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**RESEARCH**

**RURAL & REMOTE ACCESS TO JUSTICE: INTAKE  
PLATFORM RESEARCH**



Canadian Forum on Civil Justice  Forum canadien sur la justice civile



**RURAL & REMOTE ACCESS TO JUSTICE**  
A BOLDNESS PROJECT

# Rural & Remote Access to Justice Intake Platform Research

November 2015, Toronto, ON



Canadian Forum on Civil Justice • Forum canadien sur la justice civile

## the Canadian Forum on Civil Justice for the Rural and Remote Access to Justice Boldness Project.

### **The Rural and Remote Access to Justice Boldness Project:**

This review has been commissioned to support the work of the Rural and Remote Access to Justice Boldness Project (RRBP). The RRBP is a special initiative funded by Legal Aid Ontario (LAO) to transform legal service delivery. It is led by four community legal clinic Executive Directors and a LAO staff liaison working in rural and remote communities. The project partners are using a social innovation methodology (The Boldness Collaboratory™) to investigate and experiment with a multiplicity of ways to increase access to justice for people living on a low income in rural and remote communities of Ontario. By commissioning the review, the partners wished to identify the current trends, gaps in the research, and promising practices in service delivery. Specifically, they wished to know how “rural and remote” is understood, what is known about access to justice challenges and opportunities in rural and remote communities, whether the research to date has documented differences with urban communities, and how other provinces and countries have handled the access to justice challenges in rural and remote areas.

## OVERVIEW

This memo provides a wide scan of tools and platforms that either are, or ostensibly could be, used to conduct intake assessment and document storage in a clinic context. Our findings include comprehensive intake platforms that are designed exclusively for intake purposes, as well as a suite of tools that have broader application but lend themselves to application in an intake environment. We looked at tools marketed to professionals, institutions, businesses, and consumers.

In the legal sector, **A2J Author** is the most widely used platform, but does not have the polish of the comparable **IntakeQ** platform used by medical practitioners. Both these tools are examples of comprehensive “designed-for-intake” platforms that provide end-to-end intake features. Though it could use a design refresh, A2J Author has an established track record of improving intake quantity and quality. Aside from A2J Author, the only other legal intake-specific tool we found in operation was provided by Clio, a company best known for their legal enterprise software. Geared towards small to medium sized law firms, Clio’s intake tool is essentially a dressed up version of Google forms that integrates with the company’s popular case management software.

Outside of the dedicated intake platform environment, we explored a variety of tools that have the features necessary to create and manage an online intake process. **Neota Logic**’s technology is an example of a widely applicable decision tree and value-weighting tool that could be used as a front end sorting, advice-giving, system. It is designed for non-programmers. Another category of possible intake solutions cater to corporate or government customers, and are marketed as robust “survey” tools. Most of these survey systems guide the user through a series of questions or steps, collect information, allow for document uploading and storage, all while employing logic to sort users into different categories or move them along different pathways. Of these tools, **Voxco** stood out as the most comprehensive survey creation, collection, and analysis platform. Voxco offers multiplatform survey delivery and collection (phone, online, and paper forms), which may be a good fit for a clinic environment that already has a physical, online, and telephone presence. All of these features come at a price that may prove prohibitively steep for legal aid clinics. Fortunately there are several budget options available, at the cost of some features and customizability. Survey services like Wufoo, Typeform, and Google Forms, all allow for document collection and storage, and logic-based form creation.

During our research, we also discovered an intake assessment tool called the **V-SPDAT**, used to assess the eligibility of individuals for different levels of housing service interventions. While not an online intake tool, it is a good example of a highly robust assessment supported by evidence and paired with thorough training and implementation support.

## BACKGROUND: ACCESS TO COMPUTERS AND THE INTERNET IN CANADA

In considering the effectiveness and scope of implementing an online intake platform, it is important to gain a sense of the demographics of internet and computer usage in Canada, and how internet usage is changing and modernizing.

**General Usage:** According to the 2012 Canadian Internet Use Survey (CIUS), 83% of Canadian households had access to the Internet at home in 2012, compared with 79% in 2010. The rates of household access were highest in British Columbia and Alberta at 86%, followed by Ontario at 84%.

**Location:** About 85% of households located in census metropolitan areas had home Internet access, compared with 75% of households outside these areas. This shows that internet usage rates are generally 10% lower in rural and remote areas.

**Income:** Almost all households in the top income quartile (98%), or those with household incomes of \$94,000 or more, had home Internet access, compared with 58% of households in the lowest income quartile, or those with household incomes of \$30,000 or less.

