



**CLEO**

Community Legal Education Ontario  
Éducation juridique communautaire Ontario

# Supporting community justice help and advancing access to justice

Canadian Institute for the Administration of Justice

June 11, 2021

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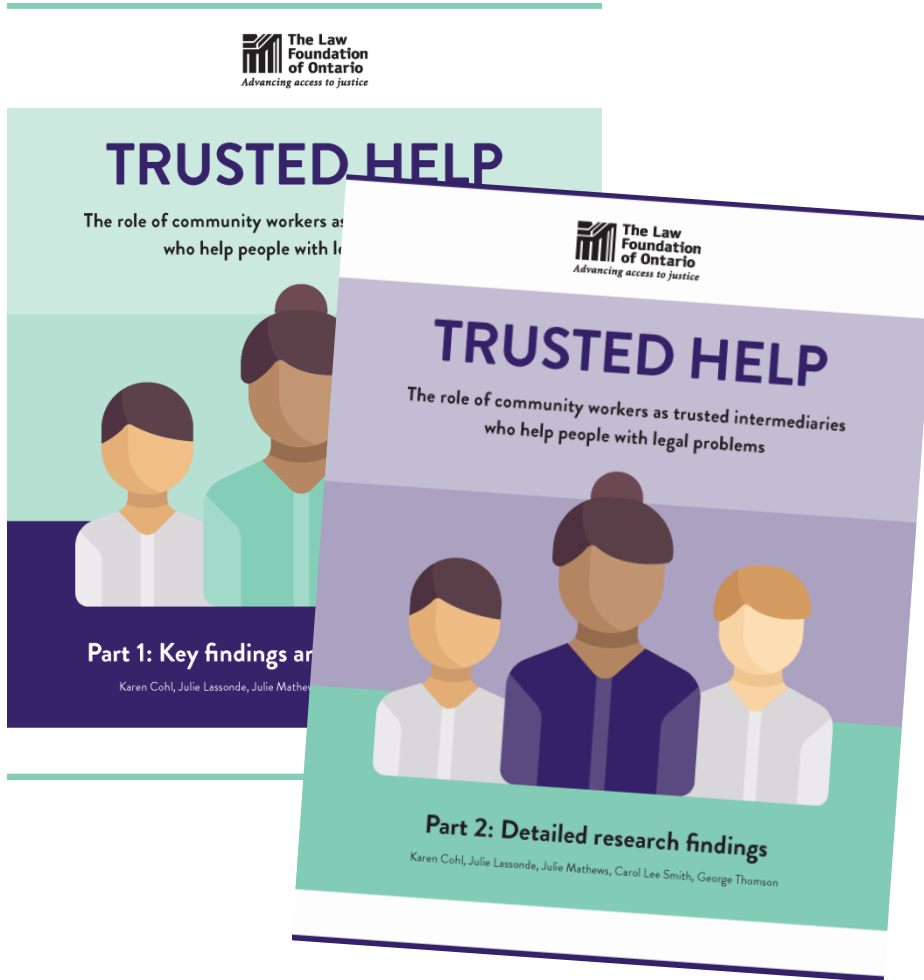
# Community Justice Help:

