

To: **Erica Paterson**
From: **Salma Ismail**
Date: **March 5, 2023**

Subject: **Re: Formal Report Proposal (Enhancing Newcomer Youth Mental Health Programs in South Vancouver)**

Audience:

This project proposal informs the settlement service provider, South Vancouver Neighbourhood House (SVNH), of the gaps in mental health services for newcomer immigrant and refugee youth in South Vancouver. SVNH receives funding from Immigration, Refugee, and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) to provide services for newcomer youth. This proposal will gather information from staff on how to better advocate for funding and support from the funder, IRCC, from identified gaps in services.

Introduction:

Newcomer youth are vulnerable to developing mental illnesses as relocating to another country during these formative years often results in feelings of culture shock, acculturative stress, unfamiliarity and interpersonal challenges (e.g., making friends, communicating with peers, resolving conflict). These factors may inadvertently affect a newcomer youth's mental health outcomes, thus highlighting the importance of offering high-quality community programs to support them through this transition. Many program service providers have developed programs to address newcomer youth's adverse mental health outcomes and provide them with community support. While there is a strong need for these services, they have low attendance, presenting a gap between the services (i.e. mental health services) and clients (i.e. newcomer youth).

For this proposal, the focus will be on mental health services for newcomer youth. Mental health services will not include professional mental health counsellors but focus on community programs, including healing circles, mental health support groups and youth spaces facilitated by Settlement Workers or Youth Workers.

Statement of Problem:

According to the Canadian Institute for Health Information (CIHI), three out of every five children and youth (aged 12 to 24) self-reported poor mental health and found it difficult to access mental health services (Canadian Institute for Health Information, 2022). This problem has been exacerbated for newcomer youth who face complex barriers to accessing mental health services, including, but not limited to, the social stigma associated with seeking help and a lack of information about where to find such help. As a result, newcomer youth are more likely to develop mental health issues (Shakya et al., 2010). According to studies, community mental health supports significantly impact the mental health outcomes of newcomers when they first arrive in Canada (Larcombe & Yan, 2010).

While many municipal, provincial and federal organizations fund and facilitate programs to introduce mental health services and provide support explicitly targeting newcomer youth, these programs are generally not well attended, even though a notable percentage of the population identify themselves as having 'low mental health' (Stick et al., 2022; South Vancouver Neighbourhood House, 2021)'. Therefore, the issue is the presence of newcomer youth services and unaddressed gaps that prevent newcomer youth from accessing said programs.

Proposed Solution:

One possible solution is to gather the opinions of youth workers, youth programmers and settlement workers working directly with the population to inform better practices for newcomer youth mental health programs at SVNH. The results of this information will be used in correspondence with preexisting data to conduct a comparative analysis between newcomer youth who have accessed mental health services since they arrived in Canada and those who did not. Collecting primary data can help identify which strategies work well and where gaps exist through the lens of frontline workers.

Scope:

The following questions will guide the review proposal, help illustrate the current state of evidence and identify areas for further investigation through primary research.

1. How do newcomer youth define mental health support?
2. What percentage of youth in South Vancouver identify as having poor mental health and are comfortable sharing with a trusted adult in the community (i.e. Youth Workers and Settlement Workers)?
3. What are the barriers that debilitate youth from accessing mental health support?

Question one will demonstrate the attitudes of newcomer youth toward what they define as mental health and the support one needs to improve it. The second question will provide a quantitative image of the demographic targeted by this investigation, as according to findings, there have not been previous surveys of this population. Finally, question three will enable youth to identify potential reasons for not accessing these services or what limits them.

Methods:

The primary data source will be an online survey to gauge how newcomer youth access mental health support and the potential barriers that may prevent them from currently enrolling in mental health services in south Vancouver from the perspective of youth workers. Secondly, informal interviews will be conducted with staff working with the demographic to discuss their strategies to increase youth participation and the barriers they face when implementing mental health programs. By having both quantitative and qualitative data, one can draw a more comprehensive image of the proposed issue.

Qualifications:

As a Youth Settlement Counsellor at SVNH, I have a strong understanding of the barriers newcomer youth face and contact with staff members who work with the demographic.

Conclusion:

The collected data will illustrate a clearer understanding of youth's mental health issues and barriers preventing them from accessing support. It will also provide information on creatively addressing said issues and develop tools to enhance current mental health programs for newcomer youth.

References:

December. (2021). Canadian Institute for Health Information. [More than half of young Canadians who sought mental health services said they weren't easy to access](#) [media release].

Larcombe, K., & Yan, M. C. (2010). A place-based approach to social integration. Settlement of Newcomers to Canada.

Stick, M., Hou, F., & Kaida, L. (2021). Self-reported loneliness among recent immigrants, long-term immigrants, and Canadian-born individuals. Statcan.gc.ca; Government of Canada, Statistics Canada. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/36-28-0001/2021007/article/00001-eng.htm>

South Vancouver Neighbourhood House. (2021). South Vancouver Neighbourhood House. <https://www.southvan.org/>