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Understanding family violence in diverse communities: What subject-matter experts think family law legal advisers should know

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Understanding family violence in diverse communities: What subject matter experts think family law legal advisers should know

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- Antoinette Clarke and Mina Vaish
- Archana Medhekar, Purnima George, Bethany Osborne, Ferzana Chaze and Hafsa Alavi
- Doris Rajan
- Mohammed BaoBaid
- Pat Durish

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Executive Summary

This report summarizes five thought papers written by subject-matter experts to assist family law legal advisers in identifying and responding to family violence in diverse communities. The thought papers focused on the following population groups: racialized groups; 2SLGBTQI+ individuals; Muslim communities; newcomers; and people with disabilities. According to subject-matter experts:

- There is no one-size-fits-all approach to identifying and responding to family violence when representing clients.
- Recognizing that there are barriers to disclosure is key; it may take time before a client discloses their experiences of family violence. There are additional socio-cultural and religious barriers that may compound a client's reluctance to disclose family violence to a legal adviser (e.g., fear of losing their caregiver, language barriers, fear of deportation).
- Family violence can present in different ways; questions to help identify family violence should be tailored to each client and focus on the client's relationship with their partner and their family dynamics.
- Family law legal advisers should take the time to learn more about the communities they serve, reflect on their internalized biases, and participate in ongoing training on equity and diversity. This can help legal advisers to more effectively and appropriately anticipate and respond to their clients' needs in a more sensitive and non-judgemental way.
- Legal advisers' offices and practices should be inclusive to clients to help them feel more comfortable and at ease. Making the environment physically accessible and asking clients ahead of a meeting whether they have any accessibility needs or preferences (e.g., support person, interpretation) can help improve trust and communication between clients and their legal adviser.
- Legal advisers should connect with support services in their area and build relationships with service providers to help facilitate referrals and obtain guidance and resources from community organizations. Legal advisers should also be aware that some clients may prefer to access informal supports (e.g., friends, family, religious leaders) rather than formal services (e.g., shelters).
- Legal advisers should avoid making any assumptions about their clients. Instead, it is important for legal advisers to ask clients what their needs are and tailor their practice accordingly. For instance, legal advisers should ask clients about what they want to gain from the family law process.
- Legal advisers should be aware of how other legal issues may intersect with the family law case, such as immigration law and criminal law matters.

Introduction

Family violence is a persistent and complex social problem that can have serious, long-lasting and sometimes fatal consequences. Amendments to the *Divorce Act* that came into force on March 1, 2021 require that judges take family violence into account when deciding family law cases, particularly in decisions related to parenting and the best interests of the child. In addition, provincial and territorial family law statutes include provisions relating to family violence.

In order to effectively support their client, it is important for legal advisers to be aware of family violence that has occurred or is occurring as well as the potential for future violence. This information is relevant not only for parenting cases, but also for other family law matters, such as property disputes or motions to change an order or agreement. Information about family violence is crucial to a legal adviser's ability to identify all of the family law issues that need to be addressed, the support services a client may require, and ways to promote the client's and their children's safety throughout the family law case and beyond.

Family violence can be difficult for legal advisers to identify, and knowing how to respond to it can likewise present challenges. People from any community or background can experience family violence, however, research shows that the risk of experiencing family violence and the way this violence is experienced is influenced by multiple personal and social characteristics.¹ Being aware of how previous trauma, racialization and colonialism as well as factors such as age, gender, Indigenous identity, ethnocultural group, perceived race, religion, disability, immigration status, sexual orientation, and the intersection of these factors,² can impact the experiences of victims and survivors of family violence can help family law legal advisers to better serve their clients.

While there are family violence education and training resources available to legal advisers, these resources do not necessarily consider the unique experiences and circumstances of specific population groups in Canada. This report is intended to help fill this gap by summarizing key questions and considerations that subject-matter experts identified as important for family law legal advisers to integrate into their practice.

Methodology

In 2020, Justice Canada, in collaboration with Women and Gender Equality Canada, contracted subject-matter experts to develop five evidence-based thought papers³ to support family law advisers in identifying and responding to family violence in diverse communities. Each thought paper focused on one of the following population groups: people with disabilities, Muslim communities, 2SLGBTQI+

¹ Cotter, A. 2021. *Intimate partner violence in Canada, 2018: An overview*. Juristat, Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 85-002-X.