**Internet Usage by the Elderly:** Most of the income lag can be accounted for by the lack of Internet use by older, low-income Canadians. In 2012, 28% of Canadians aged 65 or over in the lowest income quartile used the Internet, compared with 95% of individuals aged 16 to 24 in households in the lowest income quartile.

The rise in Canadians using the Internet can be partially attributed to increased use by those who are 65 or older. Internet use by Canadians in this demographic rose from 40% in 2010 to 48% in 2012.

**Multiple devices:** About 69% of connected households used more than one type of device to go online in 2012. Therefore, an important aspect of developing any online intake system would be to ensure it is fully responsive, compatible with a wide range of devices. Laptop and desktop computers remain the preferred types of hardware of Canadians to access the Internet from home, with 74% and 62% of connected households relying on those devices respectively in 2012. That said, the proportion of connected households using wireless handheld devices from home to go online has increased from 35% in 2010 to 59% in 2012.

**Video Calls:** The percentage of Internet users that made phone calls or video calls over the Internet via technology such as Skype or Facetime rose from 24% in 2010 to 43% in 2012. This is a good indication that building VoIP integration into an online intake platform would engage a significant part of internet users.

**Community Access:** Given the digital divide, it is unsurprising that poorer Canadians rely more heavily on public access points such as libraries to use the Internet. The biggest users of library Internet access are Canadians aged 16 to 24, where 21.5% used Internet library access in 2012 (the overall figure for Canadians was 9.7%). When broken down by income, the number increases to 26.8% for the poorest Canadians in that demographic, compared to 16.3% for the wealthiest in that group.

**Barriers to Internet Usage:** Of those households that did not have home Internet access in 2012, 61% reported they had no need for or interest in it. About 20% of households reported having no access because of the cost of the service or equipment.

	<b>Name</b> A2J Author
	<b>Type</b> End-To-End Intake Platform
	<b>Used By</b> Widely used by legal clinics in the United States, pilot projects underway in Canada
<b>Brief</b>	Adaptable and scalable online platform that can be used to conduct guided, autonomous interviews, and assemble and store documents for users. Designed for legal users, and for organizations, clinics, and courts who want to build a custom document assembly process.
<b>Features</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Document Assembly</li> <li>• Guided pathways</li> <li>• Compatible with HotDocs for document assembly</li> <li>• Interviews are stored as XML files (v5.0)</li> <li>• Mobile viewer in progress</li> <li>• Can be used with Windows, Mac, or Linux - moved from software to being cloud-based</li> </ul>
<b>Strengths</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Widely used: 14 Programs using A2J Author in the U.S., and 35+ programs researching for future online intake projects using A2J Author</li> <li>• Easy to use tile navigation system (by category); feasible technology; scalable; easy to update; good resource hub.</li> <li>• Does not require a software package to be downloaded and installed on the author's machine</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Free for interested courts, legal service orgs, and members of the HotDocs development community for non-commercial use</li> <li>• Cloud-based</li> <li>• Easy for those who have no programming background to create guided interviews</li> </ul>
<b>Limitations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does not have performance measuring capabilities built in; no VoIP capability;</li> <li>• Accessibility: no screen reader capabilities or voice recognition technology,</li> <li>• Does not Integrate with Case Management and Database Management Systems</li> <li>• Dated interface and graphics</li> </ul>

	<b>Name</b> IntakeQ
	<b>Type</b> <b>End-To-End Intake Platform</b>
	<b>Used By</b> Some medical practices in the United States
<b>Brief</b>	Facilitates an online intake form creating, distributing, and collecting process, as well as the subsequent storage and sharing of relevant patient documentation and information.
<b>Features</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consent to Treatment forms</li> <li>• Convert existing Intake Forms</li> <li>• E-Signature support</li> <li>• Accept online booking and payments</li> <li>• Sync with Google calendar</li> <li>• Flexible question types</li> <li>• Download responses as PDF</li> <li>• Conditional Skip Logic</li> <li>• SMS Appointment Reminders</li> <li>• Multi-user Support</li> <li>• Send notes along with Form</li> <li>• Printer-ready Intake Forms</li> <li>• Accept file attachments</li> </ul>
<b>Strengths</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• HIPAA Compliant</li> <li>• Integrates with existing website</li> <li>• Customizable; can use own branding</li> <li>• Flexible question formats</li> <li>• Modern interface</li> <li>• Cloud-based</li> </ul>

