

Bridging the Gaps

Summary of November 19, 2019 Workshop Presentations and Discussions¹

Bridging the Gaps Project Overview

The *Bridging the Gaps* initiative was established in January 2018 to help ascertain unmet legal needs in Alberta to guide the Alberta Law Foundation (ALF) grant-making. Since then, we have taken the following steps:

- 1 Review of selected **access to justice literature**.
- 2 **Surveys** to test research findings regarding common statements and recommendations found in the literature, and **Questionnaire** about existing legal services (**Matrix of Legal Services in Alberta – Version 1.0**) and priority legal needs.
- 3 **Workshop on May 9, 2018**, with 10 discussion topics based on responses from the surveys and questionnaire:
 - Court Forms & Procedures
 - Legal Services for Indigenous Individuals
 - Legal Services for Newcomers
 - Alternative Legal Service Delivery
 - Alternative Dispute Resolution
 - Using Technology Strategically
 - Coordination of Legal Services
 - Education the Public
 - Outcomes Analysis & Evaluation
 - Building Community Relationships
- 4 **Letter from ALF's Executive Director** (July 9, 2018) about the most significant gaps and opportunities for further work identified by *Bridging the Gaps* participants and ALF's Board.
- 5 **Workshop on December 4, 2018**, with 5 discussion topics based on the priority areas identified.
- 6 **Annual Funding Guideline Letter** (April 1, 2019) indicating as funding priorities:
 - Legal Services for Newcomers
 - Legal Services for Indigenous individuals
 - Immigration Law and Family Law
 - Legal advice, representation, coaching and assistance with court forms and procedures
 - Communication and referral among service providers
 - Cultural competency training to grantees that serve Newcomers and Indigenous clients

¹ The information listed under *Summary of Presentations* and *Summary of Conversations from Table Talk* are based on the notes from the table facilitators and Workshop facilitator and does not purport to reflect the views of the Alberta Law Foundation.

- 7 **Matrix of Legal Services in Alberta – Version 2.0**
- 8 **Workshop on May 13, 2019**, focused on Coordination of Legal Services.
- 9 **Matrix of Legal Services in Alberta – Version 3.0**
- 10 **Environmental scan and needs assessment of child welfare legal services in Alberta** (ongoing)
- 11 **Workshop on November 19, 2019**, focused on Family Law and Child Welfare Law

The *Bridging the Gaps* Workshop on November 19, 2019

The Workshop agenda was as follow:

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|---------------|---|
| 9:00 – 9:30 | Breakfast |
| 9:30 – 9:45 | Opening remarks |
| 9:45 – 10:30 | Reforming the Family Justice System Initiative (Diana Lowe)
Update and Next Steps |
| 10:30 -10:45 | Bio break |
| 10:45 – 11:30 | Legal Aid Alberta (Andrea Doyle)
Family Law and Child Welfare Legal Services |
| 11:30 – 12:00 | Alberta Law Foundation (Flora Stevenson)
Update on the Environmental Scan and Needs Assessment of Child Welfare Legal Services in Alberta |
| 12:00 - 12:30 | Lunch break |
| 12:30 - 1:15 | Office of the Child and Youth Advocate (Kirsten Wiebe and Erin Jamieson)
Child Welfare Advocacy and Legal Representation for Children and Youth |
| 1:15 – 2:00 | Native Counselling Services of Alberta (Karen Erickson)
Child Welfare Services |
| 2:00 – 2:15 | Bio break |
| 2:15 – 3:00 | Wahkohtowin Law and Governance Lodge (Hadley Friedland) & Law Society of Alberta (Koren Lightning-Earle)
Bill C-92 |
| 3:00 – 3:30 | Table Talk |
| 3:30 – 4:00 | Closing remarks and next steps |

Participants

Thirty-one people attended the workshop (excluding ALF staff and volunteers), representing the following organizations:

1. Alberta Law Reform Institute
2. Alberta Justice Services
3. Alberta Resolution Services
4. Calgary Legal Guidance
5. Central Alberta Community Legal Clinic
6. Central Alberta Women's Outreach Society
7. Centre for Public Legal Education Alberta
8. Edmonton Community Legal Centre
9. Grande Prairie Legal Guidance
10. Law Society of Alberta
11. Legal Aid Alberta
12. Native Counselling Services of Alberta
13. Office of the Child and Youth Advocate
14. Portage College
15. Reforming the Family Justice System Initiative
16. Student Legal Assistance
17. United Way
18. Wahkohtowin Law and Governance Lodge

The following organizations did not attend but are also part of the *Bridging the Gaps* initiative:

- Alberta Civil Liberties Research Centre
- Alberta Workers' Health Centre
- Alberta Law Libraries
- Canadian Bar Association
- Calgary Chinese Community Services Association
- Crowsnest Pass Women's Resource & Crisis Centre
- Elizabeth Fry Calgary
- Elizabeth Fry Edmonton
- Justice Sector Constellation
- Lethbridge Legal Guidance
- Pro Bono Law Alberta
- Pro Bono Students Canada (Calgary)
- Student Legal Services
- The Alex
- Women's Centre Calgary
- Workers' Resource Centre

Summary of Presentations

1. Reforming the Family Justice System (RFJS) Initiative

The presentation was delivered by Diana Lowe, Co-lead of the RFJS initiative. Highlights of her presentation include:

- The RFJS is about system change, it is about reimagining the family justice system.
- The RFJS has over 400 collaborators from 10 different sectors: dispute resolution; legal; court; education & information for families; education for lawyers, paralegals & law students; family support; evaluation & research services; funders; government; Alberta Justice & Solicitor General.
- The RFJS has intentionally included participants who might not traditionally be considered as part of the justice community but which they recognize as key members of the family justice system, such as psychologists, social workers, health care providers, educators and financial advisors.
- The creation of the RFJS was based on findings from the 2013 reports of the Action Committee on Access to Justice in Civil and Family Matters. The Roadmap Report² called for a shift in culture.
- The RFJS is based on the following assumptions (Theory of Change):
 - Chronic conflict leads to toxic stress and negative outcomes for children and parents.
 - Empowering parents to make early and informed decisions is effective in resolving family problems.
 - Social, relationship, financial and legal supports help foster stronger, more resilient families.
 - If parents strengthen their personal health and their parenting relationship, they and their children are happier and healthier.
 - The public costs associated with unresolved family problems are greater than the costs of supporting families to thrive.
- Some of the problems with the family justice system include (Theory of Change):
 - The system is based on legal rights, with an adversarial, win-lose approach that is detrimental to children and parents.
 - The system ignores the impact of toxic stress on children.
 - The court system is the default, but courts lack the capacity and expertise for resolving family relationship issues.
 - The system is expensive and complicated with unequal access to appropriate forms of resolution.
 - Legal language is a barrier which adds to the fear that parents experience.
 - There is a need for clarity of language and consistency across all geographic locations.
- Some of the key strategies include (Theory of Change):
 - Community-based resources, with a focus on healthy parents, on strong, healthy relationships between parents, and on children's needs.
 - Need to inform decisions and approaches with brain science re impact of toxic stress on children.
 - Focus on resources needed to build on the family's strengths. Provide families with education, tools and resources to maintain healthy relationships, and to resolve disputes.
 - Empower parents to exercise personal responsibility and self-determination so that they can make choices together for the well-being of their family.

