



BUILDING RESILIENT COMMUNITIES: ENHANCING MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT FOR NEWCOMERS IN ALBERTA

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LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT



ABOUT AAISA

The Alberta Association of Immigrant Serving Agencies (AAISA) is a non-profit umbrella organization representing agencies that provide resettlement, settlement, and integration services to newcomers in the province of Alberta.

MISSION

Facilitate collaboration and leadership within the settlement serving sector

VISION

An inclusive, welcoming, and engaged society



AAISA AT A GLANCE

AAISA is a regionally and nationally recognized leader in the settlement and integration sector. As an umbrella organization, **AAISA represents over 53 agencies** that work with newcomers across the Province's settlement and integration sector.

AAISA provides the settlement and integration sector support with...



**Professional
Development**



**Sector
Advocacy**



**Sector
Engagement &
Collaboration**



**Research & Policy
Development**



PROJECT OVERVIEW

- **Project Goal:** To support settlement and integration organizations in providing mental health supports to newcomers

PHASE 1: RESEARCH

- Mental health needs of newcomers
- How are newcomers currently accessing mental health supports
- Barriers and gaps for newcomers to access mental health supports
- Recommendations for capacity building (professional development courses)

PHASE 2: CAPACITY ASSESSMENT AND BUILDING

- Development and delivery of 7 live-facilitated professional development courses

PHASE 3: SERVICE COORDINATION

- Development of an organizational self-audit tool
- Agencies can assess their internal capacity to meet newcomer mental health needs
- The tool will be connected to the 211 database to enhance referrals

PARTNERS

AAISA, CMHA-ED, DCC, 211 ALBERTA



CANADIAN MENTAL HEALTH ASSOCIATION (EDMONTON)

- Canadian Mental Health Association Edmonton offers a variety of programs and services that assist individuals 16 years of age and older, with reaching their short and long-term mental health goals.
- Provided mental health expertise and knowledge through a research report
- Assist in course development in Phase II



DISTRESS CENTRE CALGARY

- Provides 24-hour crisis support, professional counselling, youth peer support and navigation and referrals through 211 and programs at SORCe – at no cost.
- Mission is to provide crisis and navigation support that enhances the health, well-being and resiliency of individuals in distress.
- Provided their mental health expertise and knowledge through a research report
- Assist in course development in Phase II



211 ALBERTA



- 211 is a helpline and online database of Alberta's community and social services. 211 is answered and updated by highly-trained specialists
- Clients can find programs and services in their communities to assist them with their needs such as: crisis resources, mental health supports, violence/abuse, etc.
- Living audit tool will be housed on 211 Alberta's website



RESEARCH REPORT

- Available in both French and English
- **Purpose of the Report:**
 - Highlight mental health needs of newcomers before and during COVID-19
 - Present existing supports to address these needs
- **Scope and Audience:**
 - Benefits broader audiences seeking knowledge and capacity building
 - Relevant to organizations offering informal support
- **Recommendations:**
 - Micro-level (practices & programs)
 - Macro-level (policy & funding)
- **Professional Development Courses:**
 - 7 professional development courses
 - Project partners acted as Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) for the courses

WHAT ARE THE EXISTING WAYS NEWCOMERS ACCESS MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORTS?



We identified a dichotomous approach that newcomers are receiving mental health supports through



1) Newcomer-Serving organizations

Pros: Ability to have the newcomer-awareness lens (cultural sensitivity, trauma-informed practices,)

Cons: Lack of mental health specific training



2) Broader public health systems

Pros: Mental health experts (prevention, intervention, care plans)

Cons: Lacking newcomer expertise (trauma-informed practices, translation and interpretation, cultural sensitivity)

GAPS AND BARRIERS FOR NEWCOMERS IN ACCESSING MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORTS

Economic

Cultural and
Language

Lack of
professional
training for SPOs

Technological
barriers

Limited
awareness of
health services

Geographic
limitations

Stigma and
shame

Discrimination
and systemic
racism

Precarious
immigration
status

Safe spaces

HOW DOES THIS PROJECT SEEK TO BRIDGE THESE GAPS?

1) Professional Development training courses

- Increasing staff capacity to better understand mental health needs of newcomers and not to appropriately address them

2) Organizational self-audit tool

- Allows agencies across the country to audit their internal capacity to meet newcomer mental health needs
- If they have gaps, the audit tool seeks to refer them to existing programs and organizations that can fulfill the needs of newcomers

FINAL REPORT

- Existing mental health supports targeting newcomers:
 - In-person and virtual supports
 - Information sessions –connecting newcomers to community resources
 - Downloadable guides and booklets in multiple languages
 - Specific supports for intersectional groups (LGBTQI+, children, seniors, women, etc.)

