Research Snapshot

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CREATE Justice
Centre for Research, Evaluation,
and Action Towards Equal Justice
Access to Legal Services – Dispute Resolution – Systemic Justice

How do Saskatchewan's justice sector organizations collect and use data?

What is the research about?

Organizations in Saskatchewan's civil justice sector (those that deal with disputes between individuals, companies and institutions) could benefit from data-informed decision making when it comes to resource allocation and overall improvements in the civil justice sector. This study asked several questions about curent data collection in the Saskatchewan civil justice sector including "What kind of data is being collected?" and "Would changes in what is collected or analyzed improve access to justice for the people of Saskatchewan?"

What you need to know:

Most of the organizations surveyed are collecting data. Most data collected is paper-based or a a combination of paper/electronic. Key issues include lack of time, personnel and technological support in order to analyze the data; privacy concerns surronding the collection of demographic information; and ways of standardizing and sharing the information collected in the future.

What did the researchers do?

The research team selected 24 justice sector organizations to participate in an online survey. The online survey was designed to help understand the following:

- what information is being collected
- why that data is being collected
- what are the barriers to data collection and analysis
- what gaps exist

This study was not intended to provide a complete picture of the data that is collected by all organizations that provide civil justice services in the province. Rather, the 24 organizations were chosen to represent a variety of justice sector organizations, and included government, non-governmental organizations, organizations providing legal information and legal services (including representation), dispute resolution forums, courts and administrative tribunals.

BE WHAT THE WORLD NEEDS

What did the researchers find?

Most of the organizations that were surveyed are collecting data and have policies around the collection, use, access, and disclosure of data. Most data is collected at the beginning of a legal process using manual (paper based) or a combination of paper/electronic collection. While significant historical data is available, almost two-thirds of the surveyed organizations do not use or analyze the data they collect because they lack time, personnel, or technological support. The demographic information that is collected is usually geographic information and does not provide details about who is using the justice services. About half of the organizations collect information about the length of a service delivery, how long a process takes from beginning to end, or what the end result for the individual is. Only a very small number of organizations collect any information on the user experience or feedback from the user.

How can you use this?

Civil justice organizations: This was the first study in Saskatchewan that determined what data is being collected by civil justice sector organizations and whether it is being used to make system-wide improvements. Knowing what information is being collected and how it is being used is an important first step in developing better ways to collect and use data. This will also help work towards standardizing the information collected, allowing organizations to share data. Future research will examine how to capture user experience information and how to respond to privacy concerns surrounding the collection of demographic information.

About the researchers

Heather Heavin is an associate professor and associate dean research and graduate studies, College of Law, University of Saskatchewan. **Michaela Keet** and **Brent Cotter, QC,** are professors of the College of Law, University of Saskatchewan. **Brea Lowenberger** is the Access to Justice Coordinator for the Province of Saskatchewan and Director of CREATE Justice. **Laura Schaan** was a student research assistant on the project. Funds from the Law Foundation of Saskatchewan supported the project and the Office of the Vice-President Research (USask) provided funding for the student research assistant.

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:
law.usask.ca/createjustice/projects/justice-sector-data-inventory-evaluation-and-toolkit.php

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