

Gender-Based Violence Awareness During COVID-19

for Service Providers working with Newcomers,
Immigrants & Refugees



Funded by:



Immigration, Refugees
and Citizenship Canada



Financé par :

Immigration, Réfugiés
et Citoyenneté Canada



Welcome & Introductions Webinar #3

Erin Whitmore, PhD
Executive Director | Directrice générale
Ending Violence Association of Canada | L'Association canadienne contre la violence

Kathryn Bates-Khan, BA (Hons), B.Ed
Manager Gender-Based Violence Prevention Project
YMCA of Greater Halifax/Dartmouth, Centre for Immigrant Programs

Lauren Barker, BSW, RSW
Social Change Agent
Elmwood Community Resource Centre

Margarita Pintin-Perez, PhD, MSW
Senior Coordinator, Initiative to End Gender-Based Violence
OCASI - Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants

Salina Abji, PhD
Research Consultant





About us

Our project team proactively acknowledges the following:

Gender-Based Violence (GBV) is **not unique** to any community but rather affects all communities.

We use GBV as a broad-based term that includes **distinct patterns and forms of violence**, including sexual violence.

Diverse newcomer, immigrant and refugee communities in Canada **represent an under-served population** when it comes to GBV awareness and supports.

While GBV survivors who are newcomers, immigrants and refugees may share certain structural barriers, we recognize the highly diverse and intersectional experiences of this group.

In April 2019, with funding from Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC), four organizations from the anti-violence and settlement sectors partnered to begin collaborative work on developing a national strategy to address GBV for newcomers, immigrants, and refugees

NATIONAL WEBINAR SERIES

GBV Awareness and COVID-19 for Service Providers
working with Newcomers, Immigrants & Refugees

Spring Webinars: Foundations & Safety Planning

Fall Series

- Practicing Effective Allyship Oct 7
- Allyship with 2SLGBTQIA+ Newcomers Nov 4
- Engaging Men & Boys Dec 2



Objectives



Explain what allyship is and why it is important when responding to GBV.



Identify key considerations when practicing allyship with newcomer, immigrant and refugee communities using an anti-oppressive and culturally safe approach.



Apply practical strategies for being an effective ally, including allyship during COVID-19.



Know how to find additional training and resources for front-line workers on this issue.



Presentation Outline

- ✓ Allyship and GBV awareness
- ✓ Key approaches when working with Newcomers, Immigrants & Refugees
- ✓ Practical strategies for allyship at individual and institutional levels
- ✓ Additional resources



Part 1

Allyship and Gender-Based Violence



What is an ally?

An ally is “someone who recognizes the unearned privilege they receive from society’s patterns of injustice, and takes responsibility for changing these patterns” - Anne Bishop



Becoming an ally?

- A lifelong process
- Can feel uncomfortable
- Can also be joyful and life-affirming



Immigration: Key Terms

Permanent resident – a person granted the right to live permanently in Canada. The person may have come to Canada as an immigrant or as a refugee.

What is the difference between a refugee and an immigrant? A refugee is forced to flee for their lives. There are convention refugees and asylum seekers. An immigrant chooses to move to another country.

Person without status – a person who has not been granted permission to stay in the country, or who has stayed after their visa has expired. The term can cover a person who falls between the cracks of the system.



