

# HIV & AIDS LEGAL CLINIC ONTARIO (HALCO)

## STRATEGIC PLANNING

### FINAL REPORT AND STRATEGIC PLAN

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#### INTRODUCTION

At the beginning of 2010, the HIV & AIDS Legal Clinic Ontario (HALCO) Board of Directors decided that HALCO should develop its first ever Strategic Plan. In March 2010, the Board's Strategic Planning Committee engaged Glen Brown and Associates to support the development of the plan.

This report summarizes the strategic planning process and the resulting strategic plan, which was approved by the Board and will be presented to the HALCO membership at the HALCO Annual General Meeting in September 2011.

#### THE STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

The strategic planning process began with an environmental scan to assess strengths, weaknesses, shifts in the environment and potential strategic issues facing HALCO. The environmental scan included: a review of internal and external documents; a session with the Strategic Planning Committee; a focus group session with HALCO staff; and interviews with a range of key informants knowledgeable about HALCO's environment including other local, provincial and national AIDS organizations, other legal clinics and professionals, funding bodies, similar clinics in the United States, health care professionals and others. This information was supplemented by a small number of interviews with people living with HIV/AIDS (PHA).

An initial discussion paper was the focus of a facilitated session with the Board of Directors on September 22, 2010. That session, along with additional research resulting from it, led to a larger options paper.

The full HALCO Board and staff met for a one-day special session in November 2010 to review the discussion paper, reflect on the environmental scan and discuss strategic directions for HALCO.

This report reflects the discussion and direction from those sessions.

## ENVIRONMENTAL SCAN RESULTS

The environmental scan identified a number of significant strengths that HALCO can build upon moving forward. HALCO's range of services is viewed as excellent in quality and essential in nature. There was exceptionally high praise for HALCO's legal services, case work, legal education and advocacy work. The recent expansion into immigration law was widely praised. HALCO's staff is seen to go 'above and beyond' to meet client needs. HALCO is seen to be a welcoming place to a diverse range of clientele. HALCO is seen to be responsive to changing needs in the epidemic, and is seen to provide trusted leadership on critical issues within its realm.

The areas of concern include a constant struggle with limited resources – from a limited ranges of sources – and seemingly unlimited demand; this raises an ongoing challenge of when and how to say “no”. Communications, community relations and membership engagement were noted as areas for improvement.

The economic and political climate over the coming years may pose challenges to HALCO and to the people it serves. The criminalization of HIV non-disclosure will likely continue to require HALCO's response, as will related stigma for people living with HIV/AIDS (PHAs). On a positive note, there may be opportunities to expand HALCO's publications and profile.

## RECOMMENDED STRATEGIC PLAN - HALCO 2011 TO 2014

### HALCO MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the HIV & AIDS Legal Clinic Ontario is to provide legal services to persons living with HIV/AIDS in Ontario that are relevant to their well-being and that enable them to participate fully in the communities in which they live.

### HALCO MANDATE

HALCO will pursue its mission by offering the following range of legal services:

**Brief Legal Services:** HALCO provides free legal advice in its areas of practice, as well as broader legal information and referrals, to all people living with or affected by HIV/AIDS (PHAs) in Ontario.

**Legal Representation:** HALCO provides free legal representation, in its areas of legal practice, to low-income PHAs in Ontario who meet financial eligibility guidelines.

**Public Legal Education:** HALCO provides information in print, on-line and in person to help people understand legal issues, advocate for themselves, and seek broader social change. HALCO also helps legal and other public officials understand the impact of the legal system on PHAs.

**Law Reform:** HALCO works to improve laws and the legal system to better meet the needs of PHAs. HALCO supports and partners with other groups in pursuit of social justice, and works on legal issues that could have a broad impact on the HIV community.

### HALCO VISION

HALCO's vision is a society where laws and the legal system help reduce discrimination, stigma, poverty and injustice faced by people living with HIV/AIDS.

### HALCO STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES

HALCO believes that:

1. People living with HIV and AIDS are confronted with unique legal problems of enormous proportions and complexity;

2. Those best equipped to make choices regarding HIV and AIDS issues and problems, are those individuals who are HIV positive themselves;
3. People living with HIV and AIDS must have control over their own lives.
4. The HIV and AIDS affected communities are very diverse and are confronted by overwhelming challenges derived from both their diversity and from their common experience as people living with HIV and AIDS.
5. It is necessary to create and foster a climate of understanding and mutual respect for the dignity and worth of people living with HIV and AIDS; and
6. The confidentiality, bodily security, autonomy and privacy of people living with AIDS and HIV must be respected, which includes but is not limited to:
  - a) the right of individuals to exercise control over their own medical treatment;
  - b) the right of individuals to exercise control over decisions concerning their own socio-economic position;
  - c) the right of all persons living with HIV or AIDS to be fully informed of all process and procedures in which their interests are in any way involved; and
  - d) the right of all persons living with HIV or AIDS to consent, or withhold their consent, in all matters affecting them.

#### HALCO STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS 2011-2014

Over the next three years, HALCO will strive to meet its mission and pursue its vision with some of the following key directions:

- 1) **Criteria for Service Provision:** HALCO will work to refine and communicate the criteria by which it offers services, accepts requests or pursues opportunities.

Criteria could include:

Brief Legal Services: Client is HIV positive and legal issue is within HALCO areas of practice.

Legal Representation: Client is HIV positive, issue is within HALCO areas of practice, and client meets income requirements. Test cases determined by availability of resources weighed against breadth and depth of impact of case.

Public Legal Education: Availability of resources, direct or indirect reach to PHAs, potential for improving capacity to respond to legal issues facing PHAs.

Law Reform: Availability of resources, reach to policy makers, impact on laws and the legal system to help reduce discrimination, stigma, poverty and injustice faced by PHAs.

- 2) **Areas of Practice:** HALCO will work to refine the areas of practice for legal representation by referring out cases that are non-HIV specific, where appropriate alternatives are available.

In particular, HALCO will strive to refer out cases involving landlord/tenant issues and human rights complaints. Clients will be advised to inform HALCO if the alternative is not meeting their needs. HALCO will pursue legal education strategies to enhance the capacity of other legal service providers to serve PHAs well.

- 3) **Membership & Governance:** HALCO will work to increase the number and enhance the engagement of members. HALCO will work to enhance the effectiveness of its governance model.

HALCO will recruit members by actively inviting clients, legal education participants, web site visitors, other lawyers, partners and participants in networks to join. HALCO will strive to better engage members with more communication and more volunteer opportunities. HALCO will enhance governance by reviewing policies and By-Law #1; developing an improved recruitment process; improving Board orientation and education; and developing succession plans and term limits.

- 4) **Communication:** HALCO will expand and improve its communications efforts to reach more audiences with greater impact.

HALCO will develop a media relations strategy including policies and procedures. HALCO will seek funding for an expanded range of public education materials, an improved web site, and a new 'branding' strategy.

- 5) **Funding Diversification:** HALCO will strive to increase and diversify its revenue sources.