

SHARING SETTLEMENT AND INTEGRATION PRACTICES THAT WORK TOGETHER YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLNESS PROJECT

Association for New Canadians
St. John's, N.L.

Area of Practice:

- Settlement Services and Supports that Contribute to the Physical and Mental Well-Being of Newcomer Individuals and Families
- Providing Information to Newcomers
- Strategies for Engagement with Non-Settlement Service Providers

Video:

<https://youtu.be/opkW9rEj4b0>

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

The Association for New Canadians (ANC) is a non-profit, community-based organization delivering settlement and integration services to immigrants and refugees in Newfoundland and Labrador. For 40 years, the ANC has delivered programs and services that support all aspects of immigrant integration, ranging from settlement information and orientation to language learning, skills development, and employment.

The 2Gether Youth project was established out of the recognition that newcomer youth and parents in St. John's, N.L. often face barriers that impact their ability to navigate, understand and access the mental health and wellness services available to them. The aim of the project was to address this need by increasing the awareness and understanding of available mental health and wellness services among newcomer youth and their parents. The project also recognized that, to achieve this goal, it would be important to build partnerships with local community organizations that provide mental health and wellness services to newcomers. Finally, the COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting restrictions forced the project to change its delivery format early on from an in-person approach to an online approach.

OVERVIEW OF THE PROGRAM

Name:

2Gether Youth Mental Health and Wellness Project

Description:

The first phase of the 2Gether Youth project ran from January 2020 to January 2021. In February 2020, the project established an advisory group consisting of a total of 10 newcomers (youths and parents) from six different countries. The advisory group met online on a weekly basis and was involved in a collaborative and consultative manner in all project milestones. One of the first steps of the project was to get a better understanding of the needs of newcomer youth and parents in terms of mental health and wellness. To this end, the project facilitated four online drop-in discussions about various topics related to newcomer youth mental health. These discussions were attended by 50 newcomer youths and parents and provided useful content and ideas on how to best build and share knowledge with newcomer youth and parents about available mental health and wellness services. As a result of these discussions and an extensive literature review, the 2Gether Youth project developed participatory and engaging programming, resources, and initiatives for newcomer youth aged 19-30 and their families. Another feature of the project was the engagement with stakeholders and the development of partnerships with community organizations that provide mental health and wellness services to the newcomer population in St. John's, N.L.

Goal(s):

The overarching goal of the 2Gether Youth project was to increase awareness and understanding of available mental health and wellness services for newcomer youth and their parents. To this end, the 2Gether Youth project pursued the following objectives:

- To offer a "time and place" where newcomer youth and their families are encouraged to share their perspectives on mental health and well-being

- To establish an advisory group of newcomer youth and parents from the community to advise and collaborate on all aspects of the project
- To build and share knowledge on mental health and wellness services available to newcomer youth and their parents
- To empower newcomer youth and parents to seek assistance through local healthcare, community and ANC resources
- To build partnerships and collaborate with mental health and wellness service providers and to enhance their capacity to provide services with cultural humility

Target Client Group(s):

The main target client group of the 2Gether Youth project consists of newcomer youth (aged 19 to 30 years) and their parents. A secondary target client group consists of mental health and wellness services providers in the community who serve newcomer youth.

Delivery Partners:

Project partners include Eastern Health, Choices for Youth, the Eastern Newfoundland School District, and the Refugee Health Clinic at Memorial University of Newfoundland.

Human Resources:

The project was led and coordinated by a member of the ANC. Furthermore, the team of ANC’s Children and Youth Programs division (CAYP) helped with the communication and dissemination of project information and initiatives. Additional human resources included the 10 newcomer youths and parents who volunteered to serve on the project advisory group. Finally, a consultant at Goss Gilroy Inc. contributed to several aspects of the project (i.e., conducted a literature review, conducted quantitative and qualitative research, and evaluated the project).

Funding:

The 2Gether Youth project was funded by the Royal Bank of Canada (RBC) and Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC).

KEY FEATURES THAT CONTRIBUTE TO THIS BEING A PROMISING PRACTICE

Effective:

The 2Gether Youth project purposefully established an advisory group consisting of members of the main target client group, newcomer youth and parents. Furthermore, the members of the advisory group were selected to represent diverse backgrounds and different age groups. This approach allowed for the inclusion of different perspectives and ensured that the outcomes of the project would be relevant to newcomer youth and their parents. Finally, the approach and delivery of the project adopted a cultural humility perspective. In this way, the project addressed some of the barriers that newcomer youth and parents encounter when accessing mental health and wellness services.

Efficient:

The inclusion of newcomer youth and parents in all stages of the project led to a lot of buy-in that contributed to the success of the project. Also, the project relied on technology to develop and deliver

programming, resources and initiatives for newcomer youth and their parents. The digital format of the program allowed for a lot of engagement at a low cost. In particular, the participation of newcomers was not restricted to newcomers located in St. John's, but also included newcomers located in smaller communities outside of St. John's. The digital format also made the programming, resources, and initiatives easily accessible to newcomers who otherwise would have had difficulties to attend in-person events due to childcare and/or transportation problems. Furthermore, the project used a variety of communication channels to disseminate the created knowledge, including social media, email, phone, and chat groups. Finally, the project collaborated with already existing community organizations providing mental health and wellness services for newcomer youth and their parents in order to promote the efficient use of their services.

