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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 a response to shared needs and concerns. OCASI is a registered charity governed by a volunteer board of directors. Its membership is comprised of more than 200 community-based organizations in the province of Ontario. The Mission of OCASI is to achieve equality, access and full participation for immigrants and refugees in every aspect of Canadian life. OCASI asserts the right of all persons to participate fully and equitably in the social, cultural, political and economic life of Ontario.
The OCASI *Newcomer Youth Settlement Guide for Service Providers* is prepared with a strong recommendation that youth settlement should be provided within an anti-oppression, anti-racism framework. The Guide is also prepared with the understanding that, in order to be effective, service providers must strive to reduce all barriers hindering newcomer youth settlement in Canada, including systemic barriers. This is to be achieved through appropriate assessment, intervention, education and advocacy, and through meaningful collaboration with stakeholders whose work makes a difference in the lives of immigrant and refugee youth.

The views and recommendations expressed in this document are outcomes of consultations with approximately 200 newcomer youth and youth settlement workers and others who participated in the OCASI project, *Services for Youth in Newcomer Communities (SYNC)*.
# Table of Contents

## PART ONE
INTRODUCTION ................................................................................................................. 1

## PART TWO
SUMMARY OF GOOD PRACTICE CRITERIA AND OF ATTRIBUTES OF AN EFFECTIVE NEWCOMER YOUTH PROGRAM .......................................................... 9

- Summary of the Best Practice Guidelines highlighted in the Canadian Council for Refugees report ........................................................................................................ 9
- Summary of good practice criteria identified in OCASI SYNC project research .............. 10

## PART THREE
SETTLEMENT CHALLENGES FACED BY IMMIGRANT AND REFUGEE YOUTH IN ONTARIO .................................................................................................................. 12

- Challenges/barriers in the education system .................................................................. 13
- Lack of language proficiency ......................................................................................... 16
- Challenges related to culture ......................................................................................... 17
- Challenges related to parents mistrust of western culture ............................................. 19
- Discipline and changed family dynamics ....................................................................... 19
- Youth vulnerability in the face of antisocial practices that may besiege their community .............................................................................................................. 20
- Home, school and gang violence .................................................................................. 21
- Isolation/loneliness because of a lack of social support ................................................. 21
- Lack of knowledge ....................................................................................................... 21
- Insufficient attention to mental health issues ............................................................... 22
- Settlement services in rural areas ............................................................................... 25
- Concerns relating to at-risk refugee youth ................................................................. 26
- Integration barriers related to unemployment ............................................................... 27
- Unfamiliarity with popular modes of technology in Canada ......................................... 27
- Challenges related to policing and to the judicial system .............................................. 28
- Racism, discrimination/prejudice and stigma ............................................................... 28
- Shortcomings related to programming ......................................................................... 30
- Barriers related to housing ......................................................................................... 31
- Weather/climate .......................................................................................................... 31
- Challenges faced by non-status youth ......................................................................... 32

## PART FOUR
PROPOSED STEPS TO ADDRESS CHALLENGES IDENTIFIED AND TO MAKE YOUTH SETTLEMENT SERVICES MORE EFFECTIVE ........................................ 33

- Enabling organizational structure, policies and operational frameworks ..................... 34
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Collaboration with stakeholders</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public education</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff training/development</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Needs assessment and program objectives</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information and referral</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program accessibility, affordability and participation</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Addressing challenges in the education system</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language learning for newcomer youth</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical, mental and reproductive health</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harm reduction</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Addressing challenges in employment</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Addressing challenges in the justice system</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improving youth engagement and participation</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working with newcomer parents</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Addressing the needs of youth in small towns</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Addressing the needs of non-status youth</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The newcomer youth bill of rights</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**PART FIVE**

NEWCOMER YOUTH BILL OF RIGHTS PROPOSED BY OCASI SYNC PROJECT RESEARCH ................................................................. 63

**PART SIX**

PROGRAMS WITH SOME ATTRIBUTES RECOGNIZED BY OCASI SYNC PROJECT RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS AS IMPORTANT TO EFFECTIVE YOUTH PROGRAMING ................................................................. 66

**PART SEVEN**

INTERPRETATION OF PROGRAM SELECTION AND CONCLUSION ........................................ 99

References ........................................................................................................ 103

Appendix 1 Definition ....................................................................................... 107
NEWCOMER YOUTH CONTRIBUTION TO THE GUIDE

The OCASI Newcomer Youth Settlement Guide for Service Providers is intended as a guide and not as a definitive prescriptive document. It is the outcome of youth-led, community-based research carried out in collaboration with settlement workers selected from across Ontario. The document draws on some of the challenges and recommendations from existing research, however, most of the challenges and recommendations outlined were obtained from the suggestions and proposals made by youth and settlement workers during the OCASI Services for Youth in Newcomer Communities (SYNC) project research.

The challenges outlined in the OCASI guide build upon previous research and illuminate the current situation of newcomer youth services from the perspective of newcomer youth. These challenges identified also reveal gaps in current service delivery that providers must address in order to offer effective settlement services for immigrant and refugee youth.

A key observation worth highlighting here is the increasing use of a combination of settlement and non-settlement (or ‘other’) services by youth. For instance, when asked to provide examples of services that have desirable features, project participants outlined many examples from outside the traditional settlement sector (such as health-related services; see Part 6). This indicates that immigrant and refugee youth frequent many services outside the settlement sector. Not surprisingly, youth participants emphasized the need for greater collaboration between settlement and non-settlement service providers in areas such as health and education. They called for effective partnerships to ensure that newcomer youth can access the services they require.

The Context of ‘Settlement’ and Newcomer Youth’s Perceived Role of ‘Settlement Services’

Newcomer youth strongly emphasized the fact that settlement services are offered to them in an ever changing environment, and want to be engaged and to take part in shaping those changes. Newcomer youth in the OCASI SYNC project research stressed that they did not wish to be nor to be treated as passive service recipients.

They also wished to point out that despite the many settlement challenges, numerous immigrant and refugee youth have succeeded in integrating into most aspects of Canadian life. Consistent with other research findings (e.g.}
Ornstein 2000, 2006) newcomer youth noted that poverty and race were key barriers to the integration for many immigrant and refugee youth.

THE OCASI NEWCOMER YOUTH SETTLEMENT GUIDE AS A TOOL FOR SERVICE PROVIDERS IN ONTARIO

There is no easy way to provide the ‘best service’ when serving immigrant and refugee youth. Organizations and programs learn from trial and error and feedback from newcomer youth about the success and problems of their settlement programming. Changes to programs are ongoing, and there are constant challenges that need to be addressed and improved upon.

For this reason, the OCASI Newcomer Youth Settlement Guide for Service Providers is simply a Guide and not a definitive prescription. It is hoped that the features identified as integral to effective programming by youth and youth settlement workers inspire service providers to take these considerations into account when implementing youth settlement programs and when evaluating their existing services.

The ‘Best Practices’ section (Part 6) should, therefore, be treated as an outline of a number of programs and agencies exhibiting some of the beneficial features identified by SYNC project participants. The section should not be perceived as outlining the very ‘best’ programs available. Some of the programs and activities identified by youth are implemented by organizations that are not traditionally considered part of the immigrant serving sector.

GOAL OF NEWCOMER YOUTH SETTLEMENT GUIDE FOR SERVICE PROVIDERS

The goal of the Newcomer Youth Settlement Guide for Service Providers is to enhance settlement services for immigrant and refugee youth in Ontario between the ages of 13 and 24.

The Newcomer Youth Settlement Guide for Service Providers is the product of the OCASI youth-led Services for Youth in Newcomer Communities (SYNC) project in which youth and a select group of settlement workers from across Ontario carried out community-based research, with the goals of:

- Identifying the settlement challenges and barriers faced by immigrant and refugee youth in Ontario.
- Identifying potential ways of addressing challenges and gaps.
- Outlining some programs/activities perceived by newcomer youth and/or by youth settlement workers as having some of the features that contribute to successful newcomer youth settlement programs.
- Establishing what future settlement services for immigrant and refugee youth in Ontario should look like from the perspective of newcomer youth.
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Literature Review

An extensive review of existing research was undertaken to identify some of the settlement challenges that youth and service providers face and the programs and practices that contribute to an effective youth settlement service. A review was also conducted of the tools that give service providers the ability to make their organizations more inclusive and their programs responsive to the needs of immigrant and refugee youth.

Community Based Research (CBR) By Newcomer Youth and Youth Settlement Workers

A Project Advisory Committee was established, composed of immigrant and refugee youth as well as youth settlement workers from diverse backgrounds and from various Ontario regions. Efforts were made to balance age (from 13-24 years) and to ensure representation from the francophone community.

Each Advisory Committee member from outside Toronto was invited to bring along an Associate to a two-day training session on Community-Based Research (CBR) methodology. This prepared Advisory Committee members as well as Associate Committee members to conduct their community-based research successfully, applying learned methods such as the incorporation of research questions. This helped Committee members and their associates to perform focus group and individual informant interviews in their regions.

An additional consultation was held with eight settlement workers from agencies in Hamilton, Toronto and the Halton Region.

York University Student Research

30 students from the York University Canadian Immigration Policy and Settlement course (AK/SOCI 3624), which explores the role of the Canadian state in the economy through policies and programs in the areas of immigration and settlement, undertook research to identify the best practices and challenges. They also proposed ways of developing appropriate services for immigrant and refugee youth in Ontario. Their research was gathered from literature, group discussions, and a question and answer session with a panel of seven service providers from four immigrant serving agencies in Toronto. Among the panel members were three settlement workers and two youth who had recently received youth settlement services in a settlement agency and then subsequently were hired as peer leaders to assist other youth seeking services in the same agency.

Under the direction of Dr. Tania Das Gupta, the Chair and Associate Professor of the School of Social Sciences at the Atkinson Faculty of Liberal and Professional Studies, this research was part of a pilot project which encouraged students to focus their research on community issues and to work collaboratively with community organizations to identify some solutions to the challenges currently faced by immigrant and refugee youth.
Input from a One-Day Community Discussion

Significant contributions were made by 140 participants from across Ontario, including 35 youth, who attended a one-day Colloquium in Toronto. This provided an opportunity for participants to outline settlement challenges faced by newcomer youth, and to make recommendations on developing and implementing youth settlement services that minimize barriers and sustain youth engagement.

DESCRIPTION OF THE DOCUMENT’S SECTIONS

This document consists of 7 parts assembled to offer a thorough understanding of the OCASI SYNC project research, its major findings, and proposals to be undertaken to ensure a wider reaching and more effective delivery of services to immigrant and refugee youth in the province of Ontario.

Part 1 of this document consists of the Introduction (see above), which outlines the contributions of newcomer youth and settlement workers to the Guide, as well as newcomer youths’ perceptions of their own role and participation in service provision. Part 1 also describes the methodology used to collect the information as well as the definitions of the concepts of ‘settlement’ and ‘settlement services’ advanced by various participants in the SYNC project. It also mentions participants’ articulation of the importance of remembering the unique circumstances and situations faced by each newcomer youth.

Part 2 consists of an outline of features identified by participants in the OCASI SYNC project research as integral to an effective newcomer youth settlement program.

Part 3 contains information on settlement challenges from the perspective of newcomer youth and youth settlement service providers, obtained from the literature review and from the consultations referred to above that formed part of the OCASI SYNC project.

Part 4 contains information on some proposed steps to address identified barriers to newcomer youth settlement services.

Part 5 is a proposed Newcomer Youth Bill of Rights, elements of which are intended to help service providers understand the expectations of newcomer youth who seek services.

Part 6 contains youth programs selected as having some of the features considered by OCASI SYNC project research participants as essential to an effective youth settlement program.

Part 7 contains an interpretation of program selection and the conclusion.
Distinction between “permanent residents” and “Convention refugees” from the Perspective of SYNC project participants

In relation to the legal definitions (see Appendix 1), while newcomer youth engaged in the OCASI SYNC project research did not diverge from the basic meaning, they made the following clarifications regarding the difference between “immigrant” youth who are “permanent residents” and youth who are “Convention refugees”. In their view, these differences are important because they form the basis of the different needs of many youth. They added that some of the needs, for example, of youth impacted by long separation from parents who come to Canada as care givers, may not be easily discerned from the definitions of “immigrant”, “temporary resident” or “refugee claimant.”

With respect to their perception of the youth who arrive in Canada as permanent residents and those who arrive as Convention refugees, OCASI SYNC project participants expressed the following in their own words:

- Permanent residents made a choice to settle in Canada. Even when youth may not have been active participants in the related decision-making, they are different from Convention refugees who were forced to flee their homeland, often with little preparation and/or resources.
- Youth who arrive as permanent residents tend to come with family, particularly because the latter choose to immigrate, while many more youth who arrive as Convention refugees are likely to be separated from family.
- Youth who arrive as Convention refugees tend to come from countries of conflict and tend to have experienced trauma.
- In contrast to youth who arrive as permanent residents, youth whose parents or guardians claimed refugee status upon arrival (“refugee claimants”) are more worried about their status.
- Having been forced to migrate, refugee youth might see the return to their homeland as unlikely for a long time. They may have lost contact with childhood friends and relatives, or making contact may put their friends and relatives in danger.
- Some youth are undocumented and have no legal status in Canada. They face innumerable challenges when they seek services, for example, health services.

Settlement and Settlement Services

OCASI defines settlement as a long term, dynamic process through which immigrants become fully participating members of society. The Canadian Council of Refugees (CCR) also acknowledges that settlement is a two-way, multidimensional process that requires newcomers to adapt socially, culturally and economically to their new country but also requires that their host society accept and welcome their presence.

Currently, the responsibility for immigration policy and funding lies with the federal government, while local institutions are responsible for administering settlement services. These institutions include multi-ethnic agencies,
ethno-specific agencies, gender-specific service agencies, provincial and municipal departments, and specialized employment agencies, including mainstream service providers.

Settlement services that assist immigrants in their integration process include general orientation, language training, information and referral services, and employment services. Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) provides funding to local settlement services through the Immigrant Settlement and Adaptation Program (ISAP), Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC), and the HOST Program.

*For definitions of settlement and settlement services please see Appendix 1*

### The Concept of ‘Settlement’ from the Perspective of OCASI SYNC Project Participants

In their own words, OCASI SYNC project participants from across Ontario expressed wide-ranging understandings of what constitutes ‘settlement’. Their understandings are as follows:

- An integration and adaptation process once immigration occurs. It leads to immigrants’ full contribution as members of society. It also involves receiving acceptance from the established community.
- Settlement involves settling down in Canada and adapting to the environment which involves school, culture, peers and relationship with parents.
- Overcoming language barriers.
- Finding and achieving a sense of identity in Canada.
- A process during which youth are developing a sense of belonging.
- A process that goes beyond family or settlement workers, as interactions are with a much broader group of people, peers, health experts etc.
- A result of collaborative effort by a variety of entities.
- The process is different from that of adults because youth aged 13-24 have additional issues unique to their developmental stage in life.

### Definition of ‘settlement service’ by OCASI SYNC Project Participants

Newcomer youth, and even youth settlement workers insist that the “single most effective settlement challenge” is **language**. Newcomer youth also insist that language services are the most significant settlement services. As a result, youth want language training integrated into settlement services such as recreation programs. Several youth that participated in the OCASI SYNC project research make a link between language and some of the violence that is related to bullying. They are convinced that many youth with accents would like special accent correction language classes to reduce bullying, to improve their settlement experience, and to improve employment.
prospects. To do that, they argue, language learning cannot be isolated from other services currently defined as settlement services.

Youth 16-24 who see themselves as not having language issues point to immigrant labour market integration as the “most significant settlement challenge”, and view labour market integration as a ‘settlement service’. They are critical of the lack of a strong link between education, including language learning/communication and future employment challenges. They would prefer a service model that is less rigid, more integrated, and intersectional in design.

Even when asked to treat labour market integration and language training as ‘separate’ from ‘settlement’ services, newcomer youth participants perceived pre-arrival information/orientation, settlement services, language training, and immigrant labour market integration as closely intertwined and call for definitions and service models that recognize the interconnected nature of the challenges.

SYNC project participants, in their own words, listed the following as comprising part of what they perceived as settlement services:

- Continuously assessing the unique and distinct needs of each youth and their families.
- Improving language skills and, thus, improving social networks.
- Assisting youth to get education and to adapt to the education system.
- Assisting youth to get engaged in the affairs of their communities, and helping them to become productive citizens.
- Developing and implementing any activities and programs that can serve the needs of newcomer youth.
- Helping youth to maintain their cultural roots while adapting to life in their new country, and assisting youth to integrate into mainstream culture if this is their choice.
- Improving the quality of life.
- Helping youth voice their needs and concerns.
- Connecting youth to resources, and teaching them to navigate the system.
- Providing information and referrals to different programs and services.
- Establishing youth information services and school assistance programs, and enhancing community connections.
- Helping youth to deal with changes in family dynamics and assisting youth to deal with inter-generational conflict.
- Developing a wide range of activities and ensuring that these serve newcomer youth from diverse communities.
- Helping youth and parents deal with exclusion and racism in school and in other aspects of life.
- Providing counselling.

Developing a wide range of activities and ensuring that these serve newcomer youth from diverse communities.
Preparing youth for the job market and career development.
Organizing workshops to provide education on a wide variety of topics.
Providing legal assistance.
Helping with housing issues.
Providing language translation/interpretation.

Given their perspective, many project participants are in accord with the definition of “settlement services” outlined on the Canadian Government webpage that embraces language instruction and employment services. Nevertheless, they would like to see other services such as mental health become more integral to the definition.

According to youth participants, the use of the phrase “settlement services” as in the above case is preferable because it is more inclusive and embraces the LINC, HOST and Settlement and Adaptation Program. Youth are less inclined toward the use of the phrase “Settlement and Adaptation Program” because the list is not all-encompassing of the programs they view as ‘settlement’.

A USER-FOCUSED APPROACH TO SETTLEMENT SERVICE PROVISION

The OCASI SYNC project research participants expressed that adopting a youth-focused approach is key to developing an effective youth settlement service. They also underlined the importance of service providers fully appreciating the settlement challenges that youth face and striving to continuously adapt to needs. Participants emphasized that service providers must minimize the settlement challenges encountered by newcomer youth.
In this section we discuss key attributes of an effective youth settlement program. Any reference to best practice is not necessarily a reference to what program is 'best'. This is because what may be considered a 'best' practice or activity by one individual or group of individuals may not necessarily be viewed as 'best' by another individual or group. There is, however, a general agreement over practices that are effective and should therefore be implemented to improve settlement services. The OCASI SYNC project research revealed that newcomer youth and youth settlement workers have a more favourable view of services that embrace the majority of the attributes identified during the course of the SYNC project research. This is consistent with many past researchers who have outlined what they consider indispensable features in relation to settlement programs and newcomer youth programs.

SUMMARY OF BEST PRACTICE GUIDELINES HIGHLIGHTED IN THE CANADIAN COUNCIL FOR REFUGEES REPORT

In their 1998 report, the Canadian Council for Refugees (CCR) outline the following 12 best practices guidelines that encompass features that are identified by OCASI SYNC research participants as important to a successful youth settlement program:

- Services are accessible to all who need them.
- Services are offered in an inclusive manner, respectful of, and sensitive to, diversity.
- Clients are empowered by services.
- Services respond to needs as defined by users.
- Services take account of the complex, multifaceted, interrelated dimensions of settlement and integration.
- Services are delivered in a manner that fully respects the rights and dignity of the individual.
- Services are delivered in a manner that is culturally sensitive.
- Services promote the development of newcomer communities and newcomer participation in the wider community, and develop communities that are welcoming of newcomers.
Services are delivered in a spirit of collaboration.

- Service delivery is made accountable to the communities served.
- Services are oriented towards promoting positive change in the lives of newcomer and in the capacity of society to offer equal opportunity for all.
- Services are based on reliable, up-to-date information.

(Canadian Council for Refugees http://www.ccrweb.ca/bpfinal.htm)

It is strongly advised that service providers take some time to read the detailed Guidelines that are posted on the above CCR website.

SUMMARY OF GOOD PRACTICE CRITERIA IDENTIFIED IN OCASI SYNC PROJECT RESEARCH

Newcomer youth and youth workers who participated in the OCASI SYNC project research developed the following questions to be used when seeking to identify settlement programs that represent good practice by service providers or when seeking to identify an environment in which newcomer youth settlement programs might thrive:

- **Program Delivery within an Appropriate Organizational Framework**: Is the service or youth activity being provided within anti-racism and anti-oppression frameworks, and does the service organization promote and adhere to the tenets of the Ontario Human Rights Code?
- **Clarity of Program Objectives**: Is the youth program an outcome of clear objectives and the result of comprehensive needs assessments that acknowledge the challenges faced by the different types of immigrants/refugees and familiarity with status issues?
- **Affordability**: Is the service affordable to all? Are transport subsidies or transportation provided?
- **Sensitivity to Diversity**: Is the service provider sensitive to the diversity and cultural differences of youth, and does the service provider have the ability to deliver culturally sensitive services, satisfying language needs of the youth and their parents?
- **Multicultural Competencies**: Do staff have multicultural competencies?
  - Are staff aware of how their own unique values affect interactions with service recipients who are culturally different from themselves?
  - Do staff have multicultural awareness with respect to values, assumptions, and beliefs and attitudes of the youth they serve?
  - Do staff have multicultural skills that they utilize in their interactions with service recipients whose cultural backgrounds are different from their own?

