

# Results at a glance

## Evaluation of the Federal Support for Family Justice

Federal Support for Family Justice activities are intended to help families make decisions related to separation or divorce by providing information about matters such as parenting, child support and spousal support; to help families resolve issues without going to court; to help families obtain and enforce child and spousal support; and to provide tools to help people deal with the impacts of separation or divorce.

Family law is an area of shared constitutional jurisdiction. The federal government has jurisdiction over divorce and other related matters ancillary to divorce. Provincial and Territorial (PT) governments have jurisdiction over matters relating to unmarried couples who separate, and to married couples who separate but do not divorce.

The Department of Justice (hereafter the Department) develops and implements federal family laws, policies and programs. It provides family law legal and policy advice to the federal government. Efforts to address family justice issues are coordinated through collaboration and information sharing among jurisdictions. The Department works closely with family justice representatives from the 13 PT governments across Canada through various bodies including the Coordinating Committee of Senior Officials – Family Justice (CCSO-FJ).

Funding for Federal Support for Family Justice totalled \$96 million for the period covered by the evaluation (2014-15 to 2017-18), of which two-thirds related to grants and contributions (Gs&Cs). Through Budget 2017, the Department received a permanent mandate to continue its support for the family justice system.

### WHAT WAS FOUND

- There is a continued need for federal support to enable the family justice system to meet the ongoing demand for services, respond to societal and technological changes, and address key issues. The Department implements a well-integrated approach to address these needs.
- Federal support is strengthening the family justice system. The Department develops family law policy and draft legislation. It continues to provide expert legal advice and litigation support in relation to matters engaging family law and supports the implementation of enforcement and divorce-related activities at the PT level.
- Federal support for Family Justice activities promote public and professional awareness and

understanding of key issues, increase access to services, and support the implementation of enforcement and divorce-related activities at the PT level. The Department collaborates effectively with PTs on matters specific to family justice, particularly through its work with the CCSO-FJ and financial support through its Gs&Cs.

- Available funds are administered efficiently. The costs associated with administering Gs&Cs have declined over the past decade. The Department's expenditures on family justice have remained relatively stable over the past four years. Existing salary and O&M funding is generally sufficient to effectively deliver core services as they currently exist.
- Significant progress has been made in strengthening the family justice system. However, public awareness of family justice issues and processes could be improved by increasing access to information targeted at specific sub-groups and issues, making more information available and continuing efforts to simplify processes and language.

### RECOMMENDATION:

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.

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**ABOUT THE EVALUATION:** *The Evaluation of the Federal Support for Family Justice covers the period from 2014-15 to 2017-18 and was completed in accordance with Treasury Board's Policy on Results (2016) and the Financial Administration Act. The main objective of the evaluation was to address issues related to relevance, effectiveness and efficiency. For the full report, please visit the Justice Canada website.*