Relevant:

The 2Gether Youth project addressed the need of newcomer youth and parents to learn about, understand and access the mental health and wellness services available to them. It also enhanced the understanding of service providers on how to provide mental health and wellness services to newcomer youth from a cultural humility perspective. In this way, the project was able to break down many barriers faced by newcomer youth and parents.

Sustainable:

The modules, resources and initiatives developed through the 2Gether Youth project will continue to be shared with newcomers and the community. In fact, several partnerships with mental health and wellness services providers have been established and will be maintained in the future. Furthermore, the work of the advisory group will continue and will be coordinated by a social worker from ANC's Child and Youth Settlement team. Finally, additional funding from RBC has been acquired to move to the next phase of the 2Gether Youth project. In the next phase of the project, members of the advisory group will be trained by a clinician to provide narrative therapy to their newcomer peers. They will talk about their life stories and lived experiences with mental health and wellness, including their challenges and methods used to overcome these challenges.

Transferable:

The 2Gether Youth project could easily be replicated with an even younger age group as well as in different geographical locations. Furthermore, in more general terms, the approach used for the project could be copied by other organizations and areas of practice. In other words, organizations could replicate the process and form a newcomer advisory group and work in close collaboration with this group to identify needs and develop solutions for addressing these needs. Similarly, by engaging in stakeholder development and management, organizations could build a good community partner base.

Innovative and Forward Thinking:

The innovative feature of the 2Gether Youth project is that newcomer youth and parents have been engaged in all aspects of the project, including the foundational and planning portions of the project, the development of materials and resources, and the shared co-delivery of these materials. Furthermore, the project was able to quickly pivot to an online delivery format when the pandemic started and relied on creative solutions to reach newcomers in different ways (i.e., podcasts, online presentations, and information sessions).

Differs in Definable Ways from Other Similar Practices:

The direction of the 2Gether Youth project was very much influenced by the input provided by the newcomer youths and parents in the advisory group. Furthermore, the programming (e.g., modules) developed by the 2Gether Youth project are co-facilitated by a newcomer (a member of the advisory group). Similarly, the podcasts developed for the project were designed by newcomer youth for newcomer youth.

High Client Uptake:

The 2Gether Youth project was able to reach out to the newcomer community via word of mouth, social media and referrals through ANC's settlement team. Also, on a number of occasions ANC's Child and Youth Settlement team supported the project by disseminating information, drawing in participants and spreading the word about the project.

High Client Retention:

The 2Gether Youth project was able to create a very engaged and cohesive advisory group by scheduling weekly meetings. The project was also able to continuously connect with the wider community through ongoing information sharing and planning of initiatives and activities.

Strong Evidence of Successful Outcomes:

The 2Gether Youth project successfully created an advisory group which held regular meetings. Feedback surveys conducted in the middle and at the end of the project found that advisory group members gained a better understanding of newcomer youth mental health and the associated challenges, became more comfortable and confident in addressing their own mental health, and reported an increased awareness of existing mental health resources to support newcomer youth.

Furthermore, the 2Gether Youth project developed two modules, one for newcomer youth and one for their parents, to increase their awareness and understanding of mental health and wellness services. A third module was developed for service providers which aims to enhance their understanding of cultural humility and its role when serving the newcomer youth population. All three modules successfully engaged participants. The overwhelming majority of newcomer youths and parents found the modules very helpful and reported increases in knowledge, understanding and awareness of local mental health and wellness resources. Similarly, all service providers enhanced their understanding of the barriers faced by newcomer youth and their awareness of existing resources. Most service providers also found that the module gave them practical knowledge and tools to enhance their own work with newcomers.

The 2Gether Youth project was also able to build partnerships with several community organizations. In addition, the 2Gether Youth project was approached by local community organizations interested in learning more about the project overall and the module for service providers.

The 2Gether Youth project also developed 5 podcasts on mental health and wellness which featured five newcomer youths from different countries. The podcasts were published and shared on several social media channels, including ANC's social media channels, the Anchor/Spotify apps, and YouTube.

Finally, the 2Gether Youth project was able to achieve and/or supersede the goals set by the funder RBC. In particular, it achieved the targeted percentage of youths who accessed the developed

resources as a result of a referral, the percentage of parents who reported that the developed resources were helpful, the number of youths directly impacted by the project, the number of individuals trained as a direct result of the project, the number of volunteers engaged in the project and the number of hours invested by volunteers.

PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT AND EVALUATION STRATEGY

The 2Gether Youth project worked together with an external consultant from Goss Gilroy Inc. In the initial stages of the project, the consultant provided advice and conducted several research activities including a literature review, separate focus groups with newcomer youth, parents, and advisory group members, as well as interviews and surveys with service providers. The goal of these research activities was to gain a better understanding of the needs of newcomer youth and parents, and to learn more about how information about mental health and wellness services could most effectively be shared and delivered. Besides informing the content of the developed resources (e.g., modules, podcasts), the information was used as a benchmark in the subsequent evaluation of these resources. The three modules were piloted with youths, parents, and service providers. The external consultant observed all three sessions and conducted feedback surveys with participants. Throughout the project, the external consultant also evaluated the project by conducting in-depth interviews and feedback surveys with advisory group members and ANC staff. At the end of the project, the project coordinator and the funder, RBC, conducted two separate feedback surveys with the members of the advisory group. Finally, the project coordinator also documented several project measures such as the number of volunteers involved in the project and the number of youths directly impacted by the project.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

ANC

<https://www.ancnl.ca/>

Project website:

<https://www.ancnl.ca/2GetherYouth/>