² While identity factors can affect how a person experiences family violence, the intersection of different identity factors can further compound their experiences and their access to supports and resources. The experiences of a Muslim woman who has experienced family violence, for example, will be shaped by her gender, her religion and her past experiences of Islamophobia and racism.

³ The authors of these papers are: Antoinette Clarke and Mina Vaish; Archana Medhekar, Purnima George, Bethany Osborne, Ferzana Chaze and Hafsa Alavi; Doris Rajan; Mohammed BaoBaid; and Pat Durish. The thought papers are available by request. If interested, please contact: rsd.drs@justice.gc.ca.

individuals,⁴ racialized groups,⁵ and newcomers.⁶ Subject-matter experts developed the thought papers drawing from existing research as well as from their own experience as frontline service providers.

For each population group, the thought papers were intended to include the following information:

- The unique identifiers, warning signs and risk factors associated with family violence;
- The factors that might affect whether clients feel comfortable disclosing experiences of violence to a family law lawyer;
- The key considerations for approaching the topic of family violence and asking clients about their experiences;
- The topics, issues or ways of speaking about or describing concepts that should be avoided, along with the reasons why these matters should be avoided;
- The relevant legal and non-legal responses;
- The appropriate resources to address clients' needs, including targeted available resources for the community and training for professionals; and
- The gaps in research on family violence for the community.⁷

The expertise and recommendations from these thought papers are integrated into Justice Canada's HELP Toolkit⁸, which provides guidance that assists family law legal advisers in identifying and responding to family violence in their practice.

Key Messages

It may be difficult for family law advisers to identify and respond to family violence, given the wide variety of personal and social factors involved. Below are a few of the recommended practices that emerged from the thought papers. For a more comprehensive summary of the thought papers by population group, please see Annex A.

Barriers to disclosure

Victims and survivors face many barriers in disclosing their experiences of family violence, such as feeling ashamed, being scared that their children will be taken away, fearing retribution, being scared of not being believed, and not recognizing that their experiences constitute abuse.⁹ The thought paper experts shared that victims from specific population groups may experience these barriers in addition to sociocultural or religious barriers. For instance, people with disabilities may choose not to disclose

⁴ The subject-matter expert used the acronym "LGBTQ+" throughout the thought paper.

⁵ The subject-matter experts used the language of "ethnocultural minority communities."

⁶ Another thought paper was written on the experiences of children who witness family violence. Since the purpose of this summary document is to focus on the experiences of family violence in diverse communities, information from this thought paper is not included in this summary.

⁷ Thought papers were also developed on key considerations for identifying and responding to family violence when representing a First Nation, Inuk or Métis client. See: <https://women-gender-equality.canada.ca/en.html>.

⁸ See: <https://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/fl-df/help-aide/index.html>.

⁹ For more reasons why clients may not disclose family violence, see: <https://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/fl-df/help-aide/tab1-onglet1.html#c>.

out of fear of losing their caregiver or being forced to relocate to an inaccessible place to live. 2SLGBTQI+ clients may fear that their experiences will be classified as “mutual aggression.”¹⁰ Clients whose first language is neither English nor French may be unable to make a disclosure due to a language barrier. Clients from collectivist communities¹¹ or with particularly strong ties to their community may feel reluctant to disclose family violence to a stranger. Some clients may also fear that they could be at risk of deportation from Canada.

Identifying family violence when representing clients from diverse backgrounds

Initial and subsequent meetings with a client provide opportunities for legal advisers to establish rapport, or trust. This trust can be built by asking the right questions at the right time in a culturally sensitive manner. To be able to do so, the subject-matter experts encourage legal advisers to understand their own inherent biases and to be mindful of their tone, manner, assumptions and body language, as this can affect the establishment of trust. For example, active listening and open-ended questions can help a victim of family violence feel more comfortable. Avoiding heavy use of “legalese”—language only commonly known within the legal profession—and relaying concepts in a way that makes sense to the client are also practices that should be adopted, especially when interacting with clients with limited English/French language skills.

Clients may not spontaneously disclose experiences of family violence to their family law legal adviser, and they may not know that what they are experiencing necessarily constitutes family violence. For example, gay clients may not identify their partner’s behaviour as abusive due to internalized heteronormativity that dismisses or devalues their experiences as incidents where “boys will be boys.”

