

# *Before* you Sign

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## WHAT I HOPE TO LEARN TODAY

## WHAT I LEARNED TODAY

## Workshop Goals

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Rural populations of immigrants, especially individuals who are not native English speakers, experience significant obstacles in obtaining accurate legal information due to factors of isolation, transportation, and language proficiency. Leaders of ethnic communities and frontline workers in social service and community agencies may be the only contact and source of information that rural newcomers encounter.

By helping newcomers and immigrants better understand legal systems and supports in Canada, there is an opportunity to avoid more costly and complicated legal interventions for them later.

The intention of this workshop is to bring together these key players in our communities with the existing legal information and resources to better support newcomers.

## Immigrant Perspective

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As a frontline worker why is it important that you are aware of good sources of legal information for your clients? **A frontline worker is often the first responder to clients' legal problems, many of which can be life altering.** Assisting your clients to deal with potential legal issues in a timely manner can be critical to the outcome. Additionally, it is important to ensure clients are referred to the appropriate resources.

As a frontline service provider how can you support newcomer integration? **It all starts with understanding the immigrant perspective.** To the best of your ability, put yourself in their shoes. You are now in a new country that is potentially very different from where you were born. Language can be difficult to learn and is one of the biggest barriers that newcomers can face when resettling. New Canadian terms may be confusing. Trying to access various services, get a job, make friends, or even complete basic tasks like buying food or filling out forms can be frustrating and stressful if you aren't fluent in either of Canada's two official languages.

**Which agencies are the right ones to help with each of these questions or problems?** Learning how to navigate services in a new community takes time. It is daunting to reach out and develop connections with people and agencies. **As a service provider you shouldn't assume a client that is meeting with you is also accessing other services.** Once a relationship is established, clients may start to trust a frontline service provider and this relationship can be used to help keep immigrants on track for success.

*To the best of your ability, put yourself in their shoes.... Trying to access various services, get a job, make friends, or even complete basic tasks like buying food or filling out forms can be frustrating and stressful.*

## Before You Sign

Once trust is established, your clients are highly likely to bring a wide variety of questions and concerns to you because they are comfortable with you and your organization. It is at this time you can respectfully check into other areas of their life.

Many frontline workers are very adept at providing information and making effective referrals to connect their clients with the services they need. When it comes to legal questions it is natural to feel a bit hesitant. We are not trained in the area of law. What are the implications if we go too far or cross a line? Where is the line? **Of all the areas we might be called upon to assist a client, the legal arena can be an intimidating one, but it is also one of the most critical services we can offer newcomers to Canada.**

*As a frontline worker you will be able to direct your clients to important legal information that will allow them to function in this new culture. You are potentially able to help prevent legal issues by connecting clients with the right information and resources.*

## Legal Information vs. Legal Advice

Many people who have legal problems ask service agencies for help. Service providers must be diligent in providing legal information that does not cross the line into legal advice.

**THE FOLLOWING CHART WILL CLARIFY THE SUBTLE BUT CRITICAL DIFFERENCE IN INFORMATION AND ADVICE.**

Legal Information	Legal Advice
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>» is general information about the law(s)</li><li>» helps people to understand their rights and responsibilities and how the legal processes work</li><li>» often provides referrals for where to get legal advice</li><li>» may help people prepare for meetings with a lawyer or court appearances</li><li>» Steps to Justice is an example of information you can access online</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>» is an opinion based on facts and law about how a person should deal with a specific legal issue</li><li>» can be given only by a licensed legal professional (lawyer or paralegal)</li><li>» is confidential</li></ul>

In most situations it is best to ensure your immigrant client is connected to a settlement agency. These agencies specialize in supporting immigrants to navigate the Canadian system. However, if you have built a relationship with a client, they may be most comfortable with you.

### NOTES

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You Can	You Can Not	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» help someone understand the language in a lawyer's letter</li> <li>» look at instructions or information to help someone figure out they are filling out the right legal form</li> <li>» help someone with literacy/ language barriers fill out a form in their own words</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» interpret a lawyer's letter</li> <li>» tell someone they are filling out the right form</li> <li>» fill out a legal form for someone</li> </ul>	<p>➤ Community workers can feel comfortable:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pointing someone to reliable information on a website or pamphlet (i.e. Steps to Justice)</li> <li>• Suggesting they attend a legal information workshop</li> <li>• Referring them to a licensed legal professional or other services that can help them</li> </ul>

What do you do if you find yourself pushed by a client for more specific information or help? Legal issues can be very stressful and at this point your clients have often developed a trust with you which leads them to share these challenges. You must caution them at this point that you can give them legal information but not legal advice on their specific situation.

**HERE ARE SOME TIPS ON WHAT TO SAY WHEN YOU ARE IN SUCH A SITUATION:**

Situation	What to Do	What Not to Do
<p>Your client is pushing you for details and information about how to deal with their situation.</p>	<p>If you know about a specific law or rules that might apply, you can tell them this and point to the rules. This would be an excellent use of the Steps to Justice website for example.</p>	<p>You should not say "This law applies to your specific situation and will tell you what to do." That would be legal advice.</p>
<p>Your client is asking for help completing a form.</p>	<p>You can tell them that you can help fill it out as long as they tell you what they want to record and you just write it down. This could be a good time to use the Family Law Guided Pathways on the Steps to Justice website.</p>	<p>You should not fill out the form using your own words or tell them what words to use.</p>

## Detecting Legal Problems

**Helping people detect their legal problems is important.** When you make a person aware of their rights and responsibilities, they can then look for legal information and, where necessary, get legal help. Understanding typical legal problems newcomers face will also help you identify similar challenges in others and allow you to point them to the right information and give them useful referrals to resources in their community. Detecting legal issues and, decisions they may make that could evolve into legal problems, is also an important intervention strategy for a service provider.

**THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS MAY HELP GIVE YOU A SENSE OF WHETHER SOMEONE HAS A LEGAL PROBLEM OR A PROBLEM THAT COULD EVOLVE INTO A LEGAL ISSUE.**

1. In conversation do they describe a life event?

When you are meeting with your clients do they ever mention a life event to you? **A life event is something big that happens that changes their situation.** For example, getting married, separating from a spouse or partner, having children, losing a job, retirement, starting on a government support program, or being evicted from a home are all life events. Life events sometimes trigger legal problems because they are entering into new situations they have never experienced. When you hear clients share stories like this it is a good opportunity to ask a few more questions to see if you find evidence of future legal issues.

2. Do they bring legal documents or legal forms to your meetings?

Have you ever had a client come to you for help with a legal document or letters they have received? Perhaps they bring the actual documents or tell you about them. **This type of paperwork may reveal their problem has a legal implications to it.**

3. Do their statements flag a legal problem?

When clients come to you for help, do they indicate there could be a legal problem? For example, the following statements may flag a legal problem: “My ex-partner has stopped paying child support and he’s starting a new family.” “My employer always comments on my appearance.” “Are there any shelters close by?” “I have bedbugs and my landlord said he has no money to fix the problem.”

**If you hear a statement from a client and you aren’t sure whether the problem is a legal one or not you can search websites like CLEO’s stepstojustice.ca using key words.**

**THE FOLLOWING TABLES SHOW US EXAMPLES OF LIFE EVENTS, SORTED BY AREA OF LAW.**

*The first column gives examples of what you might hear someone say. The second column lists related legal forms or documents that a person may bring with them or mention. The third column gives the URL of legal information on CLEO’s Steps to Justice site as well as other website links for relevant content. This information may help you identify when they are facing a legal problem.*

➤ This section was taken from: [cleoconnect.ca](http://cleoconnect.ca) (Topic: Detecting legal problems)

Put other questions that come to you here:

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➤ For example, you can search for “child support”, “domestic violence, or “tenant rights”. If a client has brought you a form or document, you can do a search using the form’s name.

! You will notice that each area of law has blank spaces. These are for you to fill in with any situations you have personally faced at work, or have wondered about, in the course of your job.



## CONSUMER LAW SCENARIO

**Life events** – Significant life events that might trigger a legal problem in this area of law:

- » Owing money to someone
- » Declaring bankruptcy
- » Paying for a good or service and not getting a satisfactory deal

➤ We will again acknowledge this content below was developed in consultation with CLEO and some content is theirs as well. [cleoconnect.ca](http://cleoconnect.ca) (Topic: [Detecting legal problems](#))

<b>What you might hear someone say</b>	<b>Documents they might bring with them</b>	<b>Related legal information</b>
“Can I return the used car I bought last week; it isn’t working?”	Copy of the car financing agreement.	<a href="http://stepstojustice.ca">stepstojustice.ca</a> (Topic: <a href="#">Debt and Consumer Rights</a> ) or <a href="http://cleo.on.ca">cleo.on.ca</a> (Topic: <a href="#">Buying or leasing a used vehicle</a> )
“I received a phone call/e-mail from somebody saying they were from the Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) threatening to have me deported if I didn’t pay an application fee.”	Copy of the e-mail, perhaps the phone # written down that called them.	<a href="http://canada.ca">canada.ca</a> (Topic: <a href="#">What kinds of fraud should newcomers to Canada watch out for?</a> ) or <a href="http://www.antifraudcentre-centreantifraude.ca">www.antifraudcentre-centreantifraude.ca</a> (Topic: <a href="#">immigration</a> )
“The repair shop charged me more than they said they would.”	Copy of invoice from dealer. Flyer from the dealer setting out their rates.	<a href="http://stepstojustice.ca">stepstojustice.ca</a> (Topic: <a href="#">Debt and consumer rights</a> )
“Someone asked me for a credit check.”	Form to fill out to consent or agree to a credit check.	<a href="http://stepstojustice.ca">stepstojustice.ca</a> (Topic: <a href="#">Debt and consumer rights</a> )



## EMPLOYMENT LAW SCENARIOS

**Life events** – Significant life events that might trigger a legal problem in this area of law

- » Getting a first job
- » Getting a new job
- » Being fired
- » Being laid off

What you might hear someone say	Documents they might bring with them	Related legal information
“Can an employer charge me money to be hired?”	Signed employment contract	<a href="http://stepstojustice.ca">stepstojustice.ca</a> (Topic: Employment and work)
“I have only been able to find a job working for cash. Is that OK?”	Not Applicable	<a href="http://www.canada.ca">www.canada.ca</a> (Topic: Underground economy)  <a href="http://www.canada.ca">www.canada.ca</a> (Topic: CPP contributions)  If someone is being paid cash and not paying into CPP they will not be able to access the services you find listed at this site because they have not contributed into it.
“I have been working extra hours but my employer isn’t paying me for these hours.”	Overtime agreement – a document that an employee might be asked to sign to agree to work more hours than the Employment Standards Act allows for or possible an Employment Standards Claim Form.	<a href="http://stepstojustice.ca">stepstojustice.ca</a> (Employment and work)
“I got a job but I quit because my employer changed my job description and salary.”	Letter from employer stating change in job description and salary.	<a href="http://stepstojustice.ca">stepstojustice.ca</a> (Employment and work)



## FAMILY LAW SCENARIOS

**Life Events** – Significant life events that might trigger a legal problem in this area of law:

- » living with a partner
- » getting married
- » separating from a spouse or partner
- » having and raising children
- » experiencing domestic violence

The Ontario Court Services website lists all the forms used in family law court cases such as divorce, child custody and access, child and spousal support.