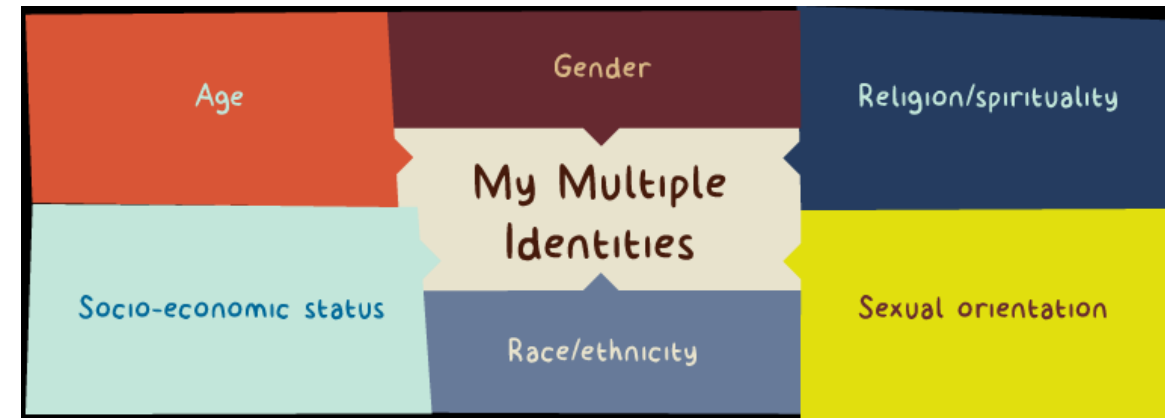


Being an ally involves understanding power and privilege

Privilege refers to automatic unearned benefits bestowed upon perceived members of dominant groups based on social identity. Privilege is often invisible to those who have it. We can all have some areas where we have privilege and other areas where we do not.

- The work of being an ally is the on-going process of taking responsibility for social change. All members of society have grown up surrounded by oppressive attitudes and beliefs, unlearning these is a lifelong process.
- When attempting an action of ally ship it is very important to ask for consent and find out what actions would be most helpful.

Privilege is based on social location



Source: <https://msw.usc.edu/mswusc-blog/diversity-workshop-guide-to-discussing-identity-power-and-privilege/>



Allyship With Newcomers, Immigrants & Refugees

Common Barriers to Effective Allyship

- Becoming a rescuer
- Worry about saying the wrong thing or offending someone
- Fear of being harmed by an attacker
- Belief that you are not an oppressor
- Having a defensive, wounded, angry, or dismissive response to evidence of racism.

Source: Elmwood Community Resource Centre

How can I be an ally without being a rescuer?

- Listen don't take over leadership
- Take responsibility for mistakes and on-going learning, make corrections
- Explore the impact of ending oppression, ask do I want oppression to end? Who would I be without it?

Source: Elmwood Community Resource Centre

"Identity isn't simply a self-contained unit, it is a relationship between people and history, people and community, people and institutions." - **Kimberlé Crenshaw**

What is Gender-Based Violence (GBV)?

Gender-based violence ([GBV](#)) is violence that is committed against someone based on their gender identity, gender expression or perceived gender.

Sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) refers to any act that is perpetrated against a person's will and is based on gender norms and unequal power relationships. It encompasses threats of violence and coercion.

United Nations High Commission for Refugees [UNHCR](#)

GBV is not unique to any community but rather affects all communities.





Connecting Allyship & GBV Awareness

Victim/survivors of GBV:

- are strong, resilient, and the experts on their own lives and they have important lessons to teach those willing to work to create change
- are often blamed for or questioned about the violence they experience
- face distinct barriers in seeking help and support
- live in systems that are often indifferent to the violence they experience or are unwilling to change
- may experience additional economic, relational, and health consequences as a result of violence that make it difficult to advocate for themselves or navigate systems

What is unique **about** GBV against Newcomers, Immigrants & Refugees that makes allyship important?

While newcomer women and girls do not report higher rates of GBV, they may be more vulnerable and less likely to report violence because of barriers to accessing services:

- Isolation
- Racism
- Language and cultural barriers
- Economic dependence
- Lack of knowledge about community resources
- Immigration status concerns
- Fear of stigma from their community
- Fear of racism from service providers
- Concern for their family in a new community
- Lack of awareness and accommodation for religious & cultural differences





COVID-19 & Gender-Based Violence

"Huge implications for clients who are in the process of obtaining status, with the courts/Immigration & Tribunal Board still closed, this limits these Survivors from financial means of moving forward with their life, such as receiving Child Tax, completing their Taxes, applying for social assistance, accommodation and job searching etc. Also, trying to receive supports for their children, childcare, special needs supports etc."