Instead of disclosing their experiences, clients may present some signs of abuse or trauma that can prompt legal advisers to ask them questions about family violence. However, it is important to recognize that these signs may be due to past trauma and may not be related to the family law matter or their ex-partner. For instance, newcomer clients may have experienced trauma in their country of origin or during their migration. Likewise, 2SLGBTQI+ clients may have experienced “betrayal trauma”—trauma stemming from ongoing stress that 2SLGBTQI+ individuals experience when they are mistreated or their trust is violated by people and institutions on which they depend for support and survival. This trauma can be caused by institutional discrimination, anti-2SLGBTQI+ opinions, childhood abuse, politics, stress of concealment, media, personal encounters, and the devaluation of their lives and relationships by others.

It should also be noted that clients may exhibit signs that are not necessarily obvious indicators of abuse. For clients with disabilities, they may appear to be uncomfortable, extremely apologetic or anxious due to years of disability oppression—where they have been devalued, stigmatized, seen as a threat and a burden, and excluded from larger society through educational segregation and institutionalization. At the same time, some clients may not present themselves as a “typical victim”

¹⁰ Due to the myth that 2SLGBTQI+ relationships are “equal,” abuse in these relationships is often perceived as “mutual,” as “boys being boys” or as “cat fights” under the false assumption that the victim has consented to the abuse.

¹¹ People from collectivist communities tend to prioritize the needs of their community as a whole over their own individual needs, for example, by seeking their community’s approval of their marriage or divorce.

due to individual circumstances; for instance, they may appear to be unsympathetic, hostile and disengaged.¹² As a result, legal advisers may find it necessary to introduce the topic of family violence themselves even if there are no signs of family violence in order to create an opportunity for clients to disclose their experiences.

Understanding the client and their community

While there may be some general indicators of family violence,¹³ legal advisers should also consider the individual circumstances of the client, as well as the client's family dynamics. Questions should be asked about the client's relationship with their partner and their family dynamics, and these questions should be tailored to the individual client. For instance, if a legal adviser is representing a 2SLGBTQI+ client, they could ask whether the client is concerned that the other party may "out" them to their friends, family, colleagues or others.

The thought paper experts also encourage legal advisers to focus on their client's personal and familial ideologies and circumstances, as opposed to stereotypes about culture, religion, ability, gender or sexual orientation. This can be achieved by adopting a person-centered approach, which places an emphasis on the client's experiences by asking certain key questions to better understand and situate the client's contextual environment and background. For instance, what is the importance of religion in resolving disputes in their relationship? Is there any diversity in religious views in the family and community? Has the family relationship changed throughout the immigration process?

Providing an inclusive environment for clients

To help effectively identify and respond to family violence in a family law case, the legal adviser's office and practice should be inclusive to clients. An inclusive practice may help clients to feel more comfortable and at ease, which in turn may help improve communication and trust between clients and their legal advisers. One way to create an inclusive environment is to make the physical office accessible to clients. Does the office have accessible entrances? Is it accessible by public transportation? Legal advisers should take the time to do a walkthrough of their office location to assess whether it is accessible to their clients. Another way to create an inclusive environment is by showing supportive symbols. This could include displaying symbols like the 2SLGBTQI+ flag or the International Symbol of Access¹⁴ to inform clients that the office is a safe space.

An inclusive environment can also be created through office procedures, policies and protocols. What protocols does your office have in place to respond to the individual needs of clients during meetings? It can be helpful to ask clients ahead of the first meeting whether they have any accessibility needs or preferences. By asking clients this question, it provides legal advisers sufficient time to ensure

¹² Neilson, L. C. 2013. *Enhancing Safety: When Domestic Violence Cases are in Multiple Legal Systems (Criminal, family, child protection) A Family Law, Domestic Violence Perspective* (2nd Edition). Ottawa, ON: Department of Justice Canada. Available at: <https://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/rp-pr/fl-lf/famil/enhan-renfo/index.html>.

¹³ These can include visible signs of injuries, hypervigilance, and fear when their partner is mentioned. See the examples listed in the following link: <https://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/fl-df/help-aide/discussion-discuter.html#s2-3>.

¹⁴ The International Symbol of Access is a blue square with a white outline of a person in a wheelchair. See: <https://www.signs.org/whats-hot/koefoed-the-international-symbol-of-access>.

appropriate supports are in place prior to the meeting, such as Braille signage. There should be consideration, for example, about how to ensure adequate access to interpretation for clients who do not speak English/French or who require an American Sign Language/Langue des signes québécoise interpreter. Legal and social services do not always have interpretation services readily available and tend to use the services of community members as interpreters. This poses some concern, as the community member may know the client or the community member may disapprove or be judgemental towards the client reporting abuse, which may deter the client from disclosing their experiences. In addition, providing clients with alternative mediums of communication, such as through writing, may make it easier for clients with a language barrier to share their experiences.

