

“Before you live together, read this...”

**Design and Implementation Strategy for a
Healthy Common-Law/Marriage Legal Resource**



Prepared for the **13th Annual Dean's
Forum on Dispute Resolution and
Access to Justice** by:

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I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 13th meeting of the Dean's Forum on Dispute Resolution and Access to Justice presents an opportunity to both build upon previous discussions and take a preventative approach to addressing family law challenges in Saskatchewan. While significant efforts have been made to respond to legal needs once they have occurred, this paper focuses on the development of a proactive, upstream resource to alleviate strain on both the legal system and the individuals navigating it.

Family law in the province presents critical challenges for both clients and legal professionals. The high demand for support, complexity of legal processes, financial burden of legal representation, and lengthy resolution timelines collectively contribute to this growing crisis. While numerous initiatives have sought to address these issues, this paper aims to assess current gaps in preventative family law information and explore strategies for proactively addressing such gaps. By considering preventive solutions, we can reduce the burden on the legal system and improve access to justice for those in need.

To ensure early outreach, this project focuses on engaging high school students by providing essential legal information before they encounter family law issues. To do so, we have created a brief informational poster that can be placed within schools outlining basic family law concepts and their importance. By reaching out to youth, we are able to provide family law information before they may need it, and by placing the poster in schools, we can ensure that it will reach a large audience. This proactive strategy encourages teenagers' awareness and critical thinking, equipping them with the foundational knowledge necessary to recognize key questions they should consider when entering a relationship.

While this paper focuses on providing legal information to teenagers, there remains a significant data, research, and implementation gap in addressing youth legal needs within the province. We understand that a Youth Legal Literacy Coalition has recently launched as an offshoot from the Saskatchewan Access to Justice Network. We aim to position this paper as a foundation for further research and development of proactive legal resources for youth. Consultations we undertook over the past several months with educators, lawyers, social workers, and psychologists have highlighted a strong interest in proactive legal resources. Such conversations have left us optimistic about the commitment of a variety of stakeholders – within and outside the justice sector – to this topic. This paper intends to document our progress and inspire further action at and beyond Dean's Forum Day.

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II. INTRODUCTION

A. Background

Family law is recognized as a critical area of legal need in Saskatchewan. Family law has been identified as the second-most area of need by community-based organizations (CBO's), and the greatest area of need by lawyers.¹ According to the *Legal Needs Survey* ("LNS"), 61% of CBO clients experience legal problems related to relationship breakdown, with an additional 36% identifying other family law challenges as a major concern.² Lawyers similarly highlight family law issues – both relationship breakdown (32%) and other family-related issues (27%) – as among the most frequent justice-related problems their clients encounter.³

Despite the critical need for family law services and supports, individuals facing these issues encounter significant barriers to justice. The *LNS* identified numerous obstacles including limited financial resources for legal representation (and associated expenses with accessing legal support), delay and time lags, and complexity of the law and related legal procedures in this area.⁴ This is compounded by the strong demand but lack of legal information available in the community.⁵ While justice stakeholders efforts have sought to address these challenges,⁶ the current approach, understandably, remains largely reactive, often addressing legal problems once they have escalated into complex and resource-intensive disputes. While these supports are critical, stakeholders in Saskatchewan have identified there is a pressing need for a more preventative approach to family justice – one that equips individuals with the knowledge and resources to understand their rights, obligations, and options *before* a legal issue arises or escalates.⁷

The *LNS* findings underscore a strong demand to increase public knowledge and education on general awareness of laws, legal information, and available resources and supports within the community.⁸ In particular, family justice stakeholders, the impetus for

¹ Lisa Jewell et al., *A Legal Needs Survey in the Province of Saskatchewan: Perspectives of Lawyers and Legal and Non-Legal Service Providers* (Saskatoon: University of Saskatchewan, 2023) at 41, 68, online (pdf): <https://law.usask.ca/createjustice/projects/legal-needs-survey-report-final-2023-03-31952.pdf> [*LNS*].

² *Ibid* at 41.

³ *Ibid* at 114.

⁴ *Ibid* at 74.

⁵ See *ibid* at 50. When community-based organization's representatives were asked what types of legal services were most in demand but not adequately offered in their community, 52% said legal information.

⁶ Many organizations in Saskatchewan experience heavy traffic on their online platforms as people seek free legal information. See e.g. Law Society of Saskatchewan, "Accessing Legal Information in Saskatchewan 2024" (2024), online (pdf): <<https://www.lawsociety.sk.ca/wp-content/uploads/SK-Legal-Infographic-2024-WEB.pdf>>.

⁷ Saskatchewan is a leader in family justice reform. Although there has been applaudable innovation to triage family law cases out of court, such as through the introduction of mandatory judicial case conferences and alternative dispute resolution processes, family law remains largely adversarial and focused on court-based solutions.

⁸ In the *LNS*, *supra* note 1 at vii, community-based organization representatives reported that people with a justice-reported problem are sometimes (60%) or rarely (27%) able to obtain effective legal information.

our topic, have identified that there is a lack of educational resources and public awareness on two key areas: (a) forming and maintaining healthy relationships, and (b) understanding one's legal rights and obligations when entering a spousal relationship.⁹

B. The Current Problem

When designing proactive legal education to address the deficit of preventative family law-related information available in the community, numerous barriers must be considered:

- **Low literacy levels** – over one-third of adults in Saskatchewan face literacy challenges,¹⁰ below average compared to other Canadian provinces.¹¹
- **Oversaturation of legal information** – while many resources exist, individuals struggle to identify reliable and authoritative sources.¹²
- **Emotional toll** – family law disputes can be financially and psychologically draining, highlighting the need for supports with non-legal services.¹³
- **Deeply embedded misconceptions and lack of knowledge about legal rights and obligations** when cohabitating in spousal relationships.¹⁴
- **Limited supports for youth** – vulnerable groups, including youth, lack targeted legal education on relationship rights, responsibilities, and protections.¹⁵

⁹ This was identified at the November 2024 A2J Network Meeting and reinforced throughout our consultations.

¹⁰ Amanda Short, “READ Saskatoon Expansion, Rebrand about Literacy’s Foundational Role” (1 June 2022), online: <<https://thestarphoenix.com/news/local-news/read-saskatoon-expansion-rebrand-about-literacys-foundational-role#:~:text=After%2043%20years%20of%20helping.rebrand%20under%20the%20name%20Foundations>>.


¹¹ The Conference Board of Canada, “Adults with Inadequate Literacy Skills” (accessed 13 February 2025), online: <<https://www.conferenceboard.ca/hcp/adlt-lowlit.aspx/>>.

¹² Action Committee on Access to Justice in Civil and Family Matters, *Access to Civil & Family Justice: A Roadmap for Change* (Ottawa: Action Committee on Access to Justice in Civil and Family Matters, 2013) at 13, online (pdf): <https://www.cfcj-fcjc.org/sites/default/files/docs/2013/AC_Report_English_Final.pdf> [“Cromwell Report”].


¹³ See e.g. *LNS*, *supra* note 1 at 71, 75, where respondent lawyers acknowledged the need for family law to include “holistic or multi-disciplinary service delivery” and “integrat[ion] with non-legal supports (i.e. mental health, addictions, counselling, housing, etc.).”

