



# Research Snapshot

## Saskatchewan Legal Coaching and Unbundling Pilot Project

### What is this about?

The high costs of legal services have resulted in a growing number of lawyers offering legal assistance to clients for only part of a file. For example, a client could hire a lawyer to handle only part of a legal case or to do a specific task. This model of service – referred to as “unbundling” or “limited-scope legal services” – aims to reduce costs, serve a greater number of clients, and increase access to justice.

### What you need to know:

Lawyers and clients were satisfied with the process and were interested in continued support for limited-scope legal services promotion within Saskatchewan. That said, far-reaching conclusions should not be drawn from this study. Researchers were unable to access large sample sizes. This study provides preliminary support for limited-scope legal services, so continued examination of attitudes towards and experiences with limited-scope legal services would be beneficial.

### What did the researchers do?

To examine limited-scope legal services, The Saskatchewan Legal Coaching and Unbundling Pilot Project (LCUP) educated the public about lawyers offering limited-scope legal services and supported lawyers offering this service. The researchers conducted an evaluation of the LCUP, which shows that overall, clients and lawyers are satisfied with limited-scope legal services.

As part of the pilot, lawyers and clients participated in an evaluation conducted by the Canadian Hub for Applied and Social Research (CHASR).

CHASR researchers administered three online surveys:

- Midpoint survey with lawyers (six respondents)
- Feedback survey with lawyers (nine respondents)
- Client survey (21 respondents)

The first two surveys allowed practitioners to discuss their interest in LCUP and their experience providing limited-scope legal services. These surveys included ranking questions and written feedback. As there were limited survey responses, researchers supplemented data with responses from a focus group with lawyers. For the third survey, researchers used a Saskatchewan-based online community panel to collect responses from 21 individuals who had used limited-scope legal services.

Given the research approach, it is unlikely that lawyer responses corresponded to the same files as client responses.

# What did the researchers find?

Most clients surveyed felt accessing limited-scope legal services was easy (81.3 per cent) and all indicated they would consider unbundled services in the future. None of the client feedback survey respondents reported being dissatisfied with the work the lawyer performed.

Lawyers surveyed provided similar feedback: all agreed that limited-scope legal services increase a client's capacity to address their current legal issue. Half of lawyers surveyed felt that accessing limited-scope legal services could increase a client's capacity to address future legal problems.

Lawyers indicated concern about lack of client understanding regarding costs and processes associated with limited-scope legal services. Interestingly, this was not evident through client responses: 81 per cent of clients indicated they understood very clearly what the lawyer would do.

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## How can you use this?

This report contains important information for Saskatchewan practitioners who may want to offer limited-scope legal services, individuals seeking more-affordable legal assistance, and legal regulatory bodies. This study suggests that limited-scope legal services provide a positive experience for lawyers and clients. Limited-scope legal services may prove an important piece of the access-to-justice puzzle.

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## About the researchers

This research was funded by the Canadian Foundation for Legal Research and initiated by CREATE Justice and conducted by CHASR, a university-based research support and consulting service. CHASR engages and supports academic-based researchers from a variety of disciplines, backgrounds, and institutions.

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## Citation

A full copy of the report can be found on the Centre for Research, Evaluation, and Action Towards Equal Justice (CREATE Justice) website at: <https://law.usask.ca/createjustice/projects/Saskatchewan-Legal-Coaching-and-Unbundled-Services-Pilot-Project.php>

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