The thought paper experts also emphasized the practice of cultural humility,¹⁵ as this will help legal advisers to maintain a sensitive and nonjudgmental attitude and to be open to clients' individual lived experiences. The experts also recommended that legal advisers make an effort to learn about their clients' communities, including learning about different practices that may be followed by some members of a community (e.g., arranged marriages), and understanding what nomenclature to avoid, such as words that perpetuate stereotypical norms or are offensive to clients (e.g., using the "dead name"¹⁶ of a trans client). Additionally, it was suggested that legal advisers should undergo continuous professional development and training, including equity and diversity training, to help them critically reflect on their own internalized biases, assumptions, and practices when representing clients from different backgrounds. Training may include but is not limited to learning about unconscious bias, critical self-reflection, anti-racism, anti-oppression, cultural sensitivity, and intersecting oppressions. For a more comprehensive list of training avenues, please see Annex A.

Connecting clients to community-based resources

According to the thought paper subject-matter experts, family law legal advisers should connect with support services in their area and build relationships with service providers. Not only does this help to facilitate referrals, but it also provides legal advisers the opportunity to learn more about resources and research that may be relevant to the clients they serve. For instance, these community organizations may be able to share guidance with legal advisers that can be subsequently incorporated into their practice (e.g., how to make the environment more inclusive).

When making referrals, it is recommended that legal advisers ask their family law clients what kind of informal supports (e.g., friends, family, religious/spiritual leaders, community) they would like to integrate with formal support resources (e.g., shelters, counselling). The combination of the two types of support may help legal professionals respond better to the complex needs of victims of family violence. Some clients may prefer to access informal supports, and they may also have some concerns about accessing formal community resources such as the associated cost of accessing the service, or the risk of compromising their religious integrity by accessing formal support services. In any case, it is

¹⁵ Cultural humility is a practice that promotes the ongoing process of learning more, understanding more and respecting different perspectives and lived experiences, as well as self-reflecting and self-critiquing our own biases.

¹⁶ Name the individual was given at birth.

a good practice for legal advisers to create a list of formal resources that could be helpful to clients, including local population-specific organizations and family violence services.

It is important to understand that many community resources provide standardized services that are based on Eurocentric/Western models, and therefore do not consider the different worldviews of individuals from other backgrounds in their policies, initiatives or outreach programs. For instance, there are family violence social services that are inaccessible for people with disabilities. Non-heteronormative individuals, individuals with disabilities and individuals from non-European descent are also more likely to face racism and discrimination, and be stereotyped, when trying to access resources and services.¹⁷

Exploring legal issues specific to the client

When representing family law clients, there is no one-size-fits-all approach. It is important to consider what additional legal factors need to be considered in the family law case to accommodate the client's needs. This can be achieved by asking clients what they wish to gain from the family law process. According to the subject-matter experts, legal advisers should avoid attempting to homogenize their clients' experiences, especially if the client and the legal adviser are from the same population group. Instead, they should consider their clients' needs and how these are influenced by many factors, including their background. Based on this information, legal advisers can tailor the legal strategy to best meet the wishes, needs, context and values of their client. For instance, Muslim clients may require an Islamic divorce in addition to a legal divorce. Some clients may require religious consultations or may turn to religious leaders for advice on how to navigate a conflict, such as a family law issue. Immigrant clients may have concerns about the potential flight risk of their partner and children, and may need to seek a court order requiring surrender of the children's passports. Clients with learning or mental health disabilities may face challenges with meeting legal capacity requirements, meaning they may not be able to understand information needed to make a decision and appreciate the consequences of making that decision. This may require them to have a guardian or trustee¹⁸ who can make decisions and give consent on the client's behalf. It is also important that legal advisers take the time to provide a detailed explanation of every step of the legal process, including what the client can expect from the family justice system and what will be expected of the client, in a way that the client understands.

Equally important is considering how other legal issues, such as immigration law and criminal law, may intersect with the family law case. For instance, clients without permanent residence or Canadian citizenship may have concerns about their immigration status or fear deportation, which may require a referral to an immigration lawyer or to information that can help correct misinformation about Canadian immigration policies. While some victims of family violence may seek a legal response in the

¹⁷ Community Coordination for Women's Safety. 2007. "Immigrant, refugee and non-status women and violence against women in relationships".