Is the service provider sensitive to the diversity and cultural differences of youth?
Does the multicultural knowledge of staff form the basis of understanding of service recipients' cultural values, histories and practices?

- **Youth Engagement and Leadership Development**: Are youth involved in planning and implementation of programs, and are they involved in advocating for themselves? Does the youth program engage youth in leadership activities, for example involving them as peer supporters and peer mentors?

- **Program Safety and Risk Reduction**: Does the program provide a safe space for youth; for example, a youth centre or youth resource centre that motivates vulnerable youth to stay away from dangerous behaviour? Are precautions taken to ensure that the program is safe for vulnerable youth to participate in?

- **Solid Foundation for Information Referral**: Does the service satisfy the information needs of youth/parents? Does the service provider know where other useful programs exist, and do they have the necessary tools (including updated lists) to enable them to refer youth/parents that need those services? Do any existing Portals have comprehensive links to major referral networks?

- **Collaboration and Partnerships**: Does the service provider work with other service providers in a spirit of sustained inter-agency collaboration rather than in a spirit of competition?

- **Program Delivery by Qualified Staff**: Does the organization avail and ensure that staff take up continuous learning opportunities to enhance their ability to plan and implement effective newcomer youth settlement services?

- **Range of Programming**: Does the service provider avail a wide variety of programming to reflect needs of all newcomer youth, including programs that connect youth to others who have gone through the same process, for example in the form of a support network?

- **Nature of Programming**: Does the service provider use integrated methodologies to offer services that meet the needs of youth and parents, such as offering one-stop services, integrating educational activities into recreation and other programs?

- **Program Quality Controls**: Does the service provider incorporate policies, mechanisms and processes for service quality monitoring, for addressing complaints, and for program improvement/modifications based on evaluations?

- **Community Outreach**: Does the service provider have community outreach strategies that effectively lead to provision of information or service to groups who might otherwise be neglected; for example, having an outreach communications network and liaising with local mosques, community media, schools, or an awareness of where different newcomer communities gather?

- **Respect for Youth Rights**: Does the service provider ensure that the youth know their rights, and does the organization ensure that the staff respect the rights of the youth being served, including the right to privacy, and the knowledge of how and where to lodge complaints?

- **Youth Bill of Rights**: Is the service provided within the parameters of the Newcomer Youth Bill of Rights?

The above criteria were developed in light of the wide variety of challenges that project research participants outlined, and in conjunction with the many recommendations made relating to how they would like future settlement services to look like and in what kind of organizations they want these services to be offered.
PART 3

SETTLEMENT CHALLENGES FACED BY IMMIGRANT AND REFUGEE YOUTH IN ONTARIO

Various consultations organized as part of the OCASI SYNC project, including key informant interviews, focus groups discussions and colloquium deliberations, helped produce information on a wide range of challenges that impact the settlement of immigrant and refugee youth in Ontario.

While reviewing these challenges, it must be noted that:

- The challenges that newcomer youth face vary from individual to individual, even when these individuals come from the same ethnic group.
- Immigrant and refugee youth are impacted differently in different geographical locations in Ontario and in different geographical locations within a given city.
- Youth from one family attending two different schools may be impacted differently.

The following newcomer youth settlement-related concerns and issues were identified during the OCASI SYNC research. These were identified both by youth and by service providers.
SETTLEMENT CHALLENGES/BARRIERS THAT NEWCOMER YOUTH FACE

1. CHALLENGES/BARRIERS IN THE EDUCATION SYSTEM

Education was said to be one of the most important issues affecting newcomer youth in Ontario. Many of the barriers that youth face in the education system, by extension, pose challenges to stakeholders, particularly for parents and service providers striving to provide support to newcomer youth.

Challenges Faced by Youth Entering the School System for the First Time

While entering the school system for the first time can be an intimidating experience for anyone, these fears are amplified when the student is in a new country.

- Many lack familiarity with the Canadian school culture. Some youth express that they feel disadvantaged by what they perceive to be the discriminatory attitude of teachers and by the organizational structure of the school system where, according to some youth, the achievement or success of minority youth is not always encouraged by those closest to them, including teachers. This, some participants stated, creates feelings of hostility and bitterness towards staff, and leads to anti-social behaviour and low grades. Indeed, some studies (see Anisef and Okihiro, 1982; Li, 1999) point to the fact that equal educational opportunities in Canada are limited for some ethnic groups. In their research paper for CERIS - The Ontario Metropolis Centre, Kilbride and Paul Anisef (n.d.) write, “[n]umerous elements, such as teacher biases, economic inequality, and institutional or systemic discrimination, act as barriers for immigrant youth in the attainment of equal educational opportunities”.

- Not being able to fit in or to make friends due to language or other barriers, the subsequent lack of socialization in their new environment can cause depression and a feeling of isolation.

- For many newcomer youth, there is also a lack of familiarity with school activities, including sports activities offered within the school. Some experience difficulty engaging in co-ed sports.

- In most circumstances, students are required to complete mandatory volunteer hours in order to graduate. For some newcomer youth this is problematic because of difficulty obtaining support from apprehensive parents.

- Balancing their religious activities with the ascribed school schedule is also hard for some newcomer youth; for example, finding time and appropriate space to pray during school hours.
Continuing their Education in Canada

Newcomer youth looking to continue and to further their education in Canada (including education at the post-secondary level) often face numerous additional obstacles.

- A permanent resident from Somalia, for example, may experience difficulty retrieving his/her school documents from a university located in Kenya. Failure to obtain these documents or to get them in time hinders the next step in their educational endeavours in Canada.

- An even greater challenge lies in getting their educational achievements recognized. Failure to get their prior learning credentials recognized can lead to lowered self-esteem and depression. This is even truer of students who are forced to repeat a grade in Canada which they have already completed in their home country.

- Newcomer youth may face financial barriers to educational attainment due to the costs involved for schooling activities, including private tutoring to keep up with their education. These costs are in addition to the cost of post-secondary education itself, which continues to rise.

Challenges Related to Age-related Class Placement Within the Education System

- Many of the youth, particularly refugee youth, lack proper documentation. They may not carry a birth certificate and therefore may not know their exact age. Often times their age is incorrectly determined by their parents. This can cause variations in years during the process of filling out the immigration documents.

- Some children, particularly those from conflict zones, where they may have had interruptions in their education, are placed in the Canadian education system in relation to age, even though they are unable to read or write correctly. This barrier is even more challenging where there is a lack of support available to newcomer youth to stay in the education system.

Youth who find themselves in these circumstances:

- are at-risk of failing in school and of falling out of the system.

- feel inadequate as they experience difficulties trying to catch up with other children in the class.

- become alienated and maladjusted and may fall prey to gangs and other negative elements in society.

In addition, many newcomer youth feel negatively impacted when placed in the same class as students who speak the same language. This is usually done with the mistaken view that all newcomer youth wish to be in groups of youth from their own ethnic background or nationality.

In the OCASI SYNC project, youth urged service providers to help alleviate these age-related and other placement problems by working with relevant authorities to review the requirements related to newcomer children and youth placement in the educational system.
Challenges Related to Misplacement in English as a Second Language (ESL) Classes

- Children are often misplaced in ESL classes, particularly in locations where there are fewer immigrants. The ESL system is currently operated as if all newcomer youth have the same English language level, despite the assessment results of each newcomer student.
- Youth observe that placing new children from one ethnic group in one class results in a lack of integration and slower English language acquisition, as many speak among themselves in their language instead of communicating in English.
- Some youth feel that they are placed in an ESL class based on their accents or pronunciations rather than as a result of correct language assessment.

Inadequate Assistance

- Some newcomer youth who arrived in Canada with inadequate levels of reading and writing skills feel that, overall, not enough time and assistance is given for them to become successful both as students and in their futures.
- Some youth also feel that there are insufficient financial resources being committed that adequately prepare youth in high schools to enter Canadian post-secondary institutions and for more support programs for immigrant youth throughout the school system.

On the other hand, it was stated that, as a result of schools’ ‘don’t ask-don’t tell’ policy with respect to immigration, authorities may fail to recognize newcomer students in class and may fail to recognize their special needs, particularly those pertaining to settlement. Some students’ unwillingness to identify themselves as newcomers may cause an additional barrier for newcomer students.

Bullying

The following observations and challenges raised because of the bullying that newcomer youth face are the reflections of SYNC participants’ personal experiences and experiences delivering settlement services.

- Bullying is a phenomenon that occurs universally among some youngsters, irrespective of their race, class, and other factors that contribute to their marginalization. Newcomer youth are generally bullied because they are new to the country, to the system and to the school/event, or because of their accents or dress. The bullies of newcomer youth, according to our youth participants, are primarily Canadian-born youth from dominant ethnic groups and in some cases other immigrant youth.
- In addition to name calling and constant harassment, newcomer youth are experiencing abuse from peers through text messaging on cell phones and via the Internet (cyber bullying).

While changes to Ontario's Education Act announced by the Education Minister were meant to “ensure that there are strong consequences for inappropriate behaviour” that include suspension and/or expulsion, youth stated that
not all bullying, including cyber bullying is reported for fear of recrimination. This is particularly because many youth lack confidence or feel they lack support, including support from peers. Whenever any form of bullying occurs, victims are left traumatized by the experience.

- It is still common in schools to hear recent arrivals being described by others as being JOB (Just off the Boat) or FOB (Fresh off the Boat).

Peer Pressure
- Peer pressure is slightly different from bullying but leads to similar consequences. Many youth feel under pressure from their peers to behave in a lax manner and to exhibit poor behaviour of others when talking to teachers or to school authorities.
- Service providers run into some newcomer youth who act out of character as they attempt to fit in. This is exacerbated by the absence of culturally positive role models.

Insufficient Parental Involvement in Their Children’s Education
- There is expressed concern both from youth and from settlement workers that, for a variety of reasons, parental involvement in newcomer youth education remains limited.
  - This is likely the result of language barriers and a lack of understanding of the educational system,
  - It is also partly due to the absence of appropriate outreach strategies to newcomer communities and a lack of education on parents’ role in the Canadian education system,
- Limited parental involvement in youth education is exacerbated by newcomer parents having to work more than one job, such that it is difficult for them to fit scheduled school events in their program.

2. LACK OF LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY

ESL’s Focus on the Immediate
- A lack of proficiency in one of the official languages is one of the highest ranked settlement challenges impacting many immigrant and refugee youth. It affects the integration of youth into all aspects of Canadian life.
- According to most youth participants in the OCASI SYNC project research, ESL courses tend to focus on their current lack of language skills for educational attainment, which they describe as temporary. Consequently, the courses fail to properly prepare them for use of English in their post-secondary educational endeavours. Youth also feel that the emphasis on ‘communication’ and the lack of attention to correcting one’s accent when teaching English produces students who will eventually have difficulty obtaining employment after graduation.
Researchers have referred to this failure of the educational system to meet long term needs: “Are we concerned primarily with ways to assist immigrant youth ‘fit in’ to the existing educational system or are we concerned with why and how the education system fails to meet their needs?” (Lam, 1994: 130).

Challenge of Francophone Youth

➢ Some French speaking youth contend that, while Canada has two official languages, to get ahead in Ontario, newcomer French speakers still need to have some degree of English.

Lack of Interpretation Services

➢ The lack of interpretation services in many agencies is still a concern and impacts youth at many levels.
  ❖ The paucity of interpretation services leads to poor communication of issues impacting youth seeking services,
  ❖ A lack of interpretation services impacts understanding of the recommendations/advice and referrals given by service providers,
  ❖ Some youth feel that failure to speak fluently sometimes impacts the way they are treated and served. According to one youth, “[w]hen someone does not speak English fluently, they [service providers] think that one is not smart and treat the youth poorly” (comment from Colloquium),

Youth expressed fears that service providers may not appreciate the extent to which lack of interpretation services impacts newcomer youth with limited proficiency in English or French.

3. CHALLENGES RELATED TO CULTURE

Challenges Related to Cultural Restrictions

➢ For some young adults, having relationships is an issue because they feel constrained by cultural restrictions imposed by their parents and communities. For example, some of the youth remarked:
  ❖ Having a boy or girl friend from a different culture or religion may be forbidden in some families, as may be having a relationship with same sex partners. This poses integration problems for youth affected,
  ❖ Many youth do not know where to turn for advice, and may not know of support groups.
Challenges Related to Cultural Communication

- Integration difficulty can be caused by unease and conflict related to misunderstanding of language use in different cultures. Misunderstandings may lead to:
  - A difficulty understanding slang and other everyday language expressions particularly clichés,
  - Taking offence when genuine jokes are made, feeling that they were meant as offensive language,
  - An inability to interpret non-verbal information,
  - An inability to understand expressions that only exist in a specified culture,

Youth Dual Identity Due to Conflicting Values at Home and at School

- At home newcomer parents may be more conservative and impose strict discipline, which may contrast a more lax atmosphere among peers at school. Indeed, many newcomer youth are shocked when they first encounter what they consider to be the lenient discipline in Canada. It is sometimes viewed, for instance, that many Canadian-born youth do not show the same respect to teachers as they are used to in their countries of origin.

- In addition, many parents want their children to maintain as much of their cultural practices as possible. However, for some youth this can be very challenging, as they feel pressured at school to fit into their new culture, and to do so quickly. These tensions can result in a young person having to struggle with a conflicted identity. Many of the youth are left confused and frustrated and, for some, this frustration can lead to poor performance at school. It may also lead to unacceptable social behaviour from the perspective of their parents or from the perspective of the larger society.

- Sometimes a direct interaction between service providers and the communities is absent, which impedes a full understanding of the issues that youth face at home. This can result in the failure to modify programs appropriately or neglecting to account for cultural challenges that immigrant and refugee youth may have to overcome.

Discipline and Intergenerational Conflict

- Sometimes youth welcome what is perceived as more liberal forms of discipline and broader societal norms. When this occurs, it can lead to tension and conflict with parents and caregivers.

- Prior to immigration to Canada, many youth perceive physical spanking by parents or teachers as acceptable punishment. In Canada, however, some youth learn and begin to appreciate the unlawful nature of this practice and call the police when parents attempt to spank them or even when they shout at them. This is exacerbated by the typical age-related tensions that youth tend to experience as they grow.
Being in a new country, these inter-generational conflicts impact both parents and youth even more adversely than they do families that have social support structures and families that function in an environment where societal rules are known from the start.

Cultural Conflict among Youth

Sometimes immigrant and refugee youth value their own traditional culture more than the culture of others. Some youth have such deep commitment to their ethnic culture that they may socialize entirely within their own ethnic group, finding it difficult to integrate into all aspects of life in their new homeland.

On the other hand, some youth feel shame about aspects of their culture, particularly as they undergo a personality and identity transformation that often happens when one is exposed to a new familiar.

In these circumstances, some youth with opposing tendencies may find themselves in conflict, as the youth break up into factions that despise each other.

4. CHALLENGES RELATED TO PARENTS MISTRUST OF WESTERN CULTURE

- Many immigrant and refugee parents keep their youth away from activities, including sports, theatre and other after-school activities that would enhance integration and enable youth to socialize, due to fear and mistrust of influence by Western culture, which they may see as detrimental to the character of their children. Subsequently, it is sometimes very difficult to obtain parental consent for youth participation in activities.

- Many youth have complained of the fact that, at times, their interests are contrary to those of their parents, such that a parent may refuse to give consent in some cases when the youth feel they need their support.

- Parents are said to refuse consent, in particular, when the events relate to the possibility of cultural adaptation, and when they perceive the event in question as distracting from the ability to succeed. For example, children going to a recreation activity instead of studying. Parents may also refuse consent when the event or activity in question seems to have an impact on the youth’s religious beliefs and practice.

5. DISCIPLINE AND CHANGED FAMILY DYNAMICS

Changed Family Dynamics Due to Youth Having to Play Several Roles

Family dynamics have a major impact on newcomer settlement.

Because of the poverty many parents experience upon arrival in Canada, youth often have to play a number of roles for which they were never prepared, and this impacts their settlement experience. For example,
parents have to work two or three jobs during after-school hours, many immigrant and refugee youth find themselves:

- having to cook, carry out chores, baby-sit, take care of sick siblings and generally look after younger siblings while parents go to work a second job at night or during the weekends. This results in many youth having to stay indoors instead of getting out to do sports and recreation activities or socializing with their peers,

- constantly having to take on additional responsibilities, such as assisting to translate for their parents, helping write letters or complete official documents, and sometimes taking parents to different locations,

- under pressure to become the primary provider due to parents’ failure to find meaningful employment in the Canadian job market,

- When youth drop out of school to work to support the family, the power relationship may no longer remain the same.

Changed Family Dynamics Due to Parents’ Lack of Language Proficiency

- Some parents’ isolation and, in many cases, their lack of language proficiency makes it difficult to easily integrate into social, political and economic systems, and to seek help in the new homeland. This impacts their children, as youth find themselves having to play the role of negotiator or advocate for their parents. While, on one hand, youth may become withdrawn and insecure, on the other hand, some youth may seize the opportunity to reverse the power imbalance, using knowledge of language as a tool that yields power.

- Some parents cannot help with homework due to lack of official language skills.

Parents’ Loss of Power With Respect to Technology

- Many parents are unable to help with homework due to a lack of technological skills.

- In many circumstances, parents’ slow mastering of the fast changing technology means that youth use cyber tools to communicate with friends, leaving parents isolated and powerless even within the home. Just like language, access to and knowledge of technology, in this case, enables youth to wield more power over their parents.

6. YOUTH VULNERABILITY IN THE FACE OF ANTISOCIAL PRACTICES THAT MAY BESIEGE THEIR COMMUNITY

Youth Behavior Compromised By Conflicting Interests

- The tensions and conflicts resulting from family dynamics and other issues may escalate as the discipline and behaviour of some youth get compromised by competing pursuits.
In a small number of cases, some youth begin to participate in anti-social/criminal behaviour; for example, in drug or alcohol abuse, despite parents’ or guardians’ protestations. This makes it difficult for their parents to relate to them. Parents often have little or no knowledge of where to find appropriate support services in their new environment.

Involvement in anti-social practices by youth may result in criminal records, which will impact the rest of their lives.

7. HOME, SCHOOL AND GANG VIOLENCE

Some immigrant and refugee youth are worried and feel vulnerable in the face of what they perceive as a high level of violence around them, particularly in some parts of Toronto.

Many youth have, indeed, become victims of gang violence, even when they or their families are not involved in drug-related activities. In some geographical locations, this creates fear among children when going about their normal functions such as going to school.

At home, some youth witness the tensions between parents because of frustrations, difficulties, and in some cases outright suffering in a new country.

8. ISOLATION AND LONELINESS IN THE FACE OF LACK OF SOCIAL SUPPORT

Many newcomer youth in Canada suffer from isolation in the absence of the social and support networks that they had in their homeland. Staying indoors with little contacts with peers and neighbours is particularly difficult for youth who come from countries where, culturally, doors, particularly in the countryside, are not closed during daylight hours and where people freely talk to each other.

For some, the isolation is compounded by difficulties experienced when trying to make friends and acquaintances in their new environment due to lack of language proficiency and of other inhibitions.

Lack of Role Models

The isolation is often compounded by a lack of role models who reflect the culture and who know the challenges of immigrant youth. This issue is very significant with regard to youth who live in smaller communities.

9. LACK OF KNOWLEDGE

Many youth come to Canada at a young age and are unaware of many of the social issues that predominate in Canadian society, including general physical and mental health issues, such as drug, alcohol and gambling addictions.
In the absence of pertinent education and accurate information, this can lead to youth being easily confused.

Newcomer youth expressed the need for settlement services to provide more accurate and comprehensive information, including information on appropriate sexual behaviour, as part of youth education.

10. INSUFFICIENT ATTENTION TO MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES

During the OCASI SYNC project research, some youth expressed the fear that some service providers may not be aware of the nature of the experiences youth and their families may have endured. They speculated that this has partly contributed to insufficient mental health programs.

