

**HAMILTON, ONTARIO**

*“Know your own community and its strengths and weaknesses”*  
*Project team member, Hamilton*

In the last number of years Hamilton has become a top destination for newcomers; they often arrive in Hamilton after living for a time in Toronto or Fort Erie or directly from countries such as Somalia, China and Bangladesh. High poverty rates in Hamilton compound the settlement challenges newcomers face, like retraining in order to find work and coping with separation from extended families living in other Canadian cities. **Wesley Urban Ministries/ Ontario Early Years Centre-Hamilton West**<sup>1</sup> and **Settlement and Integration Services Organization (SISO)**<sup>2</sup> teamed up to seek input from immigrant families and to offer a series of parenting workshops to the newcomer community under the *Welcome Here* project.

<p><b>Activities</b></p> <p><b>The project team:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>planned two focus groups with newcomers</li> <li>conducted two newcomer surveys             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>with families living in Canada less than one year</li> <li>with families living in Canada for more than three years</li> </ol> </li> <li>developed an inventory of community programs serving newcomers</li> <li>planned three parenting workshops on topics of interest to newcomers</li> <li>participated in community agency presentations on mandates and programs</li> </ul>	<p><b>Project Results</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>40 families completed surveys and shared their settlement concerns and experiences with the team</li> <li>Each family received a grocery voucher as an honorarium for their participation in the project</li> <li>The project team better understood the settlement challenges of newcomer families with young children</li> <li>The project team distributed the inventory of community programs to local service organizations</li> <li>The project team delivered the three parenting workshops on: punishment vs. discipline; keeping mother tongue languages alive; how to navigate the school system</li> </ul>	<p><b>Successes &amp; Challenges</b></p> <p><b>Successes</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The project team worked with families individually to help them complete the survey</li> <li>The team shared program information with families during the survey process</li> <li>The newcomer families who participated in the surveys appreciated the grocery vouchers</li> </ul> <p><b>Challenges</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Families were hesitant to share their personal experiences in an open forum. The low registration led to focus groups being cancelled</li> <li>Families were not comfortable providing open feedback to project team members because they had not yet had a chance to develop a strong relationship</li> <li>The project team had trouble deciding which programs to include in the inventory because of the large number of resources available to newcomers in the Hamilton area</li> </ul>	<p><b>Longer-term impacts</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The project team members are committed to on-going dialogue and working together to provide services to newcomers</li> <li>The project team will communicate monthly to share information about culturally and linguistically appropriate programming in the community</li> </ul>
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<sup>1</sup> Wesley Urban Ministries/ Ontario Early Years Centre Hamilton West - [www.wesleyurbanministries.com/index1.php?page=family](http://www.wesleyurbanministries.com/index1.php?page=family)

<sup>2</sup> Settlement and Integration Services Organization (SISO) - [www.siso-ham.org](http://www.siso-ham.org)