
Meaningful Public Access to Legislation: The Role of Public Legal Education and Information

CIAJ National Conference
September 9, 2014



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Community Legal Education Ontario
Éducation juridique communautaire Ontario

Outline of presentation

- Role and work of PLEI organizations, including CLEO
- Key hallmarks of our work
- Introduction to CLEO's research on effective formats and delivery channels for PLEI
- Improving access to PLEI



Overview of PLEI work in Canada

- What is the definition of public legal education and information (PLEI)?
- Who's doing this work in Canada?
- What are our goals?
- Who are our partners?



Introduction to CLEO

- Mandate
- Role
- Core activities



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Hallmarks of CLEO's work

- Guiding principle: user-focussed
- What this means in practice
 - Selection of topics and content
 - Selection of format
 - Clear language
 - Content that reflects realities people encounter
 - Reaching people at places they frequent



Some challenges we face

- Complex network of legislation, regulations, policies and practices
- Keeping up with changes in the law and practice
- Criticisms of “dumbing down” or “can’t be done”



CLEO – what we've learned

- Some best practices:
 - Identifying needs and developing materials
 - Recognizing diverse needs of diverse public
 - User testing
 - Working in partnership and knowledge sharing



CLEO's “Formats & Delivery Channels” research

- Why we decided to do this
- Three main questions we explored
- How we conducted the research



Themes from research

- Many people continue to face significant barriers to accessing legal information
- Human support to “interpret” the information is important, especially for people with barriers
- Outreach activities – to create awareness of reliable legal information – are critical



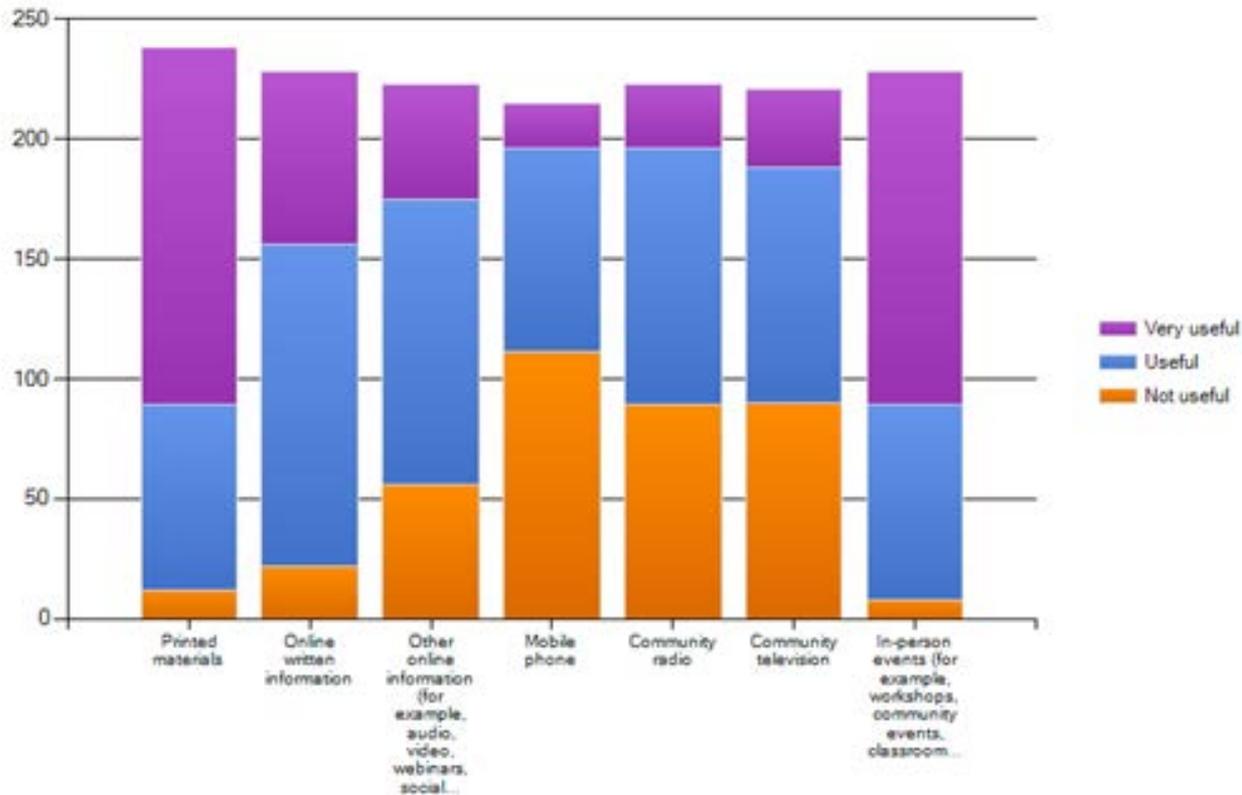
Overarching theme

- Provide legal information in as many different formats, and through as many different delivery channels or access points, to increase the likelihood that people will find it and access it

(“CLEO’s rule of multiples”)



More specifically...



