






MODULE 1 - INTRODUCTION TO LEGAL HEALTH

INFOGRAPHIC

Social determinants of health like income, housing, and work are closely tied to legal rights. Legal health significantly impacts on overall health. Access to legal help is a social determinant of health.

Categories of Everyday Legal Problems:

-  **Income Security:** problems with government assistance programs, disability benefits like ODSP & CPP-D, tax credits and benefits.
-  **Housing:** evictions, privacy issues, maintenance and repair problems, harassment by landlord.
-  **Work:** workplace safety, termination, WSIB benefits, disability accommodation.
-  **Consumer Law:** contracts and debt, collection calls, explaining contracts, enforcing warranties.
-  **Education Law:** learning disability accommodations, suspensions/expulsions.

Barriers to Asking for Legal Help



- 1 Not recognizing the problem as a legal problem
- 2 Not knowing where to go for legal help
- 3 Lawyer stereotypes and fears about cost



Over a three year period, **50%** of adult Canadians will experience at least one serious everyday legal problem - but only **20%** will get legal help.

A 2016 study by the Canadian Forum on Civil Justice on everyday legal problems: nearly all the people surveyed drew a direct line from their legal problem to a physical and emotional health problem suffered in that time.

Poverty is correlated with a high incidence of legal problems. Approximately 10% of people in Ontario live in poverty. Marginalized groups such as racialized people, Indigenous people, recent immigrants and refugees, LGBTQ2S individuals, one-parent families with young children, people living in remote areas, and people with disabilities experience disproportionately higher levels of poverty.

"Poverty creates an abrasive interface with society: poor people are always bumping into sharp legal things." - Stephen Wexler

How You Can Help

People will often talk to a trusted helper - like their healthcare provider - about a legal problem long before they seek professional legal help. As a healthcare provider, you have a critical role to play in identifying legal issues and making referrals to appropriate legal help.

Legal problems are deeply intertwined with health outcomes. Benefits to tackling legal health problems include fewer hospitalizations, more compliance with treatment plans, more uptake of preventive care, decreased stress, and improved well-being of patients and medical staff.

Access to timely and appropriate legal help matters a lot when it comes to resolving legal problems, improving overall health, and addressing health inequities.

