said that the PLC wrote letters to other organizations on their behalf and that these letters were helpful for advocating for their needs.

11. Did PLC clients receive the legal information, advice, and assistance they needed to understand and help them resolve their CFCSA matter?

Whether clients receive a good understanding of their legal issue and their rights and obligations

Key informants believed that the PLC is able to provide clients with a good understanding of their legal rights and obligations. The PLC can explain to clients the concerns and expectations of social workers as well as the authority provided to the director under the CFCSA. Key informants believed clients will be more open to accepting such information from the PLC as well as with taking their advice on steps needed to help resolve their child protection issue. As with the process evaluation, it was commented that the PLC lawyer is knowledgeable and experienced, with some also mentioning that the new lawyer has similar qualities. As well, the advocate/paralegal is viewed as experienced in child protection matters in Vancouver and all PLC staff are believed to work hard at advocating for the client.

However, a few of the external key informants again expressed concerns with matters getting backlogged on family list day because the one lawyer was trying to see all the clients, and as a result clients were not having enough time with the lawyer to obtain all the information they required to hear about their various options. Again, the addition of the second lawyer is expected to assist in alleviating these concerns.

Looking at the PLC database on services provided to clients in addition to brief advice, clients are receiving a range of services from general preparation, further provision of advice, interviews with the PLC to provide instruction, assistance at court processes as well as for mediation and/or consensual dispute resolution, and correspondences prepared on behalf of the client (Table 19).

Table 19: Services provided by PLC in addition to brief advice				
Status	Closed files (n=29)*		Open files (n=97)	
	Number of clients	%	Number of clients	%
General preparation	29	100%	50	52%
Attendance for court processes	24	83%	48	49%
Preparation for mediation and/or consensual dispute resolution	10	34%	23	24%
Attendance for mediation and/or consensual dispute resolution	10	34%	23	24%
Referral to non-LSS service	-	-	2	2%
Collateral issues	2	7%	1	1%
Preparing written agreements	1	3%	1	1%
Additional preparation if an FLA application is required	1	3%	-	-
Services provided – general preparation subcategories	(n=29)	%	(n=50)	%
Providing advice	28	97%	35	70%
Interviewing the client and taking instructions	26	90%	36	72%
Preparing correspondence	25	86%	32	64%
Preparing for hearings	22	76%	33	66%
Drafting consent orders	6	21%	7	14%
Negotiating settlements or plan of care agreements	3	10%	2	4%
Preparing written arguments	2	7%	1	2%
Preparation prior to removal	1	3%	5	10%

Source: PLC database as of April 19, 2016.
 *Only includes clients accepted to the PLC.

Interviewed clients were positive on the assistance provided by the PLC for understanding their CFCSA matter. All interviewed clients said that the PLC answered their questions. Eight of the clients said the PLC explained and helped them understand the concerns of the social worker, with a few of these clients saying the information was helpful to understand their situation better and to understand their legal rights. In fact, all clients said that the PLC explained their legal rights to them and helped them understand what they could do to resolve their child protection matter, and almost all (nine) said this information was helpful to them. The reasons clients gave as to why this information was helpful to them included the following:

- ▶ It helped them understand what they had to do to get their children returned.
- ▶ It made them feel empowered.
- ▶ It helped them understand what was going on.
- ▶ It helped them understand their legal rights.
- ▶ It helped them resolve their child protection matter.

Almost all of the interviewed clients (nine) said that the PLC attended and helped them at court appearances before a judge. Most of them said that the PLC gave them help, such as telling them what to expect in court (seven), answering all their questions regarding court (seven), and helping them with completing any needed forms (seven); this assistance was helpful to them. Furthermore, most clients also said that it was helpful to them to have the PLC attend the court appearance with them (7 out of 9), with some making comments such as it helped them to feel supported and less anxious, particularly since court is intimidating.

Two of the clients also said that someone from the PLC came with them to a meeting with a social worker from either the MCFD or VACFSS. Both also said that this was helpful to them because they gave the client support, they helped the client have a voice, and they made it more understandable and less overwhelming for the client.

Client satisfaction of services received

Of the 10 clients interviewed, eight were very satisfied with the help they received from the PLC, one was satisfied, and only one was unsatisfied. Clients' reasons for a high level of satisfaction were similar to why they found the PLC helpful to them, as described above. Clients said that the PLC was helpful and professional, they advocated for the client, and they helped them resolve their matter in a timely manner.

Any suggestions that clients had with respect to improving the PLC were with respect to more resources, such as have more lawyers or other staff members, or have the PLC in every courthouse.

Early resolution of clients' legal issues

It is difficult to assess if the PLC is assisting clients with early resolution of their matter. Six of the clients interviewed said that their matter had been resolved, while three said it was still ongoing. All said that the assistance from the PLC was helpful in the process because the PLC:

- ▶ helped them get a favorable resolution;
- ▶ were supportive and encouraging;
- ▶ provided help when the client did not know what to do; and
- ▶ gave them the support and knowledge they needed to take the appropriate actions that would help them resolve their child protection matter.

