

Supporting Immigrant Women and Gender-Diverse People in the Pandemic

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P2P 2022 Virtual Workshop
Series

Land Acknowledgement

We acknowledge the land we are meeting on is the traditional territory of many nations including the Mississaugas of the Credit, the Anishnabeg, the Chippewa, Haudenosaunee and the Wendat peoples and is now home to many diverse First Nations, Inuit and Metis.

We also acknowledge that Toronto is covered by Treaty 13 with the Mississaugas of the Credit.



MISSION STATEMENT

We provide learning and training opportunities for immigrants and refugees to access and fully participate in the workplace and wider community.



**Our program and
services**



Skills for Change

Building Welcoming and Equitable Communities



Mental Health & Well-Being Department

Programs and service offerings include:

- One-on-One and Group Counselling
- Wrap Around Supports Program
- Women Connecting with Women Program
- Virtual Connections Program

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Stress as a Risk Factor for Mental Health Degradation in Canadian Immigrants

- Stress is a major risk factor for developing mental health issues, particularly if an individual has a genetic predisposition for mental illness.
- Canadian immigrants experience stressors that Canadian-born residents do not (Robert & Gilkinson, 2012):
 - Pre-immigration trauma
 - Separation from family
 - Unfamiliarity or discomfort with Canadian culture, healthcare system, education system
 - Role and identity changes
 - Discrimination (employment, housing)
 - Increased risk of unemployment and/or poverty

The stressors newcomers experienced prior to the pandemic have been exacerbated

- Many support services have been closed, limited or transitioned to virtual support due to COVID-19
 - Virtual services present issues with accessibility (i.e., having access to a computer and internet, technological literacy)
 - Health researchers argue that social support is one of the underlying determinants of health for newcomers, especially when dealing with resettlement stressors
- Risk of additional discrimination due to changes in the public's view of travel and its role in the spread of COVID-19
 - Rise in discrimination against Chinese immigrants

COVID-19 Disproportionately Affects Immigrants

- 43.5% of Ontario COVID-19 cases have been accounted for by immigrants, refugees and newcomers, despite only making up 25% of the Ontario population (Guttmann et al., 2020)
- Stigma surrounding contracting COVID-19 or fear of contracting COVID-19 can lead to additional stress and isolation.

Taking an intersectional approach

- Worldwide, 70% of the healthcare workforce is comprised of women
 - Many healthcare workers are at higher risk of poor mental health outcomes such as PTSD, depression, anxiety and burnout throughout and after the peak of the pandemic (Thibaut et al., 2020)
- Many countries have reported an increase in domestic gender-based violence due to the pandemic, which can put women at a greater risk for anxiety, depression and PTSD (Thibaut et al., 2020)
 - Women who experienced domestic violence prior COVID-19 related lockdowns are at an increased risk of experiencing violence during lockdowns (Sediri et al., 2020)
 - Close-quartered living and COVID-19 related stressors increase the risk of domestic violence

Taking an intersectional approach (2)

- ❖ Hawke et al., 2021, found that transgender and gender diverse youth experienced greater adverse effects to their mental health when compared to cisgendered youth
 - Transgender and gender diverse peoples experience high levels of service disruption and less support from family
- ❖ -37.7% of recent immigrants who were employed in February 2020 had lost their job or the majority of their working hours by the end of April 2020—eight percentage points above the losses posted by Canadian-born workers (-29.1%) (Scott, 2021)

My Positionality



- An Immigrant woman
- A lonely mother
- A counseling psychologist
- Women's mental health researcher
- A social justice advocate

Immigrant Women and Gender Diverse People (LGBTQ2S)



Who are they?

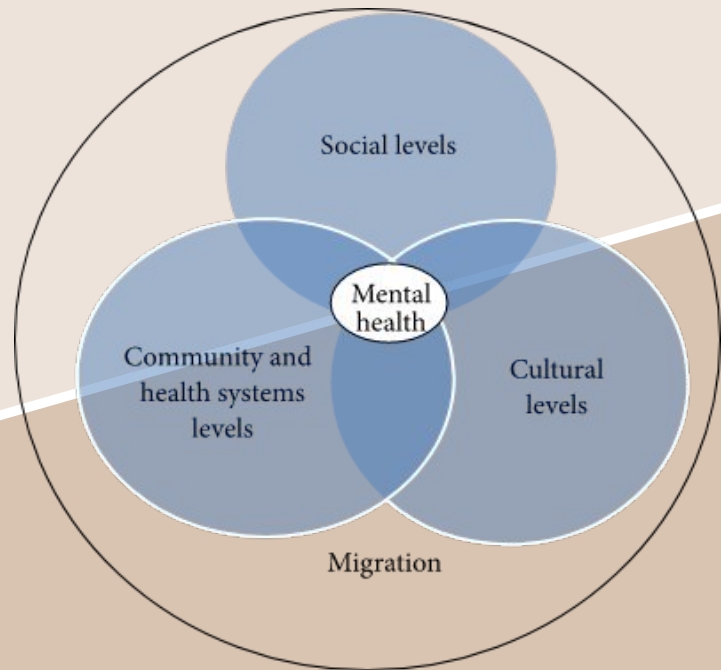
- Their lives before the pandemic
- The pandemic and their survival
- Violence and discrimination issues
- Without meaningful action, immigrant women and gender diverse people in particular are among those who stand to lose the most in this pandemic on all fronts