<b>What you might hear someone say</b>	<b>Documents they might bring with them</b>	<b>Related legal information</b>
“I see women here doing (X) with their children. Will I get in trouble if I do/don’t do that as well?”	Not Applicable	<p>There is no specific legal information to dispense in this example. You would need to get into very specific details with the client around the situation before you could determine if referring them to information regarding Family and Children’s Services was warranted for their own education. <a href="http://stepstojustice.ca">stepstojustice.ca</a> (Topic: Family law)</p> <p>A referral to a program like Healthy Babies Healthy Children would be warranted so they can receive support around adjusting to the new cultural norms and learning to adapt their existing parenting methods, where necessary, to comply with Canadian rules and regulations. <a href="http://children.gov.on.ca">children.gov.on.ca</a> (Topic: Healthy Babies Healthy Children)</p>
“What if my partner takes our child to another country without my permission?”	Not Applicable	<a href="http://stepstojustice.ca">stepstojustice.ca</a> (Topic: Family law)
“I want to know how to get a divorce.”	Form 8 Application or Form 25A	<a href="http://stepstojustice.ca">stepstojustice.ca</a> (Topic: Family law)
“My ex-partner keeps changing the time he/she will pick up our kids.”	Copy of the separation agreement.	<a href="http://stepstojustice.ca">stepstojustice.ca</a> (Topic: family law)



## HOUSING LAW SCENARIOS

**Life Events** – Significant life events that might trigger a legal problem in this area of law:

- » moving into or out of an apartment
- » moving in with a roommate
- » moving to another country
- » buying a home

The Landlord and Tenant Board website lists many of the forms used in housing law, including the ones mentioned below.

<b>What you might hear someone say</b>	<b>Documents they might bring with them</b>	<b>Related legal information</b>
“My landlord has raised my rent twice this year, can he do that?”	Form N1 or form N2	<a href="http://stepstojustice.ca">stepstojustice.ca</a> (Topic: <a href="#">housing law</a> )
“My roommate did not pay her share of the rent and now I’m at risk of losing my apartment/home. What can I do?”	Copy of the rental agreement if one exists. This is potentially very convoluted depending on the arrangements.	<a href="http://stepstojustice.ca">stepstojustice.ca</a> (Topic: <a href="#">Housing law</a> ) or <a href="http://www.cleo.on.ca">www.cleo.on.ca</a> (Topic: <a href="#">roommates</a> )
“My landlord has threatened to evict me because I make too much noise.”	Form N5 – Notice to End your Tenancy for Interfering with Others, Damage, or Overcrowding or Form L2 – Application to End a Tenancy and Evict a Tenant	<a href="http://stepstojustice.ca">stepstojustice.ca</a> (Topic: <a href="#">Housing law</a> )
“My heat isn’t working properly and my landlord hasn’t fixed it.”	Form T6 – Tenant Application about Maintenance	<a href="http://stepstojustice.ca">stepstojustice.ca</a> (Topic: <a href="#">Housing law</a> )



## HEALTH AND DISABILITY LAW SCENARIOS

**Life Events** – Significant life events that might trigger a legal problem in this area of law:

- » Retirement
- » Severe accident or medical diagnosis leading to a disability
- » Employment change leading to a change in benefits coverage

<b>What you might hear someone say</b>	<b>Documents they might bring with them</b>	<b>Related legal information</b>
“I went to the hospital for help and was not treated well. What can I do about that?”	Not Applicable	<a href="http://stepstojustice.ca">stepstojustice.ca</a> (Topic: Human Rights)
“I can’t find a job because I have a disability. How can I support myself if I can’t work?”	Not Applicable	The answer to this question will vary largely depending on the details of the person asking.  <a href="http://stepstojustice.ca">stepstojustice.ca</a> (Topic: Health and disability)  or <a href="http://stepstojustice.ca">stepstojustice.ca</a> (Topic: Health and disability)
“I do not agree with the ODSP findings. Can I ask them to look into my case again?”	Letter from ODSP	<a href="http://stepstojustice.ca">stepstojustice.ca</a> (Topic: Health and disability)
“Am I allowed to go back to school if I am on CPP disability benefits?”	Not Applicable	<a href="http://stepstojustice.ca">stepstojustice.ca</a> (Topic: Health and disability)
I am still considered a refugee here and I have not had my hearing yet. Can I access health care services still?”	Not Applicable	<a href="http://refugees.cleo.on.ca">refugees.cleo.on.ca</a> (Topic: Getting benefits and services) or <a href="http://www.canada.ca">www.canada.ca</a> (Topics: Interim Federal Health Program) or <a href="http://settlement.org">settlement.org</a> (Topic: OHIP and Health Insurance) or <a href="http://www.olhi.ca">www.olhi.ca</a>



## Family and Employment Law Scenario



Ahmed started a new job in a mechanics shop 2 months ago and tells you he has been working hard. Anything that has been asked of him he has completed. Any feedback he has received from his boss or co-workers has been positive. He went to work on Monday and his boss told him they didn't need his help anymore, he no longer had a job at the shop. His Record of Employment is going to reflect that he was fired. Ahmed doesn't understand what happened and feels being fired was not fair. Now that he has no job he doesn't know how he is going to make the child support payments. He is worried if he doesn't pay he might not be able to see his children. He has heard some horrible stories of people not being allowed access to their children because of missed payments.

