LIFE – Legal Information for Everyone | A PLE Toolbox

Resources for lawyers and paralegals delivering Public Legal Education in Ontario

Checklist:

HOW TO PLAN A PUBLIC LEGAL EDUCATION SESSION

INITIAL PLANNING STEPS: 1-2 Months Before The Session

☐ **Connect with an agency –** Working with a community agency will help you connect with a public audience. Respond to a request to deliver a session or search the following online resources to find an agency:

- Community Legal Education Ontario: http://yourlegalrights.on.ca/find-services/service-type/community-and-or-social-services
- Your local library website (e.g. http://www.torontopubliclibrary.ca/branches/)
- www.settlement.org (Services Near Me)
- 211 Ontario: http://www.211ontario.ca

☐ **Pick a date –** Check for any conflicts, including other community events and religious or civic holidays.

☐ **Pick a venue –** Ensure that it is big enough for the anticipated audience, accessible for people with mobility aids, accessible by car and public transportation, has parking close by, is comfortable (some natural light is always helpful) and can support the technology you want to use.

☐ **Schedule an initial meeting with the agency contact –** Use the meeting to assess the needs and interests of the audience, including why the topic was chosen and what to expect in terms of questions the audience may have.

☐ **Develop a promotion plan –** Consider effective ways to promote the session including newsletters, bulletin boards, websites (for the agency and related organizations), public message boards, community radio stations and word of mouth. Make sure to specify what language the session is being offered in, in all promotional materials.

☐ **Determine who will manage registration and how –** If you would like people to sign up in advance determine how registration will be tracked (online or by paper) and whether it will be done by you, someone in your office or someone at the agency. Information you may want to collect from registrants includes :

- Name
- Contact information (most often, an email address)
- Whether they consent to having their contact information shared with other attendees, consent to having pictures taken
- Any accessibility needs and/or any food restrictions.

PLANNING CLOSER TO THE EVENT: 2-3 Weeks Before The Session

☐ **Develop a session plan –** Draft an outline of the information you would like to cover and activities you can incorporate into your session. See the sample session plan attached.

GETTING READY FOR THE EVENT: 1-2 Weeks Before The Session

☐ **If possible, send all registrants a map to the venue with directions and information about parking.**

☐ **Respond to registrants who have accessibility needs –** Provide information about if/how their needs can be accommodated (e.g. the location of ramps, elevators). If you receive an enquiry for interpreting services, you can refer registrants to the following resource: http://www.chs.ca/services/ontario-interpreting-services. You should also find out whether any audio or visual clips you intend to incorporate in your session are available in accessible formats with closed captioning and/or descriptive video. If you receive enquiries from individuals with visual impairments, you may also be able to send them copies in advance of any documents or PowerPoint presentations you prepare in PDF or other formats for them to convert and read on their computers using their own specialized programs or software.

☐ **Prepare handouts on additional resources for the audience –** Bringing relevant, plain language resources to your session will not only supplement the information you present during your session, it will also give the audience something to take home with them for future reference. Check the Your Legal Rights website for plain language handouts http://yourlegalrights.on.ca/ as well as the attached lists provided by CLEO.

Recommended Handpoints :

- Plain language summary of the area of law,
- List of local legal aid and clinic services

- [ ] **Decide what other materials you will distribute to the audience –** Pens, note paper and snacks are all options.

- [ ] **Prepare any PowerPoint presentations, video or audio clips you intend to incorporate in your session –** Ensure that the venue has the equipment to play them. It is good practice to test your presentation before the session.

FINAL PREPARATION: A Few Days Before The Session

- [ ] **Print out materials to assist with making effective referrals –** Bring copies of the attached list of local legal clinics as well as the Law Society Referral Service in order to provide a warm referral for people who require legal advice, representation, or answers to questions about an area of law outside of your area(s) of legal practice.

- [ ] **Confirm the number of registrants –** Ensure that the activities you have planned can work with this number of people and modify if necessary. Ensure there are enough chairs, pens and note paper for the audience.

- [ ] **Exchange contact information with the agency contact –** This will provide you a way of getting in touch in the case of inclement weather or other unforeseen circumstances on the day of the session.

ON THE DAY OF THE SESSION

- [ ] **Arrive at least 45 minutes before the session starts –** This will give you time to set up, get settled and deal with any last-minute logistical questions.

- [ ] **If appropriate, have registrants sign in when they arrive –** This will allow you to keep track of who attended. For larger events, it will be helpful to have someone manage a registration table where attendees can sign in and collect materials.

- [ ] **Hang signs directing attendees to the presentation space and washrooms –** This is especially helpful for a larger event and/or a large venue.

- [ ] **Bring a watch –** If there is no clock in the room, make sure you have a way of keeping track of time and ensuring you are on track to cover the main points of your presentation. Although your goal is to cover everything in your session plan, realistically, count on covering two-thirds of your presentation. If your audience is engaged and asking questions throughout, this is a good sign that your presentation is meeting the needs of the audience, even if it means you will not cover all your points.

AFTER THE SESSION

- [ ] **Thank anyone who helped with the session –** Send thank you emails to the agency contact, all other speakers and anyone who assisted with coordinating logistics.
- [ ] **Follow-up on any requests for referrals.**
- [ ] **Ask the agency for feedback –** The agency contact may be best-positioned to collect feedback from an audience that they have regular contact with. Supplement your own evaluation results with this information to help prepare for future sessions.