SCAN HERE FOR THE ENGLISH
VERSION OF THE REPORT



SCANNEZ ICI POUR LA VERSION
FRANÇAISE DU RAPPORT



RECOMMENDATIONS

Micro-level (Programs and Best Practices)

Improve accessibility to mental health services

Increased professional training

Establish safe spaces to promote culturally relevant mental health services



Macro (Policy and Funding)

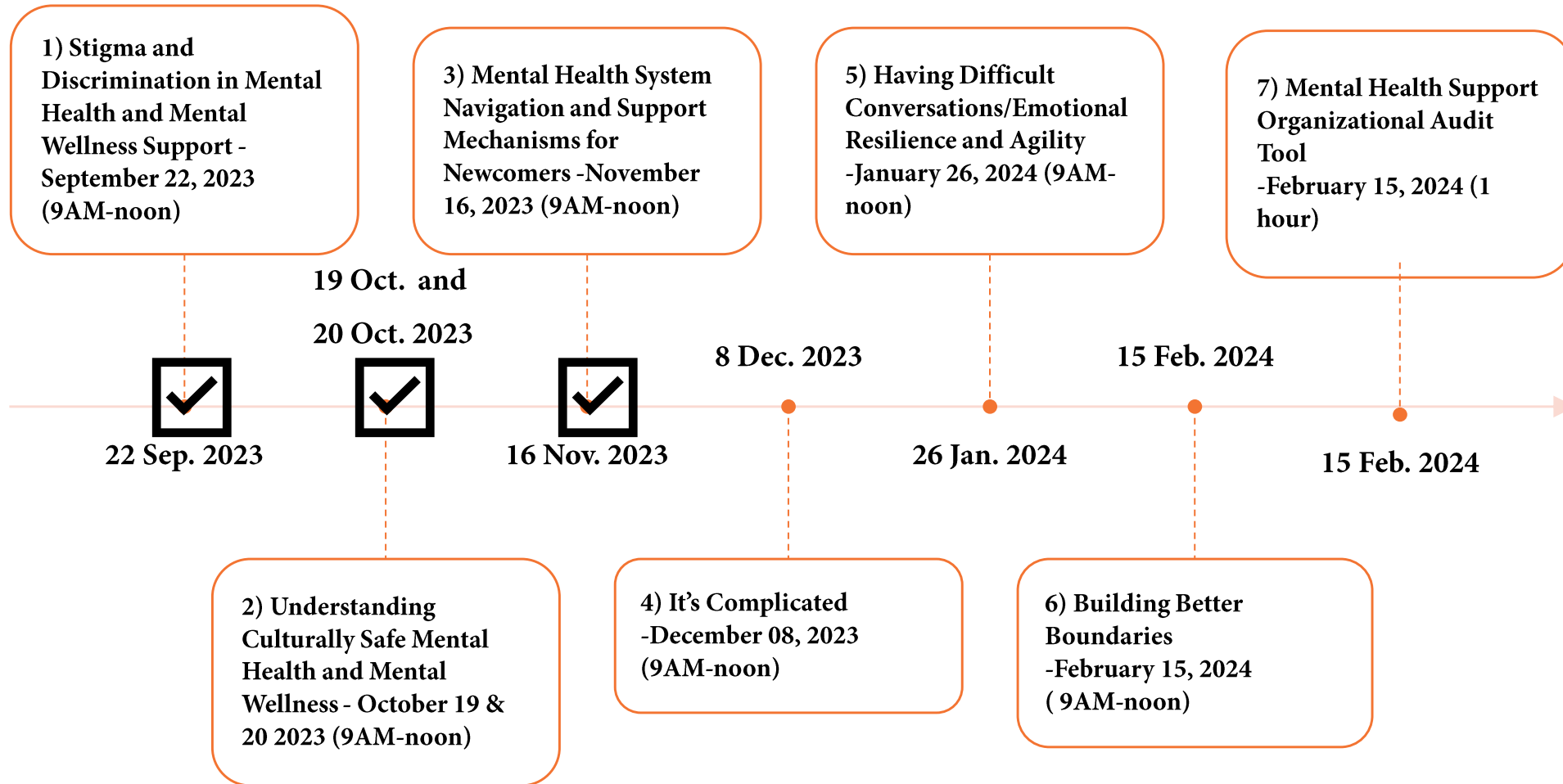
Policy recommendations to increase equity and accessibility

Advocacy for vulnerable populations

Create affordable and accessible housing

Develop improved interventions for young, racialized offenders (as opposed to arrests)

UPCOMING PD COURSES



UNDERSTANDING CULTURALLY SAFE MENTAL HEALTH AND MENTAL WELLNESS (SEPTEMBER 22, 2023)

COURSE DESCRIPTION

- The course focuses on how **mental health and mental wellness are perceived across different cultures** and discusses how practitioners/service providers can support and /or converse with clients about mental health in a **culturally safe and stigma-free manner**. It explores the interplay between cultural perspectives and mental health/mental wellness support/services. It aims to **build awareness and enable trainees to understand how their beliefs and biases affect their practices and the quality of services their clients receive**. The course is grounded in practitioners'/service providers' self-reflection and self-awareness about their practices through practical experience and working examples.