Read the full report [here](#) or by visiting endingviolencecanada.org

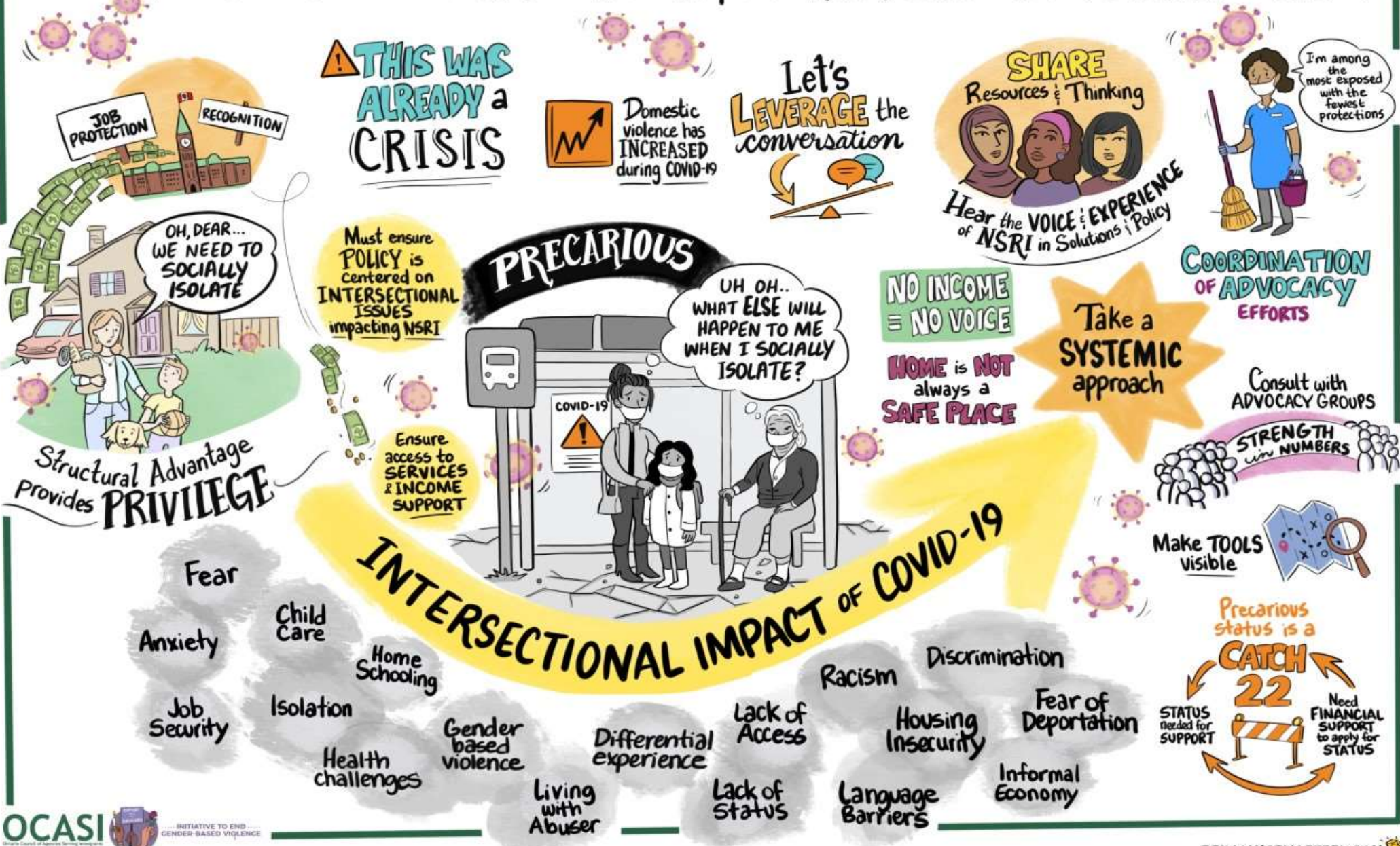


APRIL 30 2020

Virtual

NATIONAL ROUNDTABLE on GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

IMPLICATIONS FOR NON-STATUS, REFUGEE & IMMIGRANT (NSRI) WOMEN IN THE CONTEXT OF COVID-19



OCASI Project

<https://ocasi.org/gender-based-violence>

Pause for Reflection



Think of a time when you acted as an ally



What was the most important skill or quality that you brought to the interaction?



