



Mentoring Refugee, Immigrant & Newcomer Children and Youth

Resources



Resource 1 - Guide for Mentoring



The following document and associated resources have been developed with the support and advice of many community agencies across Alberta. Many of the resources have been adapted from *Mentoring Immigrant and Refugee Youth: A Toolkit for Program Coordinators*¹. They are intended to support community-based groups and organizations that are striving to develop and deliver quality mentoring programs to children and youth who are new to Canada. The tools are based upon research and the combined expertise of those who are already doing this important work.

Canada, and Alberta in particular, is a multicultural place. Every year, we welcome New Canadians – be they immigrants or refugees. Many New Canadians face challenges when they arrive – language barriers, gaps in their education, cultural adjustments. It is increasingly important that community groups and organizations develop programs to effectively support these members of our communities. Introducing, or in many cases formalizing, the practice of mentoring for New Canadians is an important part of addressing many of the challenges that these youth face as they grow up. To support the development of a mentoring program with newcomer and refugee children, it is important to be open and understanding - to listen, learn and adapt to meet the needs and preferences of the particular community you hope to work with. A culturally relevant approach is necessary for making a connection with youth.

These considerations frame the tools and resources on the [AMP website](#) **for mentoring newcomer and refugee youth**. They provide specific resources to support your work with diverse communities, supporting the development and implementation of quality mentoring programs that foster strength and resilience.

Early Considerations

Before you start a program, it is important to build a relationship and trust. Taking the time to do this, to learn about the specific community and culture, and to understand their needs helps lay the foundation for a quality program that addresses specific needs and strengths in the community. Resource 1 includes a list of things you will want to consider as you begin to build a mentoring program to serve children and youth who are new to Canada.

There are many different terms used to describe New Canadians. Some are legal terms; others may, unknowingly to some, have offensive or negative connotations. Using terms correctly is an important way of treating people with respect. Resource Two A Glossary of Terms, will help partners to use appropriate language in efforts to build new,

or strengthen existing, programs.

It is also important to keep in mind many of the challenges and risks that face children whose families are new to Canada. Resource 3 identifies challenges youth may be facing, and program coordinators and volunteers should be aware of.

Assessing Strengths and Needs for a Program

Before you move ahead to design and implement a program using the tools and resources provide on the AMP website, it is important to clearly identify the need for your program. Think about the who, the what, and the where. Use the questions attached in Resource 4 to connect with the community and other agencies to begin to assess strengths and needs for a mentoring program.

Staffing and Volunteers

The number of your staff will depend on the size and scope of your program. At the very least, you will need a program coordinator, and larger programs may need more than one coordinator. Some programs have one paid staff person and designate other program responsibilities to a team of committed volunteers, advisory committee members or, in the case of school-based or supported programs, a teacher, guidance counsellor or liaison worker). Whenever possible hire a program coordinator who has the skills required and is from the same cultural/ethnic group you want to work with. When this is not possible hire a coordinator with experience working with that community or who is respected by the community and be sure to gain partner, advisory members and volunteers who can bring this knowledge and insight to your program. Attached is a conventional mentor program coordinator job description. Work with advisors to modify this job description to include the unique skills and requirements of your program.

It may also help to create some sort of advisory committee. This committee should include appropriate representation from the community you are working to serve. To begin, brainstorm a list of possible resources (organizations, community groups, cultural/religious groups, immigrant serving agencies) that you could connect with to develop a strong and appropriate program. Then review the guidelines attached in Resource Five to support the creation of an inclusive advisory committee.

To be successful, an inclusive advisory committee must be more than just bringing diverse people around the table. The committee must be governed by a willingness to listen and to understand each other's differences, and a commitment to build a program that celebrates these differences. Use the attached ideas about multiculturalism as a tool to support constructive dialogue among your committee members.