From the PLC database, the majority of total files (60%) are still open, and when considering only those files where the applicant was accepted as a PLC client, 75% are still open (Table 20). Of the accepted PLC clients whose files are now closed, three were closed because services were completed, with most (66%) closed due to change of counsel (Table 21). Therefore, little information can be derived from this on the extent the PLC is assisting clients to achieve early resolution.

Status	Number of clients	%
All clients (n=163)		
Open	97	60%
Closed	66	40%
Only clients accepted into PLC (n=117)		
Open	88	75%
Closed	29	25%
Source: PLC database as of April 19, 2016.		

Reasons	Number of clients	%
Out of scope	2	7%
Change of counsel	19	66%
Services completed	3	10%
Inactive	4	14%
Not identified	1	3%
Source: PLC database as of April 19, 2016.		

Of those files still open, 52% have been open for 200 days or less, and 48% for more than 200 days (Table 22).

Days	Number of clients	%
1–50	13	13%
51–100	13	13%
101–150	14	14%
151–200	10	10%
201–250	18	19%
251–300	10	10%
301–350	14	14%
351–405	5	5%

Source: PLC database as of April 19, 2016.
 *From file opening date to April 19, 2016.

Legal outcomes are entered into the PLC database only after files are closed. Of the 66 files closed, 29 were accepted as PLC clients. As shown in Table 23, of these files, just over one quarter were unresolved and the file closed (28%), while in just under one quarter (24%) the child was in care, and in 21% the child was with the client under supervision.

Legal outcome	Number of clients	%
Unresolved – File closed	8	28%
Child in care	7	24%
Child with client – Supervision	6	21%
Child with client – No supervision	3	10%
Unresolved – Client abandoned	3	10%
Unresolved – Referred to intake	3	10%

Source: PLC database as of April 19, 2016.
 Note: Totals do not add to 100%; clients may have more than one legal outcome

**12. Are collaborative processes more effective and efficient because of PLC support?
 Are PLC clients' cases being resolved without the need for a court trial?**

Key informants generally believed that collaborative processes are an effective and efficient means of resolving issues. Such processes are viewed as providing good opportunities for exchanging information between the parties; for parents and social workers to provide their perspective; for social workers to provide their expectations; and to make plans for moving forward. Having the PLC assistance is helpful to the client, as the PLC can advocate the clients' position and negotiate for the clients; provide clients with support during stressful situations; help clients understand the issues; and help clients in planning how to move forward.

Several external key informants mentioned that such processes are not specific to the PLC and are commonly used approaches in Vancouver, and they are not sure if they are seeing more collaborative resolutions as a result of PLC involvement. However, another comment was that successes gained in such approaches may be small but meaningful to the client, such as reducing the time for a supervision order or assisting the parent in gaining greater access to their children.

A few external key informants commented that mediations are not occurring as frequently as in the past, with more FCPCs and informal collaborative meetings occurring. Mediations are

viewed as an effective means of reaching resolutions. Key informants also noted that some type of decision or resolution is usually achieved at FCPCs and collaborative meetings, such as short-term decisions to address immediate concerns. Plus, key informants generally believed that parents feel they have a voice and are part of decision-making when they take part in these processes, although some key informants said they could not comment on this.

Of the five clients that took part in some type of collaborative process, three said that they were satisfied with the results and two said they were not. Those that were not said they felt it was unproductive. Two clients agreed and three disagreed that the collaborative process gave them an opportunity to have a say in the decisions made over their child's care. Those that agreed said it allowed them to have a voice in what they wanted to do, and one said it helped them understand what to expect. Reasons for disagreeing included that they did not feel encouraged to speak, or that when they did, no one listened to them.

At this point, it is difficult to determine to what extent PLC clients' cases are being resolved without the need to go to a court trial, given that 60% of the files are still open. Of those files closed, 30% were closed because there was a change of counsel. As mentioned above, six of the 10 interviewed clients said that their matter had been resolved, while three said it was still ongoing.

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

Key informants are somewhat mixed on whether court appearances are more productive when clients have PLC support. Plus, key informant opinions are based on observations made prior to the hiring of the second lawyer, who had just been hired at the time of the interviews. The PLC is considered helpful in that clients can access their assistance immediately at court rather than having to adjourn their matter to apply for legal aid and wait to get a lawyer. In the past, some people did not apply to legal aid and retain a lawyer in a timely manner even after the first appearance, thereby leading to further adjournments. Some key informants believed that having the PLC immediately available at the courthouse has helped to reduce the number of adjournments, and that the immediate assistance from the PLC helps with more effective court appearances. However, a few key informants said they have not noticed any decrease in adjournments and that matters are still getting backed up on list day, as the one PLC lawyer was trying to see all of the clients. Furthermore, some clients seemed to be coming to the court appearance without having sufficient time with the lawyer and not being fully aware of their options. Again, key informants expected the additional lawyer to help address backlogs on list day. As well, in addition to the PLC lawyer, there is another LSS family duty counsel, located at the Vancouver JAC, who attends list days to provide brief advice assistance.