What did you learn from the experience?



A man with glasses and a light blue button-down shirt is on the left, smiling and looking towards the right. A woman wearing a pink and white striped hijab, red-rimmed glasses, and a purple patterned top is on the right, smiling and looking towards the left. They appear to be in a conversation. The background is a plain, light grey wall.

Part 2

Approaches to allyship with Newcomers,
Immigrants and Refugees

As staff that work in settlement and anti-violence,
we are in a unique position to act as allies to
newcomers, immigrants and refugees that have
experienced or are at risk of experiencing GBV.

Effective Allyship is:

1. Anti-oppressive
2. Anti-racist
3. Intersectional
4. Trauma & Violence Informed
5. Guided by Cultural Humility & Safety





1. Anti-Oppression

Anti-Oppression refers to strategies, theories and actions that challenge socially and historically built inequalities and injustices that are ingrained in our systems and institutions by policies and practices that allow certain groups to dominate over other groups.

- **Connects** the causes of personal and social problems to society's broader social and economic structures.
- **Recognizes** the role of societal structures in creating the personal problems that both individuals and marginalized communities face.

Anti-oppression is important for making choices about how to give, share and use power to assist and act in solidarity with people who are marginalized. *Sometimes called AO*



Anti-Oppressive Allyship in Practice

Understanding Immigration Status

It is important to understand what immigration status in Canada is, so that you can generate options and be an ally to someone who is concerned about their status.

Women may be misinformed or threatened by their spouse and given inaccurate information about their immigration status, rights and education or employment opportunities to try and control or manipulate them.

When it comes to immigration status and GBV, it is best to get legal advice.

- ✓ If the client is a Canadian citizen, immigration status is not at risk when leaving an abusive relationship
- ✓ If the client is a permanent resident, in most cases, status is not at risk if they leave an abusive relationship. However, there are some potential risks if sponsored.
- ✓ If permanent residency is conditional, the sponsorship application is in process, or the client has temporary or no status, legal advice is recommended.

<https://www.immigrantandrefugeenff.ca/need-help/legal-protection>



2. Anti-Racism involves:

- Understanding how race and racism negatively effect racialized peoples at all levels **Interpersonal – Institutional – Systemic**
- Examining power imbalances between racialized and non-racialized peoples
 - including how they offer advantages to those in power
 - (ex. gov't, law, education, private sector-big businesses)
- Developing actions and strategies to eliminate or address racism.



Anti-Racism Allyship in Practice

Many immigrant and refugee women's experiences of violence and gender inequality are connected to their experiences of racism and discrimination.

- ✓ Identify and implement strategies for making intervention and prevention programs, services, and spaces inclusive and welcoming for newcomer, immigrant and refugee women.
- ✓ Be aware that many immigrant and refugee women experience racism and xenophobia in seeking services. Work to challenge attitudes, beliefs, and practices that reinforce these harmful stereotypes and discrimination.
- ✓ Think about the organizational changes that can be implemented to accommodate and celebrate diversity.



3. Intersectionality



Intersectionality is a theory coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw, that explains how multiple forces work together and interact to reinforce conditions of inequality, social exclusion, the roots of violence. This occurs because there are intersecting types of oppression.

It is important to recognize that newcomers, immigrants and refugees hold many [intersecting identities](#) that generate unique social location. (e.g. sex, gender, education, race/ethnicity, sexuality, ability, religion)



These intersections will greatly impact **not only their**

- vulnerability to gender-based violence,
- but also their experiences and the system's responses to them (e.g. justice, housing).



Women and other survivors/victims who are marginalized in multiple ways and who face structural violence by different systems of discrimination have difficulty being believed, accessing support, and finding safety.



