

What we learned:
ARI Virtual Roundtable
& GAR-PSR promising
practices with RSTP



The following is a summary of key messages from two events organized by ARI over July 2020. The purpose of these virtual events was to hear from settlement and sponsors about the impacts of COVID-19, and a space to learn from each other as we plan for the resumption of resettlement.

July 9, 2020- ARI Virtual Roundtable

Thanks to our pilot presenters from Catholic Crosscultural Services, Kitchener-Waterloo YMCA and Mennonite Central Committee of Ontario, and Immigrant Services Kingston & Area

July 13, 2020 GAR-PSR Promising Practices

Thank you to RSTP for co-organizing this event, and to our presenters Carl Cardogan, Nawal Al-Busaidi, and Chris Friesen

Link to full recording: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IUzmWtpls_w



Summary of Key Messages:

- COVID-19 has slowed PSR arrivals greatly, and for those already in Canada the lack of in-person connection makes it more difficult to build relationships and achieve some settlement goals of newcomers
- Due to immediate need, innovative ways of supporting newcomers are being tested by both sponsors and settlement workers but there is concern that some newcomers are falling behind in their settlement goals
- Adapting to new ways of providing settlement services and meeting the increased technological needs of sponsors and refugees has been essential for continued settlement support and health of new sponsored refugees
- Many opportunities exist at this time of upheaval for new partnerships, better access for hard to reach populations such as rural sponsors, and for improved settlement over the long-term through access to new training and services online

What changes are participants seeing in the settlement of privately sponsored refugees during COVID-19?

- **Communication between settlement and sponsored refugees** has shifted from in-person appointments to WhatsApp, social media and phone calls. There has been an overall increase in cold calls to engage with clients (previously relied on walk-ins)
- Settlement workers have been in a steep learning curve and are learning to adapt to the **needs and capacity of clients** who may have low computer skills or trouble accessing & using technology
- Some sponsors report **no major changes** in how they work with settlement as they continue to access settlement services as needed online. Other sponsors report trying to **fill the gap** of reduced access to settlement services themselves

What strategies have been used to adapt to these changes?

- **Online service delivery** has been quickly adopted & settlement is working on closing gaps and reaching out to those who cannot access services
- **Increased use of informal methods for outreach to clients** such as through social media groups
- There has been increased focus on **developing access and skills to use technology** for some sponsors and PSRs out of necessity

What are the opportunities we are seeing to improve settlement of sponsored refugees during and after COVID-19?

- Some **sponsors groups report that it is easier for them to connect** internally with new online tools, especially those in rural areas, and improved access to support through newly online settlement services
- **New partnerships and innovations in service delivery** are being reported – for example, working closely with schools and partners, support jointly in giving equipment to newcomers

Introducing the ARI pilot partner agencies

Catholic Cross-Cultural Services, Greater Toronto Area

A settlement agency piloting a three-way case management model that brings together the settlement worker, sponsor group, and sponsored refugee on the same page when designing and carrying out a settlement plan.

Kitchener-Waterloo YMCA & Mennonite Central Committee

Also testing a three-way case management model; currently with 5 cases they have conducted pre-orientation meetings and developed a settlement needs checklist with roles and responsibilities for each party stated and signed.

Immigrant Services Kingston and Area

A knowledge dissemination pilot, focusing on getting parties to meet, know each other and lessen the risk of sponsors and refugees not being aware of services or settlement available to them in the Kingston community.



What we are learning through the pilots so far

- A pre-arrival orientation between a settlement worker and sponsor is key in establishing clarity on roles and responsibilities. It has the potential to enhance sectoral capacity, PSR wellbeing and access to services, and deeper agency understanding
- In order to build trust between settlement & sponsors & sponsored refugees, it seems to be key to connect early in the settlement process and have in-person meetings as much as possible
- There are big differences amongst sponsor groups in their approaches to working with settlement. Some are unaware of settlement services, some sponsors hand over settlement support entirely to the settlement worker, while others “take over” and do not support refugee self-reliance

Impact of COVID19 on ARI pilot partner agencies

Challenges

- Many settlement goals of PSRs are delayed with language assessment & classes and other services & referrals on hold, some heightened anxiety from clients reported
- Increased operational challenges for settlement such as with equipment or interpretation and establishing trust online with new clients is difficult

Opportunities

- Connection between sponsors and settlement even more important than before- settlement workers supporting sponsors in particular with support with CERB, income tax filing etc.
- With the slowed landing of PSRs, increased opportunity to build new partnerships and put in place a more streamlined approach to settlement support

On July 13, 2020 we hosted
a webinar with RSTP on
**“GAR-PSR Promising
Practices”**

Refugee
Sponsorship
Training
Program

Colleagues from COSTI (Toronto), ISS of BC and Reception House (Kitchener-Waterloo) shared their experience receiving Government Assisted Refugees (GARs) during COVID-19.

While some differences exist in funding and services available between PSRs and GARs, there were many commonalities and promising practices identified in adapting to online communication with newcomers and navigating quarantine requirements.

See the full webinar on the RSTP youtube channel:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IUzmWtpIs_w

For more information on ARI and upcoming events, sign up for our newsletter:

<https://mailchi.mp/ocasi.org/ari2019>

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OCASI
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