Effective use of other service provider resources and justice services

Views are also somewhat mixed on whether the PLC is resulting in more effective use of other service provider resources and justice services. Most key informants commented positively that communications and collaborations with social workers and director's counsel enhances exchange information and creates efficiencies. As well, some key informants observed that the assistance from the PLC, particularly in the form of the advocate/paralegal, can help to ease the burden on social workers and advocacy organizations in providing support to the clients and linking them with other services. The key informants who believed that adjournments are decreasing said that it creates less

demand on other service providers, such as social workers, director’s counsel, judges, and court services. One comment was that the higher level of advocacy the PLC provides clients may, in turn, create additional demand on social workers’ time, with respect to increased requests for meetings or information. Those that have observed backlogs in court say this creates inefficiencies for other service providers when matters are held up and other service providers — such as social workers, director’s counsel, judges, and court services — are waiting for court to resume when the lawyer is available. There are also some concerns that the advocate/paralegal position is creating duplications with other support workers, and that any related PLC supports to clients should complement and correspond to those that clients are receiving from other service providers.

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

Little can be said on how cases that are transferred to a tariff lawyer from the PLC proceed. Internal key informants said that once this occurs, the PLC is not kept informed of the clients’ case. Most external key informants did not have experience in such situations. As discussed under evaluation question 4, one concern expressed is the potential impact on the client when they need to change lawyers after establishing a relationship with a PLC lawyer, and with the potential inefficiencies in requiring another lawyer to become familiar with the file. However, internal key informants said the PLC ensures the client’s file is complete and the incoming lawyer has all the necessary and available information, and that clients are prepared prior to the transfer. Plus, it is not unusual, in general, for legal aid clients with a representation contract to request a change of counsel.

Only one client said that after they had been assisted by the PLC, they still had to get another lawyer to help them with their child protection matter. This client said they were unsure whether it was easy or difficult for them to start working with the new lawyer, although the client said that the help they had received from the PLC already gave them a good understanding of their child protection matter.

14. To what extent has the PLC pilot led to net system savings, due to efficiencies gained for LSS and/or other areas of the justice system?¹⁸

This section looks at potential efficiencies gained for LSS and/or other areas of the justice system as a result of the pilot and considers what costs might be avoided by the efficiencies gained from the operation of the pilot. As was noted in the methodology section, it is not possible to make any conclusive statements on efficiencies gained or costs avoided due to the PLC, as no data are available on the extent to which the pilot has resulted in such impacts as diversion of cases from the court system or reduced appearances, adjournments, trials, or shorter court appearances. Therefore, this section uses some statistics on CFCSA at Vancouver Provincial Court, as presented in Section 3.2 along with pilot data, to make some estimates of potential costs avoided if the PLC could affect certain changes, using different scenarios. No information is available to attach any monetary values to other potential savings on other areas of the justice system outside of court costs (e.g., reduced court time to social workers or director’s counsel).

¹⁸ We understand that any efficiency created in the system will be backfilled by cases waiting for a hearing. Thus, any court savings are at best costs avoided by these cases. The language above has not been changed, as it was approved during consultations for the development of the summative evaluation matrix provided in Appendix B.

In order to estimate savings on an annual basis, fiscal year 2015–16 is used since it is the one full year in which the pilot operated. According to CSB data, almost all applications result in a court appearance, which would be expected for CFCSA applications as the legislation has specific requirements depending upon the actions taken by the director. As was shown in Table 8, initiating applications require an average of 0.27 hours of court time and subsequent applications an average of 0.35 hours. These include court appearances for any reason. From data provided by LSS, courts costs per hour are approximately \$581 for family provincial court.¹⁹

The PLC accepted 107 clients in fiscal year 2015–16. For the purposes of these estimates, each PLC accepted client file is treated as an initiating application. The PLC does not generally take on clients that have already been working with another private lawyer under a representation contract; it would be expected that this early in the PLC’s implementation, any files that were the result of a subsequent application would mainly have started prior to the PLC and would likely have a history with another lawyer.

Also, CFCSA cases are often long-term files and take a considerable amount of time to reach some type of resolution. For this reason, the estimates below are based on average court time not only for the initiating application, but also for all of the subsequent applications that may arise from that one initiating application. From CSB data, each initiating application has an average of three subsequent applications.

From this information the following estimates can be made in Table 24. Based on these calculations, each CFCSA matter requires approximately 1.32 hours of court time. Therefore, the 107 clients accepted in 2015–16 would have required an estimated 141.2 total court hours, for an estimated \$82,060 in total court costs.

