

SHARING SETTLEMENT AND INTEGRATION PRACTICES THAT WORK OUR SELVES, OUR DAUGHTERS

Sexuality Education Resource Centre
Winnipeg, MB

Area of Practice:

Settlement Services and Supports that Contribute to the Physical and
Mental Well-being of Newcomer Individuals and Families

Video:

<https://youtu.be/4I1IV6ie0vs>

A Pathways to
Prosperity Project

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**PATHWAYS TO
PROSPERITY**
Promoting Welcoming Communities in Canada



**VOIES VERS LA
PROSPÉRITÉ**
Promouvoir des communautés accueillantes au Canada

BACKGROUND ON THE ORGANIZATION AND IMPETUS FOR THE PROGRAM

Sexuality Education Resource Centre (SERC) is a non-profit organization based in Winnipeg, MB. Founded in 1934, it is dedicated to promoting sexual health through education. It provides inclusive, non-judgmental education about sexuality with a view that people have the right to accurate information on all of their choices. Through a history of engaging with immigrant and refugee communities, SERC has learned how certain notions about the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), sex and sexuality, gender, and sexual orientation relate to the way racialized migrants are positioned in Canadian society, including their resettlement experiences and their economic options and opportunities.

In 2009, SERC was invited by a group of community members from countries affected by female genital cutting (FGC)¹ to engage with their communities about the taboo subject of FGC, to promote open discussion about the possible health impacts, and to support their communities in finding ways to shift long-held beliefs as part of ending the practice of FGC. This led to the development of Our Selves, Our Daughters (OSOD), which was created to provide social, emotional, and educational supports for women affected by FGC, as well as engage with other community members from FGC-affected countries about FGC prevention and illegality in Canada.

OSOD was designed based on learnings from other communities around the world that have chosen to stop the practice of FGC through a community-led response, focusing on the importance of organizing age- and gender-specific workshops, integrating FGC with other health topics, using a community-based education approach rather than scare tactics for sustainable change and prevention, and engaging local community / religious leaders, community co-facilitators, and interpreters.

OVERVIEW OF THE PROGRAM

Name:

Our Selves, Our Daughters

Description:

Our Selves, Our Daughters (OSOD) provides health education and social supports to women affected by female genital cutting (FGC). Each year, Sexuality Education Resource Centre (SERC) offers four series of workshops for women, including three series for adult women and one series for young women aged 18 to 25 years old. In these workshops, participants examine the ways in which cultural and family worldviews influence sexuality, relationships, and FGC, and the ways in which social and cultural changes, including migration, can impact and change their views. SERC

¹ SERC has made the decision to use the term female genital cutting rather than female genital mutilation (which is used by the United Nations and World Health Organization). This decision was made after much consideration and dialogue with FGC-affected community members to ensure meaningful community engagement.

also offers workshops to young men aged 18 to 25 years old to engage them in discussions about sexuality, culture, and FGC.

Goal(s):

The goal of OSOD is to build knowledge and capacity for increased socio-cultural supports, health education, and access to services for / with newcomer women that will improve their overall health and wellness and address prevention of FGC in the next generation.

Target Client Group(s):

Newcomers of African heritage living in Winnipeg, as well as healthcare and social service providers who work with this population.

Delivery Partner(s):

OSOD works closely with the following partners for client recruitment, interpretation, and referral support: Manitoba Association of Newcomer Serving Organizations, Network of Organizations for War-Affected Newcomers of Manitoba, Healthy Start for Mom and Me, Aurora Family Therapy Centre, Alberta Society for the Promotion of Sexual Health, Mount Carmel Clinic, Klinik Community Health, IRCOM, Red River College, University of Manitoba, and local religious / ethno-cultural community organizations.

Human Resource(s):

OSOD is delivered by a team of four staff, including one project facilitator, two community facilitators, and one program evaluation and research analyst. It is also supported by 25-30 community co-facilitators, recruiters, interpreters, and volunteers.

Funding:

OSOD is funded by Manitoba Health, Seniors and Active Living.