Recruitment and Retention of Mentors

Before you begin your recruitment efforts you may want to consider the various roles that a mentor can play in the life of an immigrant child or youth. Resource Seven describes some of these roles and can be used to help you be more clear about what kinds of mentors you need and the role you hope they will fulfill. Some mentees and their families will want a mentor who shares their first language or culture; others will want an intercultural mentoring experience. It is important to be able to provide both.

Resource Eight includes a set of suggestions meant to augment more conventional recruitment and retention strategies. They include unique things you may want to consider in efforts to attract volunteers from specific cultural or ethnic groups to your program.

Screening

It is important that rigorous risk mitigation and safety precautions are in place for all mentoring programs. Refer to AMP's [Community Based Mentoring Program Toolkit's Screening Guidelines](#) for both mentors and mentees as the basis for your screening processes. Consider the following suggestions to adapt mainstream processes to meet the needs of your target community and your program:

- Make any adaptations necessary to the application and interview forms so that they are appropriate to the community you are trying to reach.
- Build relationships with potential mentors before you begin a formal interview process.
- Minimize the amount of information required from potential mentors and mentees.
- Only gather information that is essential for safety and develop appropriate program content. Remember that questions that are common on mainstream application forms may not be appropriate on your forms. Again, rely on your advisory committee to review and vet all of your forms and processes.
- When appropriate work with professionals or leaders from

the community to connect with families and support the recruitment and screening of potential mentees.

- Reduce paperwork and ensure it's purpose is understood.

Training

Training for volunteers who want to work with newcomer and refugee youth should begin with a standard quality mentor training program. AMP has developed an online training program for mentors and an online guide to child safety. It is essential that your mentors and mentees participate in these trainings before they are matched or your program begins. [Click here to find out more about AMP's Online Training](#). It will be important that you provide support to mentors and mentees to access this training and that you follow up with additional in-person and program specific training.

In addition to this standard training you will need to include training and information related to working with immigrant communities generally and with the young people in your cultural or ethnic community specifically. Tool Nine includes tips and things to consider when training mentors for your program.

Please refer to AMP's standard resources and guidelines to support quality supervision and monitoring.

Community Engagement

On-going engagement with the community will be essential for the programs longer-term success. Below are some suggestions to support your efforts to engage parents, guardians and the broader community:

- Try to meet with parents in person. Work with your advisory committee to make connections and identify an appropriate person to be a family/community liaison for the program.
- Host an open house and invite family and community members to take part.

- Invite parents to take part in or observe the program whenever they are able.
- Also engage with parents in a meaningful way. Don't just ask them to come but ask them to come and do something specific. Help them to feel valuable. See parents as an asset and a resource for the program.
- Organize regular family nights where parents can come with their other children. Provide food if possible. Invite other important community members if possible.
- Remember that building relationships with the broader community is essential to program success. Faith organizations, cultural centers, and other leaders and institutions can help foster a successful program. Make this an explicit part of your program planning and ensure that someone is responsible for this important work.

Resource 2 - A Glossary of Terms

Who is a Newcomer?

A newcomer is an immigrant or refugee who has been in Canada for a short time, usually less than 5 years. Newcomers have access to lots of services at settlement agencies, like language and immigration help.

Who is an Immigrant?

An immigrant is someone who has moved from their country of origin (their homeland) to another country to become a citizen of that country, if they wish to do so. Just visiting a country, even to work for a few months, does not make you an immigrant. Immigrants are people who live permanently somewhere other than their homeland.

Who is a Refugee?

Refugees are people needing protection or are people escaping being persecuted in their homeland. This means that if they stay or return to their homeland, they will risk being tortured, killed, suffer cruel treatment, or worse. Refugees seek protection in safe countries, such as Canada.

Who is an Undocumented Person?

An undocumented person is a newcomer who has moved from their homeland to another country to become a citizen. However, undocumented persons are different from documented immigrants because their immigration status is unknown or unofficial.