Table 24: PLC accepted clients and estimated annual court costs for court appearances				
Row #	Item	Vancouver provincial court		
		Initiating applications	Subsequent applications	Totals
1	Number of PLC clients accepted in 2015–16	107		
2	Number of PLC clients (initiating applications) and number of subsequent applications per initiating application	107	3	107+(107*3)=428
3	Average court hours per application that makes a court appearance	0.27	0.35	
4	Court hours/PLC client	0.27	3*0.35=1.05	1.32
5	Total court hours for the 107 clients (row 1 * row 4)	28.9	112.4	141.2
6	Court costs per hour*	\$581	\$581	\$581
7	Total court costs (row 5 * row 6)	\$16,785	\$65,275	\$82,060

Sources: Calculations made based on pilot database, LSS provided court costs, and CSB data.
 Note: Numbers may not calculate exactly due to rounding.
 * Court cost data were provided by LSS, working with George McCauley, an independent consultant, and are based on MOJ data. Family provincial court costs are estimated to be \$581 per court hour and include the cost of the court clerk, one deputy sheriff, provincial court judge, and court registry staff. It does not include the cost of judicial support services, sheriff out-of-court activities, or court overhead.

¹⁹ Court cost data were provided by LSS, working with George McCauley, an independent consultant, and are based on MOJ data. Family provincial court costs are estimated to be \$581 per court hour and include the cost of the court clerk, one deputy sheriff, provincial court judge, and court registry staff. It does not include the cost of judicial support services, sheriff out-of-court activities, or court overhead.

Although it is still too early to know the outcome of many of the cases handled by the PLC, we can make some estimates based on scenarios. Below we provide some potential annual impacts of the pilot, based on what might be considered low, medium, and high impacts if the services from the PLC were able to reduce the number of court hours per file by 10%, 30%, and 50%. These estimates are provided in Table 25, and range from a potential of \$8,206 to \$41,030 of avoided costs annually for Vancouver Provincial Court, depending on the scenario.

Table 25: Estimated total annual court costs avoided based on the PLC’s current accepted client volume and several scenarios of reduced court hours	
Item	Vancouver Provincial Court
Total court costs	\$82,060
Reduce court hours by:	Total annual court costs avoided
10%	\$8,206
30%	\$24,618
50%	\$41,030
Sources: Calculations made based on pilot database, LSS provided court costs, and CSB data. Note: Numbers may not calculate exactly due to rounding.	

This is assuming a similar number of client files is handled annually by the PLC as in 2015–16, and that the averages used hold. The estimates would be the same if, instead of reducing court hours, the scenarios considered diverting these same percentages from court altogether.

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

The ability of the pilot to create substantial efficiencies is affected by the volume of clients the pilot can serve as well as the extent to which it can achieve its desired objectives. An increase in the number of clients served at the PLC will increase system efficiency gains and, correspondingly, the cost of LSS to deliver the service. Unless there is an increase in the volume of CFCSA cases going through Vancouver Provincial Court, any increase in clients would have to be primarily through clients that access the PLC before court involvement becomes likely. With the new lawyer now available to assume some of the responsibilities for both existing and new clients and the plans for more outreach, the PLC does have the potential to reach out to this group of clients. Expansion of the pilot to other locations of the province also has the potential to add to efficiency gains in terms of increasing volumes as well as additional costs to LSS for providing the service.

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

Few unintended consequences or outcomes were identified. A few key informants mentioned the concerns of private lawyers that were already discussed; although this was not unexpected, perhaps the level of concern was higher than anticipated and the concerns do not seem to be diminishing to the extent might be expected. Another identified unexpected outcome is that the number of clients was higher than anticipated.²⁰ On another note, the level of the positive feedback that the PLC is receiving from their clients is beyond what was expected, which is a welcome and satisfying outcome.

A few key informants expressed concerns that, with tariff lawyers receiving fewer CFCSA representation contracts in Vancouver, this would result in experienced lawyers moving away from accepting those CFCSA contracts that are available. While it is too early in the pilot process to make any conclusive assessments, LSS data show little to no change in the level of experience of lawyers accepting CFCSA contracts at Vancouver Provincial Court between 2014–15 and 2015–16.²¹

²⁰ From the process evaluation, the pilot expected to handle approximately 100 clients per year. Up to April 19, 2016 (13.5 months since implementation), the pilot had 163 applicants, of which 117 were accepted as clients, 33 were not but were provided brief advice, and 13 were still being assessed for PLC eligibility.

²¹ Level of experience is calculated by the number of years from lawyer call date to latest contract issue date.

6.0 Conclusions

This section presents some brief conclusions on the summative evaluation.

6.1 Conclusions on implementation and delivery of the PLC

The PLC generally operated as expected in Year 1. The initial period after launching and while the PLC was building its client base served as a good opportunity to conduct outreach to inform stakeholders, particularly social workers of the pilot. Any operational challenges experienced were primarily with respect to the start-up phase, and having all staff and infrastructure in place.

The PLC is currently perceived as having sufficient resources, at least by internal key informants, particularly with the recent addition of a second full-time lawyer. Some concerns existed that one lawyer was not sufficient to handle volumes on list days, but it was expected that the second lawyer would help to address this concern.

The initial outreach conducted by the PLC was viewed as effective for initially informing relevant stakeholders of the PLC, plus ongoing informal communications was viewed as effective for facilitating good relationships. With the addition of the second lawyer, the PLC plans on undertaking further outreach and will target other support organizations/services besides social workers.