If Ahmed was your client, and above are the details he has shared with you, list the steps you would take to help him navigate this situation?

What resources would you access to help in this situation?

What referrals, if any, would you make?



Take the time to access the Steps to Justice website [stepstojustice.ca](http://stepstojustice.ca) now and research your question(s) to find information that relates to each situation. Document the links for future reference.

*If you wish to read through more potential scenarios in a similar format you can following the link below.*

[cleoconnect.ca](http://cleoconnect.ca) (Topic: [Detecting legal problems](#))



### Consumer and Housing Law Scenario



Maria took out a payday loan last month because she was falling behind on her rent again and didn't see any other way to make her payment. The payday loan payment came due and she just didn't have the money to pay it back because she had been sick and missed out working a few of her shifts. Now she is worried about what the loan company might do to try and collect as she has heard from friends about what can happen. To make things worse she is now even further behind on having enough money to pay this month's rent. Her landlord is not happy as she is often late paying and says he has had enough. He gave her a N4 form just a few days ago. She has brought it in with her as she has no idea what to do with it or about it.

If Maria was your client, and above are the details she has shared with you, list the steps you would take to help her navigate this situation?

What resources would you access to help in this situation?

What referrals, if any, would you make?

**NOTES**

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## Family Law Scenario

Peter and Sara have come to today's meeting having decided to get a divorce. They have been separated now for 18 months and know they don't want to get back together. They have been living in Ontario for 5 years and have no children together. What they don't know is how to go about this process. They know friends who have gotten divorced and when they talk to them it all seemed very confusing and messy. They don't have the money to pay for lawyers and just want this to be done quickly and inexpensively as possible. Different people had different advice on how to go about things and now they just don't know where to start. They have a list of websites written down as well as various books and pamphlets friends and family have given them. From these, they have written down words they don't understand and have a lot of questions.

If Peter and Sara were your clients, and above are the details they have shared with you, list the steps you would take to help them navigate this situation?

What resources would you access to help in this situation?

What referrals, if any, would you make?

### NOTES

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## Consumer Law Scenario

Penny has arrived for today's meeting very angry. She is demanding her Ontario Works payments be made earlier next month and asking you to get her more money. When you ask why she is looking for these changes, she reveals she has several unpaid bills and there are collection agencies calling at all hours, seven days a week. She is tired of trying to deal with it all. She says there is just never enough money and she wants to just declare bankruptcy and be done with it.

If Penny was your client, and above are the details she has shared with you, list the steps you would take to help her navigate this situation?

What resources would you access to help in this situation?

What referrals would you make, if any?

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## FAMILY LAW SCENARIOS

Immigrating to a new country leads to stress in a variety of forms for both individuals and family units. They are facing new situations and changing cultural norms as they adapt and this can lead to changing family dynamics. It is important to stay attuned to their family and watch for signs of change that could indicate issues.

Context	Potential Question	What to listen for
<p>Perhaps a client shows up without their spouse the next time you meet. That could create a line of conversation about how the family is doing.</p>	<p>“I see X has not joined us today. Is he/she OK? Will they be joining us later?”</p>	<p>Any mention of a change in living arrangements is a potential red flag. If a spouse is routinely not attending your meetings and responses are evasive this should be a red flag.</p>
	<p>“Have there been any changes in your family arrangements since we last met? Are you all still living at the same address?”</p>	<p>There are of course normal reasons for various family members to move out and make changes to their initial arrangements after a time. A family on solid footing though will typically stay together through the initial settlement stages for both emotional and financial support. If you see signs of this changing it is worth pursuing the conversation.</p>
<p>Maybe you have noticed some parenting styles during your meetings that do not align with Canadian laws. That should create a line of conversation starting with examples that you have witnessed.</p>	<p>“Where are your children today?”</p>	<p>Look for answers like they are home alone or waiting in the car.</p> <p>This could be an example of cultural differences. Perhaps in their home country this is not an issue. Here in Canada this could become an issue of child neglect depending on the circumstances.</p>



## CONSUMER LAW SCENARIOS

If your client(s) are new to the country you know they will be looking to establish things like cell phones, new accounts at the bank, utility services (heat, hydro, water) where they are living. These are all potential topics to inquire about to ensure they know how to manage their new lives in Canada.

