

Hon. Debra Paulseth
President



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The Association of Family and Conciliation Courts (AFCC), Ontario Chapter

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(Date Sent)

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We are writing to you on behalf of the Association of Family and Conciliation Courts, Ontario Chapter (“AFCC-O”). AFCC-O is part of an interdisciplinary and international association of professionals dedicated to the resolution of family conflict. AFCC members share a strong commitment to education, innovation, and collaboration in order to benefit communities, empower families, and promote a healthy future for children.

In 2011, AFCC-O’s board of directors consulted the membership and, with their input, prepared a short paper called “The Ideal Family Court” setting out what AFCC-O considers the central principles and best practices for the ideal Family Court for Ontario. This project is intended to build on our earlier policy initiative.

AFCC-O is interested in gaining a better understanding of services, projects, policy initiatives and other measures undertaken by organizations and agencies in Ontario relating to access to justice in family law matters. Our objective is to compile a comprehensive inventory of such initiatives undertaken by organizations in Ontario working with families. Our goal is to make the final inventory publicly available to the participating organizations and to the public through our website www.afccontario.ca. This project will help us identify similarities, disparities and gaps in services and initiatives offered to children and families in the various regions of the province.

We have directed this letter to you as the identified contact person for your organization. However, if this letter should have been sent to a different contact person, would you please pass this letter on to that individual and email us at afccontario@gmail.com to provide us with that person’s contact information so that we need not bother you again. We would appreciate if you could take time out of your busy schedule to answer the following brief questions, by way of a **(one to two page)** letter:

1. What are the mandate and vision of your organization?

2. What are your user demographics and your regional catchment area?
3. In your view, what are the highest priorities in promoting better access to justice¹ in family law matters?
4. In your view/agency view, what are the largest gaps or challenges impeding access to justice in family law matters?
5. Could you please describe any services currently underway or any new initiatives that you anticipate implementing through your organization that support access to justice initiatives in family law matters?² If the service is time limited, please provide the expected end date.
6. Has there been any evaluation of these initiatives which you are willing to share with AFCC-O to better inform best practices protocols?

If you are aware of other organizations in your community that provide services to people involved in the family justice system, please tell us so that we can be as inclusive and diverse as possible in capturing the work being done in throughout province in the inventory.

Please provide your response **(one to two pages)** to us by no later than **(Deadline Date)**. Please send your response to our attention by email to afccontario@gmail.com.

We appreciate the time you have taken to consider this request and hope that you are inclined to participate so that the inventory is as complete and accurate as possible.

Yours,

Dr. Rachel Birnbaum Andrea Himel

Dr. Rachel Birnbaum and Andrea Himel

¹ The phrase “access to justice” is intended to be applied broadly. The goal is to understand the services that are being offered to families experiencing conflict and/or separation and those engaged in child protection matters. These services include but are not limited to: access to legal services, access to the courts, access to counselling and access to alternative dispute resolution. It is also intended to capture educational and informational services offered to the public to allow users to make informed decision about what steps to take to address family justice matters.

² Such services might include pilot projects, programs, educational initiatives, research or any other initiative related to the family justice system.