Intersectional Allyship in Practice

“Intersectionality is a concept that enables us to recognize the fact that perceived group membership can make people vulnerable to various forms of bias, yet because we are members of many groups at the same time, our complex identities can shape the specific way we each experience that bias.”

From: A [Primer](#) on Intersectionality from the African American Policy Forum (AAPF)

- Recognizing the identity of our clients and the way that they experience power and privilege is a way to apply intersectional allyship. People can experience different forms of violence depending on their social location.
- Understanding our own identities and where we can use our power to support and encourage clients is another important area. Crisis impacts people in different ways.



4. Trauma & Violence Informed Approaches

Trauma and violence informed approaches are policies and practices that recognize the links between violence and trauma causing negative health outcomes and actions.

Recently this concept has been expanded to include violence informed approaches – to emphasize the connections between trauma and violence

Trauma is defined as experiences that overwhelm an individual's capacity to cope. Trauma can be caused early in life through child abuse. It can also be caused later by experiences such as violence, accidents, natural disaster, war, sudden unexpected loss and other life events that are out of one's control. According to [Public Health Canada](#), there are a number of factors of trauma, including degree, complexity, frequency, duration, source.

These approaches increase wellbeing, control and resilience for people who are looking for services related to experiences of violence or have past experiences of violence.

The Triple Trauma Paradigm

Describes the three phases of traumatic stress during the migration process often but not exclusively experienced by refugees and asylum seekers.

(Congress & Gonzalez, 2013)



The Pre-Flight

Disruption, secrecy, fear, traumatic events



Flight

Food insecurity, separation, lack of trust



Resettlement

Cultural isolation, loss of status, limited social support





Trauma & Violence Informed Allyship

These approaches benefit everyone, whether or not they've experienced trauma in their lives or their personal history is known to service providers.

- ✓ Acknowledge causes of trauma without probing. Clients do not need to disclose what may have happened to them for you to help them.
- ✓ Communicate in non-judgemental ways so that people feel deserving, understood, recognized and accepted.
- ✓ Pay attention to welcoming intake procedures and signage, comfortable physical space, consideration of confidentiality. These can be communicated during COVID-19 in on-line conversations through opening with-what clients can expect in terms of confidentiality, their rights and inclusion for example: accessibility and 2SLGBTQIA+ positivity.
- ✓ The focus is to enhance safety, choice and control for all clients involved with services.