² Action Committee on Access to Justice in Civil and Family Matters, *Access to Civil & Family Justice: A Roadmap for Change* (2013), online: https://www.cfcj-fcjc.org/sites/default/files/docs/2013/AC_Report_English_Final.pdf

- Multiple options, multiple access with consistency across all geographic locations: people get to the rights pace at the right time for the most appropriate resolution for them.
- Children are the lens through which we design the system, with focus on building strong & healthy family relationships. This begins with early education and continues throughout the family justice system.
- Diana mentioned several initiatives in line with the RFJS model:
 - Family Justice Navigators in Strathcona and North Edmonton. It is no longer a pilot – it has the potential to be scaled out.
 - The Court of Queen's Bench has adopted the RFJS Theory of Change.
 - The LSA and CBA are creating a course to help lawyers get informed about brain science.
 - There is an online certification on brain science: www.albertafamilywellness.org/training
 - The LSA is interested in revamping the code of conduct for those practicing Family Law.
 - CoParenter is a parenting app design to communicate, manage, and organize everyday co-parenting responsibilities. Live mediators can also help parents get along better and resolve disputes. For more information: coparenter.com
 - Cost is \$12/month, but Justice is exploring broader licensing to allow affordable access to this resource for clinics, RCAS and etc.
 - UNDO is an online legal technology service designed for people going through divorce or common law separation. For more information: www.undo.ca
 - Divorce Magazine: www.divorcemag.com

2. Legal Aid Alberta (LAA)

The presentation was delivered by Andrea Doyle, LAA Senior Advisory Counsel, Family & Immigration. Highlights from her presentation include:

- Legal Aid Alberta offers legal services and representation in:
 - Family law and child welfare;
 - Adult Criminal law (JP Bail, Mental Health Court Drug Treatment Court, Indigenous Court);
 - Youth Criminal law;
 - Immigration and refugee law; and
 - Some select Civil law
- Their current financial eligibility guidelines (FEGs) start at Monthly Net Income Level under \$1,668 and Annual Net Income Level under \$20,021 (both monthly and annual guidelines must be met).
- Legal Aid Alberta's staff lawyers provide family law legal services through its offices in Edmonton, Calgary, Red Deer, Lethbridge, and Wetaskiwin.
- Family duty counsel is available at:
 - Provincial court — family and child welfare dockets in Calgary, Edmonton, Fort McMurray, Grande Prairie, St. Paul, Wetaskiwin, Siksika, Red Deer and Medicine Hat
 - Court of Queen's Bench — family in Calgary, Edmonton, Fort McMurray, Grande Prairie, St. Paul, Wetaskiwin, Red Deer and Medicine Hat.
 - The service is free and there are no FEGs.
- For eligible individuals LAA may provide representation for the following areas of family law:
 - Child Welfare/Protection
 - Domestic Violence and Protection orders
 - Representation of Children in High Conflict Matters
 - Custody, access, parenting orders, contact orders;
 - Guardianship;

- Child support;
 - Spousal support;
 - Separation and divorce;
 - Hague Convention applications;
 - Merit based matrimonial and family property disputes (minimum of 50k in value)
- Priority areas for LAA staff lawyers are:
 - Domestic Violence
 - Representation of Children in High Conflict family matters
 - Child welfare/ Child protection
- Domestic Violence:
 - LAA operates the Emergency Protection Order (EPO) Programs. These programs provide legal assistance and duty counsel courtroom representation to claimants applying for an Emergency Protection Order, both in Provincial Court in Edmonton and Calgary and at the Court of Queen's Bench EPO confirmation hearings in Edmonton, Calgary, Lethbridge, Red Deer and Wetaskiwin.
 - The EPO services are free and there are no FEGs.
- Representation of Children in High Conflict family matters:
 - Must be a Court Order determining that the matter is a High Conflict matter and appointing independent counsel for the children.
 - No FEGs for parents but they must reimburse LAA for the costs of child's counsel.
- Child welfare/ Child protection:
 - LAA provides legal representation to eligible parties, primarily parents, involved in child protection litigation.
 - For LAA assistance there needs to be an application before the court for Permanent Guardianship Order, Temporary Guardianship Order or a Supervision Order.
- Andrea shared some of her learnings working with child welfare clients, which include:
 - Lawyers need to create a safe place and give parents time to share their story.
 - Clients don't understand the legal process and often feel they don't know what is happening; it is important to reinforce what are the next steps. May need to repeat things numerous times.
 - Be honest in the appraisal of their situation; Set realistic expectations, don't mislead client into thinking everything is alright when it is not.
 - Give clients realistic options and advice and encourage them to take the steps to address the protection concerns to reunify their family and when appropriate explore a "Plan B".
 - Know the resources in the community that they will need to connect with to address the protection concerns
- Andrea also shared her perspective on gaps in child welfare legal services:
 - Pre-apprehension advice - advice when parents come into contact with Child Services and are working on out-of-court resolutions such as Family Enhancement Agreements- Often by the time the matter is before the Court it is already to late.
 - Matters where children are placed with individuals to avoid apprehension but not under any court scrutiny or process - minimal direction is given on what has to be done to reunify the child and parent. ("Back Door Apprehensions")
 - Legal advice for individuals who do not qualify for LAA services but cannot afford a private retainer.
- Please refer to LAA's presentation slides (attached to email) for more information.