¹⁴ Hélène Belleau, et al, *Economic Practices and Social and Legal Representations of Life Together Report: Portrait of Ontario* (Montreal: Institut National de la Recherche Scientifique, 2023) at 13. See also Pascoe Pleasence & Nigel J. Balmer “Ignorance in Bliss: Modelling Knowledge of Rights in Marriage and Cohabitation” (2012) 46:2 *Law & Soc’y Rev* 297.


¹⁵ *LNS*, *supra* note 1 at 30. According to the *Legal Needs Survey*, a youth legal needs assessment has never been conducted in Saskatchewan, despite assessments in other jurisdictions such as Alberta and Australia, which identify youth as one of the major demographics with unmet legal needs.




SUMMARY OF CURRENT PROBLEM



A 2023-24 report from Foundations Learning & Skills Saskatchewan found that more than 1/3 of adults struggle with literacy.



An Ontario study conducted by Belleau et al (2023) found that “more than 70% of cohabitants in Ontario do not know the legal rules that apply to them.”



According to the *Legal Needs Survey*, only 10% of community-based organizations in Saskatchewan provide legal and/or non-legal supports and services to child, youth, and family demographics.

C. The Role of Preventative “Upstream” Supports

Building on foundational access to justice data and previous public legal education work undertaken by justice stakeholders such as PLEA and previous Dean’s Forums discussions,¹⁶ this paper emphasizes preventative legal information as a critical strategy to improve justice outcomes. Keystone reports, such as the Canadian Bar Association’s *Reaching Equal Justice Report*,¹⁷ stress the importance of public legal education in reducing legal disputes. It also advocates for greater public participation in shaping accessible legal resources.¹⁸ Therefore, when designing resources, it is crucial to have an **expansive, user-centered vision** on people who use the system - particularly members of **vulnerable groups**, including immigrants, Aboriginal, rural populations,¹⁹ and youth **should be at the forefront**.

In reality, few legal problems are dealt with in the formal justice system, but are instead resolved informally through personal decision-making and community resources.²⁰ This highlights the importance of taking a broader view of access to justice by **facilitating everyday justice** – this includes “improving legal capability, taking legal health seriously, [and] enhancing triage and referral systems.”²¹ A key component of this approach is the **development of a robust, coherent, and coordinated “front end” early resolution services sector (“ERSS”)** to improve access to justice. The ERSS encompasses a wide

¹⁶ For example, past Dean’s Forum research has explored user-centered approaches to legal resource design, emphasizing that legal information must be clear, accessible, and relevant to the public. Our topic builds off previous work through developing a resource from a user-design approach and engaging with upstream preventative education.

¹⁷ Canadian Bar Association, *Reaching Equal Justice: An Invitation to Envision and Act* (Ottawa: Canadian Bar Association, 2013) at 130, online (pdf): <<https://cba.org/CBA/media/PDFs/CBA%20Equal%20Justice/EqualJusticeFinalReport-eng.pdf>> [“*Reaching Equal Justice Report*”].

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ Cromwell Report, *supra* note 12 at 7.

²⁰ *Reaching Equal Justice Report*, *supra* note 16 at 66.

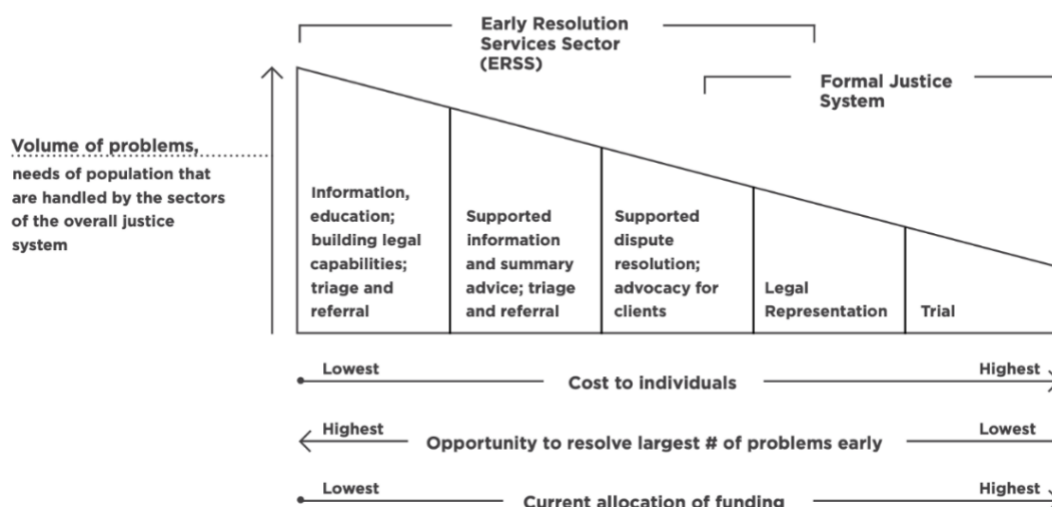
²¹ *Ibid.*

range of services including community and public legal education, pro bono assistance, legal aid, and information services. Collectively, these services help individuals clarify the legal dimensions of their issues, resolve problems independently or with early intervention, and resolve problems through alternative dispute resolution *before* they escalate into legal proceedings.²²

By allocating resources to enhance prevention and resilience, individuals are equipped with the knowledge and tools they need to address legal challenges by **preventing them in the first place or before they escalate**. This analogy is “frequently used in health prevention literature and derives the parable of the fisher, tired of continually saving people being swept downstream, who decided to go upstream to find out why so many people were ending up in the water [to begin with].”²³ This approach seeks to **balance and dually focus on prevention and resolution of legal issues**.

Data has shown that the ERSS experiences the largest volume of legal problems, while the formal system – focused on legal representation and trials – deals with fewer cases at significantly higher costs to individuals. However, despite the ERSS offering the **greatest opportunity for early resolution**, resources and attention are still often allocated to the formal justice system.²⁴ This underscores an **unrealized opportunity** to prioritize early resolution services to resolve legal issues early – or to prevent them entirely, before the issue develops a legal element. For more information, see the below diagram from the Action Committee on Access to Justice in Civil and Family Matters.²⁵

Figure 2: The ERSS and Formal Justice System: Volume of needs vs. cost and funding allocations



²² *Ibid* at 12-13.

²³ *Ibid* at 64.

²⁴ See *supra* note 7.

²⁵ Cromwell Report, *supra* note 12 at 12.

D. Our Objective

The access to justice crisis in family law affects key groups, including users, community-based organizations, legal professionals, government agencies, and the courts. One way to mitigate this crisis is through increased public legal education to ensure that community members understand their rights and responsibilities. Greater legal literacy empowers individuals to take proactive steps, make informed decisions, and avoid complications that could place strain on both themselves and the justice system.

A major barrier to legal literacy is that many people do not know what they do not know. While legal information is available online and in the community, individuals may struggle to identify and recognize when their issue has a legal component. They may also have difficulty identifying the right questions to ask or where to find current, reliable, and authoritative support.²⁶ As a result, people frequently seek legal information only after problems arise – when it is too late to take proactive and mitigating steps.