Context	Potential Question	What to listen for
When confirming a cell phone contact number	“I see you have a new cell phone number. Did you receive some help setting that up? Do you find the contract is very different from what you had in your home country?”	You are listening for any responses that might suggest they have been taken advantage of. Is the cell phone package they have truly what they or their family needs? Does it provide them with the services they need? i.e. long- distance calling features or deals. Do they understand the terms of their contract?
In discussions around first or last month rent, paying utility bills, making ends meet etc.	“Are you getting used to using your bank card now? Are they helpful at the bank when you have questions? Did they explain how you can check your accounts and pay your bills?” Are you able to pay your bills on time?	Living on a budget is the reality for many newcomers. Sticking to a budget will be difficult if they are not comfortable managing their money and able to view deposits and withdrawals.
When new to the country, little or no credit history can be a challenge, specifically when working with utility companies, landlords etc. Without a credit check showing good results, setting up accounts, renting housing etc. becomes a challenge.	“Have you had any problems getting your heat/hydro etc. set up at your new apartment? Are you clear on how to pay your bills each month?”	Clients might be requested to make a deposit on a utility account but not understand why. If struggling to make ends meet you might hear them comment on choosing to only pay bills occasionally or not paying in full without understanding the consequences.



## EMPLOYMENT LAW SCENARIOS

Understanding your client(s) skill set can allow you to steer a conversation around employment. Come to learn where they are in the process (applying, interviewing, employed) and generate questions around those stages looking for any potential warning signs.

Context	Potential Question	What to listen for
<p>Depending on your frontline worker role, it might be a natural part of your conversation to inquire about a SIN to qualify for the services your office provides.</p>	<p>“Do you have your own SIN card now so you can start to apply for jobs?”</p>	<p>This opens a conversation about legally working in Canada. Clarify the need for every working individual requires a SIN.</p>
<p>Employment status is a natural area of conversation for most frontline workers as it affects so many aspects of a client’s life.</p>	<p>“How is the job search going?”                      “Do you need help finding an employment agency to support you in your job search?”                      Does someone at the employment agency speak your first language?”                      “Have you been surprised by or uncomfortable with any questions you’ve been asked during an interview?”                      “I’m so happy to hear you have found work! Is your employer depositing money directly into your account on time as agreed?”</p>	<p>Asking them about questions they have been asked and how they responded could reveal some cultural differences that you could help explain. You could also help by referring them to an employment agency that has staff that speak their first language for further support.</p> <p>You could find here they are being paid cash and are working “under the table” raising a red flag. They might not understand the immediate and far reaching implications of this. For example, they might not be contributing to EI or CPP or paying income tax so this will have future implications.</p>
<p>Having clients compare their experiences in their country of origin to Canada can be a good way to explore new topics. Asking them to compare previous experiences to their current job can be a good way to stimulate conversation.</p>	<p>“How are you finding the hours at your new job? Are you happy working day/ night shift?”</p>	<p>This could reveal they are working too many or too few hours, not being provided adequate breaks during their shift, or time off between changes in shifts. You can also ensure they have signed a contract that outlines hours etc.</p>



## LANDLORD & TENANT LAW SCENARIOS

*This is a very important topic as it relates to immigrants. The vast majority will live through renting an apartment or house and likely have little knowledge of the Residential Tenancies Act prior to that experience. It is important in our conversations to seek out some details around their experiences to date. This will allow us to provide information where necessary.*

Context	Potential Question	What to listen for
<p>Shared living spaces vs. renting your own apartment greatly changes many of the laws as it pertains to renters. It is important to understand your clients exact living arrangements if they do express concerns.</p>	<p>“When we last spoke you were living in the same house as your landlord. Do you still live there now? How are you finding the shared living arrangements?”                      “Have you signed a lease with your landlord?”</p>	<p>There will be shared common areas in this arrangement but they may reveal that the landlord isn’t respecting private spaces such as the bedroom.. Listen for any infringement on equal access to facilities, or acceptable payment practices. Ensure a contract has been signed showing your client as an official renter in case issues arise in future. Landlords now need to use a standard lease form so if the client didn’t sign a lease (or that they just signed a piece of paper that was not a formal lease) this indicates a problem.</p>
<p>Confirming a client has a safe place to live tends to be a natural point to confirm for most frontline workers in the course of your discussions and getting to know a new client.</p>	<p>“How long have you been looking for rental housing now?” If they have been looking for a long time that could lead to further questions.                      “Why do you think it has been so hard?”                      “When looking for rental housing, have you been asked any questions that surprised you, made you feel uncomfortable, or that you couldn’t answer?”</p>	<p>Listen for questions they have been asked that might indicate they are facing discrimination. You may also be able to help them understand their rights as tenants. For example, if the landlord has refused to rent to them because they don’t have a reference from a previous landlord, they may be facing discrimination as a newcomer or as a first time renter.</p>
<p>Any mention of financial struggles should lead you to appropriate inquiries about the state of their major expenses such as rent and utilities payments.</p>	<p>“You mentioned that you are having a hard time making ends meet. Are you managing to pay your rent on time each month?”</p>	<p>If they are falling behind routinely it is important they understand the potential repercussions of that i.e. Eviction proceedings</p>
<p>If a landlord does not automatically offer receipts a newcomer might not know to ask for one and why it is important. When your client mentions having found a new place to live ensure you inquire after the payment and receipt arrangements.</p>	<p>“Are you getting a receipt for your rent monthly?”</p>	<p>It is important to have proof of rent payments. A paper trail that allows your clients to keep track of their payments ensures there is no room for disagreements about rent.</p>



## HEALTH AND DISABILITY LAW SCENARIOS

Health care and how the system operates can vary widely across the world, when newcomers arrive to Canada do not assume they already understand how things work at a federal and provincial level. Depending on the newcomer’s status (permanent resident, refugee, protected person etc.) they could be starting out in Canada with different health care access and support. As they transition between these different support systems it is important they receive the correct information on what these changes mean to them so they can make informed decisions.