3. Alberta Law Foundation (ALF)

The presentation was delivered by Flora Stevenson, ALF's Research & Project Coordinator. She talked about ALF's ongoing environmental scan and needs assessment of child welfare legal services in Alberta, which started in September 2019 and is expected to be completed by March 2020. Highlights from her presentation include:

- There are key decision points in the child protection process prior to apprehension, where parents may have the ability to influence decision making.
- According to the *Matrix of Legal Services in Alberta*, the following legal services are available in Alberta for parents involved with child welfare matters:

- Legal Information:

Alberta Civil Liberties Research Centre	Alberta
Alberta Law Libraries	Alberta
Calgary Legal Guidance	Calgary
Central Alberta Women's Outreach Society	Red Deer
Centre for Public Legal Education Alberta	Alberta
Community Legal Clinic - Central Alberta	Central Alberta
Community Legal Clinic - Fort McMurray	Fort McMurray and area
Community Legal Clinic - Lloydminster	Lloydminster and area
Community Legal Clinic - Medicine Hat	Medicine Hat and area
Crowsnest Pass Women's Resource & Crisis Centre	Crowsnest Pass
Elizabeth Fry Society of Calgary	Calgary
Grande Prairie Legal Guidance	Grande Prairie
Lethbridge Legal Guidance	Lethbridge
Native Counselling Services of Alberta	Alberta
Resolution and Court Administration Services (Alberta Justice)	Alberta
Student Legal Services of Edmonton	Edmonton

- Assistance Understanding Forms:

Calgary Legal Guidance	Calgary
Central Alberta Women's Outreach Society	Red Deer
Community Legal Clinic - Central Alberta	Central Alberta

Community Legal Clinic - Fort McMurray	Fort McMurray and area
Community Legal Clinic - Lloydminster	Lloydminster and Area
Community Legal Clinic - Medicine Hat	Medicine Hat and Area
Crowsnest Pass Women's Resource & Crisis Centre	Crowsnest Pass
Elizabeth Fry Society of Calgary	Calgary
Lethbridge Legal Guidance	Lethbridge
Native Counselling Services of Alberta	Alberta
Student Legal Assistance	Calgary

- Guidance for Court Appearance:

Calgary Legal Guidance	Calgary
Community Legal Clinic - Central Alberta	Central Alberta
Community Legal Clinic - Fort McMurray	Fort McMurray and area
Community Legal Clinic - Lloydminster	Lloydminster and Area
Community Legal Clinic - Medicine Hat	Medicine Hat and Area
Grande Prairie Legal Guidance	Grande Prairie
Lethbridge Legal Guidance	Lethbridge
Native Counselling Services of Alberta	Alberta
Resolution and Court Administration Services	Alberta

- Public Education Sessions:

Native Counselling Services of Alberta	Alberta
Portage College	Lac La Biche, Cold Lake and St Paul

- Court Support:

Elizabeth Fry Society of Calgary	Calgary
Native Counselling Services of Alberta	Alberta