Insufficient Programs

During the research, both newcomer youth as well as youth settlement workers observed that:

- Insufficient attention has been given to addressing the mental health issues of both male and female immigrant and refugee youth.
- There are insufficient programs and services providing special support for parents and youth who experience problems related to long parent-child separation, in particular, when parents arrive ahead of their children. They acknowledged the work being done by agencies such as INTERCEDE that focus on this issue, but expressed the need for access to specialized programs for all youth that require this service.
- Service providers may not even realize that youth from some immigrant communities are much more likely to have experienced long periods of separation due to the nature of the immigrant category their parents may have come under; for example if parents initially arrived in Canada under the Live-in Caregiver Program.

Insufficient Number of Qualified Staff

Youth participants in the OCASI SYNC project expressed a number of concerns related to the insufficient number of qualified and competent staff to address mental health issues.

- Where mental health services do exist, the number of qualified personnel is inadequate, and youth seeking services experience long wait times for the service.
- Many organizations lack counsellors with multicultural training or counsellors trained to deal with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).
- Some service providers do not have special training on root cause analysis and fail to get to the bottom of such issues, which may result in youth not being referred to appropriate services.
Some otherwise qualified counsellors seem completely uninformed about countries outside Canada and have no idea of what kind of conflicts are occurring in different parts of the world. Subsequently, they lack a context and understanding of the issues newcomer youth are dealing with, aside from the little they see on television.

Some youth-serving agencies do not work with parents and fail to inquire about the situation at home and to inquire about the youths’ relationship with the parents, while doing initial needs assessments.

Service providers may not understand the root of the sometimes visible tension among youth or between youth and parents, and may not fully appreciate the depth of the adjustment problems faced by some youth.

In their referral practice, service providers are not aware of organizations with specialized youth support services. For example, a new youth settlement worker in Toronto may not be familiar with the work done by the 519 Church Street Community Centre with Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Transsexual, and Queer (LGBTTQ) communities and their information and support to LGBTTQ youth. Additionally, they may not be aware of the expertise that Access Alliance Multicultural Health and Community Services has in the area of health for newcomer communities, or the work of INTERCEDE with families that come to Canada under the Live-in Caregiver Program.

Even in Toronto, just having 211 (211Toronto.ca) is not sufficient, as the individual agencies and staff working in them may not have a good understanding of exactly what services are relevant and available, and what process is required for a young person to be able to receive those services.

While some health services do exist for undocumented people, it is impossible to access them due to the fact that they are targeted to communities within strict geographical boundaries, or because of very high demand. Just because a brochure or website states that the service is available does not always mean it can be accessed. If the youth worker does not have a good network of colleagues in alternative centres, the referral service offered may be ineffectual.

**Characteristic Issues That May Lead to Psychological Health Issues**

In the research, it was stated that some immigrant youth have additional issues related to their situation as young immigrants or as young refugees that lead them to develop or exhibit mental health issues.

- **Witnessing Traumatic Events Prior to Arrival**
  - Some youth experience fear and anxiety due to traumatic occurrences that impacted them prior to immigration, particularly in the case of refugee youth who may have lived within a war and who may have gone through very harsh conditions in refugee camps inside or outside their own country.

- **Impact of Life Change**
  - Some youth are depressed due to life changes; for example, youth and their family members deal with incredible stress during and shortly after the immigration process and often experience isolation,
Even some non-refugee youth say they are traumatized by the experience of having to leave all behind to move to a new country,

**Psychological and Adjustment Difficulties Arising Out of Long Periods of Separation From Parents**

The long periods of separation experienced before family reunification often result in youth developing resentment that may cause not only strained relationships and open conflict with parents, but also complex adjustment problems on the part of youth,

**Psychological Issues Arising out of Witnessing Parents’ Failure**

Immigrant youth (particularly those whose parents immigrated to Canada on the point system) are often negatively impacted and demoralized by the reality of a very different settlement experience from that expected. For example, this may occur when witnessing parents’ feelings of failure due to a variety of reasons, including:

- Witnessing their parents’ failure to receive accreditation for their prior training/degrees and their parents’ failure to find what they consider appropriate employment.
- Witnessing their parents experience racism.
- Witnessing their parents’ lack of support from friends and family.
- Observing unemployed or under employed parents go through long periods of poverty.
- Immigrant and refugee youth feeling insecure and living with the constant thought that they may never get a well paying job, and that they will not have a good social life.

**Self-Confidence, Self-Esteem and Identity Issues**

The above-mentioned issues may result in some newcomer youth lacking self-confidence and developing, among others, self-esteem issues.

This may interfere with their ability to participate in activities, such as sports and recreation, which may further impact the confidence they need to succeed in school.

**Fear of Not ‘Fitting in’**

- Some newcomer youths’ self-confidence may be inhibited by the media’s stereotypical and negative portrayal of immigrants and refugees.
- In addition, newcomer youth may be impacted by the portrayal in the media of what is a ‘good’ body image. Subsequently they may develop issues with their own body image, becoming overly concerned about looks, including feeling over/under weight, or becoming self-conscious of their cultural skin marks. While body image concerns are not specific to newcomers, they are often
exacerbated because youth are not sure where to seek help or whether services are even available. They may become overly obsessed with certain types of clothing just to trying to fit in.

Unfamiliarity with Therapeutic Setting

- Many newcomer youth find it difficult to talk about feelings in a therapeutic setting. In addition, they do not know where to obtain therapeutic services particularly if they do not feel comfortable going to discuss this with their family doctor. Some stated that they would not even know how to begin the discussion with their family doctor.
  - Some youth do not even know there are therapeutic services for the kind of trauma they may be undergoing,
  - Some youth are isolated and go through stressful periods without talking with their parents, their peers or with qualified personnel about the issues they are dealing with,
  - Service providers often work with youth who are not able to fully participate due to shyness or a lack of confidence,

11. SETTLEMENT SERVICES IN RURAL AREAS AND SMALL TOWNS

Challenges facing one youth or a group of youth in one city, for example in a large city such as Toronto, may have a very different impact on a youth or group of newcomer youth in a small isolated city where there is only a small number of immigrants and, subsequently, a limited number of core service providers.

Less Targeted Services

In circumstances where fewer services exist, the chance of services being targeted to fit individual needs is low, resulting in many youth settlement challenges going unaddressed. Some youth in small rural communities are impacted by the absence of immigrant and refugee-related information, raising issues of accessibility to appropriate services.

Immigrant and Refugee Youth Isolation

- Due to the fact that smaller rural towns are not as culturally diverse as larger metropolitans such as Toronto, newcomer youth experience more isolation.
- The lack of representation in small towns goes beyond the community service sector. Due to the demographics in rural areas, newcomer youth may possibly be the only newcomers in their school. The reception from other students may not be warm or welcoming, as other students may not be quite sure how to accommodate the newcomer in their peer group.
- Small town perceptions of immigrants may seem unwelcoming and at times hostile. For example, in one small town racist individuals placed a cross in the compound of a new immigrant family. Youth
in such a family can be traumatized and not feel safe due to such an event. Luckily, in this case an
existing settlement agency provided support to the family.

- Access to cultural events and comforts such as food and music is very limited.
- Transport availability and the high cost of transportation were cited as an issue for youth in small
towns and rural communities. For newcomers who do not own their own transportation, this can
isolate them further.

Receiving Targeted Settlement Services in Isolated Rural Communities – The Dichotomy

- In some small towns and rural communities youth as well as their family members may have to
contend with stereotypes. One of the challenges for service providers is the fact that, in some
communities, particularly where immigrant youth avoid being targeted as belonging to newcomer
communities, youth are not likely to seek services or to subscribe to programs that are meant to serve
only newcomers. This is said to be due to the stereotyping of newcomer communities, which makes
youth unwilling to openly associate with their own communities for fear of being labeled and
identified. This is paradoxical because, on one hand, immigrant youth in small cities and isolated
rural communities are said to be under-served and, on the other hand, in some communities, the
provision of targeted services discourages newcomer youth from seeking them.

Need for Financial and Other Resources to Enable Community Organizations Frequent by
Youth to Provide Some Support

- Given the above dichotomy, there is need to provide and increase funding to a wide variety of
organizations such as faith organizations and social centres where one-stop services can be offered to
mainstream established communities alongside targeted settlement services in the same location.
- In most communities, however, youth prefer targeted services and the complaint is that the service
providers offering programs to newcomer youth need much more resources for outreach and
advertisement campaigns to ensure all newcomer communities are reached.
- Without additional financial and other resources, organizations that provide services to established
communities may not afford the cost associated with accommodating various cultural, religious and
other communities who require targeted programs.

12. CONCERNS RELATING TO AT-RISK REFUGEE YOUTH

In line with findings in research by the Canadian Council of Refugees which pointed to the fact that some refugee youth are placed in inappropriate homes, some participants in the OCASI SYNC project supported the CCR fear that this would make the youth affected vulnerable, as they would be easily targeted by harmful influences in society such as gangs.
SYNC project participants also noted that some refugee youth are placed in families where they become negatively impacted by the fact that they are unable to speak English/French.

13. INTEGRATION BARRIERS RELATED TO UNEMPLOYMENT

SYNC youth participants expressed the need for the enhancement of current youth employment programs to better support newcomer youth employment.

Lack of Preparation for the Work Market

- Youth unemployment is one of the barriers hindering integration of immigrant and refugee young adults in Canadian life in Ontario. Some immigrant and refugee youth feel unprepared for the workplace, including workplace culture, when they first graduate from the school system. This is the case even after workplace placement while they are in the school system.

Lack of Recognition of Prior Learning

Part of the reason for newcomer youth unemployment is the fact that, much like their parents, many immigrant and refugee youth (ages 18-24) have difficulty getting prior learning, experience, or accomplishments recognized and therefore have difficulty obtaining or maintaining jobs.

(see http://www.swc-cfc.gc.ca/pubs/pubspr/0662320840/200206_0662320840_7_e.html)

Financial Challenges

- Many immigrant youth who drop out of the school system have difficulty finding employment and have to continue receiving support from parents. In general, many immigrant youth feel they do not have financial resources to be able to purchase fashionable clothes, technological and other tools that make them feel they are part of the modern North American youth community. Some feel they are trapped in poverty.

- Many newcomer youth state that auto insurance is very high and makes driving inaccessible to them.

14. UNFAMILIARITY WITH POPULAR MODES OF TECHNOLOGY IN CANADA

While computer programs are taught at school, many newcomer youth were said to be unfamiliar with many computer programs that could make them competitive in the job market.

Some do not have information on internet safety, and they discover late that it is dangerous to give out personal information on the Internet.
Many people who have arrived quite recently do not have access to computers at home and rely on school or library computers.

15. CHALLENGES RELATED TO POLICING AND TO THE JUDICIAL SYSTEM

Pointing to the need for service providers to work collaboratively to help provide supports such as adequate interpretation services for youth involved in the legal system, SYNC project participants outlined a number of barriers faced by newcomer youth in accessing the justice system in Canada. These include:

Unfamiliarity with Legal Issues

Many newcomer youth lack knowledge and information about Canadian laws and are unfamiliar with what constitutes criminal behaviour in Canada. This leaves youth vulnerable and unaware of the long-term consequences when approached by those engaged in anti-social and illegal behaviour in Canada, such as gangs. Comprehensive education and awareness programs do not reach all newcomer youth.

Language Challenges in the Judicial System

Some newcomer youth and service providers point to the language-related difficulties experienced by youth who get caught up in the Justice System. There is need for youth access to more interpreters to facilitate greater understanding of the justice process.

Policing

While there are now many positive initiatives by the police, some youth have expressed concerns with respect to policing in some communities, alleging that they receive constant harassment.

Even the treatment of some newcomer youth when they go to the police station is said to be offensive and very insensitive.

16. RACISM, DISCRIMINATION/PREJUDICE AND STIGMA

OCASI SYNC youth expressed that some service providers do not have appropriate policies and policy guidelines/procedures to help reduce challenges encountered by youth when they seek services and when they interact with their peers during programs:

- Some youth reported that they are subjected to stereotypes based on race. Youth participants in the project find themselves judged not according to who they are, but according to their race, religion and their place of emigration.
- Some report how those around them assume that all immigrants do not know how to speak English and are automatically treated as second class citizens when seeking services.
Many youth report outright discrimination when being served, for example the way a bus driver may address a black youth may be very different from the way the same driver addresses a white youth. This kind of treatment impacts the settlement experience of the youth involved. Discrimination of this kind was said to occur even within immigrant-serving agencies, even though it was said to be more frequent in mainstream agencies.

LGBTQQ youth were said to face discrimination and prejudice, not only from other youth, but also from frontline staff.

It was pointed out that not many agencies currently offered services that reflect the communities they serve; for example services for LGBTQQ youth. Service providers may not realize the extent of the impact of discrimination or prejudice on LGBTQQ youth.

In this case, the impact was said to be worse when frontline staff have no knowledge of where youth could be referred to for appropriate services.

**Discriminatory Counselling by Some School Counsellors**

- Some youth report that they have sometimes been shocked to receive advice that does not motivate them to aim higher. For example, while advising others to aim for university even when the marks of students are lower, counsellors have the tendency to advise youth of colour to apply for college, or programs considered less difficult. This discourages youth and lowers their self-confidence. It also leaves them confused or frustrated.

**Fear and Tension Due to Religion**

- Some Muslim youth expressed that, after the attacks of September 11, 2001, they observed unease from their peers with respect to their religion, especially if they wore Muslim religious wear.
- Some stated that they fear to seek out rooms and to ask for time for prayer, particularly where the teacher is unsympathetic with their circumstance.

**Gender Differences in the Experiences of Immigrant/Refugee Youth**

Some immigrant and refugee female youth complained of being given different programs, sometimes being excluded from programs such as soccer, on the basis of their gender, even when they wanted to participate. This was said to be especially so where resources were limited.
17. SHORTCOMINGS RELATED TO PROGRAMMING

The following were pointed out during the SYNC project research:

INSUFFICIENT INVOLVEMENT OF YOUTH IN PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTING YOUTH PROGRAMS

- Currently, there is an insufficient involvement of youth in planning and in implementation of programs targeting newcomer youth.

LACK OF PRIVACY

- Organizations sometimes hold policies and practices on privacy that are not in accord the wishes of youth, who want full privacy and confidentiality guaranteed. Many youth felt that, because of their age, settlement workers did not respect their privacy and disclosed private matters to parents.

Some youth expressed resentment towards organizations, for what they see as colluding with parents and disclosing youths’ personal information. According to youth respondents, in some cases this makes the difference of whether or not a youth will seek out services.

IMPROPER REFERRAL PRACTICES

- Youth are concerned about improper referral practices. Newcomer youth are not being accompanied to referral appointments or are given vague instructions about how to obtain a specific service. Youth believe that these problems reflect an organizational culture in which the quality of policies, services and trained staff are poorly maintained.

- Some youth observed that some frontline workers seem improperly trained, and lack knowledge of where services are and which services actually exist.

LACK OF KNOWLEDGE OF WHO IS BEING SERVED

- Youth noted that a lack of understanding by service providers with respect to who is served is a significant concern. According to many youth, when offering services, service providers do not always accurately target the type and level of service to youth, and often provide one kind of program/activity, irrespective of the age or youth service needs.

The lack of knowledge of the different kinds of immigrant and refugee youth on the part of frontline and other workers in immigrant serving agencies and as well as mainstream sector organizations was cited by youth as one of the reasons for improper referrals.
INADEQUATE SERVICES FOR SOME AGE GROUPS

Another reason for offering inappropriate services that youth cited is the disregard for the needs of youth of different age levels, different genders, and different religions. For example, in some cases, for religious reasons, girls may not feel comfortable using a swimming pool at the same time as boys.

The 16-20 age group was said to be particularly under-served, such that many youth in this group do not feel inclined to seek settlement services since they do not target this age group.

INSENSITIVE PROGRAMMING

Youth cited examples of programs that are the result of insensitive programming. These include:

- Programs that do not aim at engaging both genders.
- Expensive programs for low income communities.
- Programs located in geographically unsuitable venues where transport is sparse and difficult for youth who do not know the city and that leave youth vulnerable to gangs that hang around to recruit them.
- Programs that expect youth to travel by public transportation but that do not provide orientation to newcomer youth on how to use public transportation; for example the transfer system in Toronto, or how to ensure safety when using public transportation.
- A lack of clearly set principles and guidelines relating to serving immigrant and refugee youth.

18. BARRIERS RELATED TO HOUSING

- Diverse groups of immigrants and refugees come from countries where housing practices are different. For many youth the concept of living in a rental property is new and challenging especially when they have to witness their family trying to rent with limited financial resources.
- Due to the difficulty of finding suitable affordable accommodation, many youth, along with their families, live in housing where it is difficult to study and to do homework due to lack of a separate and ideal room for studying.
- Also, the concept of staying indoors in a confined space is drastically different from that in their country of origin where for many youth, working and being outdoors is more the norm or is balanced with staying indoors.

Youth noted that lack of understanding by service providers with respect to who is being served is a significant concern.

19. WEATHER/CLIMATE

Many newcomer youth come from countries where there is no winter season or where the cold season is mild.

Some experience difficulty getting financial resources for seasonal clothing, including winter coats, gloves and winter shoes.
Finding appropriate attire is, thus, a challenge, in addition to having to cope with the temperatures and the unfamiliar weather.

Parents of some youth have no knowledge of where to go for assistance when they need to go to purchase warm clothing for their children.

Subsequently, some youth experience difficulty participating in outdoor events, particularly soon after arrival. Some experience a level of depression when trying to cope with the weather, experiencing difficulty even to go to school.

20. CHALLENGES FACED BY NON-STATUS YOUTH

One of the challenges that service providers contend with is looking for financial resources to facilitate provision of services for non-status youth. The referral system for non-status individuals is not easy for service providers, and this becomes a barrier for affected youth.
This section provides some proposals by OCASI SYNC project research participants with regard to how service providers might address some of the challenges experienced by immigrant and refugee youth outlined in the previous section (Part 3).

It is important to note the following observations made during the research:

- It is impossible to effect positive policy changes and service provision when there is a lack of attention paid to eliminating barriers to settlement services for newcomer youth. In their discussions, newcomer youth sought reassurance that, in addition to providing services, service providers would continuously engage in working for changes in both settlement service and public policy while placing an emphasis on eliminating the barriers that immigrant and refugee youth face.

- Newcomer youth wish to be engaged in efforts that advocate for changes to settlement services.

- A single organization, or even a single sector, cannot provide all the services that youth need and therefore, there is a need for collaboration among service providers including those partners from the mainstream sector.

Project participants highlighted out several points that are necessary for services to be successful:

i) Services must be provided in an appropriate organizational set up with principles and frameworks within which to provide the service, including anti-racism and anti-oppression frameworks and those in the proposed Newcomer Youth Bill of Rights.

ii) Organizations offering settlement services must acknowledge the important role of all stakeholders in enhancing newcomer youth settlement, and must develop and maintain collaborations and partnerships to enable newcomer youth to obtain the best possible services.

iii) Service providers must continuously promote awareness of immigrant youth contributions and issues and work towards changing conditions that create barriers to effective service provision.

iv) Service providers must have clear understanding of those they serve.

The remainder of this section incorporates these four essential qualities and offers suggestions and proposals to enhance services provided to immigrant and refugee youth in the province of Ontario. These proposals seek to
address the challenges identified in the OCASI SYNC project and provide guidance to future program development and implementation of services targeting newcomer youth.

1. **ENABLING ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE, POLICIES AND OPERATIONAL FRAMEWORKS**

**OPERATION WITHIN AN ENABLING STRUCTURE**

It is important to ensure that organizational structures and leadership styles allow flexibility and creativity to foster dynamic youth programs and ensure that youth can utilize services in all departments. The incorporation of all organizational levels including top management rather than just youth frontline staff also facilitates the successful interdepartmental referrals of youth to relevant programs within one organization.

**OPERATION OF SERVICES WITHIN AN ANTI-OPPRESSION FRAMEWORK**

According to OCASI SYNC project participants, offering youth settlement services within an anti-racism, anti-oppression framework is very important. It means that, when designing youth programs, organizations must strive to incorporate anti-oppressive, anti-racism and anti-homophobic principles and practices. This will ensure the following:

- Potential service recipients shall not be excluded because of their skin colour, sexual orientation, disability, or economic disposition and other markers that can contribute to their marginalization. Apart from focusing on eliminating barriers, organizations must sensitize staff as well as service seekers on the need to respect differences and diversity.
- Programs will not tolerate any form of racism or discrimination, which ensures a safe and respectful space for youth and lets youth know that if an incident occurs someone will be there to intervene.

**WORKING WITHIN A DIVERSITY CONTEXT**

It is important to address the challenges identified by newcomer youth and youth settlement workers so that diversity can be embraced and respected. The following proposals help to minimize some of the challenges and to enhance respect for diversity in newcomer youth service provision.

