

ACLCO Consultation Policy

The purpose of this policy is to allow for the effective functioning of the Association of Community Legal Clinics of Ontario as the representative voice of its member clinics.

I/ Enabling Authority

1. The objects of the Association of Community Legal Clinics of Ontario (ACLCO) are:
 - i) to improve the legal welfare of the communities served by its member legal clinics;
 - ii) to promote unity and understanding among legal clinics in Ontario;
 - iii) to represent and advocate on behalf of legal clinics in Ontario;
 - iv) to promote and expand the legal clinic system in Ontario.
2. At its April, 2000, Annual General Members Meeting, the ACLCO's membership passed motions directing the Executive to develop a Consultation Policy in accordance with the principles and guidelines articulated in those motions.
3. At its May, 2005 Annual General Meeting the ACLCO's membership passed a motion endorsing the ACLCO as the representative voice of the clinics.

II/ Principles

4. The Association will endeavour to develop an ACLCO position on issues that significantly affect clinics.
5. The Association will report positions taken to the membership as soon as practicable.
6. The Association will endeavour to develop positions that are consistent with the objects of the Association, the fundamental principles on which the community legal clinic system is based, the views of the membership and the previous positions taken by the Association. The Association will endeavour to develop positions that do not have any negative impact on member clinics.
7. The Association will develop an ACLCO position through the formal consultation with the membership described in Part III below in the following situations, when timing and circumstances allow for it:
 - i. on issues that could fundamentally alter the nature of the clinic system, the relationship between clinics and Legal Aid Ontario, the role of clinics, Boards and their staff, the funding mechanism, or the compensation system for clinic staff;
 - ii. on issues where member clinics request the Executive to hold a formal consultation by a written request endorsed by a majority of the members;
 - iii. on issues where the Executive determines that formal consultation is appropriate.

8. The Association will endeavour to support these fundamental principles of the community legal clinic system:
 - i. The delivery of poverty law services through community legal clinics;
 - ii. Local community governance of community legal clinics as independent, non profit corporations governed by a community based board of directors and accountable to their communities;
 - iii. Providing a broad array of legal responses including legal advice and referral, representation in individual cases, law reform, community organizing and development, and public legal education using a wide range of staff including intake workers, community legal workers, lawyers, policy analysts, social workers, administrative staff and volunteers
 - iv. Legal clinics are funded through core, presumptive funding.
9. Each clinic retains its direct relationship with Legal Aid Ontario. The development of an ACLCO position does not preclude member clinics from communicating their own position directly to other clinics, Legal Aid Ontario or any outside agency. The development of an ACLCO position does not bind any individual clinic.

III/ Formal Consultation Process

10. The formal consultation process shall provide member clinics at least 45 days to provide feedback. In situations requiring a more urgent response, the Executive will explain the reason for the urgency and will provide member clinics with as much time as is possible to respond.
11. For any issue[s] on which the ACLCO engages in the formal consultation process, the Executive shall, as soon as is practicable, forward to all member clinics a document setting out the issue[s] involved, the Executive's analysis of the issue[s], and a draft proposed position, if the Executive has developed one.
12. Communications to member clinics shall at a minimum be sent to the Executive Director, or the person(s) responsible for on-site management at the clinic, for distribution to the clinic's board and staff. Communication methods include e-mail and regular mail. The consultation document shall set out the method of and deadline for feedback.
13. Each member clinic may submit one response to a formal consultation on behalf of the clinic board and staff.

(Approved at the ACLCO AGM, May 10, 2008. Replaces any previous Consultation Policies.)