## Advancing Community-Based Access to Justice

A Discussion Paper

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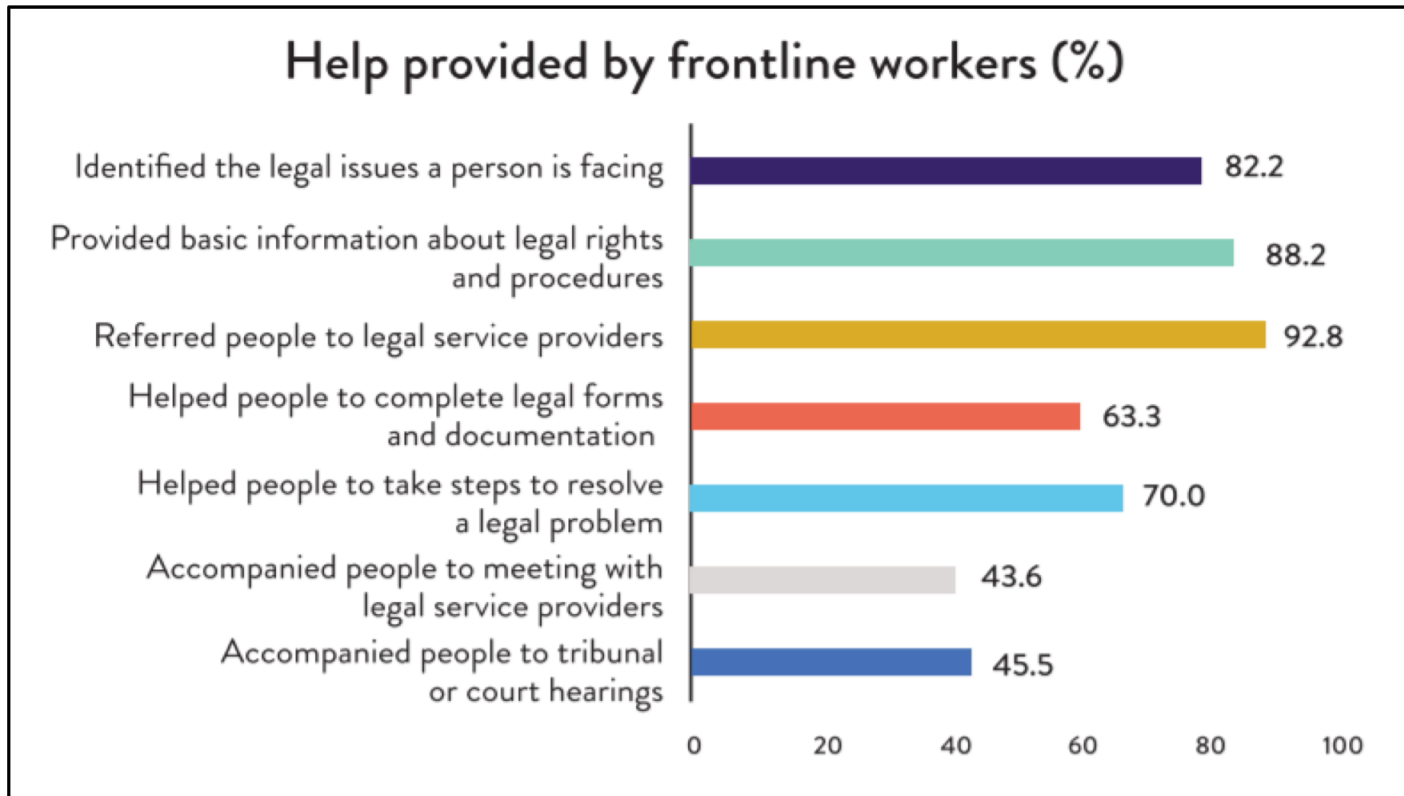




# Trusted Help

Community workers as trusted intermediaries who help people with legal problems

<https://lawfoundation.on.ca/news/legal-help-on-the-frontlines/>



*\*based on survey responses from 231 respondents self-identifying as a staff member or volunteer providing frontline services in a non-legal community organization*

*Part 2 - Trusted Help: The role of community workers as trusted intermediaries who help people with legal problems, Cohl, Lasonde, Mathews, Smith, and Thompson, Toronto: 2018 at page 15*



## Community workers: how they're helping

- Look at problem “cluster” and help person identify various elements, including legal elements
- Offer holistic support that responds to person’s goals
- Connect person to services from other community partners, and give referrals to accessible legal experts
- Help to understand options and navigate a legal or court process
- Help with the completion of a form or letter
- Accompany person to a proceeding



# What is **community justice help**?

The help provided by staff at not-for-profit community-based organizations to people experiencing life-affecting problems with a law-related element.



# What the literature tells us

- Specialization matters (findings from empirical research):
  - Day-to-day experience
  - Familiarity with legal process and settings
  - Training and focus of experience
- Deeper legal expertise where: complex legal process or issues, power imbalance, highly adversarial forums



## Community justice help – some common features

- Sector- and task-specific specialization (day-to-day experience)
- Strong, existing quality assurance mechanisms in not-for-profit sector
- Members of regulated professions or occupations
- Participants in certification or accreditation programs
- Also: **no direct financial gain from clients**





## Some examples

- **Luke's Place** (serving survivors of intimate partner violence in the Oshawa region)
- **Hotline for tenants** (serving Toronto region, operated by Federation of Metro Tenants)
- **LifeSpin** (assisting people living on low incomes in the London region)
- **FCJ Refugee House** (assisting with settlement issues in the Toronto region)
- **Community Unemployed Help Centre** (gives assistance, advice, and representation (free) to people navigating EI and other processes, in Manitoba)
- **Connecting Ottawa** (a model of collaboration between legal and non-legal community organizations)



# What we're proposing

**Support and equip** community justice help, where three features are present...

# Three features of a “support and equip” approach

“Good quality” help is where workers at a community-based organization:

1. Have the knowledge, skills and experience they need;
2. Are working within a not-for-profit organization and an ethical infrastructure;
3. Are providing support that responds to their clients’ needs in a holistic way





# Some next steps

- Finalize related literature review, funded by DOJ (any day)
- Gather feedback on the Discussion Paper
- Move forward on next steps, in consultation; for example:
  - Develop practical tools and resources to support this work
  - Collect “best practices” for training, supervising, mentoring
  - Collect and review competency profiles used in community sectors
  - Collect and analyze relevant CJH program evaluations



# THANK YOU!

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For more information:

<https://cleoconnect.ca/about-us/supporting-community-justice-help/> OR  
<https://cleoconnect.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Community-Justice-Help-Advancing-Community-Based-Access-to-Justice-discussion-paper-July-2020.pdf>