

PROMISING PRACTICES

Outreach to immigrant, refugee, and migrant women:

- Create a video that demystifies shelters and helps women see them as an option.
- Translate outreach materials (videos, documents) into different languages.
- Raise awareness in environments where your message can reach immigrant, refugee, and migrant women (e.g. present to immigrant-serving organizations, to children in schools who can share with their mothers).
- Hold group circles for older women in the community who have come to Canada after being sponsored by their kids, or on super visas for parents/grandparents. They may not recognize that what they experience is abuse, or be reluctant to report or leave their children. Group circles in the community can be a more comfortable way for them to share and receive resources.

Practice Example: You Are Not Alone

In PEI, Family Violence Prevention Services created an outreach video that explains women's rights in Canada, what a shelter is, and how to access their services. They translated the video into the five languages most frequently spoken by newcomers in PEI. The video was originally created to reach newcomer women, but they have found it useful in all of their outreach work. The newcomer association, study abroad organizations, church groups, and many others now also use this video.

Supporting immigrant, refugee, and migrant survivors at the shelter:

- Create a welcome board near the entrance with the word "welcome" written in different languages.
- When women come to the shelter, ask them if there are specific days or events they want to celebrate while at the shelter, or if there are specific foods that they would like access to.
- Shift towards accepting women and their dependents, rather than women and children. Women could have elderly parents depending on them or children who are a bit older but still dependent.
- Organize social programs that can help women connect with each other and with service providers in a more informal setting. For example, reach out to parks or other attractions to get passes for families staying at the shelter, or hold social events at the shelter for residents, staff, and service providers.

Practice Example: Welcome Boards

At the Moose Jaw Women's Transition House, they have created a bulletin board with "welcome" written in 15 different languages. It is the very first thing women see when they enter the shelter. It's a way of showing women that they are welcome at the shelter, no matter their language or culture.

- When trying out a new program/initiative, integrate an evaluation component that can help make the case for funders to continue supporting this program afterwards.
- Engage immigrant, refugee, and migrant residents in collective action. This helps them connect with each other, know more about their rights, and collectively engage in advocacy.
- Bring in food specialists to speak with women about the differences between canned, fresh, and frozen foods and how to cook easy meals with ingredients that they can get from the food bank.
- Provide pre-paid calling cards to immigrant, refugee, and migrant women so that they can stay connected to people in their home country (if they choose to do so).

Supporting and involving **former residents** who are immigrants, refugees, and migrant women:

Practice Example: Former Resident Groups

At La Maison in Toronto, ex-residents are invited back for social events a few times a year. This gives them a chance to feel like part of the community at the shelter, while sharing their news and experiences with each other and with women currently at the shelter. Similarly, at Inter-Val 1175 in Montreal, the intercultural committee held several focus groups with former residents to gather their feedback on how the shelter services can be improved and adapted.

- Organize a monthly outing for former residents, so that they can continue to access and benefit from a supportive network after they leave the shelter. This is particularly important for immigrant, migrant, and refugee women, as they might be isolated within their community.
- Invite former residents back to the shelter for social events a few times a year. This can help them feel connected to the shelter and also helps current residents plan for their own re-entry into the community. Former residents can share their experiences leaving the shelter, resources, connections, and opportunities with current residents.
- Involve former residents who are immigrant, refugee, and migrant women in identifying areas for improvement at the shelter. This could be done through a one-time gathering or focus group, or by forming a committee that meets regularly.

Supporting women with **precarious immigration status**:

- Develop protocols with shelters in other countries so they can receive women who are being deported/leaving Canada.
- Have dedicated units for women without status, especially at second-stage shelters. In these units, the women don't have to pay rent unless they are receiving income assistance.
- Partner with other organizations/individuals in the community who can help fill specific gaps in expertise:
 - Volunteer/pro-bono lawyers, law students, and legal clinics
 - Immigration consultants
 - Health clinics that will serve women without status/women from the shelter
 - Translation services
- Reach out to lawyers in larger urban centres to see if they can provide services by phone or video conference.

Practice Example: Video Consultation

At Ksan Transition House in rural BC, they have partnered with RISE, a group of law students and lawyers based in Vancouver. They do legal consultations over the internet using video calling, and can continue to do follow up afterwards. Meanwhile, at the Yukon Women's Transition Home Society, they do not have access to an immigration lawyer in their territory. As a result, most of the women at their shelter who need immigration support work with lawyers in Vancouver over the phone.