Context	Potential Question	What to listen for
<p>Perhaps you notice a client struggling to get up the stairs or they seem to have a persistent cough whenever you meet them. Keep your eyes and ears open for any clues to ill health or struggles that could potentially be considered a disability.</p>	<p>“I notice you seem to still have that cough. Have you been to see your family doctor yet?”                      “You seemed to be struggling using the stairs today, is everything OK? Have you hurt yourself and does this affect your ability to work?”</p>	<p>Perhaps they don’t have a family doctor and are not aware they should be on a wait list. Maybe they believe it will cost them money to see a doctor and don’t believe they can afford the care they need. Do they know where the hospital is and are they aware they are able to access it?</p> <p>If a new immigrant has come to this country with a pre-existing condition, but never received any support or accommodations for it in their country of origin, it might not occur to them to seek help in Canada. Maybe they are an ODSP candidate for example.</p>



## LEGAL SYSTEM SCENARIOS

The legal system can be intimidating for any of us, especially for a new immigrant to our country. They are not necessarily well informed about what legal support they are entitled to so expressing interest in their experiences to date can potentially reveal gaps in services. The below list of questions is for people already involved in a legal situation while the intent of this workshop is to help them avoid legal issues. Often an immigrant's initial reaction to the legal system is one of extreme caution or something to be avoided at all costs. It is important we look for opportunities to reassure them and provide information that allows them to navigate the system.

Context	Potential Question	What to listen for
If you know your client is already involved in a legal situation (either because they told you or because of where their referral came to you from) it is relevant to ask them about how the preparations are going for their court date.	“Have you been able to meet with your lawyer to discuss your case before your court date?”	Ensure they know who is representing them and are clear on how to contact them. If they make comments that they are not sure on next steps, or how their case is shaping up, encourage them to reach out to their lawyer/mediator/ duty council etc.
If in your own dealings with your client you know their grasp of English is poor it would be important to ask if they are clear what is happening in their case.	“Are you understanding your conversations with your lawyer?”	If they are asking you what certain words mean or trying to relay conversations they have had with their lawyer/mediator/ duty counsel etc. that should raise some concerns. Inquiring about a translator or friends/family who can attend their next appointment with them could be an important suggestion.





## Available Resources

### CLEO : COMMUNITY LEGAL EDUCATION ONTARIO

[www.cleo.on.ca/en](http://www.cleo.on.ca/en)

Their work includes:

- » an extensive collection of free legal information resources and publications available in a variety of languages and formats <https://www.cleo.on.ca/en/resources-and-publications/resources-and-publications>
- » online resources including [Refugee Rights in Ontario](#), [Youth Criminal Law](#), and [Get Ready for the ONCA](#)

### CLEO CONNECT

[cleoconnect.ca/](http://cleoconnect.ca/)

CLEO Connect provides training and tools for community workers. These are divided into various services on their website.

**Training** – This includes in-person, webinar and online training opportunities for community workers as well as tipsheets developed for community workers.

**Search Resources** – There are two options on the CLEO website. The first is Your Legal Rights. It is a collection of legal information resources produced by hundreds of organizations across Ontario. The Your Legal Rights collection includes a resource library and webinars for community workers. The second is a search in CLEO’s collection of research on public legal education and information and access to justice. <https://cleoconnect.ca/library/>

**CLEO Connector** – This is a phone or e-mail hotline that can help you plan a legal information project. It assists you in finding training that relates to your needs within CLEO or other organizations. Training can take different formats such as webinars, workshops, tip sheets etc. It is important to understand they are not there to help you with legal advice or legal information on a specific topic. That is better serviced by the Steps to Justice website or CLEO’s resources and publications webpage. <https://cleoconnect.ca/connect/>

**Develop Content** – Here you can find guidelines for better legal information and clear language and design tips. Learn about CLEO’s Connecting Communities Training Partnerships. <https://cleoconnect.ca/develop-legal-information/>

**Research** – CLEO conducts research into effective ways of developing and delivering legal rights information.

## STEPS TO JUSTICE

[stepstojustice.ca/](http://stepstojustice.ca/)

Steps to Justice provides reliable and practical information on common legal problems including:

- » Step-by-step information to help you work through legal problems;
- » Practical tools, such as checklists, fillable forms, and self-help guides;
- » Referral information for legal and social services across Ontario;
- » Live chat and email support if you can't find the answers to your questions.

### Live Chat

If you cannot find the right resources on the Steps to Justice website to help you with the question you have there is one more option available. CLEO Connect offers live chat in Ontario.

This forum is not for you to pose specific questions rather to ask for resources that would support you finding the answers you need on a specific topic. For example you would not use live chat to share the specifics of a client's issue(s). Rather you would ask in live chat what resources are available that speak to the main issue(s) your client is facing.

 CLEO Connect  
Live Chat  
operates Monday  
to Friday from  
11:00 am until  
1:00pm ET

### Family Law Guided Pathways

CLEO's Family Law Guided Pathways are a series of online interviews that are designed to help the user fill out the court forms needed for a family law matter (i.e. divorce, child custody, spousal support etc.). The pathways ask questions and then put the answers into the required forms. Each question includes information that explains what is needed. The pathways are free to use.