5. Cultural Humility & Cultural Safety

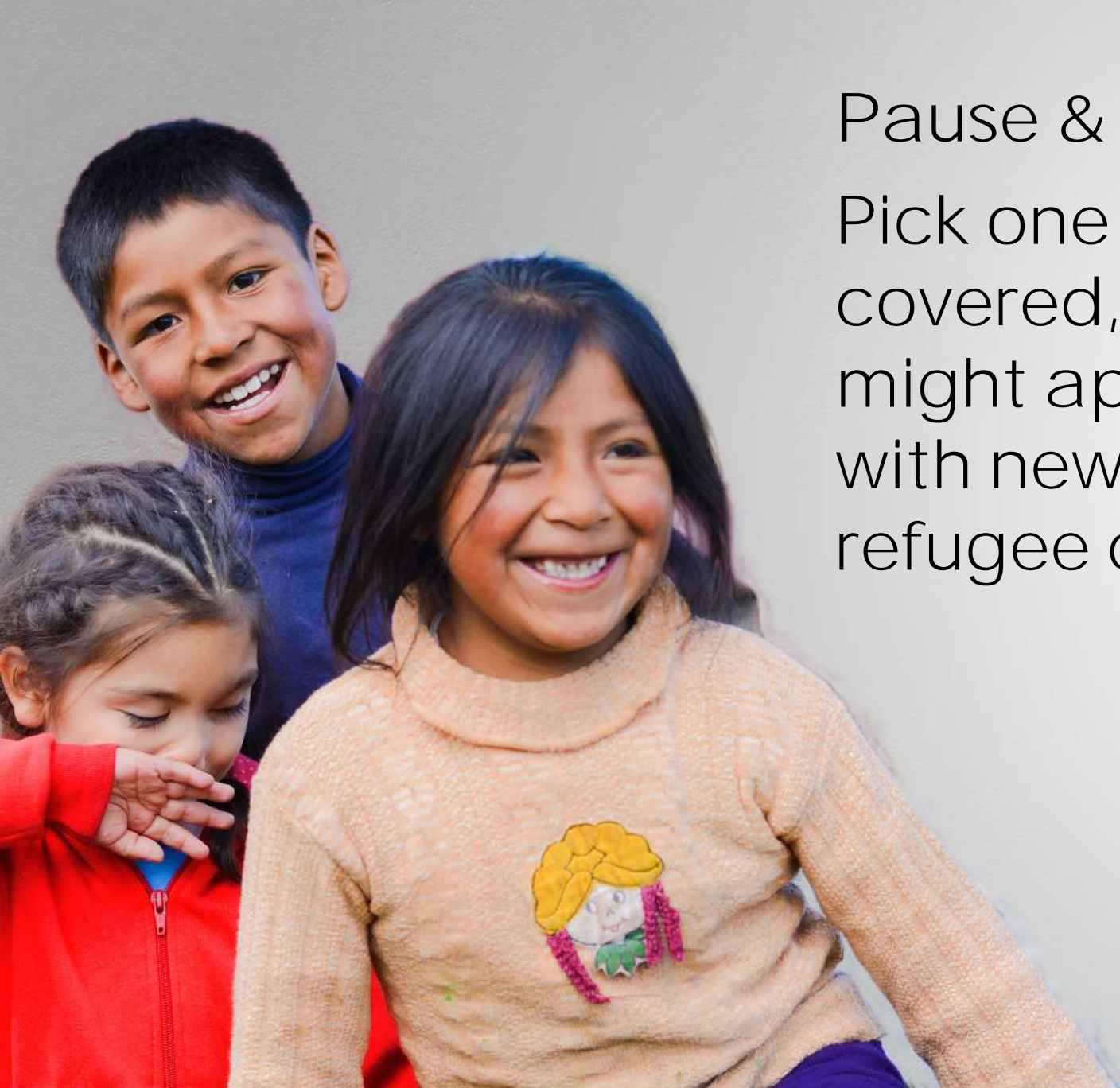
Cultural Humility involves a process of education and self-reflection to understand personal and systemic biases and to develop and maintain respectful processes and relationships based on mutual trust. Cultural humility involves acknowledging oneself as a learner when it comes to understanding another's experience.

"Culturally safe approaches are those that recognize and challenge unequal power relations between service providers and survivors by building equitable, two-way relationships characterized by respect, shared responsibility, and cultural exchange. Survivors must have their culture, values and preferences taken into account in the provision of services"

SOURCE: Government of Canada (2017). "It's Time: Canada's Strategy to Prevent and Address Gender Based Violence- Fact Sheets."

Centering the client means understanding culture:





Pause & Reflection

Pick one of the approaches we covered, and consider how you might apply this in your interactions with newcomer, immigrant and/or refugee clients.



A photograph of two women sitting at a table, engaged in conversation. The woman on the left has long dark hair, wears glasses, a black top, and a grey cardigan. The woman on the right has dark hair in braids, wears a red sweater and a large necklace. They are both looking down at something on the table. The background is a soft, out-of-focus light blue and white.

Part 3

Practical Strategies for Allyship

- In our work with newcomers, immigrants and refugees
- Within our organizations
- Personal learning and self reflection



Ways to demonstrate allyship when working with clients

Focus on Strengths

- Help clients identify their strengths, through active listening and keeping the conversation open, listening carefully, and reflecting back the thoughts the client shared.
- Share and model skills for recognizing their own feelings and responses (triggers) such as calming, centering and staying present.