With this in mind, this 2025 Dean’s Forum project aims to create a resource that helps individuals understand their legal rights and the potential implications of entering a spousal or marital relationship. By providing this knowledge to high school students, we seek to build on PLEA’s existing work with youth and fill a gap in resources to support informed decision-making.²⁷ Strengthening legal literacy will empower individuals to make informed choices while also promoting more equitable outcomes by ensuring that individuals understand their rights, obligations, and available options when making decisions. Ultimately, this can foster healthier relationships and reduce unnecessary legal costs.²⁸

The objective of the project is to provide an accessible legal resource that delivers clear, proactive information on rights and obligations in relationships. We hope that it serves as an intervention point – sparking curiosity, encouraging thoughtful discussions, and helping young people view the legal system as a valuable tool as they navigate adulthood. By increasing legal literacy and awareness, we hope to reduce the likelihood and severity of legal issues that may arise in the future.

²⁶ Cromwell Report, *supra* note 12 at 13. See also Matthew Dylag, *How Ontarians Experience the Law: An Examination on Incidence Rate, Seriousness and Response to Legal Problems* (LLM Thesis, York University, 2016) [unpublished] at 4.

²⁷ For e.g., PLEA has developed resources for the Law 30 curriculum to be taught in schools. While these efforts are valuable and important, this content is not available to all high school students because Law 30 is not a mandatory class. The aim for our project is to educate youth in schools generally. For more information, see <https://teachers.plea.org>.

²⁸ Sarah McCoubrey, *Building Legal Literacy, Preventing Crisis* (Ottawa: Research and Statistics Division, Department of Justice Canada, 2015) at 4, 7.

This paper highlights the importance of preventative legal education and the role of early interventions in improving access to justice. The remainder of this policy paper is structured as follows: first, we outline our rationale for targeting high school students as our primary audience. Next, we present key themes identified throughout our consultations and user-focus group with first-year university students. Building on these insights and through a literature review, we explain the design processes behind our poster resource. Finally, we conclude with ideas for implementing our resource, recognizing limitations and potential opportunities for measuring success.

We hope this research serves as a launching point for further legal education initiatives aimed at young people and the general public. Future initiatives could expand into other areas of family law, such as spousal and child support, or broader legal topics, including tenancy and employment rights and audiences beyond high schools.

III. TARGET AUDIENCE - WHY HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS?

Individuals often do not consider legal issues until they are already facing them. Our resource seeks to address this by providing upstream support to help prevent future legal complications. By providing information before individuals enter spousal relationships that create legal obligations, we hope to equip them with the knowledge they need to make informed decisions.

Young people often enter relationships and living arrangements without understanding the legal or practical risks involved. Without awareness of their rights, they may not know what to expect or what to ask for from others.²⁹ To address this, we are developing a resource specifically for high school students and young adults, offering them a trustworthy source of legal information.³⁰ The poster is intended to capture student's attention and encourage them to ask questions about topics that they may not have thought about before. This approach promotes a broad reach, aiming to ensure a large audience will gain the benefit of this information and know where to turn to, to navigate important decisions in the future with confidence.

A. The Gap in Youth Legal Literacy

“In the 1970s, the late Bora Laskin, former chief justice of the Supreme Court of Canada, called for increased public legal education. Many decades later, there remains insufficient public legal education, especially as it relates to legal protections for children and teens.”³¹

Beyond anecdotal evidence, there remains a lack of comprehensive data on the legal literacy of young people in Canada. While access to justice research has expanded significantly, studies focused on youth-specific legal needs and youth legal literacy is limited. Access to public legal education for young people has been referred to as “patchy and often limited” in the UK and the same is true in Canada.³² Justice Canada's engagement projects with youth from 2016 to 2019 confirmed that many young people feel

²⁹ Ned Lecic & Marvin Zuker, *The Law is (Not) for Kids: A Legal Rights Guide for Canadian Children and Teens*, 2nd ed (Athabasca: Athabasca University Press, 2023) at xi.

³⁰ For an example of taking a youth-centered approach to eviction law and practice, see Sarah Buhler and Veronica Dirk-Pothier, *Building a Human Rights and Youth-Centred Approach to Eviction Law and Practice: Toronto & Saskatoon Workshops Report* (Saskatoon: University of Saskatchewan, September 2024) Canadian Centre for Housing Rights, online: <<https://housingrightscanada.com/building-a-human-rights-and-youth-centred-approach-to-eviction-law-and-practice/>>.

³¹ Lecic & Zuker, *supra* note 29 at vii.

³² Vanessa Joshua, “Young People Need Better Access to Public Legal Education, but Who Should be Responsible for Ensuring This is Done?” (21 September 2022), online (blog): <<https://cfey.org/2022/09/young-people-need-better-access-to-public-legal-education-but-who-should-be-responsible-for-ensuring-this-is-done/>>.

that they do not have a good understanding of the law or the resources available to them, though they would like to learn more.³³

The **Alberta Law Foundation’s 2022-23 Legal Needs Assessment** underscores the severity of this issue, noting that youth (aged 15 to 24) are among one of the “top demographics in need of legal services in [the province], but currently lack access to services or are not being adequately served.”³⁴ Specifically, their top legal needs are related to social supports, criminal, family, housing, employment, and debt. Interviews with 11 youth-serving organizations in Alberta recognized that there is a need for specialized public legal education for youth, including within school curriculums and other programs. They noted that many youth struggle with trauma and mental health, and may have a limited ability to absorb and follow legal advice, while other vulnerable youth may struggle with trust and opening up about legal issues they are facing.³⁵

Similarly, the **Legal Australia-Wide (LAW) Survey** provides crucial insights into the legal vulnerabilities of young people and highlights the need for targeted legal information.³⁶ The findings show that youth are disproportionately affected by legal problems. Compared to the oldest demographic (aged 65 and over), young people aged 15-24 years are significantly more likely to experience legal issues, particularly concerning accidents, crime, personal injury, and rights violations. Notably, 55% of individuals aged 18-24 and 43% of individuals aged 15-17 in Australia reported experiencing legal problems, making them one of the most legally vulnerable demographics.³⁷ This study found that younger populations were also less likely to seek professional legal advice, instead attempting to resolve legal matters independently, often without the necessary knowledge or resources. Further, “when action was taken, the younger groups aged 15-24 years had the lowest levels of seeking advice from a professional.”³⁸

Despite comparable jurisdictions consistently identifying youth as a primary demographic with unmet needs, a youth legal needs assessment has never been conducted in Saskatchewan. Moreover, the *LNS* highlights that only 10% of community-based organizations providing legal and non-legal services offer support specifically to

³³ Government of Canada, “Youth Views on Access to Justice” (2019), online: <<https://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/rp-pr/jr/rg-rco/2019/noJv01.html>>.

³⁴ Flora Stevenson, *2022-23 Alberta Legal Needs Assessment: What We Learned so Far* (Alberta: Alberta Law Foundation, July 2023) at 9, online (pdf): <<https://albertalawfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/2022-23-AB-Legal-Needs-Assessment-July-2023.pdf>>.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ Law and Justice Foundation of New South Wales, “Legal Needs of Younger People in Australia” (August 2013) 27 Updating Justice 1 at 2, online (pdf): <http://www.plecana.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/UJ_27_Legal_needs_of_younger_people_in_Australia_FINAL.pdf> [“LAW’s Survey”].