Once you've completed the pathway, you can save or print your forms. You will also get instructions about how to give these forms to the court.

You can sign up to create an account or use the pathways as a guest. If you choose not to create an account, the system will time out after 4 hours. You must create an account if you want to save your work on the system or use the other pathways.

Any personal information that you enter is confidential. CLEO will not give your personal information to anyone unless you ask them to do this.

<https://stepstojustice.ca/guided-pathways>

## LEGAL AID

[www.legalaid.on.ca/en/publications/brochures.asp](http://www.legalaid.on.ca/en/publications/brochures.asp)

Legal Aid Ontario has a statutory mandate to promote access to justice throughout Ontario for low-income individuals by means of:

- » Providing consistently high quality legal aid services in a cost-effective and efficient manner;
- » Encouraging and facilitating flexibility and innovation in the provision of legal aid services;
- » Identifying, assessing and recognizing the diverse legal needs of low-income individuals and of disadvantaged communities in Ontario; and
- » Providing legal aid services to low-income individuals through a corporation that will operate independently from the Government of Ontario but within a framework of accountability to the Government of Ontario for the expenditure of public funds.
- » Providing funding to community legal clinics who provide free legal services to low-income residents in areas of law particularly focused on income and shelter issues

### QUESTIONS TO ASK BEFORE REFERRING A CLIENT TO LEGAL AID

Is the legal issue among the list of areas covered by Legal Aid?

Legal Aid can assist in cases that involve the following:

- » domestic abuse
- » family
- » criminal
- » mental health
- » child protection

Community Legal Clinics can assist in cases that involve:

- » Landlord & Tenant cases
- » Ontario Works appeals
- » ODSP appeals
- » CPP-Disability appeals
- » WSIB appeals
- » Employment Law
- » Community Indigenous Justice issues
- » Not all Community Legal Clinics are able to provide all of those services so it is best to know which services are covered by your local community legal clinic.

! Every day LAO helps almost 4,000 disadvantaged people, including single parents seeking child support; domestic violence survivors; parents seeking custody of children; refugees; and accused persons.

! Only people meeting strict financial eligibility limits receive legal aid. Wherever possible clients are asked to contribute toward the cost of their legal fees.

<p><b>What type of help do they need?</b> Many of us only think of Legal Aid as providing a lawyer to represent someone in court. However, this is just one of many services they provide. Familiarize yourself below with the services they offer so that you make the most effective referral for your client and their situation. <a href="http://legalaid.on.ca/en/getting/typesofhelp.asp">http://legalaid.on.ca/en/getting/typesofhelp.asp</a></p>	
<p><b>TOLL-FREE NUMBER</b> <b>1-800-668-8258</b></p>	<p>Call Legal Aid Ontario toll-free to speak to legal aid staff, and access a wide range of legal aid services, information and advice. Help is available Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. The best time to call is between 9 a.m. and 10 a.m.</p>
<p><b>LOW-INCOME</b></p>	<p>Duty counsel are lawyers who give immediate legal assistance to low-income people appearing in court without a lawyer. If you have a criminal or family law issue, you should speak to duty counsel before your court appearance. <a href="http://legalaid.on.ca/en/getting/helpinthecourtroom.asp">http://legalaid.on.ca/en/getting/helpinthecourtroom.asp</a></p> <p><b>Community Legal Clinics</b> Funded by Legal Aid Ontario, operate across the province. There are 73 in total. Sixty of these are neighbourhood legal clinics who serve clients within their catchment area and 13 of these are clinics which focus on certain legal topics or demographic groups. Call your local Community Legal Clinic rather than Legal Aid Ontario if your client needs help in an area of law covered by the clinics as outlined above. <a href="http://legalaid.on.ca/en/contact/contact.asp?type=cl">http://legalaid.on.ca/en/contact/contact.asp?type=cl</a></p>
<p><b>CERTIFICATE PROGRAM</b></p>	<p>Legal Aid Ontario's certificate program covers the cost of a lawyer. You can apply for the certificate program if you are financially eligible, and your legal matter is covered by LAO. The certificate acts as a voucher, guaranteeing that the lawyer will be paid to represent you for a certain number of hours. Certificates are only for the most serious cases; for example, for criminal charges where a jail sentence is likely, or serious family problems. <a href="http://legalaid.on.ca/en/getting/eligibility.asp">http://legalaid.on.ca/en/getting/eligibility.asp</a></p>
<p><b>FRENCH SPEAKERS</b></p>	<p>French-speaking clients can now get free, confidential advice and referrals by telephone for many of the legal issues covered by community legal clinics. Advice lines are available in Southwestern Ontario, Eastern Ontario, Northern Ontario and parts of central Ontario, and the Greater Toronto Area. <a href="http://legalaid.on.ca/en/contact/flapp.asp">http://legalaid.on.ca/en/contact/flapp.asp</a></p>
<p><b>STUDENTS</b></p>	<p>Student Legal Aid Services Societies (SLASS), funded by Legal Aid Ontario, operate out of Ontario's six law schools. With the supervision of full-time lawyers, volunteer law students provide legal advice and represent clients in cases such as minor crimes, landlord and tenant issues, immigration, tribunals, including the Ontario Human Rights Commission. <a href="http://legalaid.on.ca/en/contact/contact.asp?type=slass">http://legalaid.on.ca/en/contact/contact.asp?type=slass</a></p>
<p><b>FAMILIES</b></p>	<p>You can get help from Family Law Information Centre at your courthouse if you qualify. The legal aid lawyer (called advice lawyers) available, can give you up to 20 minutes of free general advice. The advice lawyer may also be able to give you a referral to a family law service centre. If there is no advice lawyer available, you will find various brochures and fact sheets to help guide you. <a href="https://www.attorneygeneral.jus.gov.on.ca/english/courts/Court_Addresses/">https://www.attorneygeneral.jus.gov.on.ca/english/courts/Court_Addresses/</a></p>