Undocumented persons are also known as: Uninsured person, Sans papier (without papers), non-status, without status

Source: <http://www.newyouth.ca/immigration/>

[settlement-services/what-immigrant-refugee-newcomer-un-documented-person](#)

1.0 Terms for Newcomers and Immigrants

Immigrant – a person who has settled permanently in another country. Immigrants choose to move, whereas refugees are forced to flee.

Permanent resident – a person who has been granted permanent resident status in Canada. The person may have come to Canada as an immigrant or as a refugee.

Landed immigrant – this term, still sometimes used, has officially been replaced by the term “permanent resident.”

2.0 Terms for Refugees

Refugee – a person who is forced to flee from persecution.

Convention refugee – a person who meets the refugee definition in the 1951 Geneva Convention relating to the Status of Refugees. This definition is used in Canadian law and is widely accepted internationally. To meet the definition, a person must be outside their country of origin and have a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion.

Asylum-seeker – a person who is seeking asylum. Until a determination is made, it is impossible to say whether the asylum seeker is a refugee or not.

Refugee claimant – a person who has made a claim for protection as a refugee. This term is more or less equivalent

to asylum-seeker and is standard in Canada, while asylum-seeker is the term more often used internationally.

Resettled refugee – a refugee who has been offered a permanent home in a country while still outside that country. Refugees resettled to Canada are determined to be refugees by the Canadian government before they arrive in Canada, whereas refugee claimants receive a determination in Canada.

Protected person – according to Canada's Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, a person who has been determined by Canada to be either (a) Convention Refugee or (b) a person in need of protection i.e. a person who may not meet the Convention definition but is in a refugee-like situation defined in Canadian law as deserving of protection, for example because they are in danger of being tortured.

You may also hear... political refugee and economic refugee –

these terms have no meaning in law, and can be confusing as they incorrectly suggest that there are different categories of refugees.

** These definitions have been adapted from a glossary prepared by the Canadian Council for Refugees. www.web.ca/~ccr/*

OTHER TERMS FOR PEOPLE OUTSIDE THEIR HOME COUNTRY

Temporary resident – a person who has permission to remain in Canada only for a limited period of time. Visitors and students are temporary residents, and so are temporary foreign workers such as agricultural workers and live-in caregivers.

Migrant – a person who is outside their country of origin. Sometimes this term is used to talk about everyone outside their country of birth, including people who have been Canadian citizens for decades. More often, it is used for people currently on the move or people with temporary

status or no status at all in the country where they live.

Economic migrant – a person who moves countries for a job or a better economic future. The term is correctly used for people whose motivations are entirely economic. Migrants' motivations are often complex and may not be immediately clear, so it is dangerous to apply the "economic" label too quickly to an individual or group of migrants.

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, such as a refugee claimant who is refused refugee status but not removed from Canada because of a situation of generalized risk in the country of origin.

You may also hear... Illegal migrant/illegal immigrant/Illegal – these terms are problematic because they criminalize the person, rather than the act of entering or remaining irregularly in a country. International law recognizes refugees may need to enter a country without official documents or authorization. It would be misleading to describe them as "illegal migrants". Similarly, a person without status may have been coerced by traffickers: such a person should be recognized as a victim of crime, not treated as a wrong-doer.

(Source: <http://ccrweb.ca/en/glossary>)



Resource 3 – Challenges

Newcomer and Refugee Youth May Be Facing

Newcomer and refugee youth may be facing many challenges in addition to language and cultural adjustments. Many of these challenges stem from their home life.

Separation from parents or other family members is common during the immigration and resettlement process. These separations may create feelings of cultural dislocation and instability and increase stress levels, making the young person's adjustment more difficult. Even when families are able to stay together, the parents may be absent due to the demands of working one or more jobs.

Traumatic Experiences – Refugee children, in particular, may have had traumatic experiences related to situations such as war, genocide, torture and death of family members or friends. These experiences impact children differently and may result in a range of behavioural and/or mental health issues. Family and community responses to these issues may be strongly influenced by cultural beliefs and norms.

