

# SHARING SETTLEMENT AND INTEGRATION PRACTICES THAT WORK GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE SETTLEMENT SECTOR STRATEGY PARTNERSHIP

YMCA of Greater Halifax/Dartmouth - Immigrant Services, with the Canadian Immigrant Settlement Sector Alliance (CISSA-ACSEI), Ending Violence Association of Canada (EVA CAN), and Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants (OCASI)  
Canada, Various Locations

## Area of Practice:

- Programs to Address Gender-based Violence
- Developing Strategic Partnerships and Collaborations to Provide Supports for Immigrant Settlement and Integration

## Video:

<https://youtu.be/jwuJEEoX7aI>

A Pathways to  
Prosperity Project

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PATHWAYS TO  
PROSPERITY  
Presenting Welcoming Communities in Canada



VOIES VERS LA  
PROSPÉRITÉ  
Présentant des communautés accueillantes au Canada

## **BACKGROUND ON THE ORGANIZATION AND IMPETUS FOR THE PROGRAM**

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In April 2019, with funding from Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC), four organizations from the anti-violence and settlement sectors partnered to develop a national Gender-Based Violence Settlement Sector Strategy. These organizations are 1) the Canadian Immigrant Settlement Sector Alliance (CISSA), 2) the Ending Violence Association of Canada (EVA CAN), 3) the Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants (OCASI), and 4) the YMCA of Greater Halifax/Dartmouth – Immigrant Services.

The **Canadian Immigrant Settlement Sector Alliance (CISSA-ACSEI)** is a national corporation which aims to harness the expertise of the immigrant settlement sector and to act as the sector’s national voice to help build a Canadian society in which all immigrants and refugees are able to participate fully. CISSA-ACSEI carries out its mission by 1) undertaking special projects, research initiatives, government relations and advocacy, 2) facilitating networking opportunities and sector coordination on various issues and/or initiatives that are pan-Canadian in scope, and 3) helping the immigrant settlement sector advance public policy, enhance programming, and strengthen newcomer outcomes in Canada. From among its members, CISSA-ACSEI appointed the Elmwood Community Resource Centre as its lead on the Gender-Based Violence Settlement Sector Strategy project.

The **Ending Violence Association of Canada (EVA CAN)** is a national non-profit organization which aims to educate and respond to gender-based violence (GBV) at the national level. For many years those responding to sexual assault, intimate partner violence, and child abuse have mainly been working in separate sectors. These programs are often in the position of having to compete for a slice of the social policy agenda, for funding, and for awareness of these issues. GBV is a complex issue that requires an integrated analysis and a national conversation to include all of the sectors needed to respond to or foster prevention. EVA CAN aims to build coordination and collaboration between the many actors and systems that are key to responding to GBV.

The **Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants (OCASI)** was formed in 1978 to act as a collective voice for immigrant-serving agencies and to coordinate responses to shared needs and concerns. The mission of OCASI is to achieve equality, access and full participation for immigrants and refugees in every aspect of Canadian life. OCASI is a registered charity governed by a volunteer board of directors. Its membership comprises more than 200 community-based organizations in the province of Ontario.

The **YMCA** is a charity serving communities across Canada. One of the missions of the YMCA is to respond to the needs of newcomers and to support them as they build their new lives in Canada. The YMCA accomplishes this with a strong framework of programs and a history of partnerships with like-minded agencies and all levels of government. YMCA Immigrant Services provides a variety of programs for newcomers of all ages. With a focus on successful settlement for the whole family, YMCA Immigrant Services aims to build healthy inclusive communities.

These four organizations were invited by IRCC to develop a national settlement sector strategy to address GBV among immigrants and refugees. Recognizing that immigrants and refugees continue to experience structural barriers when accessing supports, the project aims to build on the current expertise and existing resources to develop a shared base of knowledge between the settlement and

anti-violence sectors. The goal of the project is to adopt a coordinated and comprehensive approach so that the settlement and anti-violence sectors are better able to deliver GBV prevention and intervention to immigrant and refugee individuals and families experiencing violence.

