

FORUM DATE:	FORUM TITLE:	REPORT PREPARED BY:
February 13th, 2019	Emotional Wellness Community Forum	RRLIP Staff

PURPOSE OF FORUM

Each year, the Regina Region Local Immigration Partnership (RRLIP) hosts a Community Forum. The purpose of each forum is to provide project updates and bring together stakeholders and community to discuss local opportunities and challenges and identify solutions. Developed in consultation with newcomers and those who work with them, this year's forum focused on the emotional and mental wellbeing of newcomers.

FORUM GOALS

- Newcomers are connected to local service providers (learn about what supports exist in the community)
- An increased cross-cultural understanding of mental health occurs
- Service providers learn about service gaps impacting newcomers
- Service providers learn about barriers for newcomers in accessing services

FORUM FORMAT (9:00 A.M. – 12 P.M.)

- Welcome
- RRLIP Project Update
- Service Provider Presentations (3 to 5 minutes in length)
- Brainstorming discussion (4 questions to be answered)
- Brainstorming sharing including solutions
- Information tables (agency hosted)



WHO ATTENDED?

Over **80 participants** attended the Community Forum and they included:

- **Service providers** offering emotional health services for individuals and families
 - The Caring Place
 - Regina Community Clinic
 - Mobile Crisis Services
 - Regina Immigrant Women Centre
 - Family Service Regina
 - Catholic Family Services
 - Police and Crisis Team (PACT)
 - Regina Open Door Society
 - Regina Sexual Assault Centre
 - 211 Saskatchewan (information and referral)
- **Newcomers, community members and other support staff** interested in learning about emotional wellness and stress supports, as well as sharing ideas about barriers for newcomers, in accessing appropriate supports

COUNTRIES OF ORIGIN REPRESENTED

- Nigeria
- India
- France
- Bangladesh
- Congo
- Iraq
- Pakistan
- Singapore
- Thailand
- Saudi Arabia
- Ghana
- Canada
- Somalia
- Philippines
- China
- Venezuela
- Latvia
- Iran
- Burundi
- Syria
- Mexico
- Bolivia

BRAINSTORMING DISCUSSION RESULTS

Newcomers, service agencies and other interested individuals discussed these 4 questions:

Q 1 How is mental health viewed and referred to in your culture?

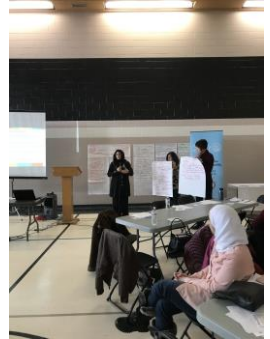
Answers included:

- Evil thing
- Shameful
- Something to be ignored/it will pass
- Fearful of the effects of treatment
- Taboo to talk about
- Treatment in home country still primitive
- If you are unwell it will be permanently on record/never go away
- The word counsellor is a scary one/means you are crazy if you have to see a counsellor
- Not recognized outside of north America/stigmatized
- Few facilities that deal with metal health issues
- Not acknowledged/ avoided
- It's 'not a disease'
- Not acknowledged/avoided
- Often hidden
- A private matter that's not to be shared
- A stigma exists to speaking out
- Families are embarrassed, so often hidden from others
- Fearful to seek help because family will ostracize you
- It's a private issue not to be shared with anyone
- People with mental health issues are looked at as "psycho"
- Family shame keeps the ill individual from seeking treatment

Q 2 What gaps exist in Canadian mental health supports?

Answers included:

- Lack of social and community supports (*shared by many participants)
- Language barriers
- Limited awareness of existing services (*shared by many participants)
- The Canadian system does not use a holistic approach
- Connections to culture need to be maintained
- A western medicine approach doesn't always work
- The system can't keep up with the growing number of individuals requiring mental health supports
- Supports are needed to address loneliness
- The ability to guarantee confidentiality
- Waitlist challenges
- Lack of opportunities for social interactions between neighbors/friends, etc. (often the method other cultures use to support each other)



- Lack of education and awareness of mental health
- Need for services that are culturally appropriate
- More interpretation services required
- Accessibility issues
- Challenges with response time in the mental health system
- Need for additional supports for children and youth
- Need for open discussions in schools (supports should start earlier)
- Few doctors taking new patients
- Cultural barriers exist that must be overcome before newcomers feel comfortable in accessing services
- Lack of proper screening
- Few resources to deal with large numbers requiring services
- Lack of follow-up with patients
- Lack of understanding between Canadian born children and newcomer children, so a need to foster understanding and relationships for better mental health outcomes
- A system that doesn't know how to address the stigma of mental health

Q 3 What barriers exist to accessing mental health supports?