- Legal Services from Lawyers:
 - Summary legal advice (30min):
 - Calgary Legal Guidance
 - Central Alberta Community Legal Clinic (Central Alberta, Fort McMurray, Lloydminster, Medicine Hat)
 - Grande Prairie Legal Guidance
 - Lethbridge Legal Guidance
 - Follow-up legal advice:
 - Central Alberta Community Legal Clinic (Central Alberta)
 - Lethbridge Legal Guidance
 - Duty Counsel:
 - Legal Aid (Calgary, Edmonton, Fort McMurray, Grande Prairie, St. Paul, Wetaskiwin, Siksika, Red Deer and Medicine Hat)
 - Legal Representation:
 - Central Alberta Community Legal Clinic (Central Alberta)
 - Legal Aid (Alberta)
 - Lethbridge Legal Guidance
- There are also organizations providing social services with elements of legal information, navigation or advocacy (e.g. Creating Hope Society, Pathways, Positive Choices, Bent Arrow, NCSA family services).
- By the time she delivered her presentation, Flora had interviewed 19 service providers to ask them about existing child welfare legal services in their community and their perception of the child welfare system and gaps in legal services. Regarding the child protection system in Alberta, main findings to date include:
 - There is a big power imbalance between Children's Services and parents involved with child welfare issues.
 - Indigenous children are overrepresented in the child welfare system.
 - Most parents involved with child welfare issues have low income and low education and are vulnerable due to trauma, mental health, addiction issues or FASD.
 - Children's Services focuses on safety and risk, not on the parents' needs.
 - There are inconsistencies in the way caseworkers apply the Signs of Safety.
 - There are regional differences regarding child welfare services available and needs.
 - Most parents involved with child welfare issues qualify for Legal Aid based on income level.
 - Parents only qualify for Legal Aid representation after apprehension.
 - It takes a few weeks to a few months (depending on the location) to get a LAA lawyer appointed.
 - Pre-apprehension legal services would have to count on Children's Services caseworkers making referrals to such services.
 - It is hard for law students and lawyers to get training (and mentoring) for Child Welfare Law.
- Regarding gaps in legal services, all but one of the people interviewed said that there are gaps in child welfare legal services. Main findings include:
 - Legal advice and information prior to apprehension, especially summary legal advice and legal information, navigation and advocacy from non-lawyers
 - Legal advice for "back door apprehensions"
 - Legal advice after apprehension, while waiting for a LAA lawyer to be appointed
 - Legal advice and representation after apprehension to parents who are low income but do not qualify for LAA
 - Justice navigation before and after apprehension
 - Duty counsel services in certain locations in Alberta
 - Legal advice to pregnant mothers who might have their children apprehended right after birth
 - Legal training for law students on Child Welfare Law (i.e. law school curriculum)

- Legal training and mentoring for lawyers on Child Welfare Law
 - Legal training for law students, lawyers, judges and Children's Services regarding Indigenous child welfare legal traditions (Bill C-92)
 - Independent legal services for parents and children/youth in care who want to take legal action against Children's Services
 - Legal information about benefits for children and youth in care
 - Culturally appropriate services to Indigenous people
- Flora asked the group if anyone would be interested in being part of a Child Welfare Focus Group to deepen the conversation about gaps in legal services and potential solutions. 15 people volunteered. She will be sending a message to the focus group in January 2020.

4. Office of the Child and Youth Advocate (OCYA)

The presentation was delivered by Kirsten Wiebe, OCYA's Engagement and Education Consultant, and Erin Jamieson, OCYA's Manager of Legal Representation for Children & Youth. Highlights from their presentation include:

- OCYA is an independent office of the Legislature of Alberta under the *Child and Youth Advocate Act* (2012).
- OCYA has the mandate and authority to advise government on best practices and gaps in the system.
- OCYA advocates represent the rights, interests and viewpoints of young people receiving designated services (or who are trying to access services) under the *Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act* (CYFEA); *Protection of Sexually Exploited Children Act* (PSECA); or who are involved in the youth justice system
- OCYA's work include:
 - Systemic Advocacy
 - Making recommendations to improve services for young people
 - Reports on issues at broad levels
 - Collaborative work to identify issues
 - Engagement and Education
 - Promote awareness of children's rights
 - Build advocacy capacity in the community
 - Investigations
 - Conduct investigative reviews when a young person who was involved with the child intervention system or youth justice system is seriously injured or dies. The main purpose is to identify best practices and opportunity for improvement.
 - Legal Representation for Children and Youth (LRCY):
 - Can appoint lawyers for young people in CYFEA and PSECA matters
 - Current eligibility focuses on contested TGOs, PGOs
 - 65 lawyers on roster in Calgary, Edmonton, Medicine Hat, Grande Prairie, Lethbridge, Red Deer, Fort McMurray
 - Can only appoint a lawyer to youth up to age of 18, then the matter must go to LAA
 - Ensures young people's legal rights are protected and their voices are heard in court hearings
 - Individual Advocacy
 - For now, they serve clients aged 0 – 24 years (it will likely change to 22).
 - Support for young people to have their voice heard by decision makers (when involved with Children Services)
 - Now OCYA sees every youth they work with in person (they travel to the child's location)

- Focus on what the young person is saying the issue is for them.
- Anyone can make a referral to OCYA (1-800-661-3446). All referrals are screened to assess if there is a role for the OCYA. If there isn't, information is provided about options and resources available.
- Please refer to OCYA's presentation slides (attached to email) for more information about the organization.

5. Native Counselling Services of Alberta (NCSA)

NCSA's presentation was delivered by Karen Erickson. Highlights from her presentation include:

- NCSA is currently developing a map of the child welfare system to help parents understand what is happening around them.
- The map will also help identify key decision points and timelines in the child protection process and will indicate how much parents can influence decision-making at each stage of the process.
- Once matters get to court (e.g. Supervision Order, TGO, PGO, Private Guardianship Order) there is little room for parents to influence the decision.
- Prior to apprehension (e.g. investigation stage, Family Enhancement Agreement and Custody Agreements) parents have a much bigger say in the decision making. Parents need to be supported to understand their rights and options prior to apprehension.
- The map is expected to be completed and available through Children's Services in April 2020.
- NCSA's programs:
 - Provide advocacy and support to ensure families understand their rights and responsibilities
 - Help families navigate the family court system (court workers)
 - Help families identify their natural supports and appropriate agencies to address safety concerns
 - Support youth aging out of care to ensure continued connection to community and culture
 - Support families in family circles and help them develop a safety plan to present to caseworkers
- A link between legal services and social services, such as NCSA, can
 - Help parents get support from the beginning, to develop safety plans and other concern
 - Help parents be more proactive to avoid apprehension
 - Help legal service providers with information about the parents' supports, challenges and progress, which can then help judges make better informed decisions
- It is important to have Indigenous organizations serving Indigenous people

6. Wahkohtowin Indigenous Law and Governance Lodge & the Law Society of Alberta

The presentation was delivered by Hadley Friedland, Co-Lead of the Wahkohtowin Lodge, and Koren Lightning-Earle, Indigenous Initiatives Liaison of the Law Society of Alberta. Their presentation focused on *Bill C-92*. Highlights include:

- There is a lack of child welfare education in law schools. Hadley compared the Child Welfare Law situation to the Criminal Law situation. (How would it be if there were no classes on Criminal Law? Imagine if the advice you had to give your client was to do what the prosecutor or police told you to do? If there was no proportionality in sentencing?) If you did all these things to our criminal justice system, it would be like the child welfare system - and no one is addressing this issue. This is a rule of law issue.
- Bill C-92 came in response to the TRC Calls to Action and Indigenous advocacy, activism and case law (Caring Society case, Brown v. Canada).
- This law recognizes, for the first time in Canadian history, that Indigenous peoples have the inherent right to jurisdiction (authority) over their own child and family services. It also puts in place national standards for providing child and family services relating to Indigenous children and families.

