

# NEWCOMERS AND COVID-19

## Information for Employers & Service Providers

### ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

#### LACK OF SOCIAL NETWORKS

- Newcomers may not have family and friends nearby who can bring food and supplies if they have to isolate, and on whom they can rely for emotional support.
- Family isolation and stress can contribute to domestic violence and abuse, amid a time when there are fewer facilities available to seek refuge.
- Families with small children may have difficulty getting out to appointments or to shop without alternate childcare.

#### LANGUAGE AND CULTURAL BARRIERS

- Informational materials may not be available in the newcomer's language, or they may struggle with English versions. They may miss important Covid-19 status updates and safety recommendations.
- Media images of food safety and hoarding, empty streets, increased police presence and restrictions on civil liberties can be traumatic for refugees who have fled unstable conditions in their own countries.

#### LIMITED FINANCES, FEWER SUPPORT ORGANIZATIONS

- Refugees and other newcomers may not have adequate finances in place to stock up on necessities, or they may lack transportation to get to stores or food banks.
- Some forms of assistance, like transportation or face-to-face counselling may no longer be available due to social distancing.
- Agencies that provide support to newcomers may be closed or operating on a skeleton staff and reduced budget. They may have lost volunteers.
- Houses of worship and local charities, thrift shops and food banks may be closed.

#### LACK OF KNOWLEDGE ABOUT SUPPORTS AND SERVICES

- Newcomers may not be aware of what assistance is available to them, or how to access it. Application forms/processes can be confusing, even to native speakers.
- Informational materials may not be available in the newcomer's language, or they may struggle with English versions. They may miss important Covid-19 status updates and safety recommendations.

#### DIFFICULTY USING OR ACCESSING TECHNOLOGY

- Newcomers may not have or know how to use the technology (computers, cell phones, etc.) necessary to work and/or learn remotely.
- They may not have access to reliable wi-fi, or there may be several family members trying to use devices and wi-fi at the same time.

#### MISINFORMATION AND INTOLERANCE

- The prevalence of misinformation (online and rumour) presents an extra challenge for multi-barriered individuals. Conflicting media reports and conspiracy theories add to the confusion.
- Fear and ignorance about Covid-19 and its origins are, in some instances, fueling racism and xenophobia. Newcomers may feel unwelcome and may be the target of intolerant behaviour.



## What to know...how to help.

Life in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic has been challenging for everyone.

Getting accurate information, accessing supports and services and making sense of conflicting safety recommendations can be especially daunting for new Canadians learning to navigate life in their new home.

Learn what issues newcomers are facing due to Covid-19 and how employers and service providers can help.

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

Taber and District Community Adult Learning Association

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## HOW EMPLOYERS AND SERVICE PROVIDERS CAN HELP

- Be aware of the challenges facing newcomers. Know that language barriers, limited financial resources, reduced access to supports and services and a limited social network are factors that multiply the challenges they face and heighten a sense of social isolation and anxiety.
- Familiarize yourself with some of the supports available in the community and through provincial and federal governments, and share those with newcomer client and employees where you can. Consider contacting support agencies (or TDCALA) for assistance and advice on helping newcomers.
- Consider donating gently used (and still current) technology such as laptops and cell phones to any organizations that will clean and redistribute them where needed. These items can be a lifeline for newcomers.
- If you're able, consider making a financial donation to an organization that supports newcomers, such as a food bank.
- Learn about sites where free wi-fi is available (public libraries, coffee shops, etc.) or local wi-fi "hot spots". Offer to share access to your organization's wi-fi if feasible.
- Stay informed...know the facts about Covid-19 and avoid the temptation to lay blame or to pass on unconfirmed information.
- Keep lines of communication open with newcomer clients and employees, wherever and however possible. Let them know they are not alone in dealing with this.

## RESOURCES AVAILABLE TO HELP NEWCOMERS

- *Taber and District Community Adult Learning Association* – English as a Second Language Classes, Low-German translation service, employment assistance, help with accessing supports and services. [www.taberadultlearning.com](http://www.taberadultlearning.com)
- *Barons-Eureka-Warner Family and Community Support Services* – provides counselling and support services at minimal/no cost. \*now offering Covid-19-specific supports <https://fcss.ca/home>
- *Alberta Association of Immigrant Serving Agencies* – Covid-19 information page <http://aaisa.ca/info-about-covid-19/>
- *MCC Low German Services* – assists with settlement, employment, education and mental health 403-223-4144
- *Taber and District Housing Foundation* – provides subsidized housing for qualified families [www.taberhsg.ca](http://www.taberhsg.ca)
- *Safe Haven Women's Shelter Society* – **24/7 Crisis Line (403) 223-0483** [www.tabersafehaven.ca](http://www.tabersafehaven.ca)
- *South Zone Resources to Support the Low-German Mennonite Community During Covid-19* (videos, posters, online portals and audio recordings, non-spoken resources useful for all language speakers). <https://sites.google.com/view/lgmccovidresources/home>
- *MCC Thrift Shop Taber* 