



Research Snapshot



Measuring the collective impact of family justice initiatives in Saskatchewan

What is the research about?

The purpose of the project was to generate ideas about measuring the collective impact of family justice initiatives in Saskatchewan, including how to measure changes happening in family justice services and processes, by gathering information from people involved in the field of family justice.

What you need to know:

Purposive sampling was used to recruit people with diverse demographic characteristics, geographic locations, roles, organizations, involvement in the family justice system, and experience with system change. This resulted in perspectives about strategy maps and system transformation from people with varied backgrounds related to focus group topics. Having responses from those with differing backgrounds, even with a small sample size, can be useful for reasons other than traditional generalizability (e.g., the responses have some relevance to those that come across them).

What did the researchers do?

The Canadian Hub for Applied and Social Research (CHASR) conducted the following 1.5-hour virtual focus groups:

1. Lawyers (6 participants; 33% response rate)
2. Researchers and other legal educators (4 participants; 29% response rate)
3. Community agency representatives (4 participants; 22% response rate)

Questions prompted participants to think about a strategy for coordinating and measuring change in Saskatchewan by viewing an example strategy map and discussing related ideas. Strategy maps convey the relationship between outcomes (or goals) for a specific group of people, strategies that aim to facilitate outcomes, and areas for capacity development. Participants also shared their perspectives about challenges and solutions to tracking strategies and measuring outcomes. CHASR conducted a general inductive analysis (Thomas, 2006)[1], which involves categorizing the data to meet research or evaluation objectives.

Continued on page 2

The research team engaged a Project Advisory Committee, including members with family justice-related backgrounds in various organizations. The committee helped guide focus group design, data collection, and interpretation of the results.

What did the researchers find?

Participants emphasized shared responsibility for system transformation, with roles for legal professionals, government, healthcare professionals, third-party services, researchers, and those with lived experience navigating family justice matters.

Participants articulated various systemic and service-related issues and frequently linked these perceived issues with ideas about strategies to mitigate issues, and outcomes that may result if the issues are addressed. Examples of issue categories include accessibility barriers, process complexities, challenges with domestic violence cases, and third-party related limitations.

Participants envisioned the strategy map as a tool to support goal setting, the development of indicators, accountability, and informed decision-making. Participants noted challenges to tracking and measuring change (e.g., resource intensive data collection), and strategies to help track and measure change (e.g., multi-sector collaboration).

How can you use this?

The findings underscore the value of co-creating solutions with diverse groups of interested people and can be used to inform the next steps in the action research process. Participants indicated which groups of people to connect with, specific information sources to consult, and potential challenges and solutions for moving forward with research and evaluation. Participants' ideas about strategy map components and uses provide a basis for reflecting on the usefulness of creating a strategy map in Saskatchewan.

About the researcher:

This project received funding from the CBA Law For the Futures Fund. CREATE Justice hired CHASR to conduct, analyze, and report on the focus groups. CHASR offers research and evaluation support to people in various disciplines, sectors, and institutions.

Citation:

A full copy of the report can be found on the CREATE Justice website at: [Insert website link]

Key words: family justice; justice system transformation; system change; measuring change; strategy map; action research; collective impact; access to justice

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