The current PLC model is viewed as supporting effective and efficient delivery. The PLC staff composition is viewed as having an effective structure that allows the lawyers to focus on clients' legal needs while the advocate/paralegal can assist with other supports. Good collaborations and communications with other stakeholders are expected to further support effective delivery.

Key informants identified a number of lessons learned to consider for continuing the Vancouver PLC or establishing a PLC in other locations. This included ensuring that the infrastructure and experienced staff are in place, understanding the community, hiring staff with an established relationship with the community, informing community stakeholders, and promoting and ensuring good communications and collaborations with other stakeholders.

6.2 Conclusions on early indications of outcomes

Many stakeholders appear to be aware of the PLC and are referring clients to the PLC. Social workers are considered key stakeholders and it appears that most are aware of the PLC. Many are referring clients to the PLC and are encouraging them to contact the PLC, at least prior to court.

The PLC is viewed as accessible by both stakeholders and clients. The location of the PLC in the courthouse is primarily considered to be accessible to clients as they go to the PLC directly from court. Clients find that the location is good and are comfortable using the PLC, attributing much of their comfort level to the PLC staff who are seen as supportive and non-judgemental. However, a few key informants expressed that some clients may find the courthouse location intimidating.

While there is some early evidence that some clients are starting to contact the PLC earlier in their CFCSA matter, many still appear not to do so until court day. Contacting the PLC for advice and assistance early is viewed as beneficial to clients, particularly if the case will involve court. Some social workers are encouraging those cases that will likely involve the courts to contact the PLC early. However, many clients are experiencing a variety of capacity constraints and are still not reaching out for services until the day of court. Further collaboration to increase cooperation and communications between the PLC and social workers is required.

Key informants generally believe that the PLC is helping clients engage collaboratively for resolving their child protection issues. The PLC model and approach for collaboration is viewed as fitting well within the Vancouver culture of collaboration over court routes. Key informants said the PLC continues to encourage the use of FCPC, as well as more informal collaborative meetings that are useful for discussion and planning.

Internal key informants report that PLC clients are receiving necessary referrals. The advocate/paralegal position is viewed as a factor of the PLC that can enhance and facilitate referrals and linkages to supports. Some clarification of the advocate/paralegal role is still needed with some external stakeholders and particularly with social workers to ease any concerns of duplications and overlap.

The PLC is providing clients with a good understanding of their legal issue and their rights and obligations and clients are highly satisfied with the services received. Key informants said that the PLC can help clients understand their legal matter and the concerns of the Director, as clients will be more open to accepting such information from the PLC as well as with taking their advice on steps needed for resolution. Any concerns expressed were with regard to the backlog on list day and whether clients were receiving enough time and advice from the lawyer. The second lawyer is expected to assist in addressing these concerns. It is difficult to make conclusions on the extent the PLC is assisting clients with early resolution, particularly as the majority of the files are still open.

Key informants believe that the collaborative processes are an effective and efficient means of resolving issues. The PLC's assistance in such processes is helpful to clients, as the PLC can advocate for clients, help them understand the issues and the process, provide support, and help them in making decisions for moving forward.

There is the potential for more effective use of other service provider resources and justice services when clients are supported by the PLC. The PLC is considered helpful in that clients can access their assistance immediately at court, rather than having to apply for legal aid which can create delays. Some key informants believe this has assisted in reducing adjournments, making more effective use of court time and other resources, such as social workers and director's counsel. The communications and collaborations that the PLC encourages with other stakeholders is also viewed as helpful for establishing effective relationships. Plus, the advocate/paralegal position has the potential to ease the burden on other support workers. However, the concerns expressed regarding court backlogs are viewed as resulting in the inefficient use of other stakeholders attending court. Plus, there still remains concern that the advocate/paralegal position is duplicating other support services.

Data are not available to make conclusions on net system savings due to efficiencies gained, however the evaluation was able to make use of available data to make estimates of the potential for avoiding court costs based on several scenarios.

Few unintended consequences or outcomes were identified. Some key informants mentioned the ongoing concerns by the private bar, although these were not unexpected.

7.0 Recommendations to further enhance the PLC

Below provides a few recommendations for LSS's consideration.

Recommendation 1: Look for ways to further enhance collaborations and communications with other stakeholders working with PLC clients, such as social workers, to further facilitate advocacy efforts.

The PLC is praised by stakeholders for its emphasis on collaboration and communication with stakeholders who are also working with the same clientele. However, some concerns still exist that the advocacy provided by the PLC has the potential to duplicate other services. If the PLC were to look for ways to work more closely with other stakeholders, such as social workers, this could have the potential to further facilitate collaborations, inform other stakeholders of the role and purpose of the PLC advocate/paralegal, and better integrate services.

Recommendation 2: Explore ways to increase the accessibility of the PLC to those clients that may have difficulties taking that first step to ask for assistance.

As was noted, some stakeholders believe that many clients are still not accessing the PLC until court day, despite the efforts of the PLC and some social workers. It may be beneficial for the PLC to work with other stakeholders, such as social workers, to find reasonable approaches to access these hard-to-reach groups. One suggestion made in interviews was that the PLC should come to community centres or social worker offices. The increased collaborations mentioned in recommendation 1 could further contribute to this recommendation.