¹⁸ Note that advocates within the disability movement are calling for the need to move away from guardianship and substitute decision-making to a support decision-making approach, where people with disabilities can exercise their legal capacity with the appropriate supports in place.

criminal justice system, legal advisers should be aware that others may be reluctant and fearful of contacting the police as a result of previous negative experiences with law enforcement in Canada or in a previous country of residence. For instance, 2SLGBTQI+ clients may fear that their complaints will be dismissed by the police or that the abuse will be classified as “mutual aggression” given the lack of knowledge around the complexities of same-sex relationships. Clients may also be unaware or have limited knowledge of Canada’s criminal laws; as such, legal advisers should present the information to clients in a simple manner, without excessive use of legalese, and provide the client with sufficient time to process the information before making a decision.

Conclusion

This report summarized information from five thought papers written by subject-matter experts. While the experts wrote their papers from the perspectives of addressing the needs of different communities, there were some overarching themes in all of the papers. A recurring theme in the thought papers is that there is no one-size-fits-all approach when representing clients. Instead of making any assumptions, it is important for legal advisers to ask clients what their needs are and tailor their law practice accordingly. Another key recommended practice is for legal advisers to take the time to learn more about the communities they serve to better understand the experiences of these groups so that they can more effectively and appropriately anticipate and respond to their clients’ needs.

Annex A: Summary tables

A. Forms of family violence

	Forms of family violence
2SLGBTQI+ individuals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -threats to “out” them to family members, friends, employers or faith communities -forcing them to have sex in a way that does not align with their sexuality or gender identity -withholding hormones or other items (e.g., dildos or binders) for trans clients -targeting their sexuality or gender expression to assert control over them -forcing displays of affection in unsafe or inappropriate spaces -disclosing information about their sexuality, gender expressions, HIV status, family and relational practices/configurations (e.g., open, poly) or sex work, without their consent
People with disabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -being called degrading language related to their disability -forcing them to live in inaccessible settings -ignoring them when they are trying to communicate (for Deaf clients) -threatening to withhold or withholding primary care services (e.g., not taking them to the washroom) -being physically assaulted in a way that results in a disability -taking their disability income cheques -forcing power of attorney and substitute decision-making arrangements against their will -preventing them from using or destroying assistive devices (e.g., hearing aids, canes) -withholding medication -being touched inappropriately while being given primary care services (e.g., dressing, bathing)
Newcomers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -threatening immediate family in their previous country of residence -being publicly shamed by their ex-partner for choices they made or were forced to make in their previous country of residence (e.g., forced prostitution, choice of employment, forced marriage) -threatening to report them to authorities for receiving income “under the table” -controlling access to important immigration or sponsorship papers
Racialized groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -removing or withholding basic necessities -threatening their immigration status -placing religious, cultural or family pressure on them to remain in the relationship or to submit to the ex-partner’s authority -preventing them from attending English or French language classes
Muslims	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -threatening their immigration status -using religion as a means to justify abusive behaviour and to control them

B. Barriers to disclosure

	Barriers to disclosure
2SLGBTQI+ individuals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -struggles with their own sense of culpability if they fought back -fear of betraying the community (and for lesbians, the feminist sisterhood) -difficulty recognizing what is acceptable behaviour and treatment (due to histories of abuse, heteronormativity or internalized anti-2SLGBTQI+ discrimination) -fear of being “outed” when seeking victim support (e.g., by service providers, their cultural or religious community, court proceedings) -preferring the familiarity of private violence over public violence that they would experience if they left their partner for the shelter system, the streets or their abusive family -fear of having their complaint dismissed by police as “mutual aggression” or of being dually charged due to a lack of understanding of the complex dynamics of 2SLGBTQI+ family violence