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ *Ibid.*

children, youth, and families.³⁹ This lack of tailored services indicates a systemic gap in legal education and resources available to young people.⁴⁰

To address this gap, legal education initiatives must be designed with age-specific strategies that recognize the unique legal challenges that young people experience. The LAW's Survey revealed that individuals face different types of legal problems through various life stages, and there may be benefits to tailoring legal information, education, and advice strategies for different age groups.⁴¹ Schools, community organizations, and legal service providers could collaborate to develop accessible legal education programs that equip young people with the knowledge to recognize their legal rights and take appropriate action. Given that young people are less likely to take action to resolve their legal problems, "[e]nhancing young people's awareness of advice services would help to ensure that they are able to seek expert advice whenever this would be useful and do not rely on less optimal strategies due to a lack of knowledge about avenues for assistance."⁴²

B. The Impact of School-Based Legal Education

School-based programs aimed at preventing intimate partner violence (IPV) among youth have shown promising results in reducing dating violence, improving relationship skills, and fostering healthier attitudes toward conflict resolution. Studies indicate that such programs, such as the Fourth R program,⁴³ help adolescents develop knowledge about healthy relationship and decrease the acceptance of dating violence.⁴⁴ Additionally, data from provinces which have implemented school-based programming on healthy relationships have lower rates of police-reported interpersonal violence and interpersonal homicides,⁴⁵ demonstrating that upstream solutions and education could reduce the incidence of legal disputes arising from spousal relationships. This data underscores the

³⁹ LNS, *supra* note 1 at iv.

⁴⁰ Several consultees recognized the gap in youth legal education and emphasized a strong desire and willingness to address this gap. Particularly, PLEA is addressing this gap through tailored initiatives and resources for high school students.

⁴¹ Law's Survey, *supra* note 36 at 3.

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ The "Fourth R" program is "an interactive classroom curriculum [implemented throughout various provinces and territories in Canada] that aims to reduce youth dating violence by addressing youth violence and bullying, unsafe sexual behaviour and substance abuse. The program is centered on a youth-focused, gender-strategic harm-reduction strategy that encompasses knowledge, positive relationship skills, and decision-making coverage of target and related issues." See Public Safety Canada, "Fourth 'R': Strategies for Healthy Youth Relationships" (2021), online: <<https://www.publicsafety.gc.ca/cnt/cntrng-crm/crm-prvntn/nvntn/dtls-en.aspx?i=10025>>.

⁴⁴ Wolfe, D. A. et al., "A School-Based Program to Prevent Adolescent Dating Violence." (2009) 163: 8 Archives of Pediatrics & Adolescent Medicine 692 at 697.

⁴⁵ See e.g. Pratyush Dayal, "Saskatchewan Leads Provinces in Rates of Intimate Partner Violence with No End in Sight" CBC News (24 November 2023), online: <<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/saskatoon/sask-domestic-violence-rates-remain-worst-among-provinces-1.7038469>>.

importance of upstream and preventative solutions to reduce legal disputes arising from spousal relationships later on.

Despite some existing efforts in Saskatchewan, such as the integration of healthy relationship topics into the health education program, gaps remain in providing comprehensive, structured programming on IPV prevention.⁴⁶ Survivors and experts emphasize the need for education on recognizing early warning signs of abuse, setting healthy boundaries, and fostering self-respect among youth.⁴⁷ Research further suggests that such education not only reduces dating violence, but also promotes long-term positive relationship behaviours, such as enforcing healthy boundaries, respectful communication, and informed decision-making free from coercion and manipulation.⁴⁸

C. Benefits of Legal Education for Youth

Educating youth about the law and their rights and entitlements offers numerous benefits, empowering youth with the knowledge and skills to navigate legal issues effectively.⁴⁹ Many young people face legal challenges similar to adults, yet they often lack support systems to advocate on their behalf.⁵⁰ Without a foundational understanding of the law, youth may struggle to recognize when they have a legal issue or where to turn to for help.⁵¹ By integrating legal education into school classrooms or curricula, youth can gain awareness of common legal issues, such as cohabitation and other family law matters, to equip them with the confidence to seek legal assistance when necessary. This early education fosters critical thinking, problem-solving skills, and ultimately could play a role in proactively addressing legal issues before they arise. It also empowers youth to make informed decisions, reducing the likelihood of preventable legal conflicts. People will be

⁴⁶ Pratyush Dayal, “Survivors of Intimate Partner Violence say Educational Reforms Could Help Break the Cycle of Abuse” (11 December 2023), online: <<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/saskatoon/survivors-of-domestic-violence-seek-educational-reforms-1.7052409>>.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ County Health Rankings & Roadmaps, “School-Based Intimate Partner Violence Prevention Programs” (2017), online: <[⁴⁹ Shelan Markus, “The Legal Profession Must Support Public Legal Education for Youth” *Canadian Lawyer Magazine* \(1 November 2024\), online: <\[⁵⁰ Canadian Bar Association, “4.9 Youth and Civil Justice” \\(accessed 25 February 2025\\), online: <\\[⁵¹ Richard Miller, “Why do we Need Public Legal Education” *The Law Society of UK* \\\(13 May 2024\\\), online: <\\]\\(https://www.cba.org/Publications-Resources/Practice-Tools/Child-Rights-Toolkit/legalAreas/Youth-and-Civil-Justice>.”</p>
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better equipped to navigate challenges if they have a basic understanding of relevant legal protections and when and where to turn for additional help.

Beyond individual empowerment, legal education also plays a crucial role in fostering trust in the justice system and civic engagement.⁵² When young people understand how the legal system works and their place within it, they are more likely to develop a sense of responsibility and confidence in the rule of law.⁵³ This education can help youth recognize legal problems when they arise and seek appropriate solutions rather than relying on informal networks, such as family members, community leaders, or online sources, which may not always provide accurate legal advice.⁵⁴

Additionally, educating youth on legal matters contributes to their identity and values, reinforcing ethical decision-making and emotional regulation during a formative stage of development.⁵⁵ Adolescence is a critical period for shaping attitudes and behaviors, and exposure to legal education can instill principles of fairness, accountability, and respect for the rights of others to ultimately foster healthy relationships.

Ultimately, strong public legal education that enhances youth's understanding of their rights, the legal frameworks adopted to protect them, and how to access justice when needed will benefit both individuals and justice stakeholders. A legally informed generation contributes to a society where more people can identify and address legal issues effectively, reducing strain on the legal system and promoting greater access to justice. Expanding public legal education efforts ensures that youth will be prepared to address potential legal challenges as they transition to adulthood, reinforcing a more just and equitable society.

BENEFITS OF LEGAL EDUCATION FOR YOUTH



⁵² Markus, *supra* note 49.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ Miller, *supra* note 51.

⁵⁵ Markus, *supra* note 49.

IV. METHODOLOGY

The research for our project consisted of three main components: a literature review on design principles for effective communication with youth, an interdisciplinary consultation process, and a focus group with first-year undergraduate students to gather insights and evaluate our initial product.

The principles of Action Research guided our research process.⁵⁶ Through a cyclical and iterative process, we aimed to understand the needs of our audience and how to support them best. Our research followed a two-phase approach: (1) individual consultations and (2) user-testing. Early in the project, we recognized that our primary goal was to create a resource that effectively communicated with teens. To achieve this, we consulted individuals who interact with young people, including teachers, principals, social workers, and school administrators. This process allowed us to explore the issue from multiple perspectives and gain insight into the needs of young people. We then consulted family law experts to ensure the accuracy of our resources through a content review. Once we concluded our consultations, we conducted a user focus group to evaluate the resource from the viewpoint of young consumers.