<b>Limitations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Designed for medical professionals</li> <li>• Pay a monthly fee to use</li> <li>• No Skype/video integration</li> <li>• Simple; designed for shorter, less complex forms</li> </ul>
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	<b>Name</b> Neota Logic
	<b>Type</b> <b>Logic-based Decision Tree Tool</b>
	<b>Used By</b> Businesses, Legal Practitioners
<b>Brief</b>	This tool was built to make the construction of logic tree and weighted logic decision survey making easy for non-programmers. Recently it has been used by <u>students in Melbourne</u> to create a “smart” legal advice guide.
<b>Features</b>	<p>Neota Logic combines rules, reasoning, decision management, and document automation. It enables non-programmers to rapidly build and deploy rules-based applications. A typical use case for Neota would involve:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Asking questions of the user to collect facts</li> <li>2. Collecting data from other sources - e.g. databases, other websites</li> <li>3. Applying reasoning to the facts and data</li> <li>4. Reaching conclusions based on reasoning</li> <li>5. Execute actions based on the conclusions - e.g. send email, update a database, trigger a step in a workflow</li> </ol>
<b>Strengths</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ongoing partnership with Georgetown Law to create 2 new apps to develop a triage system</li> <li>• Open ended, flexible process creation</li> <li>• Can employ Decision Tree/Path based logic, as well as if/then, Decision Tables, and Weighted Scorings to guide users through a process (compared to only if/then logic available on other platforms)</li> <li>• Good online training videos and customer support to help learn and use the platform</li> <li>• No need to understand code</li> <li>• Has been used in the intake context to good effect</li> <li>• Very clean user interface; good design</li> </ul>
<b>Limitations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Open ended and fairly complex compared to other platforms (survey, intake, etc.)</li> <li>• Possibly costly, undisclosed cost</li> </ul>

	<b>Name</b>	Voxco, Snap, CheckMarket, etc.
	<b>Type</b>	<b>Survey Creator &amp; Manager</b>
	<b>Used By</b>	Government, Private Industry
<b>Brief</b>	<p>These companies offer custom survey creation, distribution, and collection, as well as analysis services. Many have document upload capabilities. Survey systems created by these companies are professional, polished, and secure; they are also costly compared to consumer-facing platforms.</p>	
<b>Features</b>	<p>Vary according to company/service but most include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Custom survey creation</li> <li>• Document uploading</li> <li>• Database creation and monitoring</li> <li>• Multi-platform survey delivery (online, telephone, email, paper based)</li> <li>• Robust survey metrics</li> </ul>	
<b>Strengths</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Good customer support</li> <li>• Highly professional result</li> <li>• No need to personally create the platform or surveys, work is done by the company</li> </ul>	
<b>Limitations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cost</li> <li>• Unclear how flexible their models are in terms of functioning in a 24/7 365 day/year environment (these services advertise as periodical survey collection outfits, and not intake tool providers)</li> </ul>	

	<b>Name</b>	Wufoo
	<b>Type</b>	<b>Survey Creator &amp; Manager</b>

	Used By Both consumers and professional survey creators
<b>Brief</b>	This fully featured survey creation, distribution, and collection tool also supports document collection and management, and rates highly for its ease of use. It offers a relatively inexpensive pricing plan compared to the other professional survey platforms.
<b>Features</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• User survey &amp; form creation</li> <li>• Collect payment (from credit cards, paypal etc.)</li> <li>• Pushes notifications when a form is filled out</li> <li>• Dynamic forms (logic and branching)</li> <li>• Collect documents</li> <li>• Multiple users can access the same administrative account</li> <li>• Advanced analytics</li> <li>• Export Data</li> </ul>
<b>Strengths</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reliable and easy to build surveys</li> <li>• Hundreds of templates and themes</li> <li>• Flexible pricing (can scale up after testing and remain affordable)</li> <li>• Used by small and medium sized businesses</li> </ul>
<b>Limitations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Paid, not free</li> <li>• Does not have a client management suite</li> <li>• Unclear how easy it would be to manage files or link them to cloud storage for post form-filling access</li> </ul>

	<b>Name</b> Clio + Zapier + Cloud Storage (Google Drive)
	<b>Type</b> End-to-End Intake Platform
	Used By Small to Mid-Size law offices using other Clio practice management software
<b>Brief</b>	Extends Clio's practice management software to include a tailored online client intake platform. The intake information can be link, using Zapier, to any cloud storage service to allow clients to upload documents for future access
<b>Features</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Questions on Google forms link to custom fields in Clio</li> <li>• Intake information integrated with Clio's case management system</li> <li>• Allows for logic based questions (if/then only)</li> <li>• Connects to Cloud Storage</li> </ul>