People with disabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -fear of losing primary care services -fear of losing children (i.e., being deemed incapable of raising children on their own) -unable to communicate in a way that is understood -lack of knowledge of where to access help due to life-long segregation from mainstream society
Newcomers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -fear of family ostracizing (in Canada and in their country of origin) for accessing the family justice system, as this may be perceived as an adversarial approach to a family issue -fear of being deported -fear of experiencing racism and discrimination when pursuing legal action or accessing resources -financial vulnerability as they may not have the ability to work or may not have received accreditation for education or educational licensing from their home country -lack of knowledge of Canadian legislation and the justice system -influence of cultural values and factors
Racialized groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -language barriers -financial vulnerability due to their pre-migration work experience and education being discredited -influence of their religious or cultural background, which pressures them to sacrifice personal goals for the community/family -lack of knowledge of the legal process and their rights -fear of enforcement authorities/previous negative experiences with enforcement authorities -fear about the impacts on their immigration status/previous negative experiences with immigration authorities
Muslims	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -desire to maintain family unity -fear of being deported -fear of being rejected by the community -linguistic barriers that prevent them from adequately articulating the complexity of their situation -fear of compromising their religious responsibility to preserve the family

C. Key considerations

	Key considerations
2SLGBTQI+ individuals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -be aware of internalized biases and abuse dynamics and gender roles -be attuned to homo/bi/trans phobia -learn the terminology that 2SLGBTQI+ clients use to identify themselves and what terminology to avoid (e.g., do not ask for the dead name of a trans person or refer to their birth name as their “real” name) -learn about the community and reach out to 2SLGBTQI+ service providers -display posters or messages to signal that the office is a safe space -recognize betrayal trauma, which may have an effect on how the client presents themselves (e.g., aggressive, hypercritical, hostile, denial, dismissing, minimizing)
People with disabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -ask in advance of the meeting if clients have any access needs to ensure appropriate supports are in place and be prepared to allocate more time for the meeting so the client can communicate at their own pace -consider ways to address access barriers in the office (e.g., location, transit, poor signage) -allow a support person to be present but be attuned to warning signs (e.g., speaking without permission) -do not touch the client or any service animals without asking permission first -do not presume to understand the client if unsure of what they are trying to say; instead, wait until they finish communicating and ask them to repeat or rephrase -be sure to not sound patronizing when speaking to the client

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -understand the complexity around recognizing signs of family violence, given that people with disabilities may present some signs without having experienced family violence -avoid using body language or gestures to communicate if not appropriate for the client or the situation -do not assume the client cannot see you -for clients who are visually impaired, do not leave them in the middle of the room; instead, guide them to a more comfortable location. -for clients who are visually impaired, do not leave without informing the client that you are leaving/returning/saying goodbye -focus on the client's individuality instead of their disability and avoid making assumptions about how the client communicates
Newcomers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -recognize that newcomers generally resist initial consultations for legal advice and that by the time these victims seek advice, their visit may have coincided with a new or severe attack or escalating behaviour -be aware that newcomer clients may have experienced past abuse from the way they were raised in their country of origin (e.g., corporal punishment on children) and be attuned to signs, such as initialization, silence, physical uncomfortableness and outbursts of anger or emotion -avoid language that may appear to be stereotypical or that perpetuates stereotypical norms -ask about the client's personal and familial ideologies instead of using ideologies centered in individualism or collective principles -offer a choice of lawyer, if possible, as clients may not wish to work with a lawyer from their cultural or religious background -use a culturally anti-oppressive approach that addresses safety concerns, while also maximizing the client's trust, choice, control and empowerment
Racialized groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -acknowledge clients' language barriers and discuss with clients whether translation/interpretation services are needed -do not disclose any information with family/friends/community members without the client's explicit consent -understand how the client's length of time in Canada, as well as cultural and religious factors can affect disclosure -understand how the client's religious and cultural background influence their wants and needs -provide examples of what constitutes abuse, as immigrant clients may not understand what abuse looks like
Muslims	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -recognize that many Muslims use Islamic teachings to address family relations and that some family members may be using religion to justify their abusive behaviour -understand how the client understands and implements Islamic teachings in terms of gender and family relations and expectations, and how their religious obligations are linked to their cultural traditions -understand the client's perspective of their family gender belief systems -ask about their immigration and legal status, as the client may be unaware of their rights and may fear deportation -use respectful ways to obtain information that can lead to better understanding and honouring the client's belief system

D. Responses

	Legal and non-legal responses
2SLGBTQI+ individuals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -current assessment instruments cannot trace the complex power dynamics in 2SLGBTQI+ relationships -clients may be reluctant to report to the police if concerned that they do not understand the complexities of family violence in 2SLGBTQI+ relationships and may charge both partners