Answers included:

- Cultural differences
- Lack of acceptance of mental illness in other cultures
- Cultural and religious barriers to accessing services
- Isolation
- Lack of mental health resources in other languages
- Pressure from within the family (e.g. shame, embarrassment)
- Language barrier
- Privacy concerns to accessing services
- Too few resources to meet the demands of all newcomers
- Navigating the mental health care system (where to go, what services exist, etc.)
- Fear of others in the community finding out
- Lack of knowledge of existing services
- Financial barriers (e.g. cost of medications, if prescribed)
- Lack of childcare and transportation
- Lack of tools and resources that can be easily used by newcomer populations
- Delayed assessment
- Privacy concerns to accessing services
- Little time to attend to own mental health needs (e.g. need a job to feed my family instead)
- Fear of interpreters sharing confidential information with others in their community
- Weather challenges (e.g. too cold in winter to go to appointments)
- Difficulty finding doctors who accept new patients

Q 4 Suggestions for solutions to the above barriers:

Answers included:

- More attention paid to the social determinants of health (e.g. poverty, employment, etc.)
- Raise awareness about the unique mental health challenges newcomers face
- More assistance dealing with stress in the first year of arrival
- Additional pre-arrival supports needed
- Educate and raise awareness in both newcomer and Canadian born populations
- Additional service providers and health care workers from other cultures
- More resources and funding needed to meet the demands
- More opportunities for newcomers and Canadian born individuals to interact and connect

- Additional health care providers required to meet the growing need
- Increase promotion of mental health services so newcomers know what exists (e.g. booklet developed for Forum very helpful)
- Additional programming hours to meet the needs of those with small children/or working with children at a young age
- Begin education and awareness building with children at a young age
- Develop newcomer-specific programs
- Minimize wait times (e.g. Newcomers are left to wait, when it is often an emergency)
- Enhance screening and assessments (e.g. keep newcomer needs and perspective in mind)
- Foster a more culturally responsive health care system (e.g. Professional development opportunities)
- Mental health service providers should be present at community events (e.g. go where newcomers gather – community events fairs, cultural activities, etc.)
- Encourage 'mental health check-ups' on a regular basis (just as there are physical check-ups)
- Develop additional mobile support services
- Enhance the referral system
- Create a network of professionals with cultural understanding/sensitivity
- Liaise with the elders/leaders to connect with the broader newcomer community
- Recognition of gender differences within certain cultures
- More support for LGBTQ populations
- Recognize and promote the importance of other therapies that can improve mental health (e.g. Massage therapy, art therapy, yoga)
- Provide trained and readily available interpreters
- Reduce systematic barriers
- Develop a community-centered approach
- Increase/promote on-line mental health supports
- Additional support for newcomers looking for work as unemployment/under-employment is one of the major causes of significant stress and depression for newcomers
- Promote this message often – “there is no shame in seeking help.”
- Increased use of Cantalk and other interpretation services

FORUM EVALUATION (PARTICIPANTS & SERVICE PROVIDERS)

Participants and service providers were asked these questions:

1. Did you receive a satisfactory update from the RRLIP?

YES (100% of respondents)

Comments included:

- Thank you for the resources
- Good to know about the RRLIP
- A bit rushed and wonder if the newcomers understood the information presented.



2. Did you learn about emotional wellness supports that you didn't know about before today?

YES (99% of respondents); NO (1% of respondents)

Comments included:

- Providing the information sheets for us to take is very helpful/a great resource for us to use
- I now know more places to go for help
- I was unaware many of the services existed
- I was aware of the supports already but good to hear about them again

3. How will you use the information you learned about today?

Comments included:

- I will share it with the community
- Will try to connect with other service providers we could partner with
- I will let my clients know about this useful information
- The information will help me serve my clients better
- It has informed me on the resources available in the community and in my work as a social worker
- Will share it with family and friends
- It will help me understand the needs of our clients
- I will add the resources to the presentations we provide to newcomers
- Will be shared on our social media platforms
- I will use this forum as a model and basis for forums that our organization will be hosting in the future, etc.
- The information will be passed on to family and friends
- I will ensure that other newcomers get to know about this and will use it if they need help

