



DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

Child-centred Family Justice Fund

Public Legal Education and Information and Professional Training Component

Introduction

The federal Child Support Initiative was given a five-year mandate, scheduled to end in March 2001, to implement family law reforms related to child support and support enforcement. To achieve this objective, the Department of Justice established the *Child Support Implementation and Enforcement Fund*. One component of the Fund was entitled “Public Legal Education and Information” and another component was “Professional Training”. Activities funded through these components aimed to inform the Canadian public about child support reforms. In order to achieve this objective, the grants and contributions drawn from these components supported discrete, short-term PLEI and Professional Training projects that addressed the priorities of these components.

In February 2000, the Child Support Initiative was extended for an additional two years, to March 2003, with a broadened mandate aimed at integrating a child-centred approach to family law that includes issues of child support, support enforcement and custody and access. The objectives of the “Public Legal Education and Information and Professional Training” component of the new *Child-centred Family Justice Fund*, which, on April 1, 2000, replaced the *Child Support Implementation and Enforcement Fund*, are to enhance knowledge, promote the development of materials, and inform Canadians, including the legal community, about child support guidelines, support enforcement measures and programs, custody and access services, and related family law matters.

(A) Public Legal Education and Information (PLEI) – Funding Priorities

One aim of the Department’s child-centred family justice funding program is to promote access to the

justice system by facilitating community public legal education and information efforts to revise, develop, disseminate and deliver information on child support, support enforcement and custody and access issues. This information should meet community and client needs for a wide variety of target groups including parents from identified hard-to-reach groups who are separating and divorcing, Aboriginal parents, the youth population, and other separating and divorcing parents among the general public.

A main priority of the Child-centred Family Justice Initiative is to reach identified groups of parents with law information needs where information developed for the general public is not useful to them for reasons such as: culture and language, low income, low literacy, special needs, rural and remote locations, parents who have experienced abuse and violence, Aboriginal parents, and young people who may become parents. The Department of Justice contracted to have public legal information needs assessments undertaken across Canada on child support and related family law issues. The results of these studies will continue to guide departmental funding decisions during the Initiative.

The Department has established the following priorities for the PLEI component of the *Child-centred Family Justice Fund*:

- to develop PLEI activities that meet the needs of the identified hard-to-reach groups of parents;
- to develop information that meets the needs of young people who may become parents;
- to continue to inform and educate other parents among the general public who are separating or divorcing and those who have existing child support orders or agreements; and,



- to continue to inform professionals and other intermediaries whose clients include separating and divorcing parents, particularly parents from the identified hard-to-reach groups.

Examples of PLEI Activities that could be Eligible for Funding

- Training Sessions for Intermediaries
- Information Sessions that Address Hard-to-Reach Group Audiences
- Revisions to Existing Written Materials
- Development of New Written Materials for Hard-to-Reach Groups
- Development of Alternative Formats to Print Materials (e.g. Audio-Visual and Electronic Formats)
- Research Activities
- Evaluation of PLEI Activities

(B) Professional Training – Funding Priorities

The main objective of the Professional Training component of the Child-centred Family Justice Fund is to assist the implementation of family law reforms related to child support, support enforcement and custody and access. Professionals directly involved in family law, with divorcing and separating parents, or with the court system, need information on federal and provincial/territorial family law, child support and court reforms. In order to inform the legal profession, the judiciary, mediators and other professionals and intermediaries, child support officials have given training sessions and have participated in workshops organised by professional organisations, societies and associations. In addition, the Family, Children and Youth Section has provided funding to these organisations to develop child support materials, workshops and training sessions.

Most professionals, for whom the child support reforms have had an impact, have already received information/training on the Child Support Guidelines. There is however, a need to support continuing education efforts on family law reforms.

A main priority of the Child-centred Family Justice Initiative for professional training is to support continuing education efforts for professionals and intermediaries on child support, support enforcement and custody and access issues. Therefore, the following areas will be targeted with respect to professional training and education:

- development of continuing education programs on child-centred family law issues;
- assisting professionals, intermediaries and service providers to keep up to date on these issues; and,
- continuing to inform new professionals, intermediaries and service providers on child-centred family law reforms.

For more information on the Public Legal Education and Information and Professional Training Component of the *Child-centred Family Justice Fund*, please contact:

Department of Justice Canada
 Program Development Unit
 Family, Children and Youth Section
 284 Wellington Street
 Ottawa, ON K1A 0H8
 Tel. (613) 954-4596
 Fax. (613) 952-9600