A. Who Did we Consult?

We undertook a two-phased approach: (1) individual consultations; and (2) a user-testing session. The key questions guiding our consultations were:

- What legal information is most important to understand before entering a relationship?
- How can legal information be effectively communicated to individuals who may not yet recognize its relevance?
- What design principles should be followed to ensure effectiveness?
- How can our resource be implemented successfully?
- To what extent are teachers and administrators open to integrating such youth legal education?

To explore these questions, we adopted an interdisciplinary approach, consulting a total of eight individuals from a diverse range of backgrounds and experiences, including high school educators, school administrators, social workers, psychologists, and lawyers to determine effective strategies for engaging youth and integrating our resource into

⁵⁶ For more information on action research, see e.g. Tegan George, “What is Action Research? Definition and Examples” (12 January 2024), online (blog): <<https://www.scribbr.com/methodology/action-research/>>.

school settings.⁵⁷ Additionally, we collaborated with experts in family law and educational design to ensure that our content is accurate, relevant, and engaging.

B. Consultation Themes

Our consultations highlighted recurring themes that informed the development of our resource and could inform future resource development for youth. Specifically, consultees offered perspective on the following, further described below:

1. Essential Family Law Information for Youth

Consultees with family law experience identified the top five family law topics that youth should know before entering a relationship included:

- i. **Legal rights and responsibilities** in a **common-law relationship versus marriage**;
- ii. **Division of property** and debts;
- iii. **Coercive control**;
- iv. Child and spousal **support regimes**; and
- v. The use of **written agreements**, such as prenups and cohabitation agreements.

2. How to Effectively Communicate with High School Students

Our consultations revealed that high school students interact most effectively with educational resources when they find them meaningful, enjoyable, and inclusive within a secure environment. Resources should be relevant, safe, fun, and engaging.

- i. **Keep information concise:** Teenagers lose attention quickly if presented with excessive or unnecessary details. Ensuring direct and clear communication enhances engagement and comprehension.
- ii. **Encourage student involvement:** Students are more likely to engage with content when they actively participate in the design process or interactive activities related to the material.
- iii. **Demonstrate immediate relevance:** High school students are more receptive to information when they see its immediate application to their current lives and experiences. Emphasize the “why” upfront to draw interest and curiosity. Further, use examples and scenarios that are immediately applicable to their lives.

⁵⁷ See Appendix A for the list of stakeholders consulted and the questions asked.

- iv. **Support engagement in various forms:** In classroom settings, within appropriate boundaries, the focus should be on whether students are engaging with the content rather than how they are engaging.

3. Effective Design Principles

As the reader will be aware, aesthetics matter when trying to convey information. Since our audience consists of high school students, we inquired with experts on design principles to ensure the resource we developed is engaging, accessible, and visually appealing for a younger audience. Their insights shaped our choices in layout, typography, colour schemes, and imagery, helping us present information clearly and effectively.

- i. **Establish a clear rationale:** Present the purpose of the information upfront to immediately capture the reader's interest and engagement.
- ii. **Ensure clarity and conciseness:** Deliver key points in a straightforward and easily digestible manner.
- iii. **Use accessible language:** Avoid information overload or complex wording such as legalese to ensure the content is understandable for a broad audience.
- iv. **Incorporate visual guidance:** Utilize color strategically to direct the reader's attention while maintaining readability.
- v. **Choose simple, accessible fonts:** Choose accessible and simple fonts such as Arial, Verdana, or Open Sans.
- vi. **Avoid red:** Research has demonstrated that red can evoke emotions such as alarm or fear. Instead, use inviting, contrasting colours like blue, green, or purple.
- vii. **Layered information:** Keep the resource to a single page where possible to encourage readability. Where possible, add in QR codes or links for people to pursue if they are interested, such as further information on healthy relationships, cohabitation, and legal rights.

4. Trauma-Informed Considerations

Family law topics may be triggering or distressing for some individuals. Our consultation with a psychologist revealed that when individuals are experiencing high levels of stress, it shuts down or alters parts of the brain, which could affect reading comprehension, decision-making, and functioning. These are factors that should be taken into consideration when designing a resource.

- i. **Use supportive and inviting messaging:** Evoke positive engagement by approaching topics with curiosity rather than fear. Content should be empowering

rather than overwhelming. Empowering language includes phrases such as “what are my rights in a relationship?” Use language that reflects legal discretion (for example, “may,” “could,” or “should” rather than absolutes.

- ii. **Include anonymous support information:** Encourage self-help solutions by including support numbers. For example, links or QR codes to resources such as Kids Help Phone, 211, and 988 were suggested.
- iii. **Empower the reader:** Emphasize the importance of maintaining personal agency and choice in a relationship. Reinforce that everyone retains their rights in or out of a relationship
- iv. **Keep the message short:** The most important information should come first. Anchor key information in accessible formats like checklists or bullet points. Avoid giving the reader too many decisions to make.

5. Next Steps for Integrating our Resource

Conversations with teachers revealed not only a willingness but also enthusiasm for incorporating legal resources into the classroom. Educators emphasized that the most effective way to introduce such resources is by aligning them with curriculum topics and providing them in a ready-to-use format. The Saskatchewan Law 30 curriculum offers the most straightforward opportunity for integration; however, it lacks practical family law content due to the subject's complexity and the curriculum's broad overview of the legal system. Alternatively, consultees suggested that our resource could be integrated into other curriculums, such as Life Transitions or Wellness 30. We believe that our resource could act as a first step towards educating youth to determine if there is an appetite for further developments.

Practically, when integrating legal information within the classroom, the following were recommended;

- i. **Provide ready-to-use materials:** Teachers are already overworked, so resources should be prepackaged and easy to implement.⁵⁸
- ii. **Align with curriculum topics:** Connecting legal information to curriculum outcomes increases the likelihood of it being incorporated into class time.
- iii. **Ensure simplicity:** Materials should be straightforward and accessible for both teachers and students.

⁵⁸ Consultations revealed the importance of limiting the burden on resource-providers. For example, given that schools have limited resources, printing the resource could pose a challenge. To ensure maximum engagement, it could be beneficial to print these posters for the schools in advance.

6. Barriers to Accessing Legal Information in Schools

While there was a general receptiveness to the idea of youth legal education by educators, our consultations revealed some barriers that must be considered when creating a resource.

- i. **Distribution challenges** – It is important to ensure that both teachers and students can easily access the resource. For example, many students prefer digital resources but face barriers due to school policies (e.g. cell phone ban).
- ii. **Rural versus urban:** Rural youth may be reluctant to seek information about their legal rights due to a concern for lack of anonymity.
- iii. **The need for trust:** Teens may not ask directly about legal issues unless a safe, trusted environment is created.