## **OVERVIEW OF THE PROGRAM**

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**Name:**

Gender-Based Violence Settlement Sector Strategy Partnership

**Description:**

In April 2019, four organizations from the anti-violence and settlement sectors partnered to collaboratively work on developing a national settlement sector strategy to address GBV among immigrants and refugees. In particular, the four organizations set out to build on their current expertise, knowledge and resources to undertake several activities over a three-year period. These activities include: 1) a needs assessment, 2) the development and launch of a national gender-based violence settlement sector strategy, 3) the development of webinars and online training for staff in the anti-violence and settlement sectors, 4) the creation of a standard protocols and procedures tool, 5) the development of a client workshop for immigrants and refugees, 6) the establishment of a Champions Network (a network of staff in both sectors who champion GBV at their agencies), and 7) the publication of project resources on the project website.

**Goal(s):**

The project aims to increase knowledge and collaboration between the settlement and anti-violence sectors in order to better serve immigrant and refugee individuals and families experiencing GBV. The ultimate goal is to develop a national settlement sector strategy to address GBV among immigrants and refugees.

**Target Client Group(s):**

Leadership and frontline staff in the settlement and anti-violence sectors who are working with immigrants and refugees. In the future, the target group will also include immigrants and refugees in terms of providing information and support.

**Delivery Partners:**

Project partners include 1) the Canadian Immigrant Settlement Sector Alliance (CISSA-ACSEI), 2) the Ending Violence Association of Canada (EVA CAN), 3) the Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants (OCASI), and 4) the YMCA of Greater Halifax/Dartmouth – Immigrant Services.

**Human Resources:**

The partnership has a project manager and representatives from the leading organizations. In particular, the partnership has a working group consisting of staff from each partner organization. The working group meets weekly to contribute to the activities of the project. In addition, the senior leaders of the four partner organizations meet quarterly or bi-monthly to discuss strategic planning, to oversee the project tools and resources, and to provide guidance and support. The partnership also engaged an external research consultant to lead the project needs assessment, interview subject

matter experts, invite other interested service providers to be involved in the project, and to host learning events.

**Funding:**

The project is funded by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC).

## **KEY FEATURES THAT CONTRIBUTE TO THIS BEING A PROMISING PRACTICE**

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**Effective:**

A key factor contributing to the effectiveness of the project is that it includes multiple voices from the anti-violence and settlement sectors from across Canada. Leaders from both sectors have come together to share their experiences, expertise and connections, and to collaborate on specific activities, with the ultimate goal of helping immigrants and refugees experiencing GBV. Furthermore, the inclusion of subject matter experts in the initial key informant interviews, the webinar series, and the online course for staff allowed the partnership to access expert knowledge, to extend its network, and to learn more about the wide variety of projects and resources being developed in the area of GBV across the country.

**Efficient:**

One of the factors contributing to the efficiency of the project is that it builds on already existing expertise and resources. To capitalize on this expertise and resources, the project first undertook an environmental scan and engaged in a consultation process with frontline workers and experts in the field. This process allowed the partnership to focus its activities on key areas of concern. Throughout the project, emphasis has been placed on obtaining regular feedback and input for all activities.

Furthermore, the creation of a separate working group, besides the partners group, greatly helped with the efficiency of the project. Each partner organization has a paid part-time staff member who participates in the weekly working group meetings. This ensures that working group members have sufficient time for the project. Also, working group members' contributions are often matched with their areas of expertise. The collaborative nature of the project also allows all participating organizations to share project information, resources and reports in their own organizations and networks.

Finally, the project has greatly benefitted from the financial resources to hire an external consultant to generate activity content and research, as well as to help with the evaluation and facilitation of partnership events and meetings.

**Relevant:**

The anti-violence and settlement sectors are working to prevent silos. Increasing anti-violence workers' knowledge about the settlement sector, and increasing settlement workers' knowledge about the anti-violence sector can have significant benefits for immigrants and refugees in terms of service navigation and supports. The partnership aims to address this problem of silos by developing resources and tools for staff in the settlement and anti-violence sectors who are working with immigrants and refugees.

**Sustainable:**

The partnership has been offering their tools and resources for free (as they are funded by IRCC) and has published them on the project website. The partnership has also reached out through umbrella organization networks to the anti-violence and settlement sectors, and circulated their resources widely.

