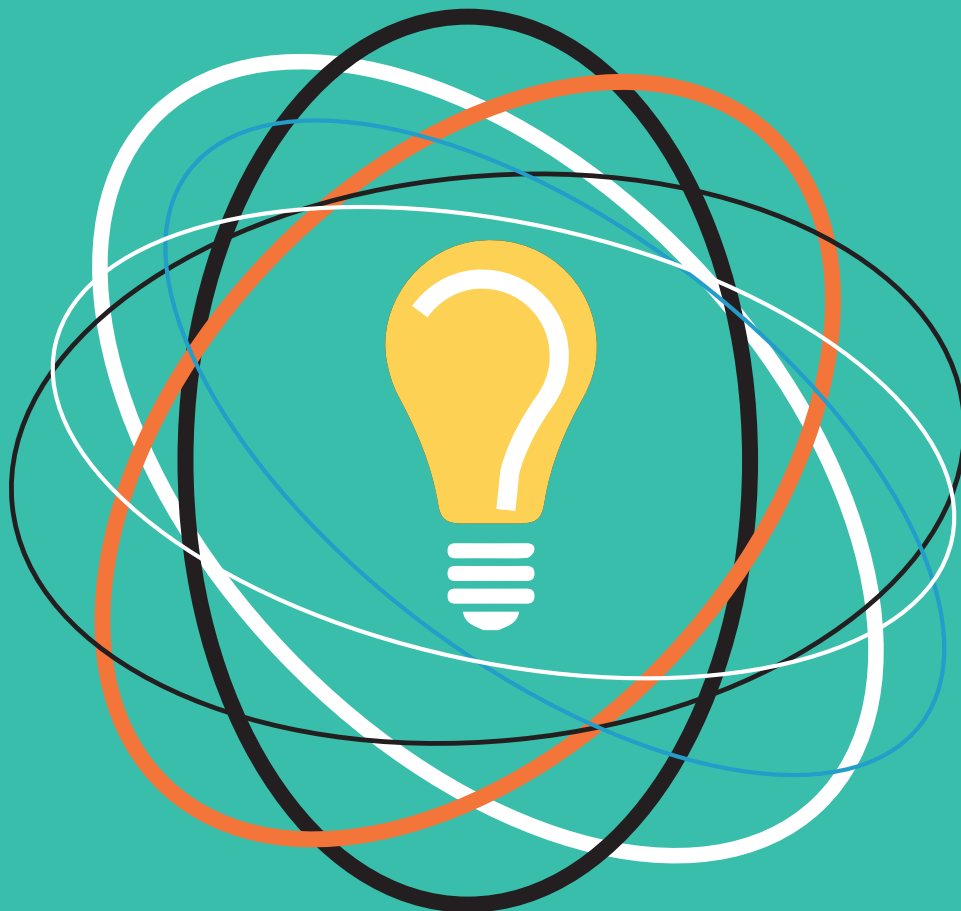




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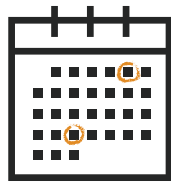


Racialized Communities Strategy
Legal Aid Ontario's
Consultation summary

The consultations



To better understand and meet the needs of Ontario's diverse population, Legal Aid Ontario (LAO) consulted with members of racialized communities (e.g. people who self-identify as Asian, Black, Middle Eastern, Latin American, Roma, or multi-racial), community legal clinics, lawyers, and community-based organizations. The consultations took place across the province between October 2017 and April 2018.



44 consultation sessions

60+ organizations participated

31 organizations hosted sessions



400+ attendees

Promotion in **12** languages

9 written submissions

Aims of the consultations

To find out:



- how much do racialized people know about the services that LAO provides?



- how can LAO improve access to services?

- how can LAO improve the way LAO helps?

- are there legal services that LAO doesn't but should provide?



- what should LAO do to make changes to the justice system?

What LAO heard



Language barriers

- clients who don't speak English or French have a hard time finding out about LAO's interpretation services
- more information provided in multiple languages would improve access to LAO's services and would help people from racialized communities get the help that they need



Service awareness

- there needs to be more promotion about all of the ways in which LAO can help with legal problems; you can't access LAO if you don't know about it
- there needs to be greater awareness of how to qualify for legal aid services and what kind of legal issues are covered



Legal service accessibility

- LAO's financial tests should consider things like housing costs of migrants workers or the higher cost of living in urban centres



Make it easier to find a lawyer

- it is hard for clients to find lawyers that will accept certificates—especially for child protection matters or for matters outside of the Greater Toronto Area

What LAO heard



Diversity in service delivery

- there needs to be more racial diversity in LAO's staff, panel lawyers, clinic staff, boards of directors and senior leadership
- the decision-making process within LAO should actively and regularly engage with members of low-income racialized communities



Better understanding of client needs

- anti-oppression and anti-racism training will help LAO improve the quality of services for racialized clients



Public legal education

- help clients understand and enforce their rights when it comes to services, including how to file complaints and how to change lawyers



Advocating for racial equality

- LAO should fund community-based groups fighting for racial equality
- LAO should fight systemic racism and advocate for more just outcomes for racialized people in the broader justice system

What LAO has done so far

2015

August

LAO makes submissions on the issue of carding and street checks to the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

2016

September

LAO makes submissions to the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services on the development of a Strategy for A Safer Ontario.

2017

April

LAO translates the most frequently downloaded brochures and fact sheets into the top 10 requested languages.

October

LAO gives two community agencies \$100,000 grants to provide legal services to Black students facing suspension and expulsion hearings.

2018

January-April

LAO provides training to staff on topics like privilege, unconscious bias, microaggressions and systemic racism.

April

LAO begins collecting race-based data from clients to plan special programs, address barriers to access, and improve service delivery and programs.

LAO's Racialized Communities Advisory Committee holds its first meeting.

What's next?

2019

January

LAO will release a strategy with short, medium and long-term changes to address the issues identified throughout the consultations.

How to get in touch

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