C. Focus Group Themes

After concluding our consultations, we presented a prototype resource to a group of three first-year undergraduate students, comprised of two females and one male. We asked the students to evaluate the poster's accessibility, the effectiveness of linking to additional resources, their prior knowledge of the content, and its usefulness as a foundation for further inquiry. In addition to suggesting minor adjustments, they provided the following key insights:

- i. **Unlikely to seek out independently:** Students would not typically search for family law information on their own.
- ii. **Encourage curiosity:** The initial resource sparked interest, and providing links to more detailed resources provides an opportunity for further exploration.
- iii. **Effectiveness of a physical resource:** A tangible resource holds more impact. Social media is oversaturated causing content to lose significance while scrolling.
- iv. **Clarity promotes sharing:** When information is clear and easily understood, students feel they have learned something valuable and are more likely to share it with others. If they do not understand the content, they are less likely to engage with or distribute it.
- v. **Attention-grabbing design matters:** Visual appeal, bullet points, and general structure of a resource should be strategized to increase engagement, especially for younger audiences with shorter attention spans.
- vi. **Application to real life:** University students are also likely to find this information relevant and engaging, allowing them to apply this information to real-life situations that they are likely going through or about to go through.

V. DESIGN PRINCIPLES FOR COMMUNICATING WITH YOUTH

Communicating with teens requires special consideration of their age, knowledge level, and generational differences. **Design decisions about each feature of the resource – topics, tone, language, media type, and graphics – must be made with the current youth audience in mind.**

TOP 5 PRACTICES FOR ENGAGING YOUTH

1. MAKE IT RELEVANT
2. GRAB THEIR ATTENTION
3. KEEP IT SHORT
4. KEEP IT SIMPLE
5. WORK WITH THEM

MAKE IT RELEVANT. Most people ignore information that does not impact their lives and teens are no different. Resources designed for late teens should stress that the information is new and will be useful to them in the near future. When an author interviewed teens and asked what they wanted to learn about, a young woman replied, “[t]each us something useful.”⁵⁹ Teens do not want information that seems irrelevant to their lives. They are not interested in reviewing what they already know. As they approach adulthood, they indicated they are interested in topics that represent growth, maturity, and the new responsibilities associated with making decisions as an independent adult.⁶⁰ As a result, information about living with a partner might only start to become relevant and interesting during their last year of high school or as they begin to think about entering post-secondary studies.

GRAB THEIR ATTENTION. KEEP IT SHORT. KEEP IT SIMPLE. Teens prefer short messages and focus first on visual elements before any text. Images attract attention which then leads to interest in the written message and the visual messages result in longer retention.⁶¹ For legal information specifically, the language should be simple, jargon-

⁵⁹ Susie Weller, “‘Teach Us Something Useful’: Contested Spaces of Teenagers’ Citizenship” (2003) 7:2 Space and Polity 153.

⁶⁰ One consultee indicated that when youth ask legal questions, they often pertain to when their parents will no longer have control or input over their lives. This may indicate that youth would prefer to make legal decisions autonomously.

⁶¹ Jeff Fromm and Angie Read, “New Communication Rules” in *Marketing to Gen Z: The Rules for Reaching this Vast – and Very Different – Generation of Influencers* (New York: American Management Association, 2018).

free, and at an appropriate reading level.⁶² The same principles were shared in one of our consultations, with an educator confirming that posters for teens should get their attention with graphics and provide brief snippets of information rather than large amounts of text. This was supported in our user-focus group, where the students suggested that brief bullet-points were preferable compared to text written in paragraph form.

WORK WITH THEM. Youth outreach is best accomplished through an authentic message as the result of involving them in both design and implementation through co-design.⁶³ Youth want to know their rights and they want to teach their friends and family to help them as well.⁶⁴ In the Ontario-based Youth & The Law TV Project, teens and young adults attended workshops where they learned about the law through examples that made the effects of laws relevant.⁶⁵ The participants then created talk shows and dramas for YouTube to educate other young people. A co-design project focusing on digital health literacy involved adolescents in gathering information, generating resource design ideas, and providing feedback to fine tune the resource before implementation.⁶⁶ Working together was empowering for the youth and resulted in a more functional resource.

A FINAL THOUGHT. Media choice can affect the impact of an educational campaign and which audience that campaign reaches. As one might expect, social media is a primary means of reaching teenagers but not the only contact point.⁶⁷ We know that marketing information integrated into social media posts by “influencers” impacts purchasing choices and public legal education could be presented in the same way. Presentation of information should not be an annoyance; public service announcements before a video are better than interruptions later.⁶⁸ The students in our focus group stated that a physical poster placed in an area where teens linger would likely be seen more frequently and for longer durations than a social media post.

⁶² York University Youth Research and Evaluation Exchange, “Five Promising Practices for Engaging with Transitional Age Youth in Legal Education and Outreach” (Accessed 31 Jan 2025), online: <<https://youthrex.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/YouthREX-EB-Five-Promising-Practices-for-Engaging-with-Transitional-Age-Youth-in-Legal-Education-and-Outreach-2018.pdf>>.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ Ontario Justice Education Network, “Justice Education as a Tool for Empowering Youth” (March 17, 2016), online: <<https://ojen.ca/en/justice-education-as-a-tool-for-empowering-youth/>>.

⁶⁵ Law Foundation of Ontario, “Youth-Driven Media Educates and Empowers about Justice Issues” (2 November 2015), online: <<https://lawfoundation.on.ca/news/youth-media-educates-and-empowers/>>.

⁶⁶ Lewis CC, et al., “Developing an Educational Resource Aimed at Improving Adolescent Digital Health Literacy: Using Co-Design as Research Methodology” (2024) 26 J Medical Internet Research e49453.

⁶⁷ Kristien Daems, Ingrid Moons & Patrick De Pelsmacker, “Co-Creating Advertising Literacy Awareness Campaigns for Minors” (2017) 18:1 Young Consumers at 54.

⁶⁸ *Ibid* at 63.

Thinking About Living With Someone? Read This First!



MYTH: We're just a couple who are roommates.

- Actually, after you live with someone for two years, the law treats you as common-law spouses - the same as if you were legally married.
- If you break up, you would have to divide money and property and might have to pay support.



MYTH: We will just keep our things separate.

- If your name is on a debt, like a utility bill or credit card, you may have to pay for it.
- Even if you keep bank accounts separate, you may have to share it when you break up.



MYTH: I'm just moving into their apartment. We don't need a new lease.

- If you are not on the lease, then your partner could make you move out.
- The lease is a legal contract which you should read before signing.



MYTH: When we live together, my partner can tell me what to do.

- No one ever gets to tell you what to do or control your behaviour or choices.
- You set boundaries and decide what is best for you.



MYTH: If I ask for a written agreement, I don't trust my partner.

- A written agreement is a blueprint that outlines things like who keeps what if the relationship ends.
- This is a responsible way to plan ahead and shows that you care about your partner and want to keep things fair.



VII. A RESOURCE FOR TEENS – “If you plan to live together ...”

A. What Type of Resource?

Our resource is a poster.⁶⁹ This is a decidedly low-tech intervention, and this choice was endorsed during our focus group with university students.⁷⁰ They noted that reaching a target audience via social media can be challenging due to the vast amount of available information and short attention spans. While a poster could be used in classrooms, it can also be strategically placed in common areas. A poster placed near an elevator or in a foyer where students linger regularly will reach a broader audience than one limited to classrooms.

B. Design Considerations

Informed by our research and consultations, the following design features were considered when creating our resource:

- Get attention by using graphics and colorful details;
- Use myths to show relevance and create interest in potential issues;
- Challenge myths with clear statements of legal information;
- Keep language simple and ensure readability at a Grade 6 level;
- Limit the number of topics per poster; and
- Provide easy to use links (QR codes) to additional information.