- Staff and youth should be sensitized on the need to respect those that are different; for instance, those whose behaviour does not adhere to societal norms and who can be subjected to offensive jokes.
- It must be ensured that services are culturally sensitive and delivered in a multicultural environment that respects youth, irrespective of their race, ethnic origin, religion, sexual orientation, economic circumstance, and mental or physical ability. The language needs of youth and parents must also be
satisfied through the provision of interpretation services or through the recruitment of staff who speak different languages. Prayer spaces and appropriate food must be provided.

- Diversity awareness/education should be provided to youth and service providers, discussing topics such as communication breakdown and misunderstanding due to unwarranted fears, misconceptions and loathing of others’ values, beliefs, religions and cultural practices.

- The value of inclusion and the consequences of intolerance—the growth of hatred and of oppression—must be discussed as well as ways immigrant and refugee youth can be more open to each other and to those from established communities.

- It is crucial to work with established communities so that they become more welcoming and inclusive communities.

- Canadian diversity-related laws and policies should be explained along with the challenges and benefits of Canadian society’s different cultures and religions. It is also important to identify the diversity competencies required to provide effective services.

- Youth must be encouraged to embrace diversity by introducing activities that help them explore self-identity and learn to respect others’ culture. This can be done through, for example, participating in music, dance and drama, and through sessions on cross-cultural communication focusing on how different cultures communicate differently.

2. **COLLABORATION WITH STAKEHOLDERS**

**DEVELOP/MAINTAIN COLLABORATIONS WITH OTHER SERVICE PROVIDERS/PARTNERS AND WITH FUNDERS**

With the increase in the number of immigrants and, subsequently, in the number of youth seeking a wide variety of services, it is important for immigrant service providers to form partnerships with other sectors, including those in the mainstream sector, who are committed to newcomer youth settlement. This will ensure that immigrant and refugee youth have access to the best services available.

Collaborating with others can enhance different components of a newcomer youth settlement program through improved advocacy, provision of specialized support for youth who need it, better information and referrals, joint orientation, provision of employment assistance by specialists in this area, just to name a few benefits.

The following are among the factors that play an important role in newcomer youth settlement:
Family/parents and guardians,
Staff in the school system, including Education Board staff, principals, teachers, including ESL teachers, counsellors, recreation staff,
Health professionals,
Service providers in immigrant sector and mainstream organizations, including LINC teachers,
Funders,
Youth themselves,
Employers,
Media,
Faith groups,
Community leaders in newcomer and in established communities as well as the broader public,

The following, therefore, will help strengthen collaboration efforts with service providers outside the settlement service sector, whose work is vital to ensuring that the needs of newcomer communities are met:

- A spirit of sustained inter-agency collaboration rather than in a spirit of competition must be maintained.
- Efforts should be collaborative and cooperative, especially in small cities. Informal and formal networks can be used to obtain collaborations with respect to sharing resources and best practices.
- Strategies should be developed for working collaboratively to offer specialist services in one-stop or satellite centres. One-stop centres can have employment and housing information, education services such as homework help, recreation facilities, social services, interpretation services, and a whole host of other services.
- Mechanisms that sustain information exchange and regional referral networks should be maintained (e.g. monthly meetings).
- Effective inter-agency referral practices (e.g. doing follow-up checks to ensure that youth received satisfactory service) should be established.
- Creative ways of raising financial and other resources should be explored; for instance, seeking out businesses that have youth support programs or developing relationships with community businesses not already involved in youth development work.
- Strategies should be developed for working with funding partners to help support programming needs. Funding providers should be given relevant information on activities and be ensured that their contributions are given a high profile.

A spirit of sustained inter-agency collaboration rather than in a spirit of competition must be maintained.
3. **PUBLIC EDUCATION**

**CONTINUOUS PUBLIC EDUCATION/PROMOTION OF AWARENESS OF IMMIGRANT YOUTH CONTRIBUTION AND ISSUES**

There is a need to increase awareness both among service providers and throughout the broader Canadian community about the contributions immigrant and refugee youth make to society. It is necessary, therefore, to continuously work towards eliminating the barriers newcomer youth face through policy and improved service. Changing the current classroom placement practices of newcomer youth, for example, is an ongoing effort requiring lengthy discussions with school authorities. It is hoped that, ultimately, a review of challenges faced by newcomer youth may lead to changes such as the introduction of bridging programs that assist immigrant and refugee youth.

4. **STAFF TRAINING/DEVELOPMENT**

**EDUCATE SERVICE PROVIDERS TO ENSURE CLEAR UNDERSTANDING OF WHO THEY SERVE**

- Service providers must be educated on the different immigrant and refugee groups (e.g. refugee/refugee claimant, undocumented persons, youth whose parents initially came as domestic caregivers), and on how each group is differently impacted by youth settlement challenges.
- All staff must understand that immigrants and refugees come to Canada in different ways and that the settlement experiences of each group are different. It must not be assumed that youth whose parents arrived in Canada with Permanent Resident status on the point system face less hardship. Their challenges are different.
- Detailed face-to-face and/or online workshop/orientation sessions on the immigration policy and process should be provided so that staff can get a clear understanding of the different newcomer groups, to help them effectively assess/address newcomer youth needs. Some of the different newcomer groups’ situations include:
  - the difference between a Convention refugee who is recognized as a refugee by the United Nations Commission for Refugees as well as the Canadian government, and a refugee claimant who claims refugee status after arrival. The issues that impact each category should be reviewed,
  - issues that impact undocumented youth,
  - the Live-in Caregiver Program and how the related policies impact families and youth, for example with respect to long period of parent/youth separation,
  - the type and nature of services required for youth who have varying needs,
New service providers, including new youth settlement workers, must be trained to recognize that, even within the same broad immigration categories, the experience of each youth is unique and, thus, it is crucial to conduct a vigilant needs assessment when planning and providing services for the community. It is also important to ensure that a correct assessment is done of each youth’s situation.

Cross-cultural counseling should be given to service providers as well as sessions on teacher/student relationships in Canada. Sessions should also be given on the difference between school culture in Canada and that in various countries of origin.

ENSURE CONTINUOUS STAFF LEARNING

Staff audits should be conducted to establish whether youth workers and youth counsellors and volunteers have cultural competencies and the necessary qualifications for the services they will provide (e.g. in providing post-traumatic counselling).

Staff and volunteers should be recruited and trained with particular attention to their sensitivity to the emotional needs of youth, particularly traumatized youth.

Continuous education for staff in the area of multicultural competencies must be ensured, which will enhance their ability to recognize how their own unique values affect interactions with service recipients from different cultural backgrounds. Enhanced multicultural competencies will help in the planning of effective newcomer youth settlement services.

It is crucial to ensure that staff are continuously trained in the areas of youth service programming and delivery, assessment and intervention, where the importance of individualized needs assessments is emphasized. This training will help youth service providers respect immigrants’ and refugees’ attitudes, values, assumptions and beliefs and reflect on how effectively they apply an anti-racism, anti-oppressive framework.

5. NEEDS ASSESSMENT AND PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

ENSURE PROGRAM RESPONSIVENESS TO YOUTH NEEDS AND INTERESTS

The following proposals are meant to address and ensure how various programs can become more responsive to youth needs and interests.

- Needs assessment is to be improved by ensuring that services take into account the complex nature of settlement and integration, and by ensuring that services reflect changing needs.
- New and existing programs should address programming gaps.
A safe environment should be provided for youth to evaluate services. The evaluation methods should be developed with youth input, prior to the provision of the service, without intimidation by staff or by peers.

Program responsiveness should be ensured by instituting pre- and post-activity needs assessments and evaluation. Program development/improvement should take into account individual and group assessment as well as other youth suggestions. Policies and mechanisms for addressing complaints should be instituted.

It is important to learn what features enhance programming for immigrant and refugee youth and develop services that maximize those features. For example, whenever possible, balance educational goals with mental and physical health goals. Education activities (such as listening to speakers and engaging in discussion) should be integrated into programs, since that is preferred by most newcomer parents and youth.

Uniforms and sports gear should be provided as these are known to attract and retain the interests of youth. They are also useful in team/identity and confidence building.

**ENHANCE PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT BY CLARIFYING OBJECTIVES**

Clearly stated program missions and goals are necessary at the outset for program success. Therefore, whether the program/activity is highly or loosely organized, or is targeted to participants from one culture or one gender should be clarified at the outset.

**6. INFORMATION AND REFERRAL**

**ADDRESS EXISTING GAPS IN INFORMATION AND IN TARGETED RESOURCES FOR NEWCOMER YOUTH**

During the OCASI SYNC project research, research participants stated that at institutional levels, organizations should address the gap that currently exists with respect to information and other resources targeted specifically at newcomer youth by doing the following:

- Ensuring that services satisfy the information needs of youth/parents. It is important that organizational websites contain comprehensive links to major referral networks, including links to specialised newcomer youth information and referral websites where appropriate.
- Widely disseminating information using available resources/tools, such as websites and through resource centres. Information should be distributed in schools, places of worship, community newspapers, etc.
Educating youth on some of the most important resources such as 211 in Toronto (211Toronto.ca), www.settlement.org, youth portals, and key youth helplines.

Referring youth to services that are specifically targeted to them; for example, referring youth to services that are age appropriate, or run by a professional in the case of suffering from addiction or trauma.

SET A FOUNDATION FOR EFFECTIVE INFORMATION REFERRAL

The following suggestions are necessary in order to improve the delivery of referral services to newcomer youth and their families.

- Effective referral procedures and practices that will be employed when immigrant and refugee youth are referred to other services should be established; for example, calling ahead to make sure the youth will receive service, and making follow-up checks to ensure that the youth received satisfactory service.

- Mechanisms such as monthly meetings should be instituted so that service providers from partner organizations have the opportunity to exchange notes on the services provided for referred youth.

- Referral networks should be established and strengthened through encouraging network meetings.

- Information referral sessions should be instituted, which will enable settlement staff to gain knowledge and correct information about existing local and regional services.

- Staff-exchanges and other opportunities should be provided for all staff to engage in inter-agency activities. This will enable them to improve referral ability by learning about the services offered elsewhere, and help to develop partnerships with staff from other agencies.

- Settlement workers should be brought together regularly with staff from mainstream organizations. This can be done, for example, through invitations to training and other events. Joint staff orientation sessions providing awareness and knowledge should be held.

- Every effort should be made to make it easy for newcomer youth to access appropriate services; for example, efforts should be made to ensure that newcomer youth learn how to navigate available services.

- Staff must have the necessary tools (including updated lists) to make effective referrals.

ADDRESS YOUTHS’ LACK OF KNOWLEDGE AND UNFAMILIARITY WITH SOCIAL ISSUES

- Orientation and other sessions should be provided immediately upon youths’ arrival in Canada to cover topics such as differences between Canadian practices and those in their home countries. Topics should cover the concept of culture shock, tension and conflict due to different religious beliefs and due to other diversity-related issues, among others.
The availability of existing services should be disseminated rapidly, with the resources most useful to immigrant and refugee youth being flagged and highlighted.

Programs should be instituted that aim at creating familiarity with Canadian social issues. Immediately upon youths’ arrival in Canada, speakers, video, and group discussions should be provided that cover, among others, the following topics:

- racism,
- youth violence prevention,
- health and safety, including mental and sexual health,
- environmental issues,
- rights and protections, including unemployment rights, girls’ dress and marriage rights,
- family dynamics,
- weather and weather attire,

7. **PROGRAM ACCESSIBILITY, AFFORDABILITY & PARTICIPATION**

**ENHANCE ACCESSIBILITY TO PROGRAMS AND INCREASE YOUTH/PARENT PARTICIPATION**

As accessibility issues were a huge concern, the following proposals seek to ensure enhanced access to newcomer youth programming, which will hopefully lead to greater access and participation in programs, activities and services.

- It is vital to ensure accessibility through programming. Programs should be introduced that reflect the needs of all newcomer youth, including programs that build or connect to support networks. Activities should be gender, age and culturally appropriate, and sufficiently varied.

- Programs and activities should be made free or cost very little, as many parents in newcomer communities are unemployed or under employed. Bus schedules should be retrieved for program participants, and, if possible, free parking should be provided. It is important to remember that what a service provider considers affordable may not be affordable for a newcomer family (e.g. a youth may be able to pay a monthly gym fee of $30 but not be able to afford the $190 initial registration fee). Youth settlement workers should be sensitive of this.

- It is important to address parents’ scheduling issues by offering activities for various age groups simultaneously in a common geographical location to minimize parents’ trips. Settlement workers should discuss schedules with parents and youth before coordinating a program/activity. Activities...
should be made more geographically accessible by offering services in satellite locations if this addresses youth transportation issues, and if it boosts parents’ ability to get more engaged.

- In order to ensure access to one’s language, multi-lingual reception services, interpretation, and multi-lingual information packages should be provided to reduce language barriers. Staff members who linguistically reflect the demographics of the population served should be engaged as much as possible.

- Youth who are afraid to attend extracurricular programs alone should be accompanied by friends, parents, or trusted community members, and more assistance should be given to youth learning a sport for the first time.

- In order to increase participation in programs, weather conditions should be taken into account when planning programming for newcomer youth.

**ADDRESSING THE ISSUE OF ACCESSIBILITY BY IMPLEMENTING SPECIAL SERVICES FOR UNDERSERVED AGE GROUPS**

- In order to ensure that youth of all ages have access to programs, activities should be provided that address the age-related needs of youth to ensure that all ages have access to programs. It is important that settlement workers work with youth aged 16-24 to establish which activities are appropriate. Special attention should be given to activities proposed by youth (e.g. driving-related activities, computer repair, preparing for university, dating-related education, dancing, etc., which young adults may find less boring).

- Programs should be introduced that reduce youths’ vulnerability to anti-social behaviour and that assist youth in developing goals and future opportunities.

- Programs and activities that provide leadership opportunities and that develop leadership skills should be offered. For example, youth being trained to become mentors and peer leaders, or youth planning activities, chairing meetings and act as secretary.

Project participants underscored the fact that without age-appropriate services for these age groups, youth are left vulnerable and at-risk of engaging in risky behaviour.

**8. ADDRESSING CHALLENGES IN THE EDUCATION SYSTEM**

**ADDRESS EDUCATION-RELATED CHALLENGES FACED BY YOUTH**

There are a number of proposals to overcome education challenges newcomer youth experience. The following suggestions seek to improve upon some of the specific challenges identified during the research process.
Training and orientation should be provided to staff in the school system, including to principals and ESL teachers. The focus of training should be the specific needs of newcomer youth, how these needs impact parent-school and parent-teacher relationships, and how having a language barrier can negatively affect other subjects in the school.

Greater collaboration should be forged between school authorities and settlement workers. A good program as a model is the Settlement Workers in Schools Program (SWIS). Efforts should be on:

- enhancing the current provision of settlement services within the school, with the aim of improving access to and quality of services for immigrant and refugee youth,
- availing basics such as designated prayer space, and halal food, where appropriate,
- eliminating the practice of placing youth in the same class just because of their ethnicity,
- addressing issues related to class placement by age, and advocating for a system that is based on individual learning and writing needs,

It is important to work with school authorities toward changing the recognition of students’ prior learning outside of Canada. It is also important to introduce bridging programs that address the current discomfort when youth are placed in classes according to age rather than ability, which can lead to depression or to some youth dropping out of school.

Improvements need to be made to the current rigid curriculum content that tends to over represent established groups in society. School curricula need to be made more responsive to the needs of the current student population, which includes a substantial number of newcomer youth. It is important to work with school authorities to address these issues; for instance, to suggest new education goals that are more representative of the composition and needs of the new Canadian society.

There is a need for greater awareness about the circumstances in newcomer youths’ countries of origin which may have led to some youth arriving in Canada without appropriate school documentation. Proposals offering supportive alternatives that can assist youth rejoin the education system with little hassle need to come to the fore in settlement work.

Youth volunteers should be utilized in providing a youth mentorship model in the school that enhances academic, social and cultural integration.

To facilitate parents’ support of youth, it is important to work closely and supportively with parents. This includes providing translated educational information, such as videos in multiple languages that parents learn how the Canadian education system works and help them better understand their children’s academic progress.

9. LANGUAGE LEARNING FOR NEWCOMER YOUTH

LANGUAGE LEARNING IN FRENCH AND ENGLISH LANGUAGE CLASSES

In language learning classes, working to ensure correct language assessment and placement is crucial for effective language acquisition. Distinctions should be made between accent and content problems and individual language
learning needs should be a priority. This avoids lumping students into one language level simply because they speak one ethnic language.

- It is vital that youth learn English/French skills for immediate as well as future use in employment. Youth complain, for example, that even at an early age English language teachers focus on teaching students to communicate and ignore accent correction, which then becomes an employment barrier when they graduate. This was considered by both youth and youth settlement workers to be a very serious problem, and partly to blame for bullying, violence and unemployment. Newcomer youth are very interested in having accent correcting classes.

- Steps should be taken towards the creation of language methodologies that encompass fast language learning at different levels and that have components of accent correction.

10. PHYSICAL, MENTAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH

INTRODUCE PROGRAMS THAT ADDRESS GENERAL HEALTH, INCLUDING SEXUALITY AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH ISSUES

The following proposals seek to minimize the barriers that immigrant and refugee youth face when attempting to access health services in Ontario.

- Youth must be involved in planning and implementation of health-related programs.
- Orientations should be provided for frontline service providers with regard to where appropriate health services for youth exist for referral purposes.
- Processes should be instituted that ensure frontline staff have referral lists prior to the provision of services and that the health services referred to do exist and take referrals. Many health services may not take new cases due to high demand.
- Disease prevention should be promoted. This includes:
  - organizing health education programs that focus on education on topics such as diabetes, diet and exercise, and mental health,
  - facilitating classes in Yoga, dancing, cardio and other group workouts,
  - creating health education workshops, including education on proper nutrition and healthy eating, physical activity, hygiene, and sexual behavior,
  - providing resource centres with large sections of health and wellness as well as mental health resources,
- Separate sessions should be run with newcomer parents on the importance of youth health and the important role of
open communication. This will help parents more effectively discuss delicate health issues and encourage them to encourage youth to seek information from qualified medical staff.

- Orientation sessions in consultation with youth should be developed that discuss different sexual orientations and resources available.
- Safe spaces should be created where youth feel safe to make use of health-related resources. For instance, private health issues should remain private and confidential.
- A confidential helpline that deals with various health issues should be introduced, providing information on sexual and mental health issues targeting newcomer youth specifically.

INTRODUCE PROGRAMS THAT ADDRESS MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES

Given the difficulty newcomer youth expressed in accessing mental health services appropriate to their needs, the following suggestions offer ways to improve these services for immigrant and refugee youth.

- It is important to work collaboratively with other service providers to increase programs and activities that address the mental health issues of immigrant and refugee youth of all genders. This includes psychological health issues of immigrant and refugee youth who may have had traumatic experiences prior to or after arrival in Canada, who have adjustment difficulties arising out of long periods of separation from parents, or who are watching their parents’ struggle due to accreditation difficulties.

- Qualified counsellors and doctors who are trained to deal with post traumatic stress disorders and who have had multicultural training are needed. If an organization does not have this resource, youth are to be referred to an appropriate centre.
- Staff must identify organizations that provide services related to youth/parent mental/psychological health issues ahead of time.
- Frontline workers must create an effective referral process by, for example, calling ahead to organize the youth’s visit to an organization so that a youth referred to a service is not ignored.
- Education sessions should be provided for youth on parents’ settlement experiences and their impact on youth.

- Programs should be provided that address anxiety issues related to parents’ unemployment, specifically, for youth who are demoralized by watching unemployed parents go through long periods of poverty and for youth who may have psychological difficulties due to witnessing parents experience racism, or who lack support from friends.
- There should be collaboration between settlement workers and parents to provide programs that give socialization opportunities to youth who have to carry out household chores and who have to care for siblings due to parents holding several jobs.
INTRODUCE PROGRAMS THAT ADDRESS SELF-CONFIDENCE, SELF-ESTEEM AND IDENTITY ISSUES

- In order to build the self-confidence and self-esteem of youth, safe spaces are needed for youth to explore who they are.
- Activities, games, visuals as well as workshops are needed on how we relate to one another as human beings and how we should embrace individual uniqueness. In addition, seminars on body language and communication with an emphasis on self-confidence and self-esteem should be provided, all in a fun youth-friendly way.
- Issues of dual or multiple identities need to be addressed, for these continue on years after arrival in Canada. These can be addressed by engaging newcomer youth in activities such as volunteering, youth leadership and peer mentoring.
- The establishment of identity-related clubs should be developed. These clubs enable youth to discuss values and determine how they can relate those values to their own lives, and build skills and confidence.
- Activities that enable youth to remain engaged in the community should be provided.
- Mentorship and volunteer experiences are needed to provide an opportunity for youth to improve self-confidence, and engage youth in planning and leadership responsibilities. Role models and mentors that validate youth experiences and help youth realize their full potential will foster a healthy sense of self-esteem and identity in youth.
- Youth should be given decision-making power, so that they become engaged in and inspired by their activities.
- Events and activities should be organized that enable youth to build a network of friends that can impact them positively.
- Youth should be provided tools for self-expression that empower them to fight against racial, language and other forms of discrimination.

