

## Promoting Emotional Well-Being in Refugee Newcomer Families in Waterloo Region

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**KEYWORDS:** Refugees, newcomers, youth and families, emotional wellbeing, Waterloo Region, whole family approach, settlement services, wraparound care, resettlement, mentorship, midsize urban area, Canada

### WHAT THE RESEARCH IS ABOUT

**OBJECTIVE:** This study aimed to deepen our understanding of newcomer families' wellbeing in the context of Canadian resettlement by conducting a case study of Sanctuary Refugee Health Centre.

**RESEARCH JUSTIFICATION:** More newcomers are settling in midsize urban areas, such as the Waterloo Region, yet these areas are often overlooked in the research on newcomer resettlement. To effectively support the wellbeing of refugees, it is critical for healthcare service providers to adhere to principles of trauma-informed, linguistically tailored, and culturally sensitive healthcare.

**PRACTICAL GOAL:** This study provides a detailed case study of a refugee-focused health centre to support other practitioners in promoting the health, wellbeing, and resilience of refugee newcomer families. It also provides policy makers with information to consider when planning initiatives for re-orienting and improving refugee health care at local, regional, provincial and national levels.

**PRIMARY AUDIENCE:** Academics, service providers, policy makers, and the public.

### HOW THE DATA WAS OBTAINED

This study began with a need and resource assessment to better understand how Sanctuary Refugee Health Centre functions and the challenges faced in providing refugee health services and promoting the wellbeing of refugee families in the Waterloo Region. This case study included a review of organizational documents and semi-structured interviews with the founder and staff.



## CALL TO ACTION

- ▶ People with refugee experience should be involved in refugee-serving initiative to help maximise the impact, provide culturally-sensitive services, and overcome language barriers.
- ▶ Create safe and respectful environments for refugee clients by providing trauma-informed care, cultural sensitivity, services appropriate for refugee newcomers, and translators when the service provider and client do not speak the same language.
- ▶ Given the complexity of refugee problems and the traumatic experiences that are often shared with staff and volunteers, refugee-serving organizations should develop and implement plans to prevent burnout.

## WHAT THE STUDY FOUND

- ▶ Sanctuary's Pathway model proposes four pathways to wellbeing: 1) physical and mental stability; 2) cognitive and emotional capacity; 3) social connections and system navigation; and 4) becoming culturally secure and aware of differences that can create conflict. The model also identifies four categories of patient needs and four stages of care, which progress according to the patient's specific situation.
- ▶ This model informs Sanctuary's holistic approach, which addresses factors that protect against mental health concerns for refugees. This model of wrap-around care provides not only physical and mental healthcare, but a variety of newcomer supports, such as social assistance, legal counselling and information, settlement services, etc.
- ▶ Sanctuary's strength lies in working with and involving multiple stakeholders at different levels, including government and non-government organizations in areas of: public health; community health centres; hospitals and pharmacies; child and adult mental health services; family and child welfare; cultural and religious services; and immigration and settlement services.

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## ABOUT CYRRC

The Child and Youth Refugee Research Coalition (CYRRC) is a network of researchers, service providers, and government partners working together to produce and share research that facilitates the integration of young refugees and their families in Canada and beyond.

The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the researchers and do not necessarily reflect the official position of the Child and Youth Refugee Research Coalition.



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