C. Legal Topics Included

At the November 2024 A2J Network meeting, some members recommended topics to cover in a resource for people planning to live together. Suggestions included what it means to “cohabit,” information related to ownership of property, parenting issues if the couple have a child together, and treatment of debts. Recognition of coercive control as a form of public facing abuse was emphasized as well. Additionally, we asked family law practitioners what they believed to be the most frequently misunderstood stereotypes and misunderstandings amongst clients seeking family law supports. Further, we asked them what areas of the law they wished their clients knew before seeking support. Based on the

⁶⁹ We created the poster using the online application Canva (canva.com). Use of this broadly accessible and easy-to-learn tool ensures that the poster can be updated in the future by stakeholder groups.

⁷⁰ In one consultation, it was noted that cell phone bans in schools pose a technological barrier. Physical resources like a poster are accessible for everyone, ensuring all students can engage with it, regardless of the policy and whether they have a cell phone or not.

expertise of SK A2J Network members and those we consulted with; we chose to include the following topics in our resource:

- How someone becomes a common-law spouse;
- Renting a residential property (i.e. lease issues);
- Ownership of property;
- Responsibility for debts;
- Healthy relationships/coercive control; and
- Written agreements.

Potential sources considered when choosing links to provide for additional information included PLEA, the Government of Saskatchewan, CBA Legal Health Check information pages, and law firm blogs.⁷¹ We are producing a Saskatchewan-focused resource and PLEA has an ongoing relationship providing existing resources appropriate for the Law 30 Curriculum.⁷² For these reasons, we chose to link to existing PLEA webpages.

D. Pilot Program

The poster resource went through multiple rounds of consultations and revisions. Practicing family law lawyers and a mental health professional were consulted for a review of both the content and the design initial versions of the poster. Edits were made to reflect their recommendations regarding wording of myths, choice of graphics, and keeping the information provided concisely focused on the topics.

The draft was then reviewed by a focus group composed of first year university students. The students reported that they did learn new information from the poster about topics that they would not have sought out independently. They described the design as clear, straightforward, and easy to navigate. One student noted that it is important to catch the attention of young people and the myth format with brief subtext accomplished that. Another student suggested adding a QR code so that the poster itself can be downloaded to save for later reference and to potentially share with others.

“Not things I would go searching for on the day-to-day.”

Our research ethics approval did not include consulting minors so high school students could not be asked for direct feedback. Given the demonstrated impact of co-

⁷¹ See Appendix B.

⁷² See the PLEA Law 30 Resource Portal, online: <<https://teachers.plea.org/resources/pleas-law-30-resource-support-portal/welcome-to-pleas-law-30-resource-support-portal>>.

design when designing for teens, high school students should be involved in future iterations.

VIII. IMPLEMENTATION

Implementation decisions begin with a question about priority. How do we balance quantity – reaching many people with a small amount of information – versus quality – in depth information provided to a smaller, targeted audience? Considerations include resources like time and money, who takes ownership of the project, and ease of implementation.

A. This Resource: An Informational Poster

A physical poster is ideal as a starting point for educating the public about the impact of living with a partner. Posters prioritize reaching a large quantity of people but sacrifice the quality of information presented. High school students are essentially a captive audience who can be reached proactively to provide information to hopefully trigger future conversations to protect themselves.

Placing posters in schools would be the first step to implement this public legal education about living together. Posters could be placed in classrooms or in public spaces such as hallways or a guidance councillor's office. Public locations do not require buy-in from teachers and would be less likely to be lost among other educational materials. With a broad distribution in multiple locations, all students are potentially exposed. Posters placed in areas where teens congregate will be observed for longer periods of time and more frequently.⁷³

Inclusion of co-design methods could improve the quality of the poster. This would start with involving a group of students, possibly a Law 30 class, in iterations of design followed by implementation of the poster in their school. Soliciting feedback and monitoring traffic via the QR codes could provide additional information to motivate further iterations before potentially expanding distribution throughout Saskatchewan schools. It was also suggested to include a QR code which allows the user to download the poster in its entirety so it can be saved or shared on a device.

B. Limitations

The primary limitation of this project was time. The two-month duration necessitated a more focused approach to ensure the project's completion while adhering to Canadian

⁷³ Daems, Moons & Pelsmacker, *supra* note 67 at 63.

research ethics guidelines. Consequently, direct collaboration with high school students in developing this poster was not feasible, nor was there an opportunity to engage a broader range of experts who could provide insights from Indigenous or immigration perspectives. Additionally, the limited opportunity for user testing constrained the extent of refinements; despite multiple iterations, further improvements could be achieved through continued evaluation and closer collaboration with youth.

Furthermore, to create a visually engaging and easily comprehensible poster, complex aspects of family law were simplified, with some details omitted entirely. The poster is meant to serve as a starting point rather than a comprehensive source of family law information.

C. Future Opportunities

We invite Dean's Forum participants to come prepared to speak about opportunities for distribution of the current poster and about potentially expanding the project. Expansion could take the form of distribution to a wider audience and widening the scope to include other legal education topics.

The utility of the poster produced during this process is not limited to one audience. While we tested it with the intent of putting it into high schools, the many design conclusions that we have drawn would apply to a broader audience. We created our resource with age-appropriate language in mind and used an accessible reading level. Given that the average literacy level in Saskatchewan is approximately Grade 6, this resource is appropriate for the general public and could be effective in other contexts beyond high schools.

People go through several doors to find family law information which informs possible implementation goals. A short-term goal could be placement of the poster within schools throughout Saskatchewan. A medium-term goal could be distribution of posters to a wide range of areas that reach the general public (e.g. libraries, schools, churches, realtors, or marriage licence offices). A long-term goal could include expanding the topics of legal education directed towards youth. This might take the form of a more general "Know Your Rights" campaign that reaches more youth and goes beyond spousal relationships to other areas of law.

Distribution of the Poster

Logistical questions will need to be considered if this poster resource is to be implemented. As learned in our consultations, resources are scarce in schools and a new

initiative is more likely to be welcomed if it easy to implement. The following are things to be considered regarding the possible distribution of the poster:

- Ideas on “ownership” of the poster (e.g., PLEA, Saskatchewan Access to Legal Information Initiative (SALI)), Family Justice Community of Practice?)
- Ideas on who is interested/willing to disseminate the poster
- Ideas on whether collaborative funding/grants could help in further developments
- Other Dean’s Forum participant ideas here: _____

Expand Dissemination of Poster to More Groups

Information about what people should know before deciding to live together or when they are already cohabitating should be widely available. Expanding the poster campaign to include other populations is a logical next step. An iterative consultation process with appropriate community groups could lead to the production of a wide variety of focused, adapted resources with information specific to each population.

Special interest groups to consider:

- Indigenous peoples⁷⁴
- Immigrants including refugees
- Parents with dependents
- Youth whose parents are separating
- Other suggestions: _____

Reaching the broader adult population as well as specific groups would require greatly expanded distribution of the resource. Posters could be placed in leisure centres, libraries, community centres, businesses, and buses. The poster design could also be modified for use in social media advertising or public service messages.

⁷⁴ Feedback at the November 2024 SK A2J Network meeting from some members recommended considering issues including the impact of homes on reserves, matrimonial interests, First Nation self-government agreements, and the *Indian Act*.