Family Trauma – Similarly, trauma affecting family members, not the youth themselves, may still have an effect. It can create stress and conflict at home.

Poverty – Past census data indicates that more than one in five recent immigrants of working-age were living in poverty, compared to fewer than one in ten other Canadians². The results of living in poverty may include living in overcrowded housing, living in neighbourhoods with fewer resources,

and or higher rates of crime, exposure to gangs, as well as the need for older children to work for additional income or provide child care while parents work multiple jobs.

Educational Adjustments – Youth may be disadvantaged in their schooling for a variety of reasons including limited English proficiency (both in parents and children), less well-educated parents, and inadequate or interrupted schooling in their country of origin. Refugees in particular may have had their formal education interrupted for multiple years. They may also have attendance problems due to their role as interpreters or child care providers for the family.

Parent Disconnect from Education and Activities – Parents may feel and be disconnected from their child's education for a variety of reasons including cultural norms regarding the school's role, their limited language skills, and lack of knowledge and understanding about the Alberta education system and curriculum. Similarly, parents may not immediately see value or be invested in extra-curricular activities, including mentoring. It is important to engage them early on and build confidence.

Intergenerational Conflict – Intergenerational conflict and role-reversals may occur when children acculturate more

quickly and acquire English language skills before their parents. Parents are often particularly disturbed at their children's adoption of Canadian social and cultural norms and values. Children may feel torn between two worlds and be embarrassed regarding their country of origin.

Overwhelming Choice – A sometimes overlooked element of successful integration by immigrant youth is the ability to manage all of the choices that are available in the Canadian context. Many children and youth from new immigrant communities have not previously experienced so many choices in their daily lives – choices at school, in recreation, in food. It can be overwhelming and difficult to make good decisions in the face of so many decisions. Mentors can be important in helping youth to build their decision making skills and can help to alleviate some of associated distress and anxiety.

¹This list has been adapted from Mentoring Immigrant and Refugee Youth: A toolkit for program coordinators. It can be found at www.mentoring.org/downloads/mentoring_1197.pdf

²A Study of Poverty and Working Poverty among Recent Immigrants to Canada, HRDC Canada. 2007
www.hrsdc.gc.ca/eng/publications_resources/research/categories/inclusion/2007/sp_680_05_07_e/page00.shtml

Resource 4 – Assessing Strengths and Needs

Consider the following as you develop your program:

- Work with representatives from newcomer and refugee communities, settlement agencies, community groups, faith-based groups and anyone else who has experience with this population. Explore the following questions before you begin to plan a mentoring program:
- What newcomer and refugee communities are represented in your geographical area?
- Are there specific tribal or ethnic subgroups within this population? Are there any issues among these groups that might affect a mentoring program?
- What are the circumstances that brought these newcomers to Canada? Have members of the community been subjected to traumatic experiences (war, torture, loss of family members). Are these being addressed by other agencies or programs? How will these issues affect the design and delivery of a mentoring program? Are they privately sponsored or government sponsored refugees?
- What language barriers exist and what are our resources for addressing these?
- What are some of the specific challenges (historical and current) that these communities have faced?
- Are there immediate or emergent issues in the community that program partners need to be mindful of?
- What strengths in the community can we build upon?
 - What human resources are already available in the community. Are there teachers, health workers, other professionals who may want to get involved?
- What is the capacity of these resources to provide mentoring support?
- What do we know about the cultural norms of these newcomers?
- What are the childrearing practices? What are the social norms for the involvement of other non-familial adults in the children's lives?
 - What are their expectations and aspirations for their children?
 - What differences are there in family and children roles and responsibilities as compared to other Canadian families?
- What formal and informal mentoring resources do these communities currently have?
- Who else is working with these children and their families? How can we work with them?
- Who are the targeted mentees? How many are there? How old are they?
- Would these children benefit from a mentor? In what ways?
- Who do we need to work with to recruit and maintain these potential mentees?
- Are there groups we can involve that share a language? Will this engagement be constructive?
- Are there groups or people in our community that have a shared experience, such as refugees from different parts of the world?

