

Guidelines for Mentoring

with Immigrant and Refugee Children and Youth

The following document and associated tools have been developed with the kind and generous support of BBBS-Calgary, BBBS-Edmonton, and the Canadian-Somali Cultural Society. 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.

Canadian demographics are changing and the immigrant population across Alberta is growing². 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 within new immigrant groups is an important part of preventing and addressing many of the challenges that these youth face as they grow up in a changing, Canadian society. To support the development of a mentoring program with immigrant and refugee children it is important to maintain all of the quality and risk mitigation strategies essential to safe and effective mainstream programs. At the same time, you will need to be open to doing things differently - to listening, learning and adapting to meet the needs and preferences of the particular community you hope to work with.

The guidelines set out below are intended to augment the mainstream tools available to community groups and organizations on the [AMP website](#) by providing specific resources to support your work with diverse communities. They are intended to build on those foundational resources to support you and your partners as you move through this work – helping you to negotiate and make the most of diversity so that you can support the development and implementation of quality mentoring programs that build on the strengths of these communities, foster resilience and pride in their young people and support pluralism across communities.

¹http://dev.mentoring.org/find_resources/immigrant_toolkit/

²*Immigration in Canada: A Portrait of the Foreign Born Population*. Statistics Canada. 2006 Census. <http://www12.statcan.ca/census-recensement/2006/as-sa/97-557/p28-eng.cfm>

Tool 1

[Early Considerations](#)

Tool 2

[Immigrants and Refugees:
A Glossary of Terms](#)

Tool 3

[Challenges and Risks
Facing Immigrant Youth](#)

Tool 4

[Assessing Strengths & Needs -
Questions to Consider](#)

[Mentor Program Coordinator
Position Description](#)

Tool 5

[Tips for Creating an
Inclusive Advisory Group](#)

Early Considerations

Things to think about as you begin to develop a program. Taking the time to build relationships, understand the specific community and culture, and explore best practice and existing successes will help lay the foundation for a quality program that addresses specific needs and strengths in the community. Tool 1 at the left 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 immigrants and refugees, some have a legal meaning, others may be offensive or have negative connotations. Using terms correctly is an important way of treating people with respect. Tool 2 is a glossary of terms that 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. Tool 3 sets out a list of challenges and risks facing immigrant youth that is meant to help program partners be cognizant of things that they need to consider in planning a mentoring program.

Assessing Strengths and Needs for a Program

Some questions to think about. 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 – the who, the what and the where. Use the questions attached in Tool 4 to connect with the community and other agencies to begin to assess strengths and needs for a mentoring program.

Program Staff and Inclusive Advisory Committees

The size of your staff will depend on the size and scope of your program. At the very least, you will need a program coordinator (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 be important 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 Tool 5 to support the creation of an inclusive advisory committee.

Tool 6

[Pluralism - Working together for more than Diversity](#)

Tool 7

[Roles that Mentors can play in Mentoring Immigrant Youth](#)

Tool 8

[Tips to Recruit and Retain Immigrant Volunteers](#)

[Mentor Application and Screening Process: An Overview](#)

[AMP Online Application form](#)

[Screening Guidelines](#)

[Sample Mentee Referral form](#)

[Sample Parent Consent form](#)

Tool 9

[Things to Consider when Training Volunteers to Support Immigrant Refugee Children and Youth](#)

[Supervision: Types and Processes](#)

[Supervision Guidelines](#)
[Guidelines for Termination](#)

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 pluralism 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. Tool 7 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.

Tool 8 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 the specific cultural/ethnic group 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 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:

- Work with your advisory committee to adapt 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 these 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

Training

Training for volunteers who want to work with Aboriginal children and 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. Right 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/ethnic community specifically. Tool 9 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

Ongoing 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, 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. Make this an explicit part of your program planning and ensure that someone is responsible for this important work