<b>FAMILIES (CONT'D)</b>	Family Law Service Centres offer eligible clients a range of legal resources and support for family matters, including help with documents, referrals to advice counsel, full representation in family law cases by a staff lawyer, referral to a private lawyer who does legal aid work if they are eligible or mediation and settlement conferences. <a href="http://legalaid.on.ca/en/contact/contact.asp?type=flsc">http://legalaid.on.ca/en/contact/contact.asp?type=flsc</a>
<b>DOWNLOAD THE APP</b>	Legal Aid also has a free app that can be downloaded. It allows the user to determine what services their financial situation qualifies them for. <a href="http://legalaid.on.ca/en/getting/legalaidapp.asp">http://legalaid.on.ca/en/getting/legalaidapp.asp</a>

### Is there a language barrier?

Language is often a barrier for immigrants and refugees looking to obtain legal advice. One of the most effective initial referrals you can make in such situations is to have them reach out to Legal Aid over the phone. Legal Aid can offer help on the phone in over 300 languages.

They can provide referrals to help with legal problems (such as referrals to duty counsel and community legal clinics). They are also able to provide referrals to other agencies and arrange to have the client speak with a lawyer for a maximum of 20 minutes if they have a family legal problem and they qualify.

The lawyer (called an advice lawyer) will give them general legal advice and explain what they can do to help with their legal case. 1-800-668-8258 from Monday to Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. (The best time to call is between 9 a.m. and 10 a.m.)

### Does your client's income qualify him/her for a lawyer paid by Legal Aid?

It is important to assure your client that even if they don't qualify for a lawyer covered by Legal Aid there are many other ways Legal Aid could possibly assist. They should still be encouraged to call Legal Aid with their issue(s).

<http://www.legalaid.on.ca/en/publications/brochures/2019-20-financial-eligibility-for-LAO-services-EN.pdf>

### What is the nearest Legal Aid clinic for my client?

Legal Aid Ontario funds 73 community legal clinics throughout the province. Thirteen of these clinics provide specialty legal services. Each is a non-profit legal center, governed by an independent board of directors representative of the community it serves. Clinics employ lawyers, legal workers, paralegals and administrative staff to provide information, legal advice and representation. To find the legal clinic that would best serve your client(s) use the link below.

<http://legalaid.on.ca/en/contact/contact.asp?type=cl>

Community Legal Clinics have financial eligibility guidelines to determine to whom they can provide services. They are different and more generous than Legal Aid Ontario's guidelines so you should check with your local legal clinic as to whether the client qualifies. Even if they don't financially qualify for Legal Aid services for a Family Law matter, as an example, they might financially qualify for help with a Landlord & Tenant matter.

## PODCASTS AND AUDIO RESOURCES

[cleoconnect.ca/learning-opportunities/rights-bites-podcasts/](https://cleoconnect.ca/learning-opportunities/rights-bites-podcasts/)

According to a 2013 report by CLEO's Centre for Research & Innovation, there is a desire amongst people working at community service organizations to have greater access to legal education resources through alternative digital media like podcasts.

ICLEO's (2013) report suggests that a digital audio podcast would be ideal for serving the needs of visually impaired people and auditory learners. Furthermore, an audio resource would be a way of making legal information accessible to people with low levels of literacy.

Contrary to concerns that English language podcasts may be difficult to understand for some non-native English speakers, a study of educational podcasting in South Africa found that because of the opportunity to pause and rewind podcasts, students whose primary language was not English were more likely than their native English-speaking classmates to listen to the podcasts being offered at school, and even to listen to them multiple times (Collier-Reed, Case & Stott, 2013). Furthermore, for anyone facing the stress of managing a personal legal problem, it can be difficult to retain important information the first time it is presented (CLEO, 2013).

Thus, a legal education podcast could be valuable as a supplementary resource for clients already engaging with information in other formats, but who will likely benefit from having information repeated to them.

As a result of these findings CLEO has produced four podcasts to date called Rights Bites. CLEO's audio podcast series for newcomers, draws attention to some common legal problems that affect newcomer tenants and workers in Ontario, and gives information about legal rights. You can find these podcasts at <https://cleoconnect.ca/learning-opportunities/rights-bites-podcasts/>

This project has also produced six podcasts on various legal issues. They cover separation and divorce, custody and access, fraud, rights of employees upon termination, eviction and the final podcast clarifies the differences between ODSP, EI and OW.

**!** As a service provider that has taken this training you will receive access to these resources for your clients. These podcasts are meant to supplement your referrals and intervention and not replace it.

## Sources for Reliable Legal Information

The following list of sources for online legal information and legal services in Ontario is intended for use by front line workers. We do not suggest this list as a hand-out for clients given the extensive list of resources available. The intention is to leverage this list in making effective referrals and/or providing legal information in your day-to-day interactions with future clients.

<https://cleoconnect.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/4.-Sources-for-online-legal-information-November-2018.pdf>

NOTES