Assessing Strengths & Needs - Questions to Consider

- What other strengths and needs do these children have that could be supported by a mentoring program?
 - English as a second language
 - Academics
 - Post-secondary readiness skills
 - Work readiness skills
 - Integration, diversity and cultural pride
- Who are potential mentors for these children?
- Who do we need to work with to connect with these potential mentors and build their interest in the program?
- What kind of program would best serve these children and youth: One-to-one, group, peer, school-based, etc? (See the [Community Based Mentoring Toolkit's Tool A: Types of Mentoring Programs: An Overview](#)).
- Have other similar programs been attempted in the community? If so, what happened to them and what can you learn from their experiences?

Step 1: Tool A

Alberta Mentoring Partnership

Adapted from www.mentoring.org/downloads

Types Of Mentoring Programs

	One-To-One	Online Mentoring	Cross Age Peer Mentoring	Team Or Group Mentoring
Description	One adult matched to one young person.	Mentoring is conducted through the Internet when transportation is an issue or when this online contact is the preferred means of communication.	Peer or youth who are older (typically 3 years or school grade higher), more knowledgeable or have advanced skills, serve as mentors to younger peers.	A small group of adults mentoring a slightly larger group of youth. For example, 3 adults mentoring 10 children or youth.
Where Mentoring Takes Place	<p>Site-based: At a community agency, typically an after-school program, Boys and Girls Club, YMCA, YWCA, etc.</p> <p>Community-based: The mentor and mentee can meet anywhere, including attending events, going to museums, etc. This is typical of the Big Brothers Big Sisters model.</p> <p>Faith-based: Mentoring pairs usually meet in a house of worship or adjoining building.</p> <p>Online: E-mentoring—also known as online mentoring, telementoring, or textmentoring—is a mentoring relationship that is conducted via the Internet.</p> <p>School-based: At the mentee's school (elementary, middle, high school), on school grounds. Mentors and mentees should have a designated meeting place within the building and/or use of school facilities (open classroom, computer lab, gym, art room, library) if available.</p> <p>Workplace-based: At the mentor's workplace. Students are typically bussed to the site. Either the school district or the company may pay for the bus. Mentors and mentees should have a designated meeting place at the workplace.</p>	<p>The mentoring relationship is conducted via the Internet, as an independent program or added component of existing programs.</p> <p>E-mail or Web-based programs need to have technology in place that provides a safe and secure environment for communication exchanges, archives all messages, and enables the tracking of communications between mentoring pairs.</p>	<p>School-based: At the mentee's school (elementary, middle, high school), on school grounds, in full view of school officials. Mentors and mentees should have a designated meeting place within the building and/or use of school facilities (open classroom, computer lab, gym, art room, library) if available.</p> <p>Site-based: At a community agency, typically an after-school program, Boys and Girls Club, YMCA, YWCA, etc.</p>	<p>Site-based: At a community agency, typically an after-school program, Boys and Girls Club, YMCA, YWCA, etc.</p> <p>School-based: At the mentee's school (elementary, middle, high school), on school grounds. Mentor and mentees should have a designated meeting place within the building and/or use of school facilities.</p> <p>Community-based: The mentor and mentees can meet anywhere, attend events, go to museums, etc.</p> <p>Faith-based: Mentoring groups usually meet in a house of worship or adjoining building.</p> <p>Online: E-mentoring—also known as online mentoring, telementoring, or textmentoring—is a mentoring relationship that is conducted via the Internet.</p> <p>Workplace-based: At the mentors' workplace. Students are typically bussed to the site. Either the school district or the company may pay for the bus. Mentors and mentees should have a designated meeting place at the workplace.</p>

STEP 1: Tool A Types Of Mentoring Programs 1

Examining Capacity—Looking Inside Your Agency and/or Partnership

- When conducting a strengths and needs assessment, it is also important to look inside your agency or partnership.
- What strengths and resources does your mentoring program and/or partnership currently have in place to provide services to immigrant and refugee children and their families?
- What challenges might you face?
- What other capacities, skills & resources do you need to effectively serve these children and their families?
- How can you build or bring in these skills and resources?