**Transferable:**

The tools and resources of the project are available on the project website. Given the national scope of the project, these tools and resources are for organizations across Canada. Furthermore, one of the project activities is to share the information about the project and to encourage staff to get involved. This in turn, should help staff to apply their newly gained knowledge, frameworks, approaches and tools to their own organizations, geographical areas, and work practices.

**Innovative and Forward Thinking:**

The information sharing from representatives from multiple sectors, cultural backgrounds and specializations has produced a group with collaborative voices across the country, and facilitated discussions about best practices in gender-based violence prevention and intervention among newcomers. This in turn is beneficial for the community of newcomers as well as the frontline workers serving newcomers.

**Differs in Definable Ways from Other Similar Practices:**

To the knowledge of the partnership, this is the first collaboration between the settlement and anti-violence sector at the national level.

**High Client Uptake:**

The 5-part webinar series for workers in the anti-violence and settlement sector were attended by individuals across the country. The promotion of the webinars was mostly conducted by the project manager. The reputation of the four partner organizations added credibility to the webinars, positively influencing participation.

In addition, the first online course for settlement staff and GBV workers, which was launched in October 2021, was attended by 120 participants. In January 2022, the same online course was launched in French. Over 40 workers signed up for the course.

**High Client Retention:**

For the 5-part webinar series, there were a total of 1,140 registrations. Overall, webinar participants found that they had learned a lot and appreciated the intersectional approach to gender-based violence.

In terms of the online course for settlement staff and GBV workers launched in October 2021, the majority of the participants completed and positively evaluated the course. Participants who signed up for the French version of the same course in January 2022 are currently in the process of completing the course.

**Strong Evidence of Successful Outcomes:**

The four organizations have effectively collaborated with each other to deliver several of the intended project activities. In particular, the partnership conducted a project needs assessment by conducting an environmental scan of GBV supports across the settlement sector in Canada, a national survey of 276 settlement and anti-violence sector workers across Canada, and interviews with 18 experts on GBV from across Canada. The partnership also drafted and launched a national GBV settlement sector strategy document with five key areas of priority for capacity building and collaboration.

Furthermore, the project developed and implemented a 5-part webinar series for service providers across Canada. These webinars covered topics such as GBV awareness basics, practical tools for responding to newcomers who experienced GBV, practicing effective allyship, allyship with 2SLGBTQIA+ newcomers, and engaging men and boys. The webinars were offered in English with simultaneous interpretation into French, and all webinar materials were available in both English and French. Overall, the webinars were positively evaluated by participants and were also seen as effective tools to bring individuals from the anti-violence and settlement sectors together.

The partnership also launched an online course for settlement staff and GBV workers. Initial feedback surveys completed by 105 participants showed that the vast majority of participants agreed that the course increased their knowledge about GBV (99%), the types of services provided by anti-violence organizations (94%) and the types of services provided by settlement organizations (87%). Also, nine in ten respondents felt that the course increased their knowledge of strategies for coordinating with other organizations or sectors in situations of GBV, GBV support strategies, and barriers experienced by newcomers and refugees.

In addition, the project also published a research bulletin, and shared existing educational resources from across Canada on the project website. Over the course of the first year after the launch of the project website, 2,000 unique individuals accessed the project website.

Finally, at the time of writing this brief, the project had started to develop a client workshop for immigrants and refugees, a Champions Network (workers who champion GBV at their agencies), and a standard protocols and procedures tool.

**PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT AND EVALUATION STRATEGY**

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The partnership has contracted an external consultant to aid with research for the project (e.g., community consultation for the national strategy, national survey with staff) and with the evaluation of the project. In addition, the working group gathered feedback from the webinar and online course participants through feedback questionnaires.

In March 2021, the external consultant completed a preliminary evaluation report. The preliminary evaluation report was based on the review of several project documents, a focus group with project partners and working group members, and an interview with the project manager. The findings of the preliminary evaluation report were used to develop a more detailed evaluation framework for the last year of the project.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

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**Gender-Based Violence Settlement Sector Strategy Partnership:**

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

**YMCA**

<https://www.ymcahfx.ca/gbvp/>

**Ending Violence Association of Canada**

<https://endingviolencecanada.org/>

**OCASI**

<https://ocasi.org/about-us>

**CISSA-ACSEI**

<http://www.cissa-acsei.org/>

**Elmwood Community Resource Centre:**

<http://elmwoodcrc.ca/>