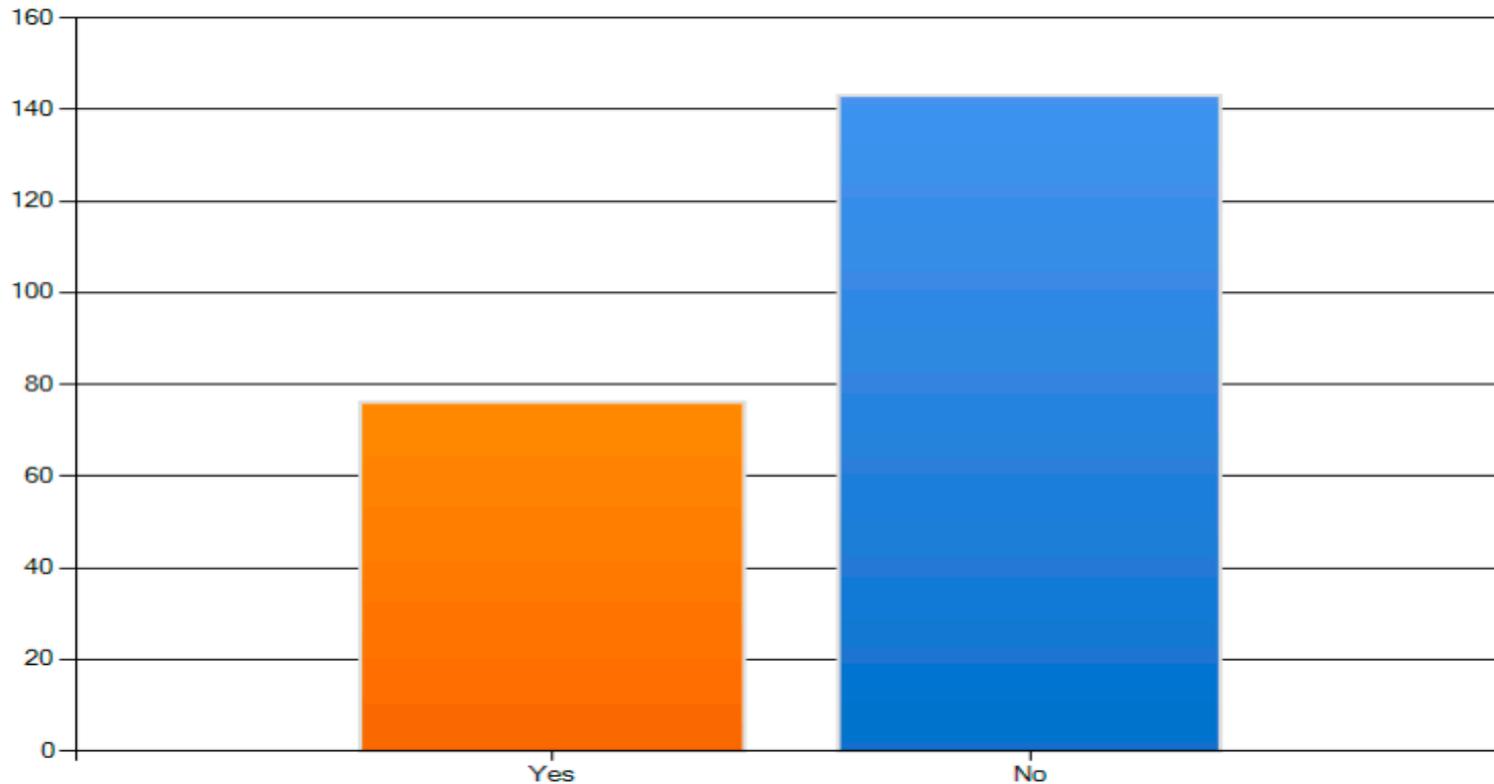
Looking at online information

- Large and growing number of Canadians have access to the Internet
- But digital divide still exists; most vulnerable often lack access
- Online information has many pros



Accessing online information

In your experience, are your clients able to easily find and make use of online information?



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Some challenges of online info

- Large volume of information hard to sort through
- Often difficult to determine whether info applies and whether it's reliable
- One-on-one support from someone – a person – who can help is often needed



Improving access to (online) PLEI

- Clear, reliable entry points
- A more coordinated approach
- Identify and apply “promising practices” for effective online information
- Integrate up-to-date referral information



What CLEO's doing

- Conducting research to map PLEI in Ontario
- Distributing Better Legal Information Handbook
- Hosting PLE Learning Exchange initiative/ site
- Providing training for community workers
- Developing collaborative “Shared Steps” site



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An intro to Shared Steps Project

- Builds on CLEO's "Your Legal Rights" legal information portal site
- Users will be guided through information in a series of self-selected steps
- Will be based on a "commons questions" approach (as well as topic-based taxonomy)



Please get in touch...

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Websites:
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