KEY FEATURES THAT CONTRIBUTE TO THIS BEING A PROMISING PRACTICE

Effective:

OSOD actively engages local ethnocultural, religious, and community organizations and leaders in all aspects of the program, including planning, design, development, recruitment, interpretation, facilitation, and more. It uses a client-centred approach, offering flexibility with time, space, and dynamics according to the needs of different communities. Staff make a continuous effort to build and maintain trust with participants, and participants' knowledge, experiences, and perspectives are acknowledged, valued, and incorporated into the program. Workshops are delivered in participants' first language or in English with interpretation.

Efficient:

OSOD builds on the strengths of the community. It is delivered in partnership with a broad range of community, religious, and ethno-cultural organizations, as well as community leaders who are able

to use their influence to engage and support participants from their communities. It was designed using an evidence-based approach, and evaluation findings are used to inform program activities.

Relevant:

OSOD was developed in consultation with community members. Feedback is collected from participants and other stakeholders on an ongoing basis and activities are adjusted, as much as possible, to ensure their needs continue to be met. Although the program's topics are considered taboo, workshops often exceed the target number of participants.

Sustainable:

OSOD aligns with SERC's mandate, values, and priorities, which include programs and services that build capacity of newcomers of African heritage in Winnipeg, and thus receives support at the organizational level. It has also received financial and other supports from the community for several years.

Transferable:

OSOD could be replicated in other communities across Canada and/or a similar model could be used to develop educational initiatives that focus on sensitive topics among different communities. It is important to build and maintain relationships and trust with community members, organizations, and other stakeholders, and engage them from the beginning to ensure the program meets their needs and expectations. This process takes time, and considerable investment will be needed before the program is ready to launch. It is important to hire staff who are passionate about the work, sensitive to the needs and experiences of participants, and willing to learn from the communities they are serving, as relationships are key to the success of the program. Employee turnover could mean loss of knowledge, relationships, and expertise.

Innovative and Forward Thinking:

OSOD was created in partnership with the African newcomer community in Winnipeg, with the goal of building capacity and effectively supporting community members affected by FGC. It utilizes an anti-racist, non-judgmental approach that is focused on human rights, which is especially important since it engages communities that are often stigmatized and addresses topics that are considered taboo.

Differs in Definable Ways from Other Similar Practices:

OSOD provides a safe and culturally appropriate space that values the strengths, knowledge, and experiences of the communities being served. Workshops are facilitated in a way that allows participants to feel comfortable sharing their own perspectives. Participants receive evidence-based information on different topics and are encouraged / empowered to act for change in their communities.

High Client Uptake:

OSOD has high client uptake and regularly exceeds its targets, in part because of the trust, relationships, and reputation established in the community. Participants are often referred by family members or friends already involved in the program, creating larger groups as the series progresses. Activities are advertised in ways that do not stigmatize participants.

High Client Retention:

OSOD has high client retention. Participants become more interested and engaged as the series progresses, often bringing family members and friends who are also affected by FGC. Community guidelines, flexible arrangements, and food are also used to create safe and welcoming space.

Strong Evidence of Successful Outcomes:

OSOD continuously monitors and tracks progress using different assessment and measurement tools. Findings are shared with staff, community members, and funders on an ongoing basis. In 2018/19, OSOD delivered 18 community workshops to newcomer women of African heritage. A total of 18 participants took part in a post-series focus group to evaluate the program. All participants reported that they appreciated the opportunity to come together, participate in a dialogue / discussion about “private things” in a safe and non-judgmental atmosphere, and share their ideas and experiences. They also reported that the information learned during the workshops was useful to their lives, that they had shared the information with others in the community and applied it to their lives, and that they had changed their previous opinion about FGC.

PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT AND EVALUATION STRATEGY

SERC has a dedicated research and evaluation team that monitors and tracks progress and measures achievements of its different programs / projects. The OSOD evaluation plan is based on S.M.A.R.T. objectives (i.e., Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, and Timely). Input is collected from participants through short feedback forms at the end of each workshop, as well as a focus group during the last workshop of each series. In-depth debrief meetings are also conducted with program staff and facilitators in order to identify challenges and lessons learned that emerged from the planning and delivery process.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Sexuality Education Resource Centre

<https://serc.mb.ca>

Our Selves, Our Daughters

<https://serc.mb.ca/what-we-offer/our-selves-our-daughters-fgc-program/>