

Name of organizer: Kathryn Baker
 E-mail address:
 Organisation: Office For Disability Issues, Human Resources And Skills Development Canada

Name of co-organizer: Angelyn Warmington
 Organization: Refugees Branch, Citizenship and Immigration Canada, Ottawa ON

Title of workshop: Invisible Disabilities: Immigrants, Refugees and Mental Health Issues in Canada

Format of Workshop: Présentation suivie de discussion / Workshop

Theme: Santé/Health

Abstract

Difficulties settling and adapting to life in Canada – along with war, violence and displacement experienced by some in their countries of origin – can have negative impacts on immigrants' and refugees' mental health. Existing policies, service gaps, and best practices in addressing their mental health needs will be analysed.

Summary

While the mental health of Canadians in general has garnered significant attention from media and governments, the mental health concerns of recent immigrants and refugees have not yet received the same level of consideration. Recent immigrants often experience mental health challenges while adjusting to their new environment. Refugees in particular face additional difficulties coping with traumatic events experienced in their countries of origin, including extreme poverty, human trafficking, and exposure to war and natural disasters.

This workshop draws on existing and recently completed research on immigrant and refugee mental health. The presentations will discuss the relationship between mental health and health, labour market attachment, gender, trauma, and settlement and adaptation to assess the state of mental health among immigrants and refugees in Canada. The mental health service needs of immigrants and refugees will also be addressed.

At the same time, attention will also be paid to the ways in which these groups demonstrate resilience in the face of challenging circumstances, working to promote and sustain their well-being. Policy and program recommendations will be made.

Name of first presenter: Kathryn Baker, Policy Analyst
 E-mail address:
 Organization: Office for Disability Issues (ODI), Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, Gatineau Quebec
 Title/Theme of presentation: Introduction to the Office for Disability Issues

Name of second presenter: Angelyn Warmington, Policy Analyst
 E-mail address:
 Organization: Refugees Branch, Citizenship and Immigration Canada, Ottawa ON
 Title of presentation: Barriers to integration: Mental Health and The Settlement Needs of Resettled Refugees

Abstract:

This presentation will discuss the results of research conducted by Refugees Branch at Citizenship and Immigration on the settlement needs of refugees. One of the key findings of this research is that mental health is crucial to successful integration, and that unaddressed mental health conditions can act as a barrier to accessing and benefiting from settlement services. While there is broad acknowledgement of this issue, refugees continue to encounter barriers to accessing mental health services in Canada due to lack of interpretation and cultural and gender sensitive services, and stigma within their communities.

Name of third presenter: Dr. Meb Rashid, M.D.
 E-mail address:
 Organization: Meb Rashid MD, Family Physician, St. Joseph`s hospital, Toronto
 Title/Theme of presentation: What lies beneath the surface: Mental health issues in newly arrived immigrants and refugees

Abstract:

The presentation will address the manifestations of mental health issues in newly arrived immigrants and refugees to Toronto. Dr. Rashid has had the privilege of working with immigrants and refugees immediately upon their arrival in Canada. He will describe the impact of various challenges on the well being of this population at different points in their migration trajectory. Programs that have enhanced resiliency will be highlighted.

Name of fourth presenter: Dr. Nazilla Khanlou, OWHC Chair in Women's Mental Health Research, Faculty of Health & Associate Professor

E-mail address:

Organization: School of Nursing, York University

Title/Theme of presentation: Vulnerability and resilience in hard times: The mental health of immigrants and refugees

Name of fifth presenter: Tahira Gonsalves, MA, PhD student, Sociology & Research Coordinator, Office of the Chair in Women's Mental Health Research

E-mail address:

Organization: Faculty of Health, York University, Toronto ON

Title/Theme of presentation: Vulnerability and resilience in hard times: The mental health of immigrants and refugees

Abstract:

The mental wellbeing of immigrants, refugees, and other newcomers is influenced by multiple systems, including individual, family, community, and societal factors. This presentation will discuss the determinants of health in general and mental wellbeing in particular (such as housing, gender disparities, and labour market attachment), within the context of newcomers' migrant status, their migration journeys, and identity markers. At the same time, attention will also be paid to the ways in which marginalized groups demonstrate resilience in the face of challenging circumstances, while promoting and sustaining their wellbeing. Findings from the literature review of two policy reports, as well as a recently completed study of newcomer youth mental health will be discussed. Policy and program recommendations will be made.