STIGMA AND DISCRIMINATION IN MENTAL HEALTH AND MENTAL WELLNESS SUPPORT (OCTOBER 19 & 20, 2023)

COURSE DESCRIPTION

- The course is designed to help clients understand the concepts, nature and impact of stigma and discrimination on clients with mental health needs. It covers issues on **how stigma and discrimination affect clients in accessing mental health support, the skills and strategies** to improve service provider and client interactions in mental health support.

MENTAL HEALTH SYSTEM NAVIGATION AND SUPPORT MECHANISMS FOR NEWCOMERS (NOVEMBER 16, 2023)

COURSE DESCRIPTION

- The focus of this course is on **mental health system navigation**. Trainees will become familiar with **Alberta's mental health continuum of care and support mechanisms, focusing on newcomers and how they can navigate and engage with them**. The course covers information for trainees on using **211** as a support system for navigating mental health services. It also presents an overview of mental health support mechanisms to address newcomers' needs and concerns.

IT'S COMPLICATED

(UPCOMING: DECEMBER 8, 2023)

COURSE DESCRIPTION

- This course provides the tools and strategies for supporting clients and their families through complex situations, including mental health and substance use concerns. It focuses on identifying the barriers for individuals and families facing complex situations and providing tools to address the barriers.



HAVING DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS/EMOTIONAL RESILIENCE AND AGILITY (UPCOMING: JANUARY 26, 2024)

COURSE DESCRIPTION

- **This course aims to support clients in identifying emotional hooks and the value of underpinning emotions and help them in managing their inner critic, internal biases, and evaluate emotional agility.**



BUILDING BETTER BOUNDARIES

(UPCOMING: FEBRUARY 15, 2024)

COURSE DESCRIPTION

- This course aims to help trainees in understanding how and where to set boundaries. It **provides an overview of the concept, role and ways of building boundaries in supporting others.** It also includes wellness tools and care strategies for practitioners who support clients.

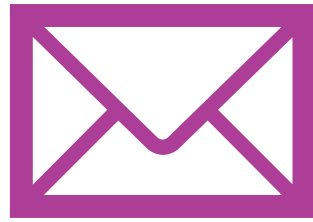


MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT ORGANIZATIONAL AUDIT TOOL (UPCOMING: FEBRUARY 15, 2024)

COURSE DESCRIPTION

- This course is designed to help trainees identify the strengths and barriers of their respective organizations in meeting the mental health needs of newcomers. It provides guidance and step-by-step instructions on completing the audit tool within an organization. It focuses on how organizations can utilize the audit tool and apply its findings to improve their capacity in providing services.

REGISTER FOR OUR REMAINING COURSES



Please contact pd@aaisa.ca to
register for our remaining
courses



We will be converting the courses into
French, and self-paced versions in the
upcoming 2024 year as well.



ORGANIZATIONAL AUDIT TOOL

- **What is it?**
 - Tool for agencies to assess their internal capacity to meet newcomer mental health needs
 - It is an online, self-audit tool, divided into five sections, where the user will answer questions accordingly:
 1. Organizational policies and planning
 2. Organizational leadership and governance
 3. Programs and services
 4. Staffing and resources
 5. Collaboration, advocacy, and outreach

ORGANIZATIONAL AUDIT TOOL

- **What is it used for?**
 - Organizations can use the **results** of the self-audit tool to:
 - Build internal capacity to incorporate newcomer mental health into its policies, plans, programs, and services
 - Bridge gaps between internal and external organizations to holistically improve access to mental health services
 - Ensure continuous improvement and change

QUESTIONS?



CONTACT

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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1. In your experience, what are the top 3 or top 5 challenges newcomers face in terms of mental well-being during their settlement process?
- 2. What existing gaps within your agencies do you have to meet mental health needs of newcomers?
- 3. What strategies or initiatives do your agencies implement to address the mental health needs of newcomers?
 - Are you currently partnered with mental health specialized agencies?
- 4. What aspects of community engagement and cultural understanding do you find pertinent to addressing mental health needs of newcomers?
- 5. How has mental health needs of newcomers changed since pre-pandemic?
 - Many global events have changed since 2019, mass digitization of services, simultaneous influx of Afghan and Ukrainian arrivals, etc.