

What Is The Family Justice and Mental Health Social Lab?

The Family Justice and Mental Health Social Lab (FJM Lab) is a landmark collaborative project that aims to improve the experience of litigants with mental health challenges in the family justice system. The FJM Lab takes a collaborative and user-centered approach to problem solving. It brings together experts such as social workers, lawyers, mental health workers, psychologists, family physicians, academics, and children and youth advocates in an interdisciplinary environment to develop pilot projects that address family justice and mental health needs from a user perspective.

Who is Participating?

The FJM Lab, which is the first of its kind in Ontario, is led by the Winkler Institute for Dispute Resolution at York University's Osgoode Hall Law School and is supported by Legal Aid Ontario and the Ontario Psychological Association. Our partners include the Ministry of the Attorney General, the Law Commission of Ontario, Office of the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth, Office of the Children's Lawyer, the Ontario Association of Social Workers, the National Self-Represented Litigants Project, Native and Child Family Services Toronto, and the Canadian Mental Health Association, Ontario.

"We know that the justice system is struggling to overcome the 'implementation gap' and to design solutions that put the public first. Our Family Justice and Mental Health Social Lab demonstrates how working collaboratively across disciplines with proven innovation methods, like design thinking, can improve our ability to create effective user-focused solutions,"

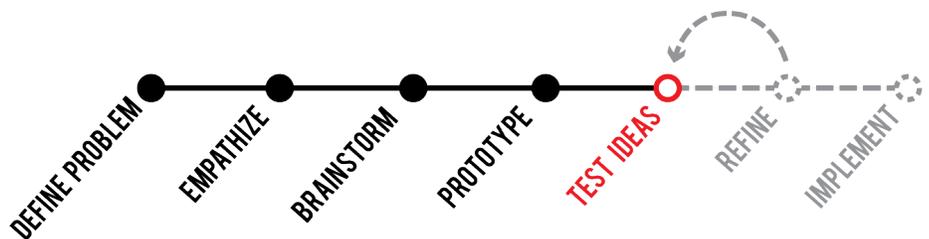
~ Nicole Aylwin, Assistant Director of the Winkler Institute and the lead designer of the FJM Lab process.

What is Design Thinking?

Using a variety of innovation methods, in particular the method of Design Thinking, the FJM Lab has been able to approach complex justice problems and generate compelling solutions. Design thinking, originally employed in the world of industrial and product design, has seen widespread adoption in recent years by companies, governments, and organizations looking to create innovative solutions to complex problems. Design thinking consistently generates creative products, services, and experiences that people want to buy or use. It does this by guiding creators through a structured process that has the *user at its center*. In brief, the design thinking process involves (1) beginning with empathy in order to fully understand the users of the service and the service ecosystem (2) defining the problem collectively and from a user perspective (3) brainstorming a multitude of potential solutions (4) choosing the best solutions to prototype (5) testing the prototypes (6) and repeating steps 4 and 5 until the product or service is ready to implement.

Where is the FJM Lab in the Process?

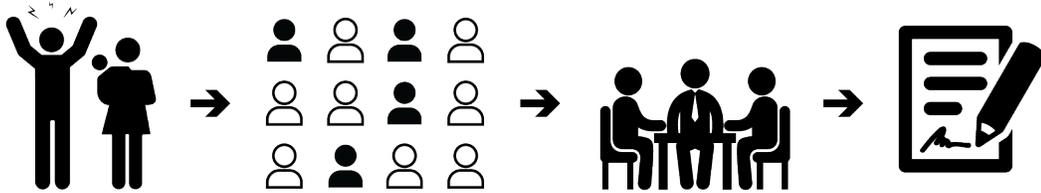
The FJM Lab opened in November of last year (2014), and has since moved through the problem definition, brainstorming, and prototyping phases. Currently the Lab Team is seeking feedback on the prototypes they have created. Following successful testing and redesign, and pending support from relevant stakeholders, these prototypes are well on their way to entering the 21st century justice space.



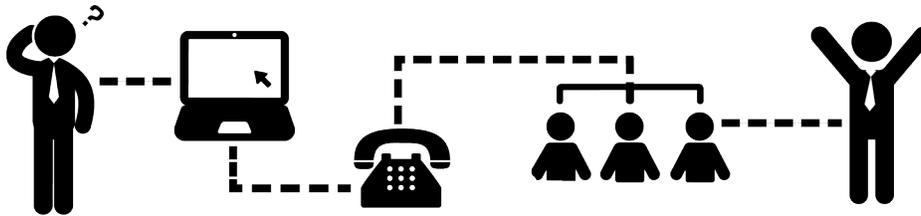
What Have We Created?

Our lab participants have created 3 distinct prototypes for the families in conflict and the professionals that serve them, and we are looking for feedback to expand and improve the design of these proposals.

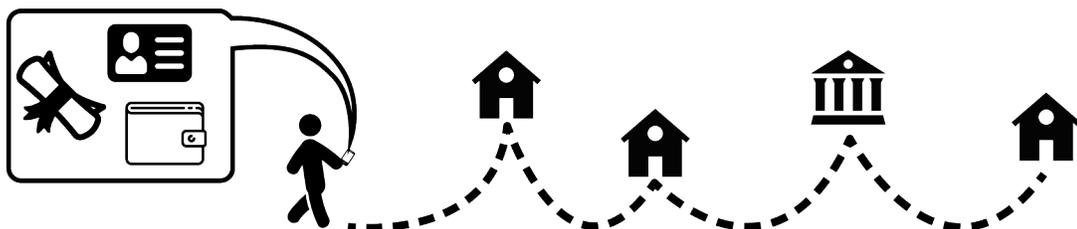
1. **Family Support Table** – An alternative dispute resolution option for families who are struggling with mental health and family justice issues. Once a family is identified as qualifying for the Family Support Table, a network of professionals, which could include mental health professionals, educators (such as a guidance counselor), financial planners, faith-based intermediaries, elders, dietitian, etc., will be convened to work with the family to develop and formalize a family plan that includes ongoing guidance, aftercare and an exit strategy.



2. **Help, Educate, & Link Professionals "H.E.L.P"** – A confidential telephone and online communication network of multi-disciplinary professionals, including psychologists, lawyers, pharmacists, family doctors, social workers, etc., that will provide answers to questions by fellow professionals who may need some general guidance/information on an issue related to a family justice and mental health case/patient. The goal would be to provide an informal space where professionals have access to other professionals in different fields. H.E.L.P may be particularly attractive to more junior professionals who have not yet established large inter-professional relationships and networks.



3. **Track My Life** – A mobile phone application that would provide youth with access to their basic information, such as health card number, SIN number, medical records, court dates, drivers license number etc. This app was inspired by the desire to provide more agency to youth who, once in the system, can feel that they have very little individual control over their situation, or access to knowledge that directly impacts them. The app would ensure that youth themselves have control of, and access to, important personal data and records, even when their family life may be in turmoil.



Contact Us!

If you have any comments, feedback, or would like further information on this project please contact Nicole Aylwin, Assistant Director of the Winkler Institute at naylwin@osgoode.yorku.ca and visit our website for updates on the FJMH Lab at winklerinstitute.ca/practice-pilots/