4. Were the brainstorming discussions helpful?

YES (98% of respondents); **SOMEWHAT** (2% of respondents)

Comments included:

- It helped me be aware of the views held about mental health in other cultures and how to respond appropriately to the needs of newcomers
- It helped me think about what more I can do to help newcomers
- I learned why many newcomers are avoiding help when they really need it
- It was helpful to discuss this with different people from different cultures
- It was good to connect and talk with other service providers
- It brought awareness about how we as a community can help
- It was very helpful to learn about other cultures and the barriers they face
- It is always good to hear about barriers and gaps as it makes you look at your own services and approach
- It allowed me to hear different insights and understanding from different people
- It was great to hear other people's ideas as this is the only way we will make significant changes
- It was extremely helpful to learn about some of the barriers that newcomers face when accessing professional mental health services which we can use in our service delivery to ensure people are well informed on extra supports (such as interpretation, child care, or transportation) that may be available, thereby increasing access

5. What other topics are important to you as a newcomer or agency that works with newcomers?

Answers included:

- Holistic wellness
- How to communicate to newcomers (e.g. Vocabulary to use, format, etc.)
- Service gaps for newcomer seniors
- Language barriers and access to social services
- Physical fitness and nutrition
- Employment programs
- Saskatchewan culture
- Identifying mental illness
- Physical illness

- Cultural differences
- How to keep healthy while looking for work
- Older single and/or young single refugees who are alone
- Healthcare access
- How do we improve communication between agencies and encourage partnerships
- How to improve communication between agencies
- Empowering Canadians to be welcoming and understanding, invite non-newcomers to educate them on newcomer issues/concerns and how the general public (i.e. not just service providers) could help
- Addiction

Resource Idea: Develop a resource for newcomers on ways to reduce stress and tips for positive mental health (e.g. connect, be active, rest, eat well, etc.).

Service Providers were also asked ‘agency specific’ questions:

1. As an agency, did you learn about emotional wellness supports that you didn’t know about before today?

Comments included:

- We had an opportunity to learn about a few new organizations that offer services
- Yes, was aware but good to have a refresher
- Yes, we learned about supports we didn’t know about before today

2. Will you use this information to refer individuals/families to other supports when needed?

YES (100% of respondents)

3. What, if anything, will your agency do differently as a result of today’s discussions?

Answers included:

- We realized we’re not alone in providing service
- Will connect with service providers that we saw there, but have not connected with before for collaboration
- We contacted all walk-in counselling services, general counselling services, and other similar services to see if they provide translation services, child care, and/or transportation and updated our records of these services accordingly

OTHER MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORTS

The RRLIP acknowledges that **The Emotional Wellness Brochure** is not a comprehensive resource of all mental health supports available in this community. In addition, service providers in attendance at the Community Forum did not represent all existing local and on-line resources available. For example, although a representative from **jack.org** could not be present on forum day, the organization is interested in the final report, as they hope to support the development of a local mental health chapter in the community of Regina.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO THE INFORMATION GAINED FROM THE COMMUNITY FORUM?

- Attending service providers took part in the table discussions, and thus heard first-hand from a newcomer perspective, the gaps in service, and the barriers to accessing services.
- Forum participants will receive the Forum Report through email.
- The Forum Report will be shared widely with the broader community through inclusion on the RRLIP project blog, project newsletters, RRLIP website and in meetings with stakeholders.
- RRLIP convened-tables, project partners and the project's major funder will receive the Forum Report.
- The RRLIPs major funder will receive the report's findings in additional ways (quarterly narrative report and annual report).
- Ongoing promotion of **The Emotional Wellness Brochure** (developed in collaboration with the local service providers) will occur.



ABOUT THE RRLIP PROJECT

The RRLIP is a community initiative that...

- **Convenes** a multi-sector Council, diverse Immigrant Advisory Table and Working Groups to support the community's settlement and integration priorities
- **Strengthens** the local capacity to integrate newcomers
- **Increases knowledge** about newcomer needs, strengths and local strategies for support
- **Promotes** welcoming attitudes and increases the full participation of newcomers in the Regina community

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Many thanks to all participating service providers and forum participants, who shared their input and feedback about a topic that can be difficult to discuss. Finally, thank you to the RRLIPs project partners and funders, for without their support, this forum would not have been possible.