11. HARM REDUCTION

ENSURE PROGRAMS PROMOTE YOUTH SAFETY

- Programs must provide a safe sanctuary for youth. This could be a youth centre or youth resource centre that motivates vulnerable youth to stay away from dangerous behaviour.
- Activity venues must meet the conditions of safety stipulated by authorities. For example, all staff working with youth should have thorough background checks.
- Policies must be provided that reflect zero tolerance for bullying.
- Policies should be matched with procedures. For example, anti-bullying policies should accompany procedures and processes to deal with bullies, including having all service providers and service
recipients and their parents/guardians sign an anti-bullying pledge.

- Youth must be made to feel safe to talk to staff and find the service a safe space for learning even when seeking to explore their sexual health identities or seeking sexual and health-related resources.

ADDRESSING YOUTH VULNERABILITY

It is vital to address the lack of social support newcomer youth face, as isolated youth are more vulnerable in society. This includes adhering to the following:

- Focusing on risk reduction when reviewing the process of selection of homes for unaccompanied refugee youth.
- Creating safe spaces for youth who are likely to be targeted by gangs or by perpetrators of illegal activities. If possible, this could be in the form of a well planned, well supervised youth centre.
- Organizing activities that boost and show support for youth, assisting youth to build healthy social networks. This includes finding role models who reflect the culture and who know the challenges of immigrant youth.
- Creating or referring youth to ethno-specific networks and other support systems. Service providers have a responsibility to ensure that the activities and networks to which vulnerable newcomer youth are referred are safe, and to prevent youth being taken advantage of by gangs or by youth who engage in anti-social behaviour. It is therefore important to enable youth to meet other newcomers who are positive influences and to involve parents in the planning of youth activities.
- Providing workshops and training on the negative impacts of recreational drug use and how to avoid peer pressure.
- Providing essential information regarding dangers of entry into illegal groups that are difficult to disengage from.
- Introducing programs that help parents’ learn about youth vulnerability in their new homeland.
- Reducing vulnerability to substance abuse by working collaboratively with school authorities for more strict supervision during school and after school hours.
- Remembering always that in some localities gang recruiters may be systematic and active and youth need strong alternative activities to stay safe.
- Providing safe alternatives for youth to hang out in summer and in winter. These can include homework clubs, sports, writing and recreation activities. Activities should be accessible, educational, motivating and free. They should also focus aspects of personal development such as peer mentorship, life skills training, volunteering, and employment.
- Working collaboratively with partners and with parents.
- Providing multi-language services so that youth who are not good in English or French are not excluded.
ADDRESS ISOLATION AND LONELINESS

- Youth isolation and frustration should be reduced by getting to know and to work with youth individually. Get to know the names of youth, inquire about their families and about their life in their country of origin and enable them to talk about issues rather than to seek solace in drugs with gang members.

- There should be a focus on programs and activities that assist newcomer youth build relationships among themselves and within the community (including networking meetings).

- Youth presentations should be organized to ensure that parents, service providers and school authorities get to learn first hand the challenges that youth experience.

- Youth should be encouraged to volunteer and to act as peer leaders in their local community.

- Outdoor as well as indoor activities should be provided to keep youth busy; for example, debates, recreation activities, organizing youth workshops and symposiums.

PROVIDE CONFLICT REDUCTION PROGRAMS

- Programs should be provided that address the needs, not only of newcomer youth, but of youth in general, with respect to how to manage their emotions, how to manage conflict with peers, with partners, with parents, and with teachers as well as with elders, with the aim of teaching them skills for resolving conflict in a mutually agreeable way.

- Forums that specialize in the area of conflict resolution should be provided to immigrant and refugee youth and service providers. For example, St. Stephen’s Community House in Toronto, specializes in conflict resolution services and provides speakers on this topic. In addition, speakers from community police or from the justice system should be provided to discuss the adverse impact of violent resolution to conflict and of engaging in behaviour such as drug activity that may escalate conflict.

- Youth should be supported and empowered through opportunities where they can present their views openly and in a safe environment where they can disagree without being shown contempt or being discriminated against.

- Programs that address intergenerational conflict, including youth awareness sessions on the role of parents in goal accomplishment should be developed.

- Programs that tackle the issue of cultural conflict among immigrant youth should be introduced. Some examples include:
  - using knowledge of cross-cultural communication to avert cultural conflict,
discussion of diversity and appreciating difference, including difference in culture,
educational sessions on conflict resolution,

INTRODUCE PROGRAMS THAT AIM AT REDUCING BULLYING

- All forms of bullying must be addressed and dealt with, including cyber bullying.
- Bullying prevention should begin with young children so bullying does not escalate.
- Given that bullying is usually a result of the bullies as well as those that are bullied having low self-esteem and self-confidence, youth settlement workers should advocate for more programs that help youth develop self-esteem in schools.
- More advocacy to the school is needed to ensure that school curricula place more emphasis on life issues such as bullying, reconciliation, and social skills, (including communication skills).
- Youth settlement workers should work with the youth and with parents, and with schools and other institutions to ensure that schools and other institutions where youth meet do not perpetuate antisocial behaviour (including bullying). Youth, parents, and schools should also collaborate with settlement workers to develop solutions.
- Awareness sessions should be given in school and in settlement and other agencies specifically to provide accessible and accurate information to immigrant and refugee children.
- Awareness sessions should be given to newcomer parents on bullying, on cyber bullying and on peer pressure. These sessions could include:
  - providing information to parents on what they can do to support the youth,
  - encouraging parents to believe if their youth report bullying,
  - encouraging parents to involve the teachers and also to seek help and support from school settlement workers, particularly if they do not speak English or if they cannot cope with the situation independently,
  - providing interpreters to ensure understanding between teachers and parents,
  - talking to parents and to newcomer youth about peer pressure and how this leads to bullying,
- It is important to work with newcomer youth and parents to develop strategies to fight peer pressure, to ensure that peer pressure does not result in youth conforming to stereotypes.
- It is important to work with newcomer youth to develop youth driven projects to reduce peer pressure. This includes:
  - developing group action plans for special issues,
promoting confidence and self-esteem through, among others, availing self-esteem and confidence building activities; encouraging youth to take part in sports activities, etc.

- It is important to work collaboratively with other service providers to provide peer helplines and targeted counselling.
- Resources and support programs for youth who report bullying should be provided. Youth must always be believed when they report bullying.
  - It must be ensured that frontline workers have the knowledge and skills to deal with youth who seek services related to bullying,
  - It must be ensured that frontline workers have resources related to bullying at hand, including correct and updated lists of organizations that work with children who have been traumatized by bullying,
- Where services do not exist within the organization, support and referral services should be given to appropriate organizations that can provide appropriate services to youth traumatized by bullying.
- All efforts to reduce cyber-bullying should be fully supported and advocated for.

HOME, SCHOOL AND GANG VIOLENCE

Due to the seriousness of this problem if it afflicts a community, all agencies should work with partners to prevent and address the issue of home, school and gang violence, whether or not their community is currently affected. This includes taking the following steps:

- Engaging with other agencies in antiviolence programs, whether a nearby community is impacted or not. Frontline and youth workers must be aware of how to deal with youth who seek assistance regarding violence. An opportunity to assist a youth who has come forward to report an incident or to seek crucial advice must not be wasted as a result of frontline or youth worker not knowing how to address the situation.
- Developing and updating an Action Plan of how to address issues of home, school and gang violence. This can consist of:
  - organizing group training to ensure that all staff are aware of what protocol to take, for example who, internally should the youth or a parent be referred to when they seek service in relation to violence,
  - staff knowing ahead of time if there is any law that requires them to report, for example as is the case of domestic violence with respect to children,
determining ahead of time who is to pick up the phone to call the police if there is a situation requiring police involvement,

In addition:

- Immigrant and refugee youth should be educated about their rights and the same information should be given to parents and guardians.
- Parents should be engaged in anti-violence programs.
- It is vital to advocate for school curriculum to enhance preventive teaching on home, school and gang violence and to incorporate training on life skills and resistance to peer pressure.
- In-staff workers who are qualified in the area of home, school and gang violence should be available to counsel students and help them cope with trauma related to violence.
- It is important to collaborate with law enforcement.
- Information should be provided on what resources are available if youth need assistance. There should also be effective dissemination strategies for information related to prevention of violence utilizing outreach points most frequented by target communities, including faith-based community centres, websites and other cyber media and schools.
- Follow-up strategies should be developed and continuously implemented when necessary.

### 12. ADDRESSING CHALLENGES IN EMPLOYMENT

#### ADDRESSING INTEGRATION BARRIERS RELATED TO UNEMPLOYMENT

- General education and awareness campaigns need to be launched and sustained. These campaigns should target independent employers and the business community at large. These campaigns should:
  - aggressively and proactively approach potential employers/businesses to advocate for newcomer youth employment when they first graduate from the school system,
  - advocate for prior learning recognition for immigrant youth seeking employment,
  - provide information about the economic and social benefits of hiring newcomer youth; for example, highlighting most newcomer youths’ commitment and desire to contribute to Canadian society and to the Canadian economy, or their enrichment of the diversity and cultural experience of an organization,
  - advocate for programs that maximize potential for employment. This includes job training, paid internships and placements, mentoring (including peer mentoring) and pairing a newcomer youth with established employees, supportive job search workshops, and counselling programs relating to workplace culture and workplace issues,
Bridging programs should be established that provide special reading and writing skills for youth that have arrived without adequate skills. Initiatives such as these will ensure effective language training prior to employment. Other programs such as those that prepare youth for work culture should also be implemented.

Employers should be assisted to develop and implement programs that help newcomer youth who are employed. Possible programs could include introducing ESL classes or implementing orientation for newly employed youth, to tackle issues such as workplace culture.

Sensitivity training is needed for employers and such training should be a collaborative effort. Employers should be assisted in establishing or reviewing their anti-racism and anti-oppression policies in an effort to assist integration of newcomer youth who get employed.

Staff from organizations that hire immigrant and refugee youth should be invited to agency business meetings and other activities.

Financial incentives should be put in place (including wage subsidies) for employers who hire newcomer youth and for programs such as Job Connect that are designed for and targeted to newcomers.

Incentives should be provided to employers who hire newcomers; for example:
- profiling committed employers,
- providing awards or merit certificates,
- seeking financial and other resources to help to boost youth employment opportunities,

Collaborations should be initiated with local businesses to create volunteer and mentoring opportunities. Efforts should be made to implement programs that provide extra assistance to immigrant and refugee youth integration in the job market, including apprenticeships.

Career days and employment fairs should be provided to help youth learn about various career fields and to explore jobs that suit their style.

Efforts should be made to establish connections with school authorities and to highlight the role of the school/education system in assisting with employment preparation of immigrant and refugee youth. Schools should be encouraged to take a greater participation in encouraging youth employment; for example, organizing or hosting fairs for youth.

WORK DIRECTLY WITH NEWCOMER YOUTH AND PARENTS ON EMPLOYMENT ISSUES

Even when working with younger youth, efforts should focus on youth integration into the Canadian workforce when they leave school. This will partially address the complaint that by, the time they leave school, immigrant and refugee youth feel they are not well prepared for work in Canada, despite placements they may have had in school.

It is important to work directly with youth and/or parents to instill the importance of work-related mentorship programs, and the importance of working with Canadian and ethnic role models.
Parents should be invited to youth job search workshops and provided with information on the employment-related challenges facing youth, and on how they can assist starting from when youth are at a young age.

Effective employment-related preparation must be ensured (e.g., job search workshops for youth) and include employment-related activities such as résumé writing skills and life skills, personality assessments (“True Colors”), and ways to organize mentorship contacts.

Newcomer youth should be introduced to Canadian labour law and the accompanied rights and responsibilities of being employed in Ontario. It is especially important to highlight the right to work in a non-discriminatory, non-oppressive environment.

The importance of networking opportunities should be emphasized. Youth should be encouraged to attend job fairs, talk to teachers and seek advice from guidance counsellors.

The need to balance work and education should be highlighted, encouraging further education, continuous learning and the advantage of completing the highest level of school prior to taking up work.

The challenges related to financial management should be addressed. For example, youth should be taught how to construct a budget.

Participants in the OCASI SYNC project stressed the importance of organizations that serve immigrant and refugee youth having a designated job developer to ensure that this service is not neglected. They also emphasized the importance of developing multi-lingual reception services and multi-lingual information packages, to boost knowledge of the youth who seek service and employment opportunities.

13. ADDRESSING CHALLENGES IN THE JUSTICE SYSTEM

ADDRESS CHALLENGES FACED BY YOUTH IN THE JUSTICE/LEGAL SYSTEM AND POLICE ISSUES

Youth who participated in the SYNC research made the following suggestions (in their own words), which were also supported in the Colloquium:

- Work with schools to ensure support programs relating to youth crime.
- Advocate for diversity to become mandatory core training, with police playing a central role in teaching the course.
- Educate youth on their rights when they come into contact with police or get arrested.
- Educate service providers about rights related to arrest, court appearances, etc.
- Organize youth-led education about youth crime prevention.
Educate students about their rights in school, and how the consequences of indiscipline, for example suspension, could progressively lead some youth to get into further trouble.

Organize information sessions that aim at enabling familiarity with Canadian laws to address a lack of knowledge and information about Canadian laws and unfamiliarity with what behaviour constitutes criminal behaviour in Canada.

Educate youth on the long-term consequences if they join those in society that engage in anti-social and illegal behaviour such as gangs.

Discuss the issue of substance abuse.

Hold workshops for newcomer youth on sexual harassment, as some cultures perceive harassment differently and could very easily end up in the legal system without intending to cause harm. Youth must be informed of the perception of harassment and sexual harassment in Canada.

Assist young adults to understand how their legal responsibilities change as they undergo legal age transition. Teach young adults how to protect themselves as they become full adults under the eyes of the law.

Educate youth on what happens when crime is committed, explaining the consequences of having a criminal record.

Work collaboratively with other agencies such as the police to address policing issues. This includes:

- introducing opportunities for recreational contact with police, to be also used as educational opportunities. Agencies should proactively work to bridge the relationship between youth and police,
- introducing programs that enhance parent interaction with police and that bring together community police and community members,
- exploring police youth mentorship programs,
- exploring community/police football team tournaments,
- discussing topics such as racial profiling that are perceived by some communities as an issue impacting youth,

In addition to the proposals discussed at the Colloquium, the following proposals strive to address challenges for newcomer youth related to the criminal justice system:

- Translated resources and documentation should be developed that provide guidelines on navigating the legal system.
- Youth should be educated on how to appear in court (e.g. grooming, manners) so that they create a good impression and do not get further into jeopardy while in court.
Support programs should be introduced for Youth involved in justice system. These programs could include:
  - referring to appropriate agencies if no support program is available,
  - developing interpretation facilities or working hand in hand with the justice system to ensure the availability of information sessions on the justice process and on what behaviour constitutes criminal behaviour in Canada.

14. IMPROVING YOUTH ENGAGEMENT AND PARTICIPATION

INCREASING PARTICIPATION BY FOCUSING ON COMMUNITY-BASED PROGRAMMING

- Strategies should be developed for working with youth and the community. Youth should be actively involved and trained to participate at different levels.
- Parents should be involved from the outset and youth should also be involved in decision-making strategies for community programs and initiatives.
- Activities should be of both immediate and long-term value to youth and community. For example, engaging youth in the summer may be very helpful for families where parents do not wish to leave youth home alone while they go to work.
- Brainstorming, surveys, interviews, internet discussions, youth peers consultations and letter writing to ensure that the desires of potential participants and community members are affirmed. A youth advisory group should be created with built-in feedback mechanisms that ensure effectiveness.
- Youth activities such as sports and recreation activities should be used as opportunities to bring together newcomer children/parents and children/parents in established communities.

ENHANCE YOUTH LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

- In order to strengthen youth leadership development, programs should be established that integrate leadership skill building into activities. This could be achieved, for example, by assigning responsibilities to as many group members as possible. Also, youth could be taught skills such as coaching, minute writing, chairing meetings, making presentations, designing posters, and planning outreach activities.
- Enhancing youth leadership development also requires that outreach strategies and youth roles be streamlined so that youth engagement is maximized in activities.

INCREASE PARTICIPATION THROUGH ENHANCED DIVERSITY AND ACCESSIBILITY

- Immigrant settlement staff should develop a strong relationship with parents, children, and community members. Effective outreach
strategies through announcements, local faith communities, and local ethno specific press should target schools, parents, and youth.

- Efforts should be made to increase participation by making programs as inexpensive as possible. Ways to achieve this include:
  - exploring how to overcome space constraints in relation to availability and proximity to youth (e.g., make activities more geographically accessible; offering a variety of activities in one geographical location whenever possible; offering services in alternative locations, including satellite locations especially if this alleviates or reduces challenges related to transportation or cost),
  - providing TTC tokens, bus schedules, discounted tickets and, if possible, free parking,

- Overcoming language barriers is essential for increasing access to services for all newcomer youth. Whenever possible, staff that linguistically reflect the demographics of the population served should be engaged to work with newcomer youth.

- It must be ensured that activities are gender, age and culturally appropriate, and sufficiently varied, which includes activities for girls. Activities should be culturally sensitive and must not reinforce stereotypes.

- Programs that are of interest to youth should be offered; for example, driving lessons.

- Children who are afraid to attend extracurricular programs alone should be accompanied by friends, parents, or trusted community members, and there should be more assistance for youth learning an activity (e.g. a sport) for the first time.

- Programs should provide something tangible to youth. Such programs enhance youths’ knowledge and skills, broaden their networks, and improve their language abilities.

- Weather is a key factor and must be considered when programming for immigrant and refugee youth.

- Youth should be involved in the planning and implementation of youth activities and programs. A genuine youth advisory committee should be established that is composed of both recent arrivals and Canadian-born youth. The advisory committee should be involved in planning, implementation, evaluation and program modification.

**INCREASE PARTICIPATION BY MAKING ACTIVITIES INTERESTING AND EDUCATIONAL**

- Activities should be made interesting and engaging for youth; for example day trips, unusual activities such as fishing or dance classes should be integrated into programs.
Activities organized should enable youth to learn something, including subjects related to their schoolwork and their future success. Activities that help youth identify future occupations or learn about university programs should also be encouraged.

15. WORKING WITH NEWCOMER PARENTS

PROVIDE PARENT SUPPORT PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS BARRIERS RELATED TO PARENTS’ LIMITATIONS

Any challenges and concerns about programs or activities should be discussed with youth, parents, and community members. Strategies should be developed that address barriers and access issues (e.g. participation costs, time constraints, location, parental consent, gender issues, the suitability of activities, discrimination and racism).

Parents, community members, and organizations should participate in and co-facilitate meetings. Emphasis should be placed on the importance of youth activities in enhancing the learning capabilities of youth. Special attention should be given to the language skills youth attain through these activities, which are crucial to academic and career success.

Events should be organized that bring together youth, parents, and stakeholders.

Orientation and education should be provided to parents on all aspects of Canadian life. This eases the burden on many youth who act as teachers, guides and interpreters for their parents. Parents’ helps them better understand youth as they struggle with their own identity in a multicultural environment. Topics that should be discussed with parents include:

- focusing on diversity and a wide range of pertinent topics, including awareness sessions on family dynamics, and on Canadian law as it relates to children and youth, including legal/human rights of the children and youth, the requirement to send children to school, and restrictions relating to corporal punishment,
- discussing with parents broader cultural differences and similarities and how these impact practices such as their children’s marriage,
- encouraging parents to seek help if communication with youth becomes difficult,
- emphasizing the importance of resolving issues at an early age,

Youth-related counselling and youth related services for parents should be launched and maintained.

Parents should be educated on the various programs and the role they play in enhancing youth settlement. Also, parents should be educated on their own role in supporting and allowing their children to attend.

Programs should be introduced that increase the knowledge of and information on the social issues that predominate in Canadian society, including drug, alcohol and gambling addictions, or sexual behaviour.
Programs should be introduced that reduce parents’ isolation; for example, language proficiency sessions, and health information sessions.

Programs should be introduced that focus on intergenerational conflict.

Support programs should be developed that address family tensions resulting from long separation for parents who arrived ahead of their children.

Programs should be introduced that increase knowledge of and familiarity with legal issues.

Awareness sessions should be offered to parents on the impact of youth immigration experience on psychological and mental health.

Programs should be developed that address parents’ mistrust of Western culture.

