

Mental Health Support Sub-Committee Meeting
Systemic Issues and Social Change Working Group
Meeting Minutes, Monday, January 29, 2018
CSI Annex, 720 Bathurst Street, 3rd Floor

Agenda

1. Welcome
2. Strategies and actions:
 - a. Promote establishing organizational policies
 - b. Educate staff about how to talk to newcomers about mental health
 - c. Use popular-education style programs (ie. Center for Spanish Speaking People Café-style discussions);
 - d. Address the stigma of mental health issues in cultural groups (ie. Strength in Unity)
 - e. Explore role of faith-based organizations regarding mental health for newcomers
3. Framing our work regarding broader theme of systemic and social change
4. Clarifying our overall goal(s) for the year
5. Any other issues
6. Next steps
7. Next meeting
8. Adjournment

Participants

Grace E. McDonald (Hospitality Training Centre); Tahir Khan (Toronto North-LIP); Vivien Green (North York Community House); Sogol Sand (Afghan Women's Organization); Kaitlin Murray (Toronto East Quadrant-LIP); Muna Gaye (Toronto Newcomer Office)

Staff (Toronto South-LIP)

Angelica de Jesus-Bretschneider; Sandra Guerra

Minutes

1. Welcome

Participants introduced themselves.

2. Strategies and actions

a. Promote establishing organizational policies

QUESTIONS TO EXPLORE:

- Do we want to encourage all agencies to have a standardized protocol in place for working with clients on mental health issues?

ACTION: **GRACE** ordered a guiding document from OCASI (but she was uncertain of the title of the document at the time of the meeting). She will share her thoughts on the document with the group at the next meeting.

An issue that emerged during this part of the meeting pertained to **getting funders to take notice of mental health support for newcomers and front-line workers**. Participants agreed that funders do not put enough focus on this issue. Potential targeted funders include CAMH, IRCC, and possibly MCI (as suggested by Muna).

In January 2018, CAMH received an anonymous donation worth \$100 million. Money will be used to attract talent and support research to advance mental healthcare. Members agreed to draft a joint-letter to convince CAMH to allocate money for action-research on newcomer mental health. Participants also agreed to draft a letter to IRCC. Participants agreed that trainings for front-line workers also need sustainable funding. Tahir gave the example of the Mental Health First Aid Training from the Mental Health Commission of Canada, which costs \$50 (including a manual). Is there a way to provide such trainings for free to make them more accessible?

Perhaps letter can also focus on the need to train people for long-term sustainability (e.g. train-the-trainer model re: talking to newcomers about mental health, or refresher training sessions every 2 years, which can then help create “champions” around the issue).

Letter(s) can also showcase what’s already happening in the sector. What’s working? What’s not? And, what needs to be improved?

Another issue that emerged was the **lack of mental health support for frontline workers**, especially if they experience stress.

QUESTIONS TO EXPLORE:

- Are agencies able to buy into an Employee Assistance Program [EAP], especially for mental health support for their workers? Can OCASI be involved in this?

ACTION: **TAHIR, ANGELICA, AND VIVIEN** to draft letter to CAMH and share with group.

ACTION: **VIVIEN AND KAITLIN** to draft letter to IRCC and share with group.

b. Educate staff about how to talk to newcomers about mental health

Participants discussed resources that are already available, such as OCASI's e-learning workshops. As previously mentioned, the Mental Health Commission of Canada [MHCC] offers a 2-day training about Mental Health First Aid Training. It costs \$50 to register (including a manual).

QUESTIONS TO EXPLORE: Should we engage with MHCC to re-design their training(s) to focus specifically on newcomer mental health? Can we improve the training? For example, is there another way to deliver the existing training, so that knowledge is passed on? Would it be better to have each organization have this type of training in-house? Can the 5 LIPS come together and convince their members to cover training for front-line workers throughout the city?

- c. **Use popular-education style programs (ie. Center for Spanish Speaking People café-style discussions);**
- d. **Address the stigma of mental health issues in cultural groups (ie. Strength in Unity)**
- e. **Explore role of faith-based organizations regarding mental health for newcomers**

Participants discussed items c, d, and e together since all three were related. Sandra briefed the group about the Center for Spanish Speaking People providing a café-style discussion regarding mental health, as well as the Strength in Unity at Ryerson, which provides discussion opportunities for Asian men regarding mental health. Sogol also shared information on the Wellness Café, which was funded by OTF. Participants also acknowledged that the Peoples Church (Pastor Nestor) provides a mental health councillor for newcomers.

Participants recognized that there are many non-medically based support-system services out there, and that they are often culturally-specific, which helps breakdown barriers for newcomers. However, finding these services and telling people about them is difficult because these services are usually one-off events, or the funding gets cut, or people do not know what to enter in the Google search to find such events or services.

QUESTIONS TO EXPLORE: Do we want to organize a forum or a lunch-and-learn type of meeting between actors who provide(d) non-medically based mental health support services? What have they learned from providing these services?

Can we create a database of non-medically based support services? For example, what are community centers doing? Faith-based institutions?

ACTION: **SOGOL** to share information regarding a wellness forum in March; related to the Wellness Café.

3. Framing our work regarding broader theme of systemic and social change

4. Clarifying our overall goal(s) for the year

Items 3 and 4 were also discussed together, since both were related. Participants discussed the following goals to guide our work for the coming year:

- Getting funders (e.g. IRCC, CAMH, MIC) to take notice, and commit funding for improving mental health services for newcomers
 - And, getting financial support to sustain services and resources, to leverage on existing services and resources, and to build alliances
- Improving services that already exist
 - Helping front-line workers be more knowledgeable about culturally appropriate mental health support services for newcomers (e.g. improving the referral system)
 - Helping front-line workers to also get the support that they need if they are stressed or spread too thin (e.g. Buying into EAP)
- Helping newcomers find support before getting to the point of having to go to CAMH (e.g. finding non-medically based support services, such as the Wellness Café)

5. Any other issues

None.

6. Next steps

All participants: Action planning meeting: February 13, 2-4 .pm., at CSI Annex Room 4 (3rd floor).

Tahir, Vivien, Kaitlin, and Angelica: Share draft letter(s) to group at next meeting (February 13).

7. Adjournment

2:45 p.m.