- On January 1, 2020, Bill C-92 comes into force and the national standards will apply in all provinces and will have to be followed by Children's Services, DFNAs, lawyers and courts. Within one year (January 1, 2021) some Indigenous groups may have their own legislation. Where different, these national standards and Indigenous laws will prevail over provincial legislation (CYFEA).
- There are many uncertainties regarding Bill C-92:
 - No regulations, policies, practice guides yet
 - No court interpretations of this legislation yet
 - Concurrent jurisdiction model = provincial and federal statutes both apply, as well as potential for multiple Indigenous statutes.
 - No commitment or clarity regarding funding
- Please refer to Hadley Friedland's presentation slides (attached to email) for more details about Bill C-92.

<h3>Summary of Conversations from Table Talk</h3>

At the end of the workshop, participants had 30 minutes to chat about how they could use some of the learnings from the presentations to develop strategies to address gaps in Family Law and Child Welfare legal services. Some of the common themes include:

- Parents involved with child welfare issues need both social and legal support (multi-disciplinary team). Legal service providers and social workers need to work more closely together. Some organizations expressed their desire to collaborate in this matter.
- There is a need to expand legal advice and representation for parents involved with child welfare matters. Many organizations indicated their interest in providing at least summary legal advice for their clients on this subject.
- There is a need for legal and social services prior to apprehension but it is hard to reach parents before they get to court.
- There will be significant changes to the early intervention framework at the provincial level in 2020. Agencies may need to re-invent ways to support their families.
- There is a need for more training for lawyers regarding Child Welfare Law and Bill C-92. Many organizations indicated they need to build their capacity in the subject matter, some may require additional staff.
- There is a need to include Child Welfare Law into law schools. Some indicated that law schools should be brought into this conversation.
- Child welfare legal service providers need to have strong connections to community services.
- There is a need for a culture shift in the child welfare justice system and Children's Services.

Workshop Evaluation and Next Steps

A feedback survey (anonymous) was delivered at the end of the workshop. 27 attendees responded. Overall, participants indicated they have learned a lot, but some wished they had more time to interact with the group.

The highlights include:

- 100% of participants found the presentations relevant and informative.
- 72% found that the table talk helped them think about ways to better serve their clients and better coordinate with the group.
- 92.5% found that the workshop helped them build and strengthen relationships with other legal service providers.
- 100% are interested in attending another *Bridging the Gaps* workshop.
- Participants (n=19) indicated as the most valuable part(s) of the workshop:
 - 94.7% presentations (47.3% Hadley Friedland and Koren Lightning Earle's presentation about Bill C-92)
 - 26.3% connecting with other service providers
- Only 6 participants answered the question regarding the least valuable part of the workshop. 2 indicated the "Reforming the Family Justice System Initiative presentation", 2 "Legal Aid's presentation" and 2 "more dialogue/group discussion".
- Suggestions for topics of discussion for future workshops included "more on Bill C-92", "focus on child welfare gaps pre-apprehension", "support for families in communities, beyond the legal silo", "legal services for newcomers and Immigration Law", "bring Children's Services into the conversation, as well as Minister of Children's Services and Justice Minister", "how lawyers work with social workers", "actual steps to address gaps", "coordination of legal services", "civil dispute resolution", "position of the judiciary", "discussion comparing urban and rural communities".
- Regarding the Matrix of Legal Services in Alberta – Version 3.0 (Matrix) (n=25):
 - 13 participants indicated they have been using the Matrix and found it useful for making referrals or learning about legal services available in Alberta
 - 6 were not aware of the Matrix
 - 4 didn't know if their organization has been using the Matrix
 - 2 have not been using the Matrix. 1 didn't find the Matrix useful for making referrals or learning about legal services available in Alberta.

Next Steps:

- Based on the feedback received, we will be hosting at least one *Bridging the Gaps* workshop in 2020.
- We will send all *Bridging the Gaps* participants two short surveys about the *Matrix of Legal Services in Alberta* and our next workshop.
- We will contact the participants of the *Child Welfare Focus Group* in January 2020.
- The *Environmental Scan and Needs Assessment of Child Welfare Legal Services in Alberta* will be completed and distributed in March 2020.