

For release November 3, 2015, 8am

November 3, 2015

News Release

Online tool empowers Ontarians to better navigate family law issues

Toronto, ON -- Getting separated is one of the most stressful and expensive life events anyone can face. And the startling reality is that in Ontario, more than half of the people in family court are on their own, representing themselves. Even for people who have lawyers, the family court process can often be confusing and overwhelming.

Today, CLEO is releasing **Steps in a Family Law Case**, designed to help Ontarians understand and navigate the complex family law process. This is the first time this essential information has been compiled and presented in this step-by-step way, making it accessible for people with no legal training.

Steps in a Family Law Case can be used by those trying to resolve their issues with the help of a lawyer, a trusted community advisor, a friend or family member, or on their own.

“Family problems are highly distressing by nature, and the complex family court process doesn’t help,” says Julie Mathews, executive director of CLEO. “This user-friendly resource aims to empower people as they go through the family court process by explaining, in clear language, the legal requirements of each step in the process.”

The online tool presents three interactive flowcharts, guiding people through the common legal decision points they will face as they try to resolve family breakdown issues.

The first flowchart takes people through the things they need to think about when family issues arise, like custody, access, support, and property division. It then sets out ways they can resolve these issues, such as through a separation agreement, arbitration or mediation. The next two flowcharts guide users through the steps they have to take if they go to court.

People get detailed information on what the law requires at each stage in the process. And they are directed to a glossary that defines difficult legal terms and concepts, such as filing, issuing, and serving documents, as well as the relevant family law rules and forms, and other practical online guides.

“We are grateful for CLEO’s ongoing work to enhance family law information in Ontario,” says Mr. Justice Czutrin, Senior Judge of the Family Court of the Superior Court of Justice. “These flowcharts are just one example of ways that justice organizations are working together to deliver concrete improvements to access to justice issues.”

“At the Ontario Court of Justice, we are pleased to see assistance for people which simplifies the system in language that everyone can understand,” says Senior Advisory Family Judge Debra Paulseth.

CLEO developed the flowcharts with the assistance of the Superior Court of Justice, the Ontario Court of Justice, the Ministry of the Attorney General, and Legal Aid Ontario. “We are extremely grateful for the expertise that people from these organizations brought to the project,” says Mathews.

To view the Steps in a Family Law Case flowcharts visit www.cleo.on.ca/en/family-flowchart/steps-family-law-case

CLEO (Community Legal Education Ontario/Éducation juridique communautaire Ontario) is a non-profit organization that provides accurate and easy-to-understand information and education about the law for people in Ontario. For over 40 years, CLEO has reached people who have low incomes or are marginalized in other ways with critical legal rights information. CLEO is funded by Legal Aid Ontario, the Department of Justice Canada, and the Law Foundation of Ontario.

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