Resource 5 – Involving Community

Whether in a formal or informal way, involving the community will help your program succeed. Some organizations choose to form an advisory board. Others reach out to people and groups at different times in the program planning and implementation. Whichever approach you choose, consider the following groups for involvement and assistance:

The Community – Invite cultural leaders, business leaders and/or civic leaders who have a stake in promoting and supporting this group of immigrant and refugee children and youth.

Local Schools – Invite teachers, counsellors, principals and ESL specialists who may be familiar with the young people in your program and their families.

Settlement Agencies – Having representation from people who already work with this community can help strengthen your partnerships and further collaboration to build the strengths and meet the needs of the children and youth taking part in your program.

Parents/Caregivers – Involve parents or caregivers of the young people in the program. Developing closer relationships and capitalizing on their perspectives can help strengthen services for their children.

Youth – Invite youth who are taking part in the program to be part of the advisory committee. Providing a space for their voices, stories and perspectives in the oversight of the program will not only strengthen the program but will also build the confidence and leadership skills of the youth involved.

Mentors – Include bilingual or bicultural mentors, mentors that have experienced immigration themselves, or mentors that have extensive experience working with immigrant youth on the advisory committee. Having their perspective will strengthen the program and will help you to recruit and retain other mentors.

Resource 6 - Understanding and Embracing Diversity

We live in a multicultural society, with members who have come to Alberta and Canada from all over the world. They bring their own histories and customs to our communities. Understanding how diversity enriches our communities, and a person's culture, helps how you can work together with newcomers and refugees. Here are some ideas:

- It's not just about diversity, but about how you engage with diverse communities. It's about breaking down walls between cultures, respecting everyone's traditions and welcoming them into your community. Be open minded; acknowledge what you know and don't know and be prepared to learn.
- It's not just about tolerance, but the active seeking of understanding across lines of difference. Understanding removes pre-conceptions, stereotypes, and other barriers to true inclusion. Keep an open mind as you encounter and get to know people from different cultures.
- Accept that we may have differences, but that we can reconcile and respect them. It's about holding our deepest differences, even our religious and cultural differences, not in isolation, but in relationship to one another. This mutual respect fosters greater tolerance, and acceptance of people and cultures different from ourselves and our own.
- Dialogue matters. It means both speaking and listening. Through this process, you will find things you share in common and things you disagree on. Dialogue does not mean everyone agrees with one another. It means being open, and open-minded when interacting with others.

These ideas, often called pluralism, help foster intercultural learning and understanding. Everyone has their own experiences and ideas. Understanding those experiences and ideas, through dialogue, listening, and acceptance, will help newcomers and refugees feel welcome and will produce a more rewarding experience for everyone involved.

* These ideas have been adapted from the work of Diana L. Eck. <http://www.pluralism.org/pages/pluralism/meanings>

Resource 7 – Roles that Mentors Can Play

Mentors serve many roles. Within the mentoring relationship, here are some key activities and roles a mentor can offer:

Cultural Ambassadors – Mentors who can serve as “cultural translators” and guides in negotiating Canadian culture as well as supporters of a mentee’s culture. They can also provide perspective to help the young person better cope with and respond to conflicts that may occur with his or her parents during the integration process. This intercultural mentoring also allows the mentee to share their own culture.

English Language Acquisition – Mentors can help their mentee learn to speak and read English, or to improve their English language skills.

Emotional Support – Immigrant youth often feel socially isolated and may be victims of teasing and bullying because they are different. A mentor can provide important support by creating a strong sense of attachment and belonging in the mentoring relationship.