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -provide information on hate crimes, 2SLGBTQI+ advocacy and support groups if there have been threats to “out” the client -refer to community-based counselling, 2SLGBTQI+ community centres, and advocacy centres -understand that there are issues of homo/bi/transphobia in service delivery as well as the history of discrimination by social and legal services, which have led to fear and mistrust -recognize that family violence is often dealt with through informal networks of concerned friends and family -develop a referral list of 2SLGBTQI+ dedicated or positive services
People with disabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -clients may not be able to meet the legal capacity tests required to understand and appreciate the consequences of legal actions -explain the reason for taking notes (e.g., clear, detailed documentation) -clients should be in charge of the discussion -refer to attendant care services, services to help apply for disability income support and services to help find an accessible place to live
Newcomers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -refer clients to an immigration lawyer or information on Canadian legislation if there have been immigration or sponsorship threats -explain the different legal options available to newcomer clients, as they may not know what options are available or where to access information -refer to cultural and community networks -refer to newcomer and settlement services
Racialized groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -language services may be required -help the client understand the mandate of child protection services and the impact of child protection services on their immigration/refugee claims -if there is a flight risk, seek court order to surrender the passports of the ex-partner and children if they have dual citizenship/nationality -tailor legal strategies to best meet the needs and cultural/religious values of clients -provide detailed explanations of every step of the legal process (e.g., what the client can expect, what the client needs to do) -refer to newcomer/immigrant/refugee organizations
Muslims	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Islamic marriage and divorce may be required along with the legal process -an Islamic divorce can occur in three ways: (1) the husband initiates the process without agreement of his wife, (2) there is a mutual agreement, or (3) it is imposed by a judicial authority as a result of one partner violating a key Islamic law -understand how important religion is in resolving family disputes, which issues require religious consultations and how to deal with diversity in religiosity within the client’s family (if applicable) -connect with faith leaders who can provide spiritual and religious support -faith leaders and informal support are important in the initial stages of conflict resolution -integrate informal support with formal resources (with client’s consent) -refer to Muslim community services (e.g., Nisa Homes, Muslim family services or Muslim legal clinics)

E. Training

Training	
2SLGBTQI+ individuals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -reach out to academics and academic institutions (e.g., University of Toronto’s Trans Health Project) as well as other resources (e.g., 2SLGBTQI+ community centres, Egale)
People with disabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -learn about the general categories of disabilities (e.g., mobility, vision, Deaf and hard-hearing, intellectual, cognitive, psychosocial, episodic) -establish partners with community organizations to learn more about the services and how to make the law office more accessible

	-consult the ARCH Disability Law Centre, particularly the tips for lawyers and paralegals
Newcomers	-consult the Centre for Research and Education on Violence Against Women and Children as well as the Barbra Schlifer Clinic
Racialized groups	-equity and diversity training -impacts of gender norms within families (e.g., a preference for sons) -harmful traditional cultural practices -consult the Canadian Race Relations Foundation
Muslims	-cultural humility -consult the Muslim Resource Centre for Social Support and Integration, the Canadian Council for Muslim Women and the Muslim Power and Control Wheel

F. Gaps

	Gaps in knowledge
2SLGBTQI+ individuals	-need more research on family violence and abuse in 2SLGBTQI+ relationships, particularly about bisexual, trans, two-spirit, intersex and asexual individuals -lack of data on the intersection of ability, gender, sexuality and intimate partner violence
People with disabilities	-need more research on the experience of family violence for people with disabilities, including their intersection with other identity factors -lack of research on the current provisions for decision-making supports and accommodations that apply to victims of family violence (e.g., identifying types of legal arrangements, identifying gaps in legal regimes for regulating legal capacity)
Newcomers	-need more research on male and newcomer victims of family violence -more research on the impact of family violence on gender equity, workplaces, health, poverty, economics and Canadians
Racialized groups	-need more research on the prevalence of family violence in racialized groups, for example, by using methodologies other than police reports or surveys where data is only collected in English or French -lack of research on the experiences of women from racialized groups who have experienced family violence and are involved with child protection services -lack of research on the relationship of the United Nation's International Women's Peace and Security Agenda with the domestic violence experienced by women from racialized groups
Muslims	-lack of knowledge about the intersections of faith with identity factors and their impact on the risk of violence and its outcomes -lack of knowledge about how diversity (e.g., country of origin, cultural variances) within Muslim communities in Canada may impact family violence -lack of research on violence from a collectivist perspective as opposed to the Western conceptualization of family and family violence -lack of understanding of the different perspectives and definitions of protection, safety and accountability