



TORONTO NORTH LOCAL IMMIGRATION PARTNERSHIP



**PROMOTING THE
MENTAL HEALTH
OF REFUGEES &
NEWCOMERS**

September 18, 2017





The **Toronto North Local Immigration Partnership** (TNLIP) is a community-based planning table seeking to enhance the settlement and employment experiences and outcomes of immigrants in the community.

<http://torontonorthlip.ca/>



OBJECTIVES

Newcomer Engagement & Settlement:

- Recent newcomers are welcomed, receive timely supports and have their contributions recognized

Effective Language Training:

- Newcomers have access to language training that adequately matches their learning goals and life circumstances

Health & Wellbeing:

- Newcomers are healthy, have appropriate and timely health supports made available to them, and access them

Employment:

- Newcomers are employed at levels commensurate with their skills and experience and have access to appropriate training



MEMBERSHIP

- **Settlement Agencies**
- **Employment Service Providers**
- **Language Service Providers**
- **City Services** (TPH, TPL, Parks, Forestry & Recreation, Toronto Newcomer Office)
- **Faith Groups**
- **Community Health Centres**
- **Community Legal Services**



EXAMPLES OF OUR WORK

- **Early Identification Clinics (children 0-6, seniors, families)**
- **Food Security Network** (Seedy Sunday event, mapping of food resources, community-based research, community forums)
- **Pop-up Hubs** (services outside regular business hours)
- **Mapping of culturally sensitive recreation programs**
- **Capacity building for frontline workers: workshops, info sessions, networking events**
- **Faith & Welcoming Communities Forums**
- **Power of Collaboration Forums – employer engagement**
- **Funders' Forums**
- **MH Ambassadors & Online Navigation Tool**



NEWCOMER MENTAL HEALTH CHALLENGES

- **Access to services:** system navigation, cultural barrier/stigma, language barrier, waiting time;
- **Immigration & settlement issues:** environmental changes, homesickness, trauma, marital problems, cultural adjustment, isolation, employment challenges, etc.



SETTLEMENT SECTOR CHALLENGES

- Insufficient org. frameworks/policies on inclusiveness, empathy, anti-oppression, trauma-informed care
- Lack of self-care/wellness at the workplace
- **Need for continuous staff capacity building (identification, referrals, MH first aid)**
- Need for a holistic approach to newcomer settlement issues (social determinants of health: employment – housing – health, etc.)
- **Cross-sectoral collaboration (e.g. in-house counselling/co-location of services)**



INTER-SECTORAL RESPONSE

A planning group including four quadrant LIPs (south, west, east and north), lamsick.ca, Toronto Public Health, Toronto Newcomer Office, CAMH, and Hong Fook Mental Health Association

Consultations

Projects:

- Mental Health Navigation Tool
- Mental Health Ambassadors Project



MH NAVIGATION TOOL

- Rationale: need for a resource that would explain how the health and mental health systems work in Canada and could be used by both service providers and newcomers; must be user-friendly, available online and without the need for constant updates;
- Process: consultations - framework development - platform identification - resource development – review – testing-launch
- Status: testing



MH AMBASSADORS' PROJECT

- Rationale: consultations showed that frontline workers of settlement agencies do not have access to a network of mental health professionals; continuous need for training on mental health issues among frontline workers in the settlement sector; opportunity to raise awareness among MH professionals about the sector & newcomer needs;
- Process: framework development, outreach & recruitment, orientation, matching, monitoring, evaluation
- Status: the pilot project ran from December 2016 to May 2017 and involved 8 mental health professionals (out of 14 that originally signed up) and around 12 community agencies across Toronto resulting in 14 sessions and over 160 frontline staff trained.



WHAT WE'VE LEARNED FROM AMBASSADORS:

- Staff concerns about own MH and well-being (self-care) and capacity to work with clients that have MH issues;
- Lack of knowledge around stigma and MH awareness overall – some frontline workers expressed “expert” attitude superior to clients;
- Need for an efficient referral system;
- Specific training needs: suicide risk assessment, de-escalation of difficult situations, MH first aid;
- Lack on inter-agency connections and awareness about supports (e.g. city services);



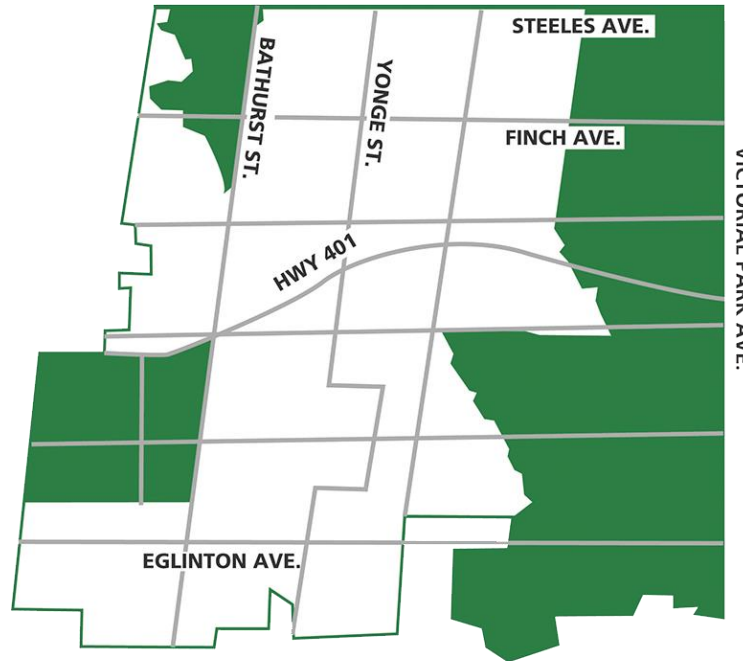
OPPORTUNITIES/NEXT STEPS

- Org. policies & practices on social inclusion, anti-oppression, people-centered approach, as well as wellness policies for staff;
- Sector capacity building: training and networking opportunities;
- Cross-sectoral collaboration: a network of MH professionals (MH Ambassadors) to assist frontline workers in settlement, employment, legal, housing sectors (hot line, co-location, etc.);
- Using a holistic approach to newcomer settlement issues (social determinants of health: employment – housing – health, etc.);
- Include health & mental health related questions in the intake forms;



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Please visit: www.torontonorthlip.ca



QUESTIONS ARE WELCOME!

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