Awareness sessions should be provided for parents regarding:

- youth insecurity,
- the importance of youth sport and recreation activities in achieving academic success and social integration,
- the importance of youth integration in workplace success,
- conflicting values at home and at school,
- the new and unfamiliar environment in Canadian society,
- youth behaviour changes,
- youth vulnerability (risk of newcomer youth being lured by bad elements into inappropriate alcohol and drug use or sexual abuse),

Activities such as networking events, kitchen groups, and clubs should be introduced to build a sense of community among newcomer parents.

16. ADDRESSING THE NEEDS OF YOUTH IN SMALL TOWNS

One of the most important challenges that needs to be addressed in small towns is finding funding and other resources to strengthen settlement services to ensure that all newcomer youth in rural areas, small towns, and isolated communities have access to the services they need.

- It is important to ensure that awareness sessions are offered to service providers in small cities and rural communities.
- Financial resources should be mobilized to carry out needs assessments for targeted services.
- Resources should be devoted to outreach and advertisement campaigns, to ensure that immigrant communities are reached. This includes:
resources for developing and disseminating information brochures through local community-based organizations, including faith centres (e.g. churches and mosques), hospitals, libraries and media stations, informing newcomers of existing services in the community,

resources for developing other media outreach tools to ensure information access for newcomer youth,

Information should be provided through websites that tailor their content and information to the needs of youth and other isolated immigrants (e.g. seasonal immigrant workers) in rural communities.

Efforts should be made to reduce the isolation of newcomer youth by proactively reaching out to youth through contacting families and centres where youth gather. The outreach can be face to face; through media (e.g. use of local radio stations), including the use of local ethnic media; adverts along common transportation routes; or announcements through Internet channels, including well-linked websites.

In collaboration with partners and with agencies, one stop centres that facilitate youth access to services offered in one large centre should be maintained and established. One-stop centres can host the following services:

- health care-related offices (for mental health and addictions care; women's health, etc., emphasize prevention),
- a resource centre,
- recreation programs,
- a youth employment centre,
- satellite services (for counselling; information and referral, etc.),

One-stop centres in isolated communities:

- address transport problems on the part of service recipients,
- enable service providers to provide satellite services. For example, at the Storefront in Scarborough, several settlement and other agencies in the area use the same space for provision of settlement and other services on specified weekdays,
- facilitate the sharing of facilities such as space for workshops and meetings. At the Storefront, for example, there are also workshop/meeting rooms that different organizations can share, utilized within the perimeters of agreed protocols,

Effective methodologies must be used for referring youth to other services. For example, rather than informing a newcomer youth receiving service that another service exists in a specified location, the
frontline worker must call ahead to confirm that the service exists and if they can actually serve the youth being referred. The worker should serve the youth recipient being referred to the fullest extent.

- Service organizations should also seek to develop and sustain working relationships and partnerships with others that provide services, to facilitate access to services.

- Inter-agency relationships and collaborations should be developed through inviting staff from neighbouring or other agencies that offer services for joint events such as workshops, open houses and joint strategic meetings. Such actions:
  - familiarize staff with the existing services in different organizations within an area,
  - allow service providers to build valuable networks for more meaningful future collaborations, including referrals,
  - enable staff to understand barriers that youth are likely to face when referred to an existing service,

- Consideration should be given to establishing mobile services, which improve access for youth.

- Youth settlement workers should collaborate with the schools authorities to:
  - provide essential awareness/orientation and sensitization sessions for school principals and school staff,
  - develop appropriate brochures and other information tools to be used by all involved in the school system,
  - provide orientation and information sessions as well as ongoing support to newcomer students, as school is where newcomer youth spend most of their time,

- Youth workers, school authorities and community organizations (including potential and current employers) should collaborate and attempt to minimize the barriers faced by newcomer youth in rural areas, including challenges related to:
  - transportation,
  - employment,
  - the lack of services,
  - limited information (access),
  - limited cultural integration,
  - social networking,
  - inclusion in cultural life,

- It must be ensured that isolated students in small towns receive sufficient attention and sufficient assistance to guarantee future success in the education system and eventually the workplace.

- Information should be given to service providers on the profile of immigrants and on challenges faced by newcomer youth, pointing out how they can enhance settlement of newcomers in the region.
It is important to work collaboratively with immigrant and with established communities through community-based organizations, including faith and recreation organizations, in order to enhance the integration of newcomer communities, especially newcomer youth. This includes encouraging communities to integrate immigrant and refugee youth in their programs and activities.

Resources and technology should be provided to encourage newcomers in isolated communities to communicate through networks. Similar resources should be provided to increase communication among newcomer and organizations from established communities, which will encourage communication and greater interaction.

Efforts should be made to advocate various government levels and school authorities for a review/assessment of youths’ needs in small towns.

OCASI Regional Meetings should have, as a standing item, issues specifically pertaining to immigrant and refugee youth in rural communities and small towns.

17. ADDRESSING NEEDS OF NON-STATUS YOUTH

Participants in the SYNC project research felt very strongly about the plight of non-status youth who need services. The following suggestions were divulged and are summarized here:

Continue to advocate for a coherent humane system for addressing status issues related to youth.

Highlight and increase awareness about the many positive contributions of non-status people.

Develop collaborations between Children’s Aid Society and the immigrant serving sector, in order to review practices related to unaccompanied minors.

Seek financial and other resources to enable the creation of a safe space to assess and address the needs of non-status youth.

Enhance current work with police to prevent raids in schools.

Support the inclusion of voices of non-status youth in community and academic research.

Educate the public about the reasons for migration and non-status issues.

18. THE NEWCOMER YOUTH BILL OF RIGHTS

During the OCASI SYNC project research, newcomer youth proposed a client Bill of Rights as one of the ways of improving youth settlement services. This, they stated, will ensure shared commitment among service providers to prevent disrespect, violations of rights, and discriminatory practices experienced by many immigrant and refugee youth when seeking services.
The proposed Newcomer Youth Bill of Rights in Part 5 of this guide (see below) embraces some of the principles that youth see as important. The Bill was proposed by newcomer youth and by youth settlement workers during the course of the OCASI SYNC project research.

Prevent disrespect, violation of rights, and discriminatory practices experienced by many immigrant and refugee youth when seeking services.
During the Ontario Council (OCASI) Services for Youth in Newcomer Communities (SYNC) project research, which reviewed newcomer youth settlement challenges, newcomer youth argued that, for youth settlement services in Ontario to become more effective, a **Newcomer Youth Bill of Rights** must be created. It was suggested that:

- The Newcomer Youth Bill of Rights must underline newcomer youth expectations of services, service standards offered to youth, and their current concerns with respect to gaps in services.
- The Newcomer Bill of Rights must be extensively disseminated to organizations that provide services to newcomer youth in Ontario, including organizations that provide services primarily to established communities.
- All organizations and individuals that serve immigrant and refugee youth must commit to principles outlined in the Newcomer Youth Bill of Rights. It must be the role of management to ensure that all staff, including all new frontline staff, are oriented to the principles in the Bill, and discuss implications for their work.
- The Newcomer Youth Bill of Rights should be reviewed and reaffirmed by youth and by youth service providers on a regular basis.

It was the assertion of some immigrant and refugee youth that:

- Service providers who receive funding for immigrant and refugee youth services should be required to pledge to commit to the proposed Newcomer Youth Bill of Rights.
- Commitment to the Newcomer Youth Bill of Rights and to developing good practice with respect to youth programs identified during the OCASI SYNC project research, should form part of the criteria for the selection of organizations to be funded for immigrant youth services.

The following are the issues, expectations, and challenges that youth in the project outlined as most important for the overall improvement of immigrant and refugee youth services in Ontario.

**Youth Ownership and Involvement in the Planning and Delivery process**

- Immigrant and refugee youth have the right to engage in Canadian society, not just as consumers, but...
as critical thinkers, active participants, and advocates for the change that they would like to see in their society.

- Youth have the right to take ownership and responsibility for their issues, and youth have the right to provide input into program planning and development, as they are experts in issues that affect their lives.

**Entitlement to Minimum Standards of Efficiency and the Right to Question the Type or Quality of Service Offered**

- Immigrant and refugee youth have the right to dignity, the right to expect a minimum standard of service provision, and the right to develop and maintain a Bill of Rights to ensure this.
- Youth have the right to speak up and to question services provided, and the right to access complaint mechanisms if their rights are violated or if they receive unsatisfactory service.

**Respect for Diversity and the Provision of Service within an Anti-Racism Anti-oppression Framework**

- Youth have the right to access services designed to assist young newcomers in settlement orientation and employment without any discrimination by reason of race, national origin, color, religion, or sexual orientation.
- Youth who seek service have a right to obtain fully accessible service, irrespective of their economic circumstance, and despite their mental or physical ability.
- Immigrant and refugee youth have the right to their own cultural identity and have the right to receive services in their languages. Every youth has the right to be treated in a sensitive manner as an individual whose personal circumstances are unique.
- Youth have the right to services, including educational services that are anti-oppressive and that seek to re-empower.
- Youth have a right to be served by staff who are professional, well informed, and who show sensitivity to the diversity of youth being served.

**Confidentiality**

- Immigrant and refugee youth who seek services have a right to confidentiality and a right to a ‘do not ask and do not tell policy’.
- Youth have the right to express themselves and, in the same vein, they have the right to not have to say anything.
Youth 12 years and older should have a right to see a counsellor without parents’ consent or knowledge, if they so wish.

Youth have the right to all information related to them being kept private with minimum identifiers except for stated legal reasons.

**Safety**

- Youth have the right to safe learning and play conditions, and have the right to go about their life without experiencing violence.
- Immigrant and refugee youth who seek sexual and health-related resources have the right to have such resources provided in a confidential manner and without fear of judgment and/or discrimination.
- Youth have the right to safe space for learning about and exploring their sexual health identities.
- When seeking employment services, youth have the right to obtain meaningful and safe employment and the right to be paid fair wages.
- All youth who seek services have a right to a safe and nurturing environment. The service provider must provide policies that reflect zero tolerance for bullying and these must be matched by policies and procedures to deal with bullies, including having all service providers and service recipients and their parents/guardians sign an anti-bullying pledge.

**Service Responsiveness and Evaluation**

- Youth have a right to expect a safe environment for them to evaluate the services they receive, using tools developed with their input and without being intimidated by staff or by peers.
- Youth have the right to a responsive service, which takes into account youth suggestions and changing requirements.

**Organizational and Staff Code of Conduct and Ethics**

- Each immigrant and refugee youth has a right to expect service providers to treat them with respect, arrive punctually at functions and to return calls promptly.
- Youth have the right to be provided a service at an agreed upon time and to be given accurate and up-to-date referrals to other or additional services.
- Immigrant and refugee youth have the right to expect the service organization to have a clear code of conduct that ensures that all staff know and respect the rights of clients, and youth have a right to expect that staff are continuously trained in the area of youth service programming and delivery.
As outlined in Part 2 of this document, newcomer youth and youth workers identified a number of features and criteria that are integral to a successful youth settlement program. Accordingly, the OCASI SYNC project research participants identified the programs listed in this section as those that meet some of those features and address the barriers impacting immigrant and refugee youth settlement. Participants identified some of the programs as having creative programming approaches, and others as providing an environment that enhances newcomer youth settlement through improving connections of youth, or as improving youth leadership.

It must be reiterated here that the programs below are selected only as examples that have some desirable attributes identified during the research. Participants made mention of a number of programs that are run by organizations that are not traditionally considered as being in the mainstream sector because of the attributes they have and because they have a desire to see those kinds of programs offered either within the sector or in collaboration with mainstream organizations.

Attributes that led to the selection of the program are summarized below.

1. YWCA Jump youth program ISAP Young Women 13-24

**Description of Program**

Even though this is a new pilot program still in development, participants felt it has important features that are consistent with an effective youth settlement program.

The YWCA Toronto describes itself as an association dedicated to improving the lives of women and girls through dynamic leadership, advocacy and a range of unique and essential services that promote personal growth and economic independence.
Description Continued

YWCA JUMP Scarborough, as well as the YWCA Jump Etobicoke, is a new youth-centred settlement program with an employment focus which targets new immigrant female youth between the ages of 13 to 24 and who are within their first year of arrival: Permanent Residents or Convention Refugees.

The program addresses the adaptation, settlement and integration needs of female youth through a comprehensive, settlement centre model, including:

- a welcome centre that provides settlement information, translation assistance and referrals
- satellite workshops
- settlement series workshops
- case management
- employment-related services
- community building

It is designed to help young newcomer women overcome barriers to employment and to help them settle positively and prosperously in Canada.

Offered in a safe, supportive, girls-only space YWCA JUMP program is an environment where girls and young women can access one-on-one and group support and obtain education and employment direction.

Through workshops, individual counselling and peer support YWCA JUMP helps young women:

- learn valuable job search skills and gain computer training
- plan their futures
- learn about services that can help them adjust to their new city such as healthcare, housing, school, recreation, employment, transportation and banking.
- get information and referrals to other programs and resources
- get involved in the community
- make friends

Extensive employment services at the centre include job search cafés, résumé workshops, and interview skills.

The YWCA JUMP program uses creative activities, for example:

- Speed mentoring: women from a variety of fields act as mentor. Participants have 7 minutes with each mentor to ask questions about education, their job, and other advice. This is interesting and beneficial for all youth and mentors

Interpretation services are available in:

Tibetan, Hindi, Urdu, Punjabi, Mandarin, Dari, Kiswahili, Kibundu, Malyalam, Telegu, Tamil.
Some attributes consistent with good practice criteria identified in OCASI research:

- is offered at times that are in sync with youth schedules with respect to time of day and taking into account exams, when university applications are due etc.
- is a girls only program
- is an accessible program
- provides TTC tokens, and is also offered in satellite locations
- provides something tangible (e.g., gets forms completed for further education)
- has a Girls Group, special events and field trips
- has interpretation services available in at least 11 languages
- uses creative activities (e.g. speed mentoring)

2. Globe Youth Centre (The) at Settlement and Integration Services Organization (SISO)

Description of Program

The Globe Youth Centre at Settlement and Integration Services Organization (SISO) is open 7 days a week and has been specifically created and designed as a safe comfortable and welcoming enclave for newly arrived and longer term immigrant and refugee youth 13-24, in Hamilton, Ontario.

Programs offered by the centre include:

- Youth Educational programs: Conversation Circles, Homework Club, Resource centre
- Recreational Programming and Services: soccer and other sports, field trips, events, etc.
- Youth Empowerment and Leadership: on-going workshops
- After school programming

Agency Contact:
Manager, the globe youth SISO
24 Main St W
Hamilton, Ontario
L8P 1H2
905-527-2049
youth@sisohamilton.org
nrashidi@sisohamilton.org
http://www.inform.hamilton.ca/record/HAM1749
Description Continued

The wide variety of activities include:

- A series of health promotion facilitated discussions
- Homework club
- Volleyball
- Badminton
- Gender-specific soccer programs
- Basketball
- Reading club
- Dancing club - girls only
- English conversation circle
- Walking program
- Multi faith groups
- Homework club
- Health information program
- Housing/homelessness info and awareness
- Computers for youth and other things
- A variety of sports
- English conversation circle
- Youth events
- Holiday parties
- Televised sports events

Youth are provided snacks at every event.

Youth are given free transportation.

Languages

English and French

Interpretive Services are offered in Albanian, Arabic, Armenian, Assyrian, Bengali, Cambodian (Khmer), Chinese, Croatian, Czech, Dagaare, Dari, Dihlca, Farsi (Persian), Filipino (Tagalog & Ilocano), German, Gujarati, Hebrew, Hindi, Hungarian, Italian, Kazaku, Korean, Serbian.
Some attributes consistent with good practice criteria identified in OCASI research:

- is fully accessible with transportation provided
- combines educational activities with recreational and other activities
- offers a safe and fun location for youth thereby reducing vulnerability to negative influences elsewhere
- offers cultural interpretation available and interaction in over 20 languages
- has a resource centre and recreation centre tailored for variety of programs for both genders

3. Saddle Up Program at Youth Assisting Youth (YAY)

**Description of Program**

The Saddle Up Program is a newcomer youth program at Youth Assisting Youth (YAY), a non-profit charitable organization whose stated mission is to provide a peer mentoring service to improve life prospects for at-risk and newcomer children.

The core of the One to One program is prevention, even though other services are also offered, which offer support to children aged 6-15 who are experiencing behavioural, social, emotional and/or cultural difficulties.

YAY matches children aged 6-15 with trained and dedicated Youth Volunteers aged 16-29 who act as positive role models. Since 1976 YAY has helped more than 20,000 young people.

While waiting to be matched, youth can participate in the Pre-Match program or the Saddle Up for Success therapeutic riding program.

In the Saddle Up for Success therapeutic riding program, newcomer and at-risk youth learn riding with a police officer. Youth and police learn to ride together.
Description Continued

Children aged 6-15 who would benefit from having a mentor are referred to YAY through a variety of social services, health care, and educational organizations. There are no limitations on family structure.

A child’s problems may include emotional, behavioural or social and relate to life skills, self esteem, peer relations and/or family dynamics.

Children undergoing problems as a result of cultural transition can benefit from having a peer mentor who is respectful of their heritage.

Children with more complex needs may be referred to more appropriate resources and services.

Initially established in Scarborough, YAY now serves the GTA, York, and Peel Regions and plans to expand the service across Ontario and Canada.

Some attributes consistent with good practice criteria identified in OCASI research:

- focuses on prevention but also offers support to children with emotional difficulties
- provides a peer mentor that a young person can rely on and confide in
- offers Learning to Ride with police, a service that helps to builds youths’ confidence, teaches youth to communicate with and trust the police
- has referrals for children with complex issues

4. Centre for Victims of Torture (CCVT) Youth programs

Description of Program

The Canadian Centre for Victims of Torture (CCVT) aids survivors in overcoming the lasting effects of torture and war. In partnership with the community, the Centre supports survivors in the process of successful integration into Canadian society, works for their protection and integrity, and raises awareness of the continuing effects of torture and war on survivors and their families. The CCVT gives hope after the horror.
Description Continued

CCVT Settlement Services

Programs at CCVT take into account the fact that, for many survivors of torture, the process of resettlement can be just as traumatic as the initial trauma they experienced and that a positive resettlement process is essential to the process of recovery. To aid in overcoming the many barriers to recovery, CCVT's Settlement Services include:

- information/orientation
- interpretation/translation
- time limited counselling
- employment-related issues and referrals to resources relating to the economic, social, cultural, educational and recreational facilities that could contribute to the initial settlement of the client
- counselling (by referrals) on access to housing, social assistance, citizenship, health plans, income tax, skills training and applications for family reunification and sponsorships

CCVT’s needs assessment is only the beginning and goes beyond the tasks related to giving information, referrals and filling out forms.

Their program focuses on providing interviews and assistance to clients, many of whom have experienced highly traumatic events, such as torture, and settlement-related crises.

Children/Youth Program

The Children's Program at CCVT was created to meet the specific needs of refugee children and their families in Canada through assessment, individual and family counselling, crisis intervention, support groups for children, youth and parents, often including Art Therapy, and referrals to the health network of experienced physicians and psychiatrists for documentation and treatment. As well, Child and Youth Program Workers provide specialized settlement services, recreational and empowerment activities that incorporate conflict resolution, mentoring, peer support and story-telling.

Sometimes an entire family has been subjected to the trauma of flight and resettlement as refugees, the shock of encountering a new language and culture, and/or the loss of extended family and friends. That is the reason why working with the family as a unit, helping parents deal with their own traumatic experience and restoring family functioning, is an essential element in the philosophy of the Children's Program. The Children’s Program services include:

- youth group sessions for teens and young adults 16-24
- youth individual sessions for tutoring, settlement support, psychological counselling, solution-focused counselling, and legal support on a one on one basis
- provides a network of doctors and psychiatrists who work in different languages
- offers policy analysis
Description Continued

- YMCA youth flicks

The Canadian Centre For Victims of Torture also has various specialized Settlement and Mental Health Services for survivors of war and torture:

- Child/youth in-house psychiatry counselling
- One to one tutor program
- Girls club
- Youth support group counselling in trauma related issues
- Homework club
- A ‘Be friendly’ program
- Conversation circles
- Youth employment/post-secondary education counselling
- Connection to youth volunteer opportunities
- Assistance in filling out immigration forms
- Psychiatry, psychologist, and physician documentation for refugee board hearings

Some attributes consistent with good practice criteria identified in OCASI research:

- addresses the issue of insufficient mental health and, in particular, post-traumatic treatment for immigrant and refugee youth
- incorporates doctors’ services
- uses integrating techniques such as art therapy
- is fully aware of youths’ backgrounds and conducts comprehensive needs assessment
- reduces language barriers
- offers referrals to other services
- provides other settlement services; e.g. employment assistance, family reunification, which makes it possible to receive multiple services in one area
- incorporates, among others, recreational, empowerment activities, conflict resolution, mentoring, peer support and story-telling
- focuses also on parents
- incorporates tutoring, an important feature supported by both parents and youth; it provides something tangible
- works collaboratively with other service providers
5. The Asian community AIDS Services (ACAS) Youth Program

Description of Program

The Youth Program at the Asian community AIDS Services (ACAS) helps prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS and Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) by educating and outreaching to East and Southeast Asian youth across Toronto. It emphasizes that all activities are based on a non-judgemental peer education approach.

