

MANAGEMENT RESPONSE AND ACTION PLAN - ORIGINAL (FOR PMEC)

Evaluation Report Title: Evaluation of Federal Support for Family Justice
Approval Date of Evaluation by Deputy Minister (03/2019):

Recommendation 1: It is recommended that Justice Canada continue to provide support to programs and services that extend reach to diverse and underserved populations for the resolution of family law matters. More specifically, it is recommended that Justice Canada develop and implement a plan including

- activities to support programs for diverse and underserved populations; and
- measures to determine the impact of these activities in increasing access to justice.

Rationale for Recommendation:
Extending the reach of family justice programs, services and information to meet the needs of diverse and underserved populations is a priority for the Department. However, it is a new priority of the CFJF and as such, advancements in this area are in the early stages. Consequently, data specific to these populations was limited at the time of evaluation. In addition, there was no evidence of a strategic approach to planning and priority setting to determine how it will increase and assess access to programs and services that extend reach to these specific groups.

Management Response:

Justice Canada recognizes the importance of reaching diverse and underserved populations who have family law issues to resolve. The Canadian Family Justice Fund (CFJF), established as of April 1, 2017, has: “extending the reach of family justice programs, services and information to meet the needs of diverse and underserved populations” as one of its five priorities. While under the CFJF, each province or territory must undertake at least one activity under each of the 5 priorities and all activities must fall within one of the priorities. They otherwise have flexibility. Multi-year agreements have been signed with each of the PTs, which will be in effect until 2022.

It is important to note as well that the existing level of resources for the CFJF, which has remained constant at \$16M since 2002, constrains the ability of the CFJF to extend into new types of activities. Similarly, the reduction of funding for research services related to family law in 2014/15 continues to have an impact on the research available to support policy development.

In addition to work related to the CFJF there are other policy activities at the federal level which can address the needs of diverse and underserved populations. Bill C-78, *An Act to amend the Divorce Act, the Family Orders and Agreements Enforcement Assistance Act and the Garnishment, Attachment and Pension Diversion Act and to make consequential amendments to another Act (Bill C-78)*, would allow proceedings at first instance under the *Divorce Act* to be conducted in English or French, thus significantly increasing access to justice to official language minorities. Implementation of these language rights will be progressive and the language rights provisions will apply to provinces and territories over time, as they are ready to implement them.

In addition, Justice Canada has produced some public legal education and information materials in the area of family law for underserved populations. These resources have been available online for over a year, but to date, these materials have not been accessed in large numbers. Strategies could be identified to promote increased access to these materials.

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Action(s) What SMART action(s) will be taken to address this recommendation?	Deliverable(s) Expected deliverable(s) to demonstrate the completion of the action.	Accountability ADM responsible for implementing the action.	Planned Completion Date
Discuss with Coordinating Committee of Senior Officials – Family Justice (CCSO-FJ) on the development of strategies to use the CFJF to better meet the needs of diverse and underserved populations.	Agenda and Minutes from CCSO – FJ meeting	Senior Assistant Deputy Minister, Policy Sector	Fall 2019
Work collaboratively with CCSO – FJ, to develop and implement a plan to support programs and services for diverse and underserved populations. The plan would identify specific activities, deliverables and measures of impact.	Plan of activities, deliverables and measures to support programs to increase access for diverse and underserved populations, presented to CCSO-FJ	Senior Assistant Deputy Minister, Policy Sector	Spring 2020 (draft plan)
	Two annual updates on implementation progress presented to CCSO – FJ.		Spring 2021 (first update) Spring 2022 (second update)