

FORT MCMURRAY, ALBERTA

“Be ready to modify or change your programming approach along the way to respond to needs that arise.”

Project team member, Fort McMurray

The tar and oil sands projects in Northern Alberta are major employers of newcomers in Fort McMurray. The success of these energy projects has led to a population boom in Fort McMurray and thus an increase in the cost of living as well as a shortage of child care supports and housing. Many families hire live-in caregivers from abroad in response to the lack of available child care. The caregivers often use community services like the ones offered at **The HUB Family Resource Centre**¹ and **YMCA Immigrant Settlement Services (ISS)**². In the past, the HUB and YMCA-ISS served Filipino live-in caregivers through separate programs. Under the *Welcome Here* project, the two organizations came together to deliver a joint Nanny Network program that blended settlement information provision and developmental activities for children. The project team also trained volunteers to translate program materials and provide interpretation services for newcomer program participants.

Activities

The project team

- recruited and trained community volunteers to translate materials and provide interpretation for community orientation tours
- translated program documents into Arabic, Spanish and Somali
- met to talk about mandates, share information on services and review program processes, outcomes and barriers
- offered an eight-week Nanny Network program for caregivers that blended settlement information provision and activities for children. The settlement agency and family resource centre took turns hosting the program

Project Results

- The project team engaged the larger community with volunteer recruitment and training
- The team provided settlement orientation and information to newcomers through the family resource centre
- Newcomers gained greater awareness of settlement services offered by partner organizations
- Volunteers translated many program materials and documents (i.e. brochures, tour notes, notary information)
- The team successfully delivered the Nanny Network program

Successes & Challenges

Successes

- The team delivered a unified program with one registration process and combined community advertising
- The settlement agency and family resource centre both had documentation translated for newcomers

Challenges

- It was difficult for the team to recruit and train volunteers who had various work schedules (shift work is common in Fort McMurray)
- All training was done one-on-one but group training would have been interactive and more effective
- Some program materials could not be translated into Tagalog so a family resource center staff member provided interpretation instead
- The project team had limited access to the technology they needed to perform translation (i.e. Arabic keyboards and software), so the team chose to insert the translation into an existing English brochure
- The initial registration process didn't work so the team allowed registration for individual sessions
- The program was too long at eight sessions; not all participants could attend each session
- The project team was not able to track referrals between partners as they originally hoped

Longer-term impacts

- The settlement agency and family resource centre have developed a valuable working relationship for the future
- The project team will strive to maintain their partnership and look for new projects to support newcomer families

¹ The Hub Family Resource Centre - www.thehubfrc.ca

² YMCA Immigrant Settlement Services - www.ymca.woodbuffalo.org