The program provides:

- HIV/STI prevention education workshops
- Outreach at events, fairs, and conferences
- A volunteer peer educator program
- Supportive social spaces for lesbian, intersex, bisexual, transgender, transsexual, gay, queer and questioning East and Southeast Asian youth through QAY (Queer Asian Youth program)
- HIV/STI prevention events targeting East and Southeast Asian youth in general
- Multilingual brochures and resources on prevention, testing, coming out, and other issues related to healthy sexuality (see Resources)

In 2008-09, a LGBTTIQQ peer-led, youth focused workshop/forum series, Queer Luck Club, is launched. Funded by The Lesbian and Gay Community Appeal Foundation, it provides an opportunity for LGBTTIQQ youth to discuss issues affecting their lives and share life experiences with their peers and an opportunity to train LGBTTIQQ youth become leaders in the community.

Some Program Features:

Workshops

Youth groups facilitate free, fun and interactive HIV/STI prevention workshops. These workshops, held in high schools and in community organizations, are rooted in a peer-to-peer approach, and are delivered in a spirit of sex-positive, non-judgemental, pro-choice, and harm reduction principles of education.

Outreach

Program staff go to different areas of Toronto to hand out safer sex kits and talk to Asian youth to increase awareness about HIV/AIDS and STIs. They also go to community centres, nightclubs, malls and other places where Asian youth hang out.

Peer Educators

East and Southeast Asian youth volunteers are educating each other about HIV/AIDS and STIs through the peer
Description Continued

educator program with focus on HIV/STI prevention education workshops and outreach around the city. The program continuously looks for volunteers interested in learning and in educating their friends about healthy sexuality and safer sex choices.

QAY: Queer Asian Youth

The Queer Asian Youth group builds supportive social spaces for gay, lesbian, bisexual, transsexual, transgender, queer, curious, undecided, or questioning East and Southeast Asian youth and their friends. Some of the regular events include Bubble Tea Lounges and Movie and Games Nights. In 2003, a conference called Facts for Friction (F3), the largest conference for and by queer East and Southeast Asian youth in Canada, was organized. A Queer Asian Youth ‘Zine was launched in 2005.

QAY volunteers meet once a month to organize events, which happen every 2 months.

Counselling and Referrals

Focus is also on the provision of information and referrals and answering questions about HIV/AIDS, STIs, sex or sexuality and other issues. Youth can call anonymously. The service does not have call display and they make this known in their adverts, as it is assurance to potential service recipients. They also make it known in their outreach literature that if they do not offer a service being sought they can connect a youth to an appropriate service.

http://www.acas.org/english/youth.php

Some attributes consistent with good practice criteria identified in OCASI research:

- contains a clear objective of AIDS prevention
- focuses attention on health and helps to address the expressed lack of sufficient immigrant youth health-related programs
- involves youth as peer educators
- has a proactive community outreach
- makes a special effort to target and to provide safe place for LGBTTIQQ youth
- ensures privacy from the outset
- offers referrals to other services is carried out with a view to satisfying the needs of the youth rather than those of the organization
6. The “Spot” youth centre at Jane and Finch Community and Family Centre JFCFC

Description of Program

The “Spot” at Jane and Finch Community and Family Centre (JFCFC) is a new youth centre created to serve as a safe and welcoming place for local children and youth to hang-out, to participate in after-school programming/drop-in programs, and to receive information and referrals about substance misuse, sexual health, local youth services and more.

The service provider envisioned The “Spot” as a means of enhancing the Youth and FOCUS Program at Jane and Finch Community and Family Centre (JFCFC), and it forms part of the youth programs at JFCFC. The aim of these programs is to increase the voice and build the capacity and leadership of youth in the Jane/Finch community.

The goal of the youth program at JFCFC is to prevent violence and drug misuse, and to promote healthy lifestyle choices among youth.

This is done through social, educational, arts and recreational programming and after-schools programs, leadership and peer mentoring groups, drop-ins, outings, volunteer and employment opportunities.

The Youth and FOCUS Program at Jane and Finch Community and Family Centre (JFCFC) is mandated to provide substance abuse prevention and violence prevention activities for children and youth. This includes the prevention of injuries and chronic diseases which occur as a result of substance misuse, and violence.

The FOCUS program first began in this area over 16 years ago and became a part of the Jane/Finch Community and Family Centre over 7 years ago.

Since becoming a program of the Centre the main program focus has been youth, due to the existing gap in programming for community youth.

http://www.janefinchcentre.org/FOCUS%20&%20YOUTH.html

JFCFC also carries out youth ISAP/HOST programs.

After School Clubs

After school clubs provide a range of activities for children aged 8-12.

Some of the clubs run out of public housing buildings and others are run out of the Spot Centre.

Social, recreational, and educational opportunities include leadership, team building, games, art activities, sport activities, outings, and cooking. Parent involvement is an important element with periodic family nights included as a part of the regular activities.

Agency Contact:

The spot team leader “Spot” centre
1 Yorkgate Blvd., Suite 228
Yorkgate Mall
Toronto, Ontario
M3N 3A1
416-736-4413 Ext. 223
or 416-663-2733
www.janefinchcentre.org
Youth programs, including ISAP/HOST activities, include:

- Toronto Arts Council internship
- Project Y.O.U (youth of unity)
- Break dancing
- Digital photography
- Young leaders
- Young women’s group
- Substance prevention
- Recreation drop-in
- Drop-in tutoring
- Drop-in services
- Information and referral
- Project chill-Winter-related
- Project Canoe – Summer/Winter
- HIV/STI Project (Educational Awareness)

Some of the topics youth explore during the above activities include:

- Peace-building/violence prevention
- Anti-racism/classism/sexism
- Sexual health
- Peer mentoring
- Expressing yourself through art or poetry
- Alcohol and Drugs
- Healthy relationships
- Community Development
- Employment Development

At JFCFC, there are articulated principles of support, whereby staff operates programs with a view to strengthening capacity, offering participant centred programs and activities, collaboration, diversity, respect for service recipients and advocacy.

The main funders for the program are the Ministry of Health Promotion (JFCFC is one of 22 FOCUS sites across Ontario), United Way and the Ontario Trillium Foundation. The program also includes many other partners and funders year to year. It receives ISAP funding.
Some attributes consistent with good practice criteria identified in OCASI research:

- has a youth centre beneficial as a safe sanctuary for youth, reducing their vulnerability away from street corners
- makes an effort to address the gap in programming
- has an articulated policy and principles within which staff must operate
- utilizes games and other activities that also reduce health risks due to non-activity
- combines educational and recreational activities
- also runs activities in satellite locations to improve access and outreach
- serves a variety of youth ages
- involves parents in activities
7. Supporting Our Youth (SOY): a program of the Sherbourne Health Centre in Toronto

Description of Program

Supporting Our Youth (SOY), a program of Sherbourne Health Centre in Toronto, is a mentoring program that focuses on connecting LGBTTQ youth to safe, out, adult 'mentors' from the community. Mentors are queer 'big brothers and sisters' who, it is stated, are able to help LGBTTQ youth explore questions about identity, sexuality and community. Mentors provide support, encouragement, and a non-judgemental listening ear to talk about anything and everything going on in their life: family, school, friends, relationships, etc.

Community Mentoring:

Community Mentoring involves matching a youth with a safe, screened adult in a one to one relationship. Matches are based on the needs of the youth and shared interests and values. Mentors and youth spend time together on a regular basis (once a week or so) to:

- meet at a coffee shop/juice bar to hang out and talk
- go to a movie or a play in the community
- explore the city together
- cook and share a meal
- celebrate birthdays and holidays

Monday Night Drop-In for Youth:

Monday Night Drop-In is a weekly drop-in where adult mentors and youth create community together. It's a fun 'queer' space for socializing, relaxing and sharing a home cooked meal. There are movie nights, arts and recreational activities and special workshops and events. Youth drop in every Monday night from 5:30-8:00 p.m. at Sherbourne Health Centre, on the 2nd floor.

Housing Mentoring

Housing Mentoring is for youth who need a safe and affordable place to live where there is adult support. Youth are matched with adult mentors from the community who are able to provide housing. In some cases, youth may be paying all their own expenses, but getting support from the mentor in whose home they live. In other cases, the young person may be like a member of the mentor's family.
Non-Profit Housing Mentoring

The program has secured a limited number of subsidized housing units in the non-profit housing sector. This housing is designated for youth who are matched with a community mentor and are in need of housing. *At this time the need for housing greatly exceeds the availability. We are working very hard to expand our housing pool.

Who Are Mentors?

Mentors are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual or transgender (or gay-positive and trans-positive) adults, 26 years of age or older. Mentors come from a diversity of backgrounds and have varied life experiences, interests and skills. All mentors undergo a thorough orientation and screening process before they are accepted into the program. Mentors must agree to abide by program policies that clearly outline their role and responsibilities. Ongoing support and training are provided.

Youth Participation

SOY welcomes all youth who are 14-29 years of age, and identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual or transgender or questioning. Youth may be living with their families, or be on their own. Some youth may be employed or in school, while others won't be. Youth who are HIV+ can also be matched with supportive, knowledgeable mentors.

Some attributes consistent with Good practice criteria identified in OCASI research:

- provides an opportunity for LGBTTQ youth to connect with people who understand
- provides safe spaces for LGBTTQ youth
- ensures that adults are screened
- matches youth who are HIV+ for support
- has staff and mentors who are given orientation, screening and ongoing training
- has clear guidelines and policies related to involvement in the program
8. Planned Parenthood Toronto Community Health Centre for youth age 13-29

Description of Program

Planned Parenthood carries out Women’s Programming, Teen Programming, and programs for LGBTQ Communities.

For Newcomer Communities

Planned Parenthood aims at improving access for newcomers through offering health services in different languages.

Women’s Programming

In 1975, Planned Parenthood Toronto’s (PPT) partnership with the Bay Centre for Birth Control began. Today, the partnership still exists, as the satellite office of PPT’s Women’s Programming.

Youth Programming

The House Teen Health Centre opened its doors in 1983, becoming a licensed Community Health Centre in 1990.

Planned Parenthood Toronto Community Health Centre offers a full range of health services, including primary health, sexual and reproductive health, and mental health services for youth ages 13-29.

The centre serves clients without a health card.

It is a one-stop centre, offering services such as flu shots, pregnancy tests, full physical exams, counselling services especially for youth, and assisting youth to find a job, housing, or dealing with any other needs.

Outreach material clearly states ways in which newcomer youth can be assisted and states, for example, that the centre can help young men figure out what they need to know to be healthy. The centre also assists young parents. Youth can call direct to make an appointment. Outreach information informs them that they can request interpretation service when they call for an appointment.

PPT Community Programming provides workshops all around Toronto.

The program also continuously develops new programs, like the Self-Esteem, Health, Appreciation and Respect Project (SHARP) for newcomer youth, and partners with other organizations around Toronto.

In 1993, the Teen Sex InfoLine began in 1993 and in 2001, expanded its services with the launch of a new website for teens: Spiderbytes.ca, provides 24-hour a day answers to frequently asked questions about sexual health for youth.

LGBTQ Programming

In 1998, PPT adopted the Teens Educating and Confronting Homophobia (T.E.A.C.H.) program, a small, peer-led anti-homophobia project from East End Community Health Centre. The program is now very well-known in Toronto, having won a number of awards and distinctions.
Some attributes consistent with good practice criteria identified in OCASI research:

- focuses attention on health, and helps to address the lack of sufficient immigrant health-related settlement programs
- is a one stop for all ages and for comprehensive health needs
- uses interpreters
- has a Teen Sex InfoLine addressing need related to insufficient sex-related helplines
- provides peer-based information and youth involvement
- is supported by a dedicated teen website providing 24 hour answers to questions
- has a website with resources and Fact Sheets on sexual health
- offers direct outreach material that can prompt youth to act, for example:

  “Need a physical? An STI test? Pregnant? Looking for birth control options? Need to talk to a counsellor? Have questions about sex or sexuality? Are you a young man with specific health questions? A young parent, or parent-to-be, looking for support? We have health services created especially for youth ages 13-29!”

  OR

  “If you’re 13-16 years old, Teen Programming can help you find answers to any question you might have about sex, sexuality, puberty, or relationships. We have three unique ways to get reliable information: our Teen Sex InfoLine, which you can call to talk to a trained teen volunteer in person, our MSN chat service, where you can get in touch with trained teen volunteers through the Internet, and our Spiderbytes website makes it easy to find answers whenever you need them”.

9. The Pathways to Education Toronto - Regent Park

Description of Program

The Pathways to Education Program was created and implemented in Regent Park by the Regent Park Community Health Centre. It receives funding from the Ontario government and has a new partnership with United Way. Its strategic partnership with United Way of Greater Toronto seeks to continue Pathway’s success in Regent Park and to replicate the model elsewhere in Toronto.

In 2001, Pathways to Education was established in Toronto’s Regent Park to provide local high school students with academic tutoring, group mentoring, student and parent advocacy and support, and scholarships for all students who complete high school and are accepted into post-secondary programs. The Mission is to ensure that young people from at-risk and/or economically disadvantaged communities achieve their full potential by
Description Continued

going to school, staying in school, graduating and moving on to post-secondary programs.

By 2006, an independent evaluation conducted by Boston Consulting Group found that since the program was established, drop-out rates in the community were reduced from 56 to 10 per cent, while the proportion of young people attending post-secondary education increased from 20 to 80 per cent. More than 800 students are currently enrolled in the program.

http://www.unitedwaytoronto.com/whatWeDo/pathwaysToEducation.php

How the program works

Pathways seeks to address the community risk factors endemic in disadvantaged communities, and complements the work of the public school system. Pathways offers a comprehensive, community-based, and results-focused approach. Pathways has demonstrated that the dropout rate (and other factors) can be significantly improved with a program that has “four pillars” of integrated and consistent support:

- **Academic Support.** Tutoring four nights a week in all core academic subjects. The tutoring takes place in the community, and gives students the academic boost they need to succeed. There are over 300 volunteer tutors.

- **Social Support.** A mentoring program that provides group mentoring in grades 9 and 10, and career/specialty mentoring in grades 11 and 12. Important social skills are learned, and students’ windows of opportunities are greatly expanded. There are over 150 volunteer mentors.

- **Counselling and Support.** Each student has a full-time Student-Parent Support Worker who is employed by Pathways and works with the student personally on every aspect of their education. If issues arise between the student and their teacher, principal, parents, tutors, etc., the support worker is directly involved with the student in resolving them. The support worker identifies problems and intervenes early by constantly monitoring the student’s school attendance, keeping an eye on their grades, and meeting with them bi-weekly to discuss their progress.

- **Financial Support.** In Ontario, for every year the student is in Pathways, $1,000 is placed in a bursary fund for the student’s post-secondary education. Therefore, when the students graduate from high school, they have $4,000 to help them with post-secondary education or job training programs. This provides a long-term financial incentive for the students and their families. As a short-term financial incentive, Pathways identifies an every-day financial need that poses a barrier
10. Youth to Youth Program at Jewish Immigrant Aid Services Toronto (JIAS)

Description of Program

Youth to Youth program of the Jewish Immigrant Aid Services Toronto (JIAS) is an open group, led by 2 youth leaders and involves close to 40 high school students who are newcomers (less than 3 years from arrival date). The group engages in three kinds of combined activities that include recreational, and volunteering.

The group meets 2-3 times a month. A new program for 11-13 year olds was recently launched in partnership with a group of young leaders who run the program.

The program also includes a homework club for newcomer kids with student volunteers as tutors once a week.

The program has created a Youth Guide which can be shared.
Some attributes consistent with good practice criteria identified in OCASI research:

- engages youth and enables youth leadership and youth responsibility as the program is youth-led
- offers a youth guide

11. Family Support Services (CFSS) at Griffin Centre

**Agency Contact:**
24 Silverview Drive
North York, Ontario
M2M 2B3
416-222-1153
http://www.griffin-centre.org/
programs_cfss.asp

**Description of Program**
Family Support Services (CFSS) at Griffin Centre provide support for youth and families dealing with conflicts and concerns at home, in school or in the community. They also offer support for youth with emotional or mental health challenges which may be accompanied by a mild developmental disability. Substance use, mental health counselling and a day program are also offered.

**Who can access**

- Youth 12-18 years of age at the point of referral
- Those with mental health challenges or a dual diagnosis (mild to moderate developmental disability and mental health challenges)
- Those with mental health challenges and live in North York
- Those with developmental disabilities and mental health challenges who live in the City of Toronto

**Nature of Services**

- Individual, family, and group counselling or crisis support
- Telephone support and drop-in services
Description Continued

- Assessments of family strengths, concerns, the current request for service and to explore and coordinate service options with the youth and family
  - Parent education groups and workshops
  - School-based counselling, crisis supports, outreach, and consultation services
  - Assessment and treatment services for youth who have sexually offended
  - Support and counselling to newcomer youth who identify or are identified as LGBTQ

Some attributes consistent with good practice criteria identified in OCASI research:

- address youth mental health issues
- use a variety of methods e.g. telephone and drop in to maximize access
- provide targeted programs for LGBTQ
- provide targeted counselling for substance use, giving youth with variety of problems to access specialized services

12. Youth and Host Programs at Thunder Bay Multicultural Association

Description of Program

The Youth and Host Programs in Thunder Bay aim to address the needs of smaller newcomer communities in Northwestern/Northern Ontario. The programs use local venues such as libraries, health clinics, and social centres as focal service points. They also conduct aggressive outreach, which includes the use of websites. Newcomer youth are able to use websites for information as well as link to other organizations on the web.

Agency Contact:
Youth settlement worker/ HOST coordinator
17 Court St. N.,
Thunder Bay, Ontario,
P7A 4T4
807-345-0551
www.thunderbay.org
Description Continued

The Thunder Bay Multicultural Centre works with partners to:

- offer joint services
- make referrals
- run a 1-800 line
- run e-mail and network of interpreters to enhance access

Some attributes consistent with good practice criteria identified in OCASI research:

- has enhanced accessibility through extended outreach and multi-service points
- has extended collaboration with www.settlement.org to ensure provision of info to potential service recipients
- utilizes inter-agency collaborations

13. Finding Our Way: Part of Website of Thunder Bay Multicultural Association

Description of Program

*Finding Our Way*-Helping each other settle in Canada* is part of a website of Thunder Bay Multicultural Association.

*Finding Our Way* was created to support the transition of newcomer youth into Canadian culture and society. It has provided a forum for a group whose voice is generally not heard regarding their immigrant or refugee experiences.

Youth from various ethnic backgrounds have compiled their stories, poetry and photography into an online book in the hopes of providing other young newcomers as they settle in Canada. This book also includes information on Canadian life and customs, local services and organizations specific and of interest to the youth.
Description Continued

At this time, *Finding Our Way* is only available in English. However, the book will soon be available in a number of different languages online and in hard copy.

The Thunder Bay website has a significant focus on youth.

Some attributes consistent with good practice criteria identified in OCASI research

- uses technology to bring together newcomer youth
- is working towards writing an education book online as a collective
- writes and disseminates information on available services
- is making efforts toward offering a variety of languages

14. The Youth Theatre Workshop at Mennonite New Life Centre

Description of Program

The Mennonite New Life Centre of Toronto strives to remain a vibrant, multicultural community centre for newcomers to Canada. The centre offers a wide range of programs and services to help refugees and immigrants adjust to their new life in Canada. The goal is to support people from diverse cultural communities to participate and contribute in all areas of Canadian life - social, economic, cultural, and political.

An important focus of the centre’s work is to bring together newcomers and members of established communities to support each other, learn from each other, and advocate together for a more just and compassionate society.
While it is declared that emphasis is on the whole family, it is also emphasized that special attention is dedicated to the particular needs of individual family members, as each goes through the settlement process in their own way. Subsequently, youth programming is integrated.

**Special Programs for Newcomer Youth**

Despite its focus on the family unit as a whole, the centre runs special programs for newcomer youth.

