

## NEWS RELEASE

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### OTF grant helps OJEN provide legal education for young mothers in Hamilton

**Hamilton, ON** – A grant of \$37,400 from the **Ontario Trillium Foundation's (OTF)** Seed fund has made it possible for **OJEN** to develop and pilot a new public legal education program for young mothers in Hamilton. The multi-session program was delivered in partnership with two community-based organizations that provide support to young mothers, St. Martin's Manor and Regina's Place. This grant project was completed earlier this year, and OJEN hopes to encourage replication of this public legal education program in other parts of the province.

"The OJEN continues to do important work in our community in legal education to protect and help those in need," said Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas MPP Sandy Shaw. "Their pilot project has developed a key new program to support young mothers here in Hamilton, that will help to make the legal system more accessible."

OJEN's "Family Law for Young Parents: Challenge and Change" is an interactive public legal education program that focuses on building the legal capability of young mothers. Over the course of six to eight sessions, young mothers are introduced to reliable sources of public legal information and practice legal life skills. Family law lawyers are recruited as program volunteers to build connections between young mothers, community partners and the legal community.

"Navigating issues of custody, child support, access and child protection can be very challenging and intimidating," explains OJEN's Executive Director, Jess Reekie. "We can explain legal terms and practice communication skills with young mothers, but introducing them to the professionals who work within the legal system and having these professionals take the time to listen to their questions and concerns, helps build greater comfort and confidence when interacting with the legal system."

The Ontario Justice Education Network (OJEN) is a charitable not-for-profit organization with a province-wide mandate. We develop innovative educational tools that introduce young people to the justice system and help prepare them to manage the legal aspects of problems that arise in their own lives. For more information visit [ojen.ca](http://ojen.ca).

The Ontario Trillium Foundation (OTF) is an agency of the Government of Ontario, and one of Canada's leading granting foundations. Last year, nearly \$112M was invested into 1,384 community projects and partnerships to build healthy and vibrant communities and strengthen the impact of Ontario's non-profit sector. In 2020/21, OTF supported Ontario's economic recovery by helping non-profit organizations rebuild and recover from the impacts of COVID-19. Visit [otf.ca](http://otf.ca) to learn more.

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