Supportive Communication

- Communicate nonjudgmentally so that service users feel deserving, understood, recognized and accepted
- Provide clear information about services and programs

Create emotionally and physically safe environments

- Build trust
- Listen, believe and validate survivor memories
- Focus on strengths
- Express compassion



"I am happy to see you came in today."

"I'd like to help you find other ways to manage your situation. **Let's** consider all of your options"

Acknowledge the effects of historical and structural conditions on peoples' lives

"What happened to this person?" vs. "What's wrong **with this person?**"

Help normalize trauma responses

"You have really **survived a lot.**"



Ways to demonstrate allyship when working with clients

The causes of personal and social problems are linked to the social and economic structures of society. Rather than seeing the individual or marginalized group as the problem, or as deficient, anti-oppressive practice recognizes the role of societal structures in creating barriers.

- ✓ Adapt resources and information about services to make them accessible to newcomer, immigrant, and refugee clients.
- ✓ Believe survivors when they disclose experiences of violence.
- ✓ Collect feedback from service users about their experiences & goals.
- ✓ Learn about crisis and settlement services in your community.
- ✓ Do not talk to anyone about abuse in front of their suspected abuser. Make a separate meeting.
- ✓ Remember, leaving an abuser can be extremely dangerous. Help with safety planning both for staying and leaving.
- ✓ Service providers need to support service users through focusing on client needs and helping overcome barriers by offering practical help such as: bus tickets, childcare, healthy snacks, drop-in programs and being aware of intersectionality in safety planning.

Practicing allyship within your organization

- Participate in GBV prevention efforts in your community.
- Promote policies that support the wellbeing and safety of survivors .
- Help others be informed by inviting guest speakers to your organization.
- Consider barriers to accessing services such as transportation, language barriers, physical access barriers, and lack of childcare.
- Recognize and [accommodate](#) cultural and religious needs such as food, prayer spaces, privacy and inclusion
- Include intersectional policies in organizational structure to reduce barriers.
- Form partnerships with other social justice groups that serve marginalized communities.



Allyship & Self-Reflection

Know your privilege – understand the rights and privileges you have that others don't.

Listen and learn– in order to learn you need to listen. Do some research.

Speak up not over– be supportive and use social position to advocate for others but in a way that doesn't speak over the community members they're supporting.

Acknowledge mistakes- If you make a mistake remember to listen, apologise, commit to change and move forward.

Allyship is action oriented- just saying that you're an ally is not enough, follow up with consistent and reliable actions.



Upcoming Webinars

November 4: Allyship with 2SLGBTQIA+ Newcomers

December 2: Engaging Men & Boys



Please join us
for project updates, resources & discussion:

Staff network on GBV @settlenet.org



Resources

Public Health Agency of Canada: Stop Family Violence site offers a wealth of guides and resources for professionals:

<https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/health-promotion/stop-family-violence.html>

Trauma & Violence Informed Approaches

<https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/publications/health-risks-safety/trauma-violence-informed-approaches-policy-practice.html>

Women & Gender Equality-WAGE

<https://cfc-swc.gc.ca/violence/knowledge-connaissance/index-en.html>

For information about safety planning:

<https://www.immigrantandrefugeenff.ca/need-help/safety-planning>

<https://www.sheltersafe.ca/>

For information about culturally informed risk & safety

<http://cdhpi.ca/domestic-homicide-immigrant-and-refugee-populations>

A Primer on Intersectionality from the African American Policy Forum (AAPF)

<https://www.racialequitytools.org/resourcefiles/african.pdf>



Resources

Issue 26: Intimate Partner Violence Against Immigrant and Refugee Women

http://www.vawlearningnetwork.ca/our-work/issuebased_newsletters/issue-26/index.html

UN Women-Standing Against Rape Culture

<https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2019/11/compilation-ways-you-can-stand-against-rape-culture>

Legal information

<https://www.immigrantandrefugeenff.ca/need-help/legal-protection>

Shelters, Sexual Assault Services, and other GBV Services:

<https://endingviolencecanada.org/getting-help/>



THANK YOU!