- The newcomer youth Program is aimed at assisting newcomer youth in the areas of settlement, education, recreation, employment, and access to community resources
- The program also advocates for and with youth to address concerns and meet their settlement needs
- A major part of this process aims at exploring issues they face as newcomer youth through the use of Popular Theatre

Built around the premise that being an immigrant youth presents a variety of additional challenges for youth, including the search for identity, the theatre workshops intend to give youth the tools to take on these challenges without feeling rejected for being different. This includes increasing self esteem and reducing vulnerability to participation in drug, alcohol or gang cultures.

Theatre expresses newcomer youth’s experiences, identifies issues of concern and builds possible strategies for change. While Popular Theatre encourages reflection on issues, it also builds confidence to explore one's ideas and feelings in a group, develops teamwork and leadership skills, and benefits youth through the development of positive relationships, and strong supportive networks.

In addition to newcomer youth Popular Theatre (Spanish/English), other services include:

- settlement supports, counselling, and advocacy
- all immigration-related applications and processes
- homework clubs
- after school drop-in
- mental health counselling (psychologists)
- English, Spanish, Mandarin, and French classes
Some attributes consistent with good practice criteria identified in OCASI research:

- provides free TTC tickets for students
- offers special programs for youth (even though the centre focus is the family unit)
- stipulates that they advocate for youth
- creatively uses Theatre, in addition to offering traditional settlement programs. Theatre enables exploration of issues such as gangs
- offers a diversity of languages and free use of computers
- offers educational services e.g. French and Spanish language classes and homework help with other programs, e.g. mental health counselling

15. Hearing Every Youth through Youth (HEYY) program

Description of Program

Hearing Every Youth through Youth (HEYY) program, a program of Neighbourhood Centre offers a peer to peer telephone helpline, an online chat services by and for youth, and provides non-judgmental, confidential, anonymous, and collect calls to youth.

HEYY trains youth 15 years and older to provide service and information to other youth.

Agency Contact:
H.E.Y.Y c/o Neighbourhood Centre
91 Barrington Ave.
Toronto, Ontario, M4C 4X9
416-698-1626
Helpline: 416-423-HEYY
(416-423-4399)
www.heyy.net

Some attributes consistent with good practice criteria identified in OCASI research:

- engages youth in helping other youth
- emphasizes confidentiality in their outreach literature
16. Youth HOST and Leadership Programs at Learning Enrichment Foundation (LEF)

Description of Program

Youth HOST and Leadership Programs provide many traditional settlement services, including:

- Referral services
- Job readiness workshops for those looking for summer job
- Help with immigration issues or issues related to statues, employment, school, medical, social, escorts to appointments

The Learning Enrichment Foundation also carries out a group of youth-specific programs that aim at reassuring youth that the sky is the limit. These activities include:

- Bicycle assembly and maintenance program (BAM)
- “My magic hands”, a magic tricks training program led by magicians, newcomers youth as volunteer coach for younger, up-and-coming magicians
- Sports Camp
- Field trips for youth
- A ‘Chill’ program (snow boarding trips)
- Currently focusing on building programs for newcomer youth so the sky is the limit
- Conversation of “you tube” video clips with photographs from day trips designing personal webpage
- Newsletter and photo clubs, where interviewing, reporting, designing, and writing skills are developed
- Movie nights (summer) with popcorn and discussions
- After school and Saturday sports, basketball, volleyball, soccer
- Post secondary education workshops

Some attributes consistent with good practice criteria identified in OCASI research:

- focuses on providing confidence to youth
- focuses on creative programming
17. Vietnamese Association, Toronto Youth Programs

Description of Program

Vietnamese Association Youth Settlement programs were launched in April 2008. The programs offer a wide range of activities and services to immigrant and refugee youth of all ethnicities aged 13-24. The programs aim to foster a fun, educational, and comfortable environment for youth. Services include:

- Referrals
- Peer counselling
- Connecting youth with Mentors for guidance and support as well as have an opportunity to learn while making new friends

There are many activities provided by the Vietnamese Association youth programs.

Some examples of the programming offered are:

- Cooking classes, which teach how to cook healthy meals
- Employment-related activities
- A drop-in sports program (e.g. basketball, volleyball and soccer)
- Homework Club (e.g. in Math and proof reading)
- Field trips to enrich understanding of Canadian culture
- Bicycling
- Sexual health workshop series provided by the Asian Community AIDS service

Satellite venues are used for activities to provide youth with plenty of choices. This is accomplished through partnerships with community agencies.

Agency Contact:

Youth settlement coordinator
Downtown office
1364 Dundas St. W.,
Toronto, Ontario, M6J 1Y2
416-536-3611 Ext. 230

North York office
3585 Keele St., Unit 13
North York, Ontario, M3J 3H5
416-636-8887

http://www.vatoronto.ca/en/about.php

Some attributes consistent with good practice criteria identified in OCASI research:

- improve access by bringing services to youth thus overcoming transportation barrier (having home work club in high school after school having our cooking class)
- provide a good mix of activities
- combine educational services with other services
- engage youth in mentoring and counselling
- maintain partnerships with other service providers
18. “Embracing Roots” at: Brampton Neighbourhood Resource Centre (BNRC) youth host program

Description of Program

Newcomers who join “Embracing Roots” program are matched with a Canadian volunteer who meets with them regularly for conversation, friendship and the sharing of knowledge about the community and Canadian culture. The program provides the setting variety of activities and events facilitated by expert Program Leaders in the areas of the arts and sports for both the newcomers and volunteers to participate in.

The Brampton Neighbourhood Resource Centre “Embracing roots” youth HOST program includes:

- a mentoring program
- arts and sport activities
- a homework club
- interactive services that involve youth from Canadian communities
- the input of youth in programming
- a youth lounge
- karate classes
- poetry
- painting

Some attributes consistent with good practice criteria identified in OCASI research:

- is creative
- provides safe spaces to conduct programs
- provides opportunities for skills development and education
- combines education (e.g. homework) with other activities
- offers a wide variety of activities
- offers services for youth ages 8-24
19. Integrated youth program and Youth Employability Skills Program (Y.E.S.) at AAT school Program

Description of Program

While it may not be perceived as a settlement service in the traditional sense, the Integrated Youth Program at AAT school Program offers bridging programs that were recognized by OCASI SYNC research participants as important for the future success of immigrant and refugee youth. This program provides necessary services to newcomer youth, who are unable to follow the traditional route to university in Canada.

AAT is a registered private high school with approval from the Ontario Ministry of Education to grant over 50 Ontario secondary school diploma credits.

The school specializes in alternative and flexible learning styles to accommodate adults in transition and younger students struggling in the mainstream high school education system. Youth-specific curriculum that relates to the Ministry of Education is integrated into instruction. Technology is also integrated into the curriculum and lesson plans.

The school delivers academic upgrading, college preparation, and language training that emphasizes literacy fundamentals to adults, injured workers, individuals on unemployment insurance, women and young people interested in building careers in technical trades, and workers seeking help to study for their journeymen’s exam.

School programs are offered in an anti-oppression framework, and in an environment that acknowledges diversity with respect to race, creed, culture, gender, abilities, language or socio-economic status.

The school’s main goal is to offer innovative, practical and high calibre academic, technical and vocational instruction to learners over the age of 16 and to disenfranchised and at-risk youth learners.

Strategy

The AAT School maintains strategic alliances with key stakeholders in identified industries and communities including but not limited to:

- Skilled, Information and Technological Trades, Arts, Music and Media
- Independent and Public Post Secondary Education Providers
- Government and Community Agencies whose mandate includes youth and adult literacy and addressing the needs of disenfranchised, visible and language minority learners
- Target Communities
Description Continued

The Youth Employability Skills Program (Y.E.S.)

The Y.E.S. program is comprised of recruitment, educational training, professional and peer counselling, leadership development, and job placement for the diverse communities who meet the following criteria set out by Service Canada:

- Between 15 and 30 years of age (inclusive) at the time of the intake/selection
- In need of assistance to overcome employment barriers
- Canadian citizens, permanent residents, or persons on whom refugee protection has been conferred
- Out of school
- Legally entitled to work according to the relevant provincial/territorial legislation and regulations
- Not in receipt of Employment Insurance benefits

The Y.E.S. program is for 40 weeks and offers marginalized youth the opportunity to level the playing field by helping them to acquire transferable skills and develop personal qualities, including self-esteem, self-reliance, leadership, communication, and other employability skills while at the same time contributing to their local community.

It also offers a broad range of information, skills, community connections and practical work experience needed for entry and sustainability in the labour market;

The Y.E.S. program offers WIMIS training, CPR, First Aid, and Employability Skills training which focuses on the participants learning a variety of Fundamental Skills, Personal Management Skills and Teamwork Skills.

Finally, the program offers the participants an opportunity to demonstrate their skills by participating in the construction of two community projects: completely renovating a low-income housing unit, and developing a community signature garden in the Hamilton area.

Youth are given the opportunity to increase their self-confidence while gaining theoretical knowledge on construction work and professional landscaping.
Description of Program

This Youth HOST program connects immigrant youth ages 13-24 with Canadians to ease adjustment into life in Canada. It provides settlement services through a wide range of group and one-on-one activities as well as mentorships.

Program delivery is based on promoting positive change, being accountable to the participants, and ensuring cultural sensitivity. It is delivered in a manner that fully respects the rights and dignity of newcomer youth, and strives to respond comprehensively and holistically to the needs of newcomer youth. The Youth HOST program is offered in compliance with access and equity principles and anti-discrimination/anti-oppression frameworks.

In addition, the program is designed to promote community capacity building, enhance bridges across communities, and address the root causes of barriers to social inclusion of immigrant youth.

Some attributes consistent with good practice criteria identified in OCASI research:

◆ addresses complaints related to lack of adequate programming for youth aged 16-24
◆ offers peer counselling
◆ offers leadership development, and job placement for youth 20-25
◆ is attentive to at-risk youth
◆ has programming addresses the transition needs of newcomer youth
◆ integrates technology into curriculum and lesson plans
◆ integrates youth-specific curriculum related to the Ministry of Education
◆ provides youth with the opportunity to develop self-esteem, self-confidence while gaining theoretical knowledge that will contribute to future academic success

Agency Contact:

248 Ossington Ave., Toronto, Ontario, M6J 3A2
416-532-4828

http://www.stchrishouse.org/adults/ImmigrantAndRefugeeS/Events.php
and
http://www.stchrishouse.org/adults/ImmigrantAndRefugeeS/Page20931.php

20. Connecting Immigrant Youth to Social Networks at St. Christopher House Youth HOST
Description Continued

Capacity building and leadership training through youth engagement is provided at all levels of programming including planning.

The first forum for immigrant youth was organized in May 2008, and staff continue to work with the Advisory Committee comprising immigrant and non-immigrant youth. Staff stress the importance of providing support to specific ethnic-based youth communities, such as the Tibetan community in Parkdale.

The program continues to provide specialized services through partnerships, including support in areas of health services, including mental and sexual aspects.

The program works with immigrant and non-immigrant youth to ensure effective social inclusion for the participants.

Language Capacities

Spanish, Cantonese, Tibetan, Urdu, Hindi, Punjabi, Nepali, Arabic and French

The St. Christopher House also has access to several other languages through trained volunteers

Services offered by the Youth HOST program at the St. Christopher House include:

- Training for volunteers and participants in areas of leadership, communication and mentorship
- Information workshops
- Orientation and referrals (through collaboration with other immigrant services programs at St. Christopher House)
- Employment support, career guidance and workshops (through collaboration with other program at St. Christopher House)
- One-on-one mentorship such as tutoring, arts-based, and English and French language support
- Group-based mentorships (such as art-based, sports clubs, trips and outings, English and French Conversation Circles)
- Activity-based programming in various areas
- Educational orientation, which eases the transition from high school to university or college

Internal Partners:

The Youth HOST program works closely with two other programs at St. Christopher House that focus on youth services and employment support. Other programs that provide specialized services, such as financial problem solving and advocacy, community outreach and volunteer management provide valuable support to Youth HOST services.
Description Continued

In addition, the program is integrated with other programs at the Immigrant and Refugee Services at St. Christopher House. This enables the program to maintain the principles of access and equity and serve clients who are ineligible for the funding.

External Partners:

St. Christopher House maintains proud partnerships with the Toronto Public Library, the Catholic District School Board and Toronto District School Board. Several community agencies partners on a semi-regular basis in delivering activities.

Some attributes consistent with good practice criteria identified in OCASI research:

- maximizes the use of existing programs
- creates connections with youth in established communities
- includes mentorship
- focuses on community-based programming
- examines the root cause of barriers to access
- encourages youth engagement
- has a clear focus on specific groups based on a needs assessment
- maintains partnerships with other agencies
- has a mental and sexual health focus, which meets the needs of the youth they serve
- has language capacities
- streamlines its volunteers
- offers specialized services, such as financial problem solving, which address the needs of youth
In the research and discussions with newcomer youth and youth workers during the OCASI SYNC project important insights into ways to improve and enhance immigrant and refugee youth services were presented.

**Appreciation of Current Programs**

To begin with, based on discussions during the project, it is clear that newcomer youth appreciate the usefulness of many current settlement programs. As the previous section indicates, there are currently a number of HOST and ISAP programs with features that make an effective youth settlement program. It should be noted, however, that a significant number of youth revealed that they had never sought the services of settlement agencies, and in one SYNC focus group none of the participants had sought out these services.

The following points offer some observations that provide a path forward for ensuring improvements to newcomer youth services in Ontario.

**Desire to Accomplish Employment Goals by Staying in Education System**

- While newcomer youth are interested in healthy living, building friendships, and settling comfortably in their new homeland, it is clear that the long term goal of meaningful employment is a top priority of youth. Throughout the project, youth pointed out that when a young person fails to stay in the education system, they are more likely to end up engaging in anti-social or even criminal behaviour. They are also likely to experience greater difficulty integrating into Canadian life.

Newcomer youth want programs that help them succeed in their educational and employment goals. Therefore there is a very high demand for homework, tutoring, and other education-related support/programs that help newcomer youth succeed in the Canadian education system. The selection by OCASI research participants of *The Pathways to Education* (see 9 in Part 6) as having features that make a good settlement program is consistent with their desire for programs that help newcomer youth stay in the school system. *The Pathways to Education* provides high school students with academic tutoring, group mentoring as well as scholarships.
English Language Teaching Methodology Contributor to Employment

With meaningful employment being an ultimate goal for many, youth have learned from others before them that, especially for racialized youth, just graduating from school or from university is not enough. Youth see a strong correlation between the English language taught in school and the lack of employment. They want English programs not to ignore the impact of speaking the English language with an accent and to ensure that upon graduation youth have built up strong English language capabilities. This calls for a review of the language teaching methodologies. There is need to move away from what newcomer youth perceive as teachers’ focus on ‘communication’ as the main objective of language learning towards an approach that encompasses all aspects of English, including pronunciation.

Given the specific nature of this barrier which impacts some, rather than all immigrant and refugee youth, newcomer youth who participated in the OCASI research believe that settlement agencies can play a role.

Agencies’ Potential to Complement Work of Language Teaching Institutions

- They envision settlement agencies working collaboratively with schools and other stakeholders to offer more support to youth to overcome language related barriers by forming language clubs that focus not only on general communication but also on pronunciation. Language learning provided by settlement agencies also provide youth with a safe space to practice language skills without feeling self-conscious or nervous about being singled out as immigrants or refugees, as many are at school. Language clubs run by settlement agencies in collaboration with universities, colleges and others are viewed very positively by youth and could be effective in enhancing language learning. Therefore, until changes are made in the methodologies of teaching English—which includes instituting effective bridging programs—settlement services should incorporate English (and French) language learning into their activities.

Need for Collaboration with Mainstream

- Newcomer youth settlement services need to interact and collaborate with other service providers in order to provide wider-reaching, multi-dimensional and holistic services to youth. The notion of strict distinctions between settlement and ‘other’ services such as employment and language services is not attractive to newcomer youth. Maintaining such distinctions will not remove some of the barriers to service that youth face, many of which are the direct result of services not being well-interconnected.

There are several examples of programs in Part 6 that were identified as having desirable attributes but are outside the scope of many settlement agencies. The Integrated Youth Program and Youth Employability Skills Program (Y.E.S.) at AAT school (see 18 in Part 6), for instance, was selected primarily because it has a special bridging program that takes into account the specific barriers faced by immigrants rather than offering courses irrespective of specific youth needs.
Additionally, the selection of the health-related programs Supporting Our Youth (SOY) at the Sherbourne Health Centre in Toronto (see 7 in Part 6), and The House Teen Health Centre for youth ages 13 to 25 at Planned Parenthood (see 8 in Part 6) indicate that youth view health services as essential to their well-being, even though such services are not offered at many settlement agencies.

Need for More focused on Mentorship and Youth Mental Well Being

- Youth see the need for more programs and services that offer mentorship and mental health counselling. Mentorship programs are desired because they help youth build a sense of independence, and help youth feel confident to access physical and mental health services on their own. Youth want a large increase in mental health services as the lack of services now is a major concern for many. Both youth and youth settlement workers see the Canadian Centre for Victims of Torture as a program with good features, demonstrating the desire for community-oriented mental health programs. Efforts should be made to increase programs that deal with the mental well-being of newcomer youth.

- These points are vital when youth workers and others develop and implement youth programming and services, and they must be taken into consideration.

Call for More Integration

- The research from this project has revealed that services must become more integrated, with settlement services incorporating employment and language services into their mandates. Partnerships, with other stakeholders such as health providers and teachers, must be strengthened with greater attention given to providing holistic services to youth.

Call for Long-term Focus

- Programs and services must also focus on the long-term goals of many youth, which is to find well-paying and meaningful employment in Canada. This must always be taken into consideration when designing language, educational and other programs related to this longer-term endeavour.

Call for More Youth Engagement

- Programs targeting newcomer youth must begin to take into account the demand for youth engagement and leadership. The introduction of a Newcomer Youth Bill of Rights is indicative of newcomer youths’ desire to play a strong role in services tailored to their needs. Greater efforts should be made to involve youth in the planning and implementing process and to see youth as active participants with a wealth of experience and knowledge rather than passive recipients of services.
Call for Continuous Dialogue with Youth

- Ultimately, to be effective, what future settlement services should and should not entail must be discussed with youth and youth settlement workers. This ensures a more accurate picture of whether services are being effective and whether youth are using services to the fullest extent. These are necessary steps to ensuring the effectiveness of services and programs for newcomer youth in the province of Ontario.
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DEFINITIONS

Definitions according to Immigration and Refugee Protection Act (IRPA)

"foreign national": a person who is not a Canadian citizen or a permanent resident, and includes a stateless person.


"permanent resident": a person who has acquired permanent resident status and has not subsequently lost that status under section 46.


Definitions of “immigrant”, “temporary resident” and “refugee claimant” in the Canada-Ontario Immigration Agreement (COIA)

The following definitions are used in the Canada-Ontario Immigration Agreement (COIA):

- “immigrant”, as used in this Agreement and unless stipulated otherwise, means permanent residents, protected persons and Convention refugees, as defined in the IRPA;
- “temporary resident” means temporary workers, students and visitors, as defined in the IRPA and IRPR;
- “refugee claimant” refers to a person who has made a claim for refugee protection under subsection 99(3) of the IRPA (Italics ours)

The Definition of “Settlement Services” from the Canada-Ontario Immigration Agreement

In the Canada-Ontario Immigration Agreement “settlement services” are described in the Annex on “settlement services” as follows:

2.1 For the purpose of this Annex, “settlement services” includes:

- the range of current services that help eligible immigrants adapt to life in Canada and Ontario, as outlined in section 6.4.1 of the General Provisions;
- pre-arrival and orientation services, as outlined in section 6.3.1 of the General Provisions, to the extent that they are applicable in Ontario;
- any new or expanded services and initiatives designed to address emerging needs. These services and initiatives may include: pre-arrival services; initiatives to improve coordination of settlement service delivery; specialized services to support the integration of protected persons and Convention refugees resettled from abroad; services to support the integration of business immigrants; and initiatives to foster community engagement in the planning and delivery of settlement services.

In Section 6.4.1 referred to above, “settlement services” are defined as follows:

6.4.1 Settlement services, excluding language training, are services that include, but are not limited to, those presently offered by CIC, through its Host Program and Immigrant Settlement and Adaptation Program (ISAP), and by MCI, through its Newcomer Settlement Program (NSP). These services currently encompass: reception upon arrival, in-Canada orientation, settlement counselling, refugee resettlement services, referral to community resources, and translation/interpreter services.”

In the agreement, language training is treated separately from “settlement services”. Indeed, in the Canada-Ontario Immigration Agreement, “settlement services” are on a continuum of programs that are important to “social and economic integration of immigrants.” According to Section 6.2 under 6.0 Social and economic integration of immigrants,”

6.2 The following continuum of programs and services is important to the successful social and economic integration of immigrants:

- pre-arrival information/orientation
- settlement services
- language training
- immigrant labour market integration