IX. MEASURING SUCCESS & CONCLUSION

Assessing the success of educational outreach through a poster is challenging. Measuring the effect of our resource requires evaluation of knowledge before and after an intervention to identify any positive changes associated with the presence of the poster.

A small-scale implementation would be a useful setting to evaluate effectiveness of the resource and allow for iteration prior to a wider distribution. One or two high-school classrooms could be used as a trial. A brief pre-test with questions related to the content of the posters could be administered at the start of the school year. Posters could then be displayed in the classrooms for a few months followed by administration of a post-test version of the same questions. Feedback solicited from both students and teachers would augment analysis of changes in knowledge associated with the posters.

We are optimistic that the resource piloted in this project could successfully increase public knowledge about issues related to “Before You Live Together...”. Even in our high-tech environment, broadly distributed, accessible resources are a viable option to educate the public about legal issues that have the potential to impact their lives. A design process including both legal experts and members of the target audience would improve the impact of education initiatives to increase access to justice.

X. APPENDICES

Appendix A: Stakeholders Who Were Consulted and What They Were Asked

The background of individuals consulted, and the questions posed are outlined below. The questions served primarily as conversational prompts rather than strict parameters, allowing for open discussion. Consequently, much of the information gathered emerged organically through the broader dialogue rather than direct responses to specific questions.

Questions on Resource Design from Public Legal Education and Information (PLEI) Perspectives:

- What strategies do PLEI organizations use to engage high school students on legal issues?
- Given that our resource aims to be preventative, how do you stress the importance of legal rights and issues to teens who may not be experiencing these issues yet?
- What format of resource do you find is the most effective to deliver messages about public legal education?
- How do you recommend breaking down complex legal issues into simpler, age-appropriate topics?
- Do PLEI organizations have any resources or information that would be helpful to include within our resource?
- What barriers do you foresee in creating this resource, and how might we overcome them?
- In your experience, what format of resource do you find youth are most receptive to? For example, do youth prefer infographics, a myths-based approach, Q & A, pamphlets, etc.?

Questions on Resource Design and Implementation from Educator Perspectives:

- What would be an effective way to implement our resource specifically in high schools?
- Do teens ever ask questions about legal issues? If yes what types of questions?
- Where do teens go for information?
- What are the most effective ways to provide information to teens?
- Can you suggest resources to explain healthy relationships to teens?

- What strategies do you use to deliver important messages to teens?
- Can you point me to any resource about communicating legal issues to teens?
- What is the most effective way outside organizations can provide legal resources to high school students and teachers?
- We understand how much is on teachers' plates. With the proactive resource we seek to create, is there a willingness amongst teachers or administrators to have such a resource in the classroom? Why or why not?
- When teaching Law 30 to students, what aspect of the course did students connect with the most?
- What recommendations do you have for legal or relational information that we should provide to students?

Questions on Resource Design and Implementation from Psychologist Perspectives:

- What strategies have you used to deliver important messages to teens?
- Do you have any further insights related to design principles and psychology (e.g. fonts, spacing, formatting, colours)?
- We asked for general feedback on our resource to ensure it is trauma-informed for diverse audiences with a range of different experiences.
- How can we frame difficult topics (e.g., relational red flags, setting boundaries) in a way that feels supportive rather than overwhelming?

Questions on Resource Design and Implementation from Family Law Lawyer Perspectives:

- Inquired about general feedback on the poster and the accuracy of its content.
- Inquired on general feedback on resource and our activities for the Forum Day.

Student Focus Group:

- What did you learn from the poster?
- Were the QR links helpful?
- Any comments about the design of the poster?
- Would you prefer this information in another format (e.g. short videos, social media posts, etc.)? Why?
- Do you think this information is important for high school students? How likely are you to share this resource with a friend who is considering living with a partner?
- Where would you expect to see a resource like this? For example, in a school, on social media, public libraries, community centres, university residences, etc.?

Appendix B: Links to Additional Information Considered for QR Codes on Poster

Public Legal Education Association of Saskatchewan (PLEA)

- Separation & Divorce – Family Law Basics
 - Includes living together as spouses
 - <https://familylaw.plea.org/separation-divorce/family-law-basics>
- Separation & Divorce – Names, Debts & Wills
 - <https://familylaw.plea.org/separation-divorce/names-debts-wills>
- Property – Family Home
 - <https://familylaw.plea.org/home-property/family-home>
- Property – The Family Property Act
 - <https://familylaw.plea.org/home-property/the-family-property-act>
- Property – Equal Division
 - <https://familylaw.plea.org/home-property/equal-division>
- Support – Spousal Support
 - <https://familylaw.plea.org/child-spousal-support/spousal-support>
- Agreements
 - <https://familylaw.plea.org/agreements>
- Roommates
 - <https://www.plea.org/housing/renting/finding-a-place-to-live/roommates>
- Family Violence
 - <https://familylaw.plea.org/safety/abusive-behaviour>

Government of Saskatchewan

- Clare's Law
 - <https://www.saskatchewan.ca/residents/justice-crime-and-the-law/victims-of-crime-and-abuse/clares-law>
- End lease early – Victims of Interpersonal Violence Act
 - <https://www.saskatchewan.ca/residents/justice-crime-and-the-law/victims-of-crime-and-abuse/interpersonal-violence-and-abuse-programs#how-to-end-a-fixed-term-tenancy-agreement>

Law Firm Blogs

- Robertson Stromberg “Am I in a Common-Law Relationship?”
 - www.rslaw.com/2020/08/17/am-i-in-a-common-law-relationship/
- Macdougall Gauley “Getting Married or Moving in Together? A Contract Might be More Important than you Think”
 - www.mcdougallgauley.com/insights/getting-married-or-moving-together-contract-might-be-more-important-you-think

Appendix C: Artificial Intelligence Logbook

General reflections regarding the use of AI throughout this project: We found that it is very important to craft concise and thoughtful prompts to ensure that AI responses are relevant and useful. Additionally, we found it crucial to verify all information generated by AI to ensure accuracy and guard against hallucinations, as AI can sometimes produce incorrect or misleading information. While we found AI to be a helpful tool for brainstorming ideas, its most reliable function was in spelling and grammar-checking rather than content generation. This highlights the need for critical engagement with AI outputs.

Date	GenAI Tool Used	How AI was Used (e.g. prompts used)	How did the Tool Perform?
Feb 5, 2025	ChatGPT	After writing the myth and prompts portion of the poster ourselves, we experimented with attaching a PDF file of the resource into the chat function, then using prompts such as “rewrite this using grade six-appropriate language” and “rewrite this for a high school audience using trauma-informed language.”	The output was slightly helpful and gave a range of possible suggestions, however, these versions were ultimately not utilized. We found our own language, as well as revisions in language suggested by consultations to be most helpful and reader-friendly.
Feb 23, 2025	ChatGPT	We completed our own research to find statistics for the introductory activity quiz. We then prompted ChatGPT to “turn these research questions into multiple-choice questions.”	The output was very helpful and many suggestions were used to create the questions and answers for our quiz. However, the prompts had to be verified for accuracy and others were rephrased for clarity and accuracy.
Feb 23, 2025	Grammarly AI	Grammarly does not use prompts, however, this tool was used to review grammar and sentence structure on the Executive Summary and Consultations sections of this policy paper.	This was a very helpful tool to ensure that these sections of our paper were grammatically correct. Suggestions were reviewed and ultimately inserted into paper.