Social Determinants of Mental Health

Considering immigration as a social determinant of health may offer valuable linkage (National Academy of Science 2018)

Three significant determinants of mental health have been identified in the literature as

- social connectedness,
- freedom from discrimination and violence, and
- economic participation (Mahin Delara 2016)



Steps to Supporting Immigrant Women and Gender-diverse People

- Creating safe spaces in which the immigrant women and gender-diverse people can critically explore and discuss the effect of the pandemic on physical and mental health
- Enhancing feelings of belonging and social support, particularly from family, friends, caseworkers, and health care providers
- Community health promotion
- Providing opportunities for social action, including volunteerism



Uniques Care and Sensitivity in the Health Care System

- Culturally sensitive health care has been described as care in which health care providers offer services in a manner that is relevant to patients' need and expectations

(Majumdar, Brown, rober,& Carpio, 2004).

- Ensuring access to affordable, culturally competent, and linguistically appropriate health services, including prevention, care, and treatment
- Recognition of the key role of mental health on health outcomes
- Support to reduce barriers to care activism (Wilson 2018)



Strategies for Counseling Survivors of Pandemic - Trauma-informed Approaches

- Trauma is the experience of, and a response to an overwhelming negative life-threatening event with lasting adverse effect on overall wellbeing
- The basic focus of the Trauma -informed Care is a shift in the therapeutic approach from asking”what is wrong with you?” to considering ‘What happened to you?’ (Bloom 2006).
- There are many types of traumatic events, such as sexual abuse, physical injury, neglect, isolation, trafficking, homelessness, and disability
- The traumatic effect of the pandemic: The shock, the fear , the pain the stigma, the discrimination, and the uncertainty can lead to mental health disorders such as PTSD and Co-occurring disorders



Common Trauma Approach Treatments

- Cognitive-Behavioral approaches
- Mindfulness
- Exposure Therapy
- Peer and group support
- Positive Psychology

Cognitive Behaviour Therapy

Interpersonal Therapy

Psychodynamic Therapy

Family Therapy

Solution Focussed Therapy

Person Centred Therapy



Your thinking



Your relationships



Your past



Your family



Your strengths



What you pay
attention to

Trauma-Informed Care (TIC)

It isn't about what's wrong with a person.
It's about what happened to a person.

TIC is a strengths-based framework, which recognises the complex nature and effects of trauma and promotes resilience and healing.

5 KEY PRINCIPALS:

Safety

Creating areas that are calm & comfortable

Trust

Providing clear and consistent information

Choice

Providing an individual options in their treatment

Collaboration

Maximising collaboration among health care staff, patients and their families in organisational & treatment planning

Empowerment

Noticing capabilities in an individual

THE FOUR R'S OF TIC

REALISE

All people at all levels have a basic **realisation** about trauma, and how it can affect individuals, families, and communities

RESIST RE-TRAUMATISATION

Organisational practices may **compound trauma** unintentionally, trauma-informed organisations avoid this.

RECOGNISE

People within organisations are able to **recognise** the signs and symptoms of trauma

RESPOND

Programmes, organisations and communities **respond** by practising a trauma-informed approach

UNIVERSAL SCREENING



Prevents misdiagnosis and inappropriate treatment planning

“ Trying to implement trauma-specific clinical practices without first implementing trauma-informed organisational culture change is like throwing seeds on dry land.

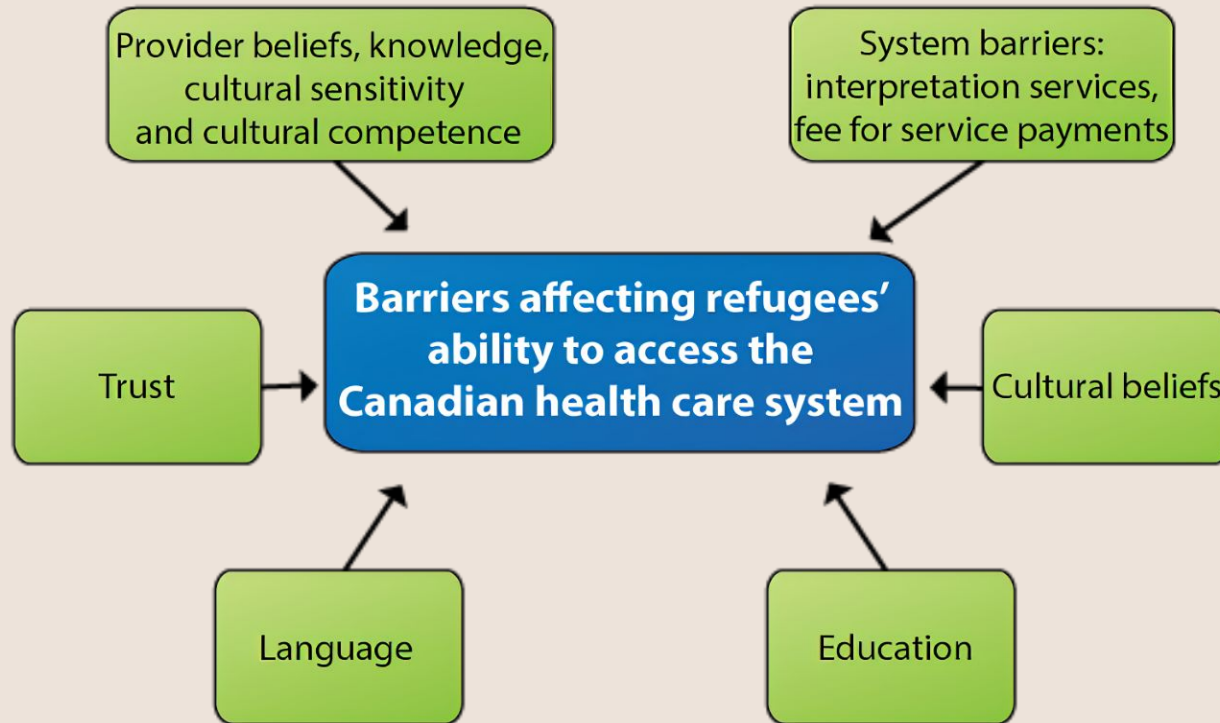
Sandra Bloom, Creator of the Sanctuary Model