<b>Strengths</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Eliminates having to store hard copy forms and enter manually in Clio</li> <li>Simple to set up and start using quickly</li> </ul>
<b>Limitations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Separate cost for Clio's client management system</li> <li>Google forms provides a simple but relatively limited survey system</li> <li>Lightweight option tailored for the law firm environment</li> <li></li> </ul>

 <p>Ask awesomely</p>	<b>Name</b> <u>Typeform + Zapier + Cloud Storage</u>
	<b>Type</b> <b>Survey Creator &amp; Manager</b>
<b>Used By</b> Both consumers and businesses	
<b>Brief</b>	Arguably the most simple, professional, and barebones survey collection tool. When paired with Zapier and a cloud storage service like Google Drive or Dropbox, can also offer document collection and storage features. Typeform allows logic-based survey questions.
<b>Features</b>	Comparable to <a href="#">Google Forms</a> , another lightweight and adaptable survey tool, integrated exclusively with Google Drive. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Customizable surveys</li> <li>Logic based decision making (available in paid typeform, free on Google Forms)</li> <li>File upload available with typeform (not Google Forms)</li> </ul>
<b>Strengths</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>If using Google Forms - Free; if using typeform, relatively inexpensive</li> <li>Quick to create and implement</li> <li>Links to Cloud storage</li> <li>Can embed (Typeform) into an existing website</li> </ul>
<b>Limitations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Requires more design know-how than wufoo (especially Typeform)</li> <li>Free, or inexpensive, but relatively limited offering</li> <li>Limited to survey creation and collection, not much in the way of analytics or document/case management possibilities</li> </ul>

	<b>Name</b> VI-SPDAT
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Type	Screening Tool
Used By	Community service providers
<b>Brief</b>	VI-SPDAT is a pre-screening, or triage tool designed to be used by all providers within a community to quickly assess the health and social needs of homeless persons and match them with the most appropriate support and housing interventions that are available.
<b>Features</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• VI-SPDAT combines the strengths of two assessments:</li> <li>• The Vulnerability Index (VI), is a street outreach tool. Rooted in medical research, the VI helps determine the chronicity and medical vulnerability of homeless individuals.</li> <li>• The Service Prioritization Decision Assistance Tool (SPDAT), is an intake and case management tool. Based on a wide body of social science research and extensive field testing, the tool helps service providers allocate resources in a logical, targeted way.</li> </ul>
<b>Strengths</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Easily integrated with existing Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) systems</li> <li>• Reviewed by experts in health, mental health, addictions, housing and homelessness and has proven to be effective for a range of populations from an age, gender and cultural perspectives</li> <li>• Relatively easy to implement</li> <li>• Free</li> <li>• Required one or two-day training program for frontline staff, team leaders, supervisors and other important community stakeholders</li> <li>• Used by over 100 communities in North America</li> </ul>
<b>Limitations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not an online intake tool - administered in-person or over the phone</li> <li>• Developed to address homelessness, not legal needs</li> </ul>
<b>Resources</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">V-SPDAT Manual</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Video introducing V-SPDAT</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">SPDAT and VI-SPDAT Evidence Brief</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">V-SPDAT Template</a></li> </ul>

#### FURTHER READING

- [“Beyond Online Intake: Looking at Triage and Expert Systems”](#), Webinar, Legal Services National Technology Assistance Project (LSNTAP), December 2013. This presentation advocates for triage before intake is carried out, which would prevent low-priority clients to apply only to be turned away, while at the same time allowing them access to other resources that meet their needs. Projects in Washington, DC, Illinois, Massachusetts and New Mexico have undertaken to develop integrated triage and online intake systems.
- [“Online Intake and Online Screening Systems in Legal Services”](#), Database of current intake platforms used by different jurisdictions by Legal Services National Technology Assistance Project (LSNTAP).

- [Massachusetts Legal Resource Finder](#), online triage platform built on Drupal
- Richard Zorza, "[The Access to Justice “Sorting Hat”: Towards a System of Triage and Intake that Maximizes Access and Outcomes](#)" (2013), online: Self-Represented Litigants Network.
- [Online Intake Best Practices](#), Webinar, Legal Services National Technology Assistance Project (LSNTAP), October 2012.
- Karin Romans, "[Top Ten Tips from Evaluating Online Intake: What are we learning?](#)" (2012), online: Connecting Justice Communities.