

## A Study of PTSD in Unaccompanied Refugee Youth

**TITLE OF RESEARCH:** Loss and Protracted Family Separation among Refugee Children and Youth: Examining Post-Migration Impacts and Service Needs

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**SUMMARY:** This study explores how the experience of loss or family separation affects the mental and social wellbeing of refugee youth. It also identifies interventions, services, and policies to support the wellbeing of these youth.

**LINK:** Click [here](#) to read the executive summary and [here](#) to learn more about the project



Factors that intensify post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) in refugee youth who have experienced family loss or separation:

- › Post-traumatic guilt and shame
- › Lower levels of literacy and language barriers
- › Social isolation
- › Living in low-support reception centres
- › Social determinants of health: poverty, social insecurity, lack of family attachment
- › Lack of access or inappropriateness of services



Factors that protect refugee youth from PTSD and support their integration:

- › Trauma-focused cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT)
- › Social support and help navigating various systems (housing, refugee claims, taxes)
- › Supportive programs, including mental health support, mentorship, recreational activities, and arts-based programs
- › Language support
- › High quality relationships with guardian(s)

### Recommendations:

- › Services and service providers need to be accessible (in terms of cost, availability, and language) and use trauma-informed approaches.
- › Policies should reduce the wait time for claimant decisions in the settlement process, expediate family reunification, improve access to healthcare and allow youth to access services in their preferred language.
- › Refugee youth need access to affordable housing and education regardless of their claimant status.
- › Education credentials from outside of Canada need to be recognized.
- › A strengths-based approach to capacity-building and social inclusion would recognize the resilience of refugee populations and allow refugees themselves to become key stakeholders in decision-making processes and advocacy.

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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