Advocacy – Mentors can help their mentee learn to access resources to meet a variety of needs. Examples include how to use public transportation; find and use a local library; get involved in other youth programs.

Advice and Counsel – Mentors can help both the mentee and his/her family (as appropriate) on issues such as homework, job application skills, obtaining a driver’s license and applying for college or university.

Role Modeling – When it is possible to have same culture matches, the mentor provides an important model for integration, developing a bicultural or bilingual identity, and achieving success in a new culture. This kind of mentor supports a young person to learn how to maintain his or her own culture while learning to be successful in a new culture.

Resource 8 – Tips for Recruiting and Retaining Volunteers from Cultural Communities

Some mentees and their families will look for a mentor from their own community, or who shares a language. In order to recruit these mentors, consider these tactics:

- Identify a champion to be involved in recruitment - someone who is respected and credible in the community. Support this person to connect with potential mentors in the community.
- Reach out to professional, social and religious organizations relevant to the ethnic group you serve. Meet in person with leaders and explain your program. Do presentations about your program and the mentoring opportunity at staff and/or board meetings. Develop and provide promotional material that is targeted to their staff.
- Look for cultural associations at local post-secondary institutions. Where they exist, build a relationship with the volunteers that are part of the association. Meet them in person to explain the program. Develop and provide promotional material that is targeted to their members.
- Partner with settlement agencies. Ask for their support to identify potential volunteers. Leave targeted and language specific brochures with staff in these agencies.
- Use language specific media aimed at the population(s) you seek to recruit.
- Demystify mentoring. Explain to potential mentors that it does not require special skills and that most importantly it is about being a role model and friend to a child in their community.
- Spend time building a relationship with a potential mentor before expecting them to commit to the program. Help them to fully understand the purpose of the program and their role in achieving the purpose.
- Consider having formal and informal mentors. Formal mentors will have been screened and trained to work with the program. Informal mentors may be people from the community who are not yet ready, for a variety of reasons, to become a formal mentor but are interested in supporting the program. These informal mentors are likely to become formal mentors after some time with the program.
- In some cases it may be appropriate to pay mentors a stipend. This small amount may remove barriers such as child care and transportation costs enabling new Canadians to make an important contribution to their new community.

Resource 9 – Training and Retaining Newcomer Volunteers

Securing newcomer volunteers is the first step. Effective training and support will ensure retention. Consider the following activities:

- Include cultural advisors and/or community leaders in the training process.
- Provide some background to the history of the cultural and ethnic group and an overview of the immigration process.
- Provide opportunities for experienced mentors (from the community whenever possible) to present to volunteers in training about their experiences as a mentor.
- During the training process provide opportunities for volunteers to examine their own cultural identity, values and practices.
- During the training process provide opportunities for volunteers to examine their assumptions and stereotypes about other cultural and ethnic groups.
- During training, provide volunteers with an opportunity to explore what they bring to a young person who is new to Canada. Help them to see what they have to offer.
- With support from community leaders or cultural advisors, provide information on specific cultural practices, values and protocols that are important for your mentors to understand. Work with your advisory committee to determine what these are.
- Remind volunteers that for many of the youth their definition of family is much larger than the Canadian “nuclear” family.
- Be clear with the volunteer that they are being asked to be a mentor – a role model and friend. They are not expected to be an expert or to have all the answers.
- Clearly set out roles and responsibilities of each mentor in your program.
- During the training include exercises that help the immigrant volunteer identify what s/he brings to the children and youth in your program.
- During the training, provide opportunities for the immigrant volunteer to examine his/her own cultural identity and practices.
- During the training, provide opportunities for the volunteer to examine his/her assumptions about other cultures and his or her own culture.
- Create opportunities for mentors to get to know each other, and to share challenges and successes.
- Provide on-going support to the mentors.
- Acknowledge, thank and reward mentors in ways that are appropriate for them and their community. Recognize their importance in the success of the program.



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