www.70-30.org.uk
@7030Campaign



Barriers to Immigrants' Healthcare Accessibility



Reasons to join support groups in the Pandemic

- To decrease isolation, stigma, and find community who understands you.
- To share information and experiences, keeping each other up to date
- To find role models, and act as a role model for others
- To get new ideas about how to overcome challenges.
- To have a safe place to talk about deeply personal issues, experiences, problems, thoughts, fears, and achievements.
- To gain support and assistance on recovery journey.
- To reduce anxiety, increase hope, and help sense of overall mental well-being.

Benefits of Support Groups

- We are in an emotionally crushing period which has lasted for more than two years.
- Mental health issues still face stigmatization but we are better at speaking about it than ever.
- A support group will offer emotional support from people with similar concerns and experiences
- Support group will help to learn better coping strategies
- Support group will focus on self-care
- Support group will facilitate growth and a sense of hope
- Women Connecting Women- Skills for Change program

Case Scenario, what solutions has helped with past clients

Clara- (not real name) has attended breast cancer patients psycho-oncology group that I was co-ordinating. She was shocked to see people who are in the same condition like her it was a great and hopeful atmosphere for her.

She saw people undergoing chemotherapy laughing and playing with one another and was so surprised, she has had the suicidal thought before joining the support group but she recovered so fast within three weeks of joining the group and saw a better way of facing her challenges with positive thinking and hopefulness.

In her words “ **I never knew there are people living with cancer who could speak about it freely, I had thought of killing myself because I was isolated and alone**”

Holistic Approach to Recovery

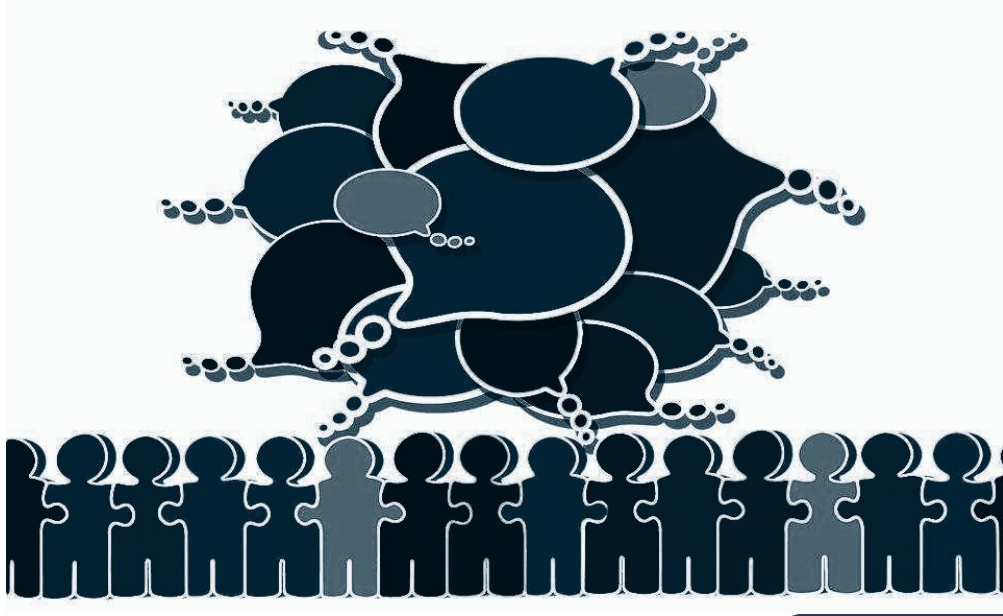


[holistic approach to mental health in pandemic - Bing images](#)



Thank You!





Questions?



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Types-of-psychological-therapy-counselling.png (532×465) (possitivevibes.com)

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