

Refugee Families' Mental Health during Resettlement in Hamilton, Ontario

TITLE OF RESEARCH: **Mental Health and Help-Seeking among Refugee Children and Families in Hamilton, Ontario**

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SUMMARY: This study explored government-assisted refugee (GAR) families' experiences of resettlement stressors and access to mental health supports in Hamilton, Ontario. Mixed methods surveys were conducted with 40 parents and semi-structured interviews were done with 33 service provider staff; 48 children and parents from the study participated in an arts workshop to further share their experiences with the public.

LINK: Click [here](#) to read the executive summary, [here](#) to read the publication and [here](#) to view the video



Refugee parents experience significant mental health challenges due to high levels of economic and social stressors such as the high cost of living, social isolation, and language barriers.



Levels of psychological distress appeared to increase with length of stay in Canada, highlighting the urgent need for early intervention.



Despite these stressors, most parents rated themselves as coping well or very well and described various coping strategies such as positive reframing, problem solving, planning, and turning to religion.



Parents and children agreed that strong family relationships are key to preventing and addressing mental health challenges.



Most refugee parents and children have not accessed mental health supports and know little about what services are available, indicating a need for greater investments in mental health promotion and prevention.

Recommendations:

- Policies and programs are needed to provide comprehensive social and economic supports to refugees beyond the first one to two years after arrival. Specifically, more cost-of-living support is needed for refugee families.
- Policymakers and service providers should create more opportunities for newcomer social connection, especially sports and recreational activities that bring together newcomers and community members.
- More services to help refugee children and parents cope with stress and loss in ways that celebrate their strength, culture, and resilience are needed.
- Services should meet newcomer families where they are by embedding mental health supports in community settings such as schools and ethnocultural associations.
- Parents should be engaged in identifying and responding to children's mental health needs to ensure that care does not clash with cultural values, thereby causing or exacerbating intergenerational conflict.

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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