

Legal Coaching for SRL's

National Self-Represented Litigants Project
(NSRLP)

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BETTER ACCESS THROUGH
UNBUNDLING



“At the height of the self-represented litigant phenomenon, we need multiple solutions. Conflict coaching is one such solution and evidences Windsor Law’s focus on Access to Justice.”

*- Georgette Makhoul,
Coaching class instructor*

The NSRLP at Windsor Law

- Dialogue and collaboration
- Research
- Advocacy
- Resources



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SRLs in Canada

- Family court more than half self-representing and up to 80% in urban centres
- Civil and appellate courts up to 40%
- An exponential rise

The National Self-Represented Litigants Research Study 2011-13

- 283 interviews with 259 SRLs in family and civil court
- 60% family, 31% civil
- 86% continued to seek affordable legal assistance
- 53% had previously retained counsel (or had been represented by a Legal Aid Lawyer)

Consistent client complaints

- Not really listening to the client/ not explaining decisions to the client
- “Nothing happened”
- Unexplained legal costs/ billable hours
- Perception that some legal tasks not “worth” the hourly rate
- A failure of empathy and a lack of collaboration
- Clients want to take on some tasks themselves in order to reduce costs: rigidity of the full representation model

What do SRLs want?

- Coaching and mentoring rather than “all-or-nothing” representation
- Assistance with specific tasks (eg document review and hearings presentations)
- Assistance with procedural issues and cultural know-how
- Settlement coaching and preparation
- F2F assistance/ emotional support

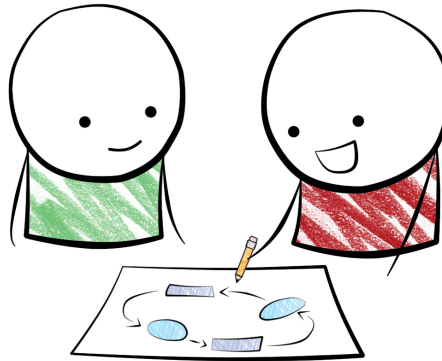
The SRL phenomenon reflects a rapidly changing public culture around legal services



What do SRLs want lawyers to do for them?

- Work with them as partners
- Accept that they may want to and may be able to handle parts of their case themselves
- Move beyond the summary advice model to the “next steps” model

Legal Coaching



**A new service philosophy of
collaboration, responsiveness and
informed choice**

Windsor Law's Coaching Class

- First ever for-credit SRL Conflict Coaching class in a North American law school
- Pairs Windsor Law students with SRLs via a clinic setting
- Continuation of work to develop “coaching” model for SRLs
- Here focusing on the types of partnerships that can be provided by trained and supervised law students



Law students provide SRL “clients” with:

- procedural information and guidance
- help with form completion
- preparation for events such as case conferences and case management hearings, and mediation

The most important thing that law student coaches can offer is the sense that someone is there to listen and provide emotional support.

“(A)s a SRL coach, my most valuable role is allowing the SRL to know that in this swirling twirling mess of professionals and courts and statutes and conflict, there is at least one person who is completely on the same page.”

- *Student coach Shawna Labadie*

Typical feedback from an SRL coaching client:

“[His] listening skills and quick insight relieved my stress, anxiety and the feeling of being so alone within the court system. He kept me more focused, on what I need to do. ... I had no idea of where to start. I am grateful for this coaching process.”

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