

Youth Legal Needs and Literacy in Saskatchewan

Research Snapshot | Phase 1 Findings

💡 So What?

Youth in Saskatchewan face legal challenges but often lack awareness, support, and access to appropriate resources. This study provides the first province-wide snapshot of these needs from the perspective of school staff, identifying key gaps and opportunities to improve legal literacy, access to justice, and youth well-being.

🧩 What Did The Researchers Do?

This study is the first phase of a broader project aimed at addressing youth access to justice in Canada. Funded by the Law Commission of Canada, it focuses on identifying youth legal needs in SK and developing a survey that can be adapted for use in other jurisdictions.

An online survey was conducted with 110 school staff across SK who work directly with youth. The survey examined awareness of legal resources, perceptions of youth legal needs, barriers to accessing support, and opportunities for legal education. Data were collected between October 2025 and February 2026. Findings are intended to inform future programming and research involving both educators and youth.

Key Finding

90.9% cite lack of awareness as a barrier to youth accessing legal resources

🔍 What Did Researchers Find?

Legal issues among youth are common, with 66.4% of respondents reporting direct experience supporting a student with a legal concern. However, awareness and help-seeking remain low: over half indicated youth rarely recognize legal issues, and 74.4% reported that youth rarely or never seek help even when they do.

The most frequently identified legal issues include child protection (82.7%), family law (54.5%), and human rights (41.8%). Major barriers include lack of awareness (90.9%), lack of parental or guardian support (70.9%), and fear of stigma (57.3%).

Educators also reported gaps in legal literacy, particularly around the justice system, the Charter, and restorative justice, alongside strong perceived student interest in topics such as social media, bullying, and rights at school.

Key Finding

Most youth do not seek legal help – even when they recognize a legal problem.

💡 What Do You Need to Know?

This research reflects the perspective of school staff rather than youth directly, offering insight into how legal issues are observed and supported within school settings. While findings provide a valuable snapshot, the sample size is modest and participation was voluntary, meaning results are not fully representative. The study should be understood as a pilot that identifies key trends and priority areas for further research and program development.

🔧 How Can You Use This?

These findings highlight opportunities to strengthen legal literacy and access to justice for youth. Educators and service providers can use this information to develop targeted, youth-friendly resources, expand programming, and improve referral pathways. Increasing educator awareness and building partnerships with legal organizations may also enhance support for students. The results can inform future research, policy, and programming within SK and beyond.