Recommendation 3: The LSS should continue to look for ways to address the concerns of private bar lawyers.

As noted, the private bar continues to have concerns regarding the impact of the PLC on their practices. While the LSS has tried to address these concerns through several meetings, these have met with limited success and other avenues may need to be explored. In particular, if the PLC is opened in other locations, the LSS should look for ways to learn from the Vancouver experience in order to circumvent such situations in the new locations.

Recommendation 4: The LSS should look for ways to better track client outcomes to facilitate the assessment of whether the PLC is assisting clients resolve their CFCSA matter collaboratively and earlier.

The objectives of the PLC include resolving more child protection cases collaboratively and achieving collaborative and sustainable results earlier. Currently, it is difficult to make any assessments of the extent to which the PLC is able to attain these objectives based on the pilot's database. Given the fact that 75% of accepted clients' files are still open and that child protection cases can be ongoing for lengthy periods of time, LSS should better define what is meant by earlier resolution and incorporate a means for measuring this expected outcome. Furthermore, the database could be improved to assist in identifying whether the PLC assisted the client in resolving their matter collaboratively. This could be incorporated into the legal outcomes field. Alternatively, a new field could be created for such purposes. Better tracking of client outcomes will particularly be useful, as the PLC increases its volume of clients who access the pilot prior to the court involvement stage.

Appendix A — PLC logic model

PLC Logic Model

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

Appendix B — PLC evaluation matrix

Evaluation matrix for the Parents Legal Centre pilot project		
Questions	Indicators	Data sources
Delivery questions		
1. Did the PLC operate as expected in Year 1? What, if any, challenges were met in Year 1, and how were these addressed?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stakeholder opinion on operation of the PLC Stakeholder opinion on challenges/improvements Decision-records of changes made to improve model 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Key informant interviews Document review
2. Did the PLC have sufficient tools, resources, and capacity to meet demand and any intended targets?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> # of CFCSA cases accepted by the PLC # of CFCSA cases accepted by the PLC compared to CFCSA cases receiving legal aid referrals in previous years (for catchment area) Stakeholder opinion that the PLC has sufficient tools and resources to satisfactorily meet demand Client opinion on the level of assistance provided by the PLC 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> PLC database LSS CIS database Key informant interviews Client interviews
3. How effective has the PLC's communication strategy been for informing other relevant stakeholders of their services? Are there ways to improve communication/outreach?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> # and types of communication and outreach activities Stakeholder opinion on the communication strategies and outreach 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Document review Key informant interviews
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"> Stakeholder opinion on the current processes and structure to support the project 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Key informant interviews
5. What are the lessons learned for continuing the Vancouver PLC and for establishing the PLC in other locations in the province?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stakeholder opinion on factors to be considered for expansion to other locations/lessons learned/best practices Documentation/data related to Q1 to Q3 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Key informant interviews Document review
Outcome questions		
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"> Key informant opinion on awareness and understanding of the role of the PLC by relevant stakeholders and community agencies Key informant opinion on extent other stakeholders are referring people with CFCSA matters to the PLC Proportion of PLC clients that were referred from another agency/organization Client input on how they learned of/were referred to the PLC 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> PLC database Key informant interviews Client interviews
7. Is the PLC accessible to all financially eligible people in the catchment area with CFCSA issues?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Client and stakeholder opinion on accessibility of services (location, hours, client comfort level in using the PLC, language issues addressed, etc.) Evidence of steps taken by the PLC for culturally-appropriate services (e.g., publications in other languages, access to translation services) # of screened and assessed cases the PLC accepts and reasons for denial 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Document review PLC database Key informant interviews Client interviews

Evaluation matrix for the Parents Legal Centre pilot project		
Questions	Indicators	Data sources
8. Are people with CFCSA issues accessing the PLC and are they doing so early in the process?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stage of their CFCSA matter that PLC clients are accessing the services • # of PLC cases compared to overall number of CFCSA cases in pilot site over same time period • Stakeholder opinion on whether people with CFCSA matters are accessing the service early in their CFCSA matter • Client input on when they access the PLC • Client input on how the PLC helped them understand their CFCSA matter, the legal processes, and their rights and obligations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PLC database • MCFD data • Key informant interviews • Client interviews
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"> • Proportion of PLC clients making use of collaborative approaches and what types • 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 • Comparison of % of overall CFCSA cases where collaborative approaches are used since PLC was implemented • Key informant opinion on extent that PLC clients use collaborative approaches compared to before the implementation of the PLC • Stakeholder and PLC client opinion on the extent clients understood and were prepared for the collaborative processes they participated in • Client input on decisions to take part in collaborative processes and satisfaction with the approach and outcomes • Proportion of overall PLC clients reaching resolution through collaborative processes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PLC database • LSS CIS data • MCFD data • Key informant interviews • Client interviews
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"> • Proportion of PLC clients receiving referrals • Client input on use and helpfulness of referrals • Stakeholder opinion on client use and helpfulness of referrals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PLC database • Key informant interviews • Client interviews
11. Did PLC clients receive the legal information, advice, and assistance they need to understand and help them resolve their CFCSA matter?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Types of assistance clients receive from the PLC • Proportion of PLC clients represented by PLC at collaborative meetings, court hearings • Client input on satisfaction of services (information, advice, assistance) received from the PLC and level of support for collaborative processes and court appearances • Client opinion on whether they have a voice in the resolution of their CFCSA matter • Stakeholder opinion that PLC clients are supported for collaborative processes and other court processes • % of cases where child is returned to parent/or does not get removed • % of children removed that are returned to the parent within 3 and 6 months 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PLC database • Key informant interviews • Client interviews

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' cases being resolved without the need for a court trial?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stakeholder opinion on effectiveness and success of collaborative approaches that PLC clients are participating in Stakeholder opinion on whether collaborative processes operate more efficiently when clients are supported by the PLC Comparisons of orders by consent pre- and post-PLC implementation Number of agreements (e.g. voluntary care agreements) pre- and post-PLC implementation Number of PLC clients that reach an outcome without having to be transferred to a tariff lawyer Stakeholder and client opinion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MCFD data Court data PLC database Key informant interviews Client interviews
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"> % of CFCSA cases that go to trial compared to pre-PLC for Vancouver Robson Square provincial courthouse # of adjournments pre- and post-PLC Comparison of average wait time for half-day and two-day hearings pre- and post-PLC Stakeholder opinion that MCFD, DAA resources (Directors Counsel, social workers), and court resources are being used more effectively because of PLC involvement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> PLC database LSS data Court data Key informant interviews
14. To what extent has the PLC pilot led to net system savings, due to efficiencies gained for LSS and/or other areas of the justice system?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> PLC average cost per case Cost implications of estimates of avoided court costs based on costs of actual court activity Comparison of budget allocation versus expenditures Success of project in reaching clients (relative to commitments/expectations) Key informant opinion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> PLC data CSB data Key informant interviews
15. Were there any unintended consequences or outcomes (positive or negative) of the PLC project identified in Year 1?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stakeholder opinion on unintended consequences or outcomes of the PLC 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Key informant interviews

Appendix C — Interview guides

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

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

The Legal Services Society (LSS) of British Columbia requires an evaluation of the Parents 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 these notes or hear the recording.

A process evaluation that focussed on the implementation of the PLC project has already been completed. This interview is for the summative evaluation component, where the focus is on the extent to which the PLC is achieving the expected outcomes, with consideration on the delivery of the pilot.

We realize you may not be able to answer all of the questions; please let us know, and we will skip to the next question.

Delivery of the PLC pilot

1. Please briefly describe your role in the delivery of the PLC pilot project.
2. In your opinion, did the PLC pilot operate as expected in year 1? If not, why not? What factors (either internal or external) to the PLC project affected, either positively or negatively, the operation and success of the pilot? If any challenges were encountered, how were they mitigated?
3. In your opinion, does the PLC have sufficient resources and capacity for providing the expected level of services to all eligible PLC clients? Please explain why or why not. What steps have the PLC taken to overcome any resource challenges? (*Probe: enough staff, staff have all the needed tools.*)
4. What communication and outreach strategies were used for informing other relevant stakeholders of the PLC and its services? What were the responses from stakeholders on communications and outreach? Do you have any suggestions for improving communication and outreach?
5. In your opinion, do the current structure and processes of the PLC support its effective and efficient delivery? Do you have any suggestions for improvements to the model?
6. What have been the main lessons learned after the first year of the PLC? What are the main lessons learned for any considerations to establish the PLC in other locations in the province? (*Probe: What are the strengths and challenges of the PLC with respect to offering such services in other areas of the province?*)

Progress toward achieving objectives

7. Are all relevant stakeholders aware of the PLC? Are they referring potential clients to the PLC? Which stakeholders are primarily making referrals to the PLC? If some are not referring clients, do you know why? What more, if anything, is needed to encourage stakeholders to refer clients to the PLC? (*Probe: how effective have communication activities been?*)
8. 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?*)
9. Are people with CFCSA issues accessing the PLC early enough in their process? Please explain why you believe they are or are not accessing the services early enough. When in their CFCSA matter are clients generally accessing the PLC? How soon in their CFCSA matter should people be accessing the PLC?
10. From your perspective, is the PLC able to give clients the legal information, advice, and assistance they need to achieve a good understanding of their legal issue and their rights and obligations, and of what they need to do and the options available to them for resolving their CFCSA issue (*e.g., early advice and information, assistance in court*)? Please explain.
11. Is the PLC resulting in more people with CFCSA issues taking part in collaborative processes? How does the PLC encourage people to take part in collaborative processes? Which collaborative processes are clients using the most and why? Is the PLC able to effectively prepare clients for and support them through the collaborative process?
12. In your opinion, how successful are the collaborative processes that PLC clients take part in? Are clients satisfied with the process and the outcome? Are more CFCSA cases being resolved collaboratively since the implementation of the pilot? Why or why not?
13. 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.
14. 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?
15. 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?
16. 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?
17. Do you have any other comments on the PLC pilot? Do you have any suggestions for improving the pilot?

Thank you for your participation.

**Legal Services Society of British Columbia
Parents 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 Parents 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 these notes or hear the recording.

A process evaluation that focussed on the implementation of the PLC project has already been completed. This interview is for the summative evaluation component, where the focus is on the extent to which the PLC is achieving the expected outcomes, with consideration on the delivery of the pilot.

We realize you may not be able to answer all of the questions; please let us know, and we will skip to the next question.

Delivery of the PLC 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 PLC pilot operated as expected in year 1? If not, why not? Do you know of any factors (either internal or external) to the PLC project that affected, either positively or negatively, the operation and success of the pilot?
3. In your opinion does the PLC have sufficient resources and capacity for providing the expected level of services to all eligible PLC clients? Please explain why or why not. 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.*)
4. What communication and outreach strategies are you aware of that the PLC used for informing other relevant stakeholders of the PLC and its services? Were these helpful? Do you have suggestions for improving communication and outreach?
5. In your opinion, do the current structure and processes of the PLC support its effective and efficient delivery? Do you have any suggestions for improvements to the model?
6. Can you identify any main lessons learned after the first year of the PLC? What are the main lessons learned for any considerations to establish the PLC in other locations in the province? (*Probe: What are the strengths and challenges of the PLC with respect to offering such services in other areas of the province?*)

Progress toward achieving objectives

7. Do you know if all relevant stakeholders are aware of the PLC? Are they referring potential clients to the PLC? Which stakeholders are primarily making referrals to the PLC? If some are not referring clients, do you know why? What more, if anything, is needed to encourage stakeholders to refer clients to the PLC? (*Probe: how effective have communication activities been?*)
8. 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?*)
9. Are people with CFCSA issues accessing the PLC early enough in their process? Please explain why you believe they are or are not accessing the services early enough. When in their CFCSA matter are clients generally accessing the PLC? How soon in their CFCSA matter should people be accessing the PLC?
10. Can you comment on whether the PLC is able to give clients the legal information, advice, and assistance they need to achieve a good understanding of their legal issue and their rights and obligations, and of what they need to do and the options available to them for resolving their CFCSA issue (*e.g. early advice and information, assistance in court*)? Please explain.
11. Is the PLC resulting in more people with CFCSA issues taking part in collaborative processes? How is the PLC able to encourage people to take part in collaborative processes? Which collaborative processes are clients using the most and why? Is the PLC able to effectively prepare clients for and support them through the collaborative process?
12. In your opinion, how successful are the collaborative processes that PLC clients take part in? Are clients satisfied with the process and the outcome? Are more CFCSA cases being resolved collaboratively since the implementation of the pilot? Why or why not?
13. 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.
14. 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?
15. 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?
16. 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?
17. Do you have any other comments on the PLC pilot? Do you have any suggestions for improving the pilot?

**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 15 to 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 these notes or hear the recording. No one connected to your child protection matter, such as a social worker or any other person involved, will find out 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. When you first contacted the PLC 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?
3. How soon after the social worker contacted you did you contact either legal aid or the PLC? Did you have to go to court for your matter? If so, did you already have a court date when you first contacted either legal aid or the PLC? Or did you contact legal aid or the PLC on the day of your first court appearance? Or after the first appearance?
 - a. (If they contacted PLC before the court date) What made you decide to contact legal aid or the PLC when you did?
 - b. (If they contacted the PLC on the day of court or after) If you didn't contact legal aid or the PLC right away, was there any particular reason why not? (*Probe: didn't know about it or legal aid? Didn't know they should?*)

4. Do you think you contacted and got help from the PLC early enough in your child protection matter? Why or why not? Would it have been helpful to get their help earlier? Why or why not? When would you have like to have gotten their help?
5. How easy was it to get to the PLC and use their services?
 - a. Was the PLC easy to get to? Is it in a convenient location?
 - b. Are the hours they are open good? Are they convenient?
 - c. How comfortable were you going to the PLC? What made it either comfortable or uncomfortable?
 - d. Did they seem to have enough staff members to give you the help you needed? If not, why not?
6. Who did you first talk to from the PLC? Was it the lawyer or someone else? (*Probe: did you see them in court or go to their offices, which are down the hall from the court room?*) 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?
7. 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?
8. 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?
9. 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?
10. 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?
11. 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?

12. 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.*)
13. 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, or for some type of program or counselling.
 - a. Did you get a referral to anything like that from the PLC (you don't need to tell me which ones)?
 - b. If yes, did you make use of their referral?
 - c. Were these organizations helpful to you? Did the help they gave you help with your child protection matter?
14. Has your child protection matter been resolved, or were you able to come to some type of agreement? If yes, were you able to do so without having to go to a court trial? How helpful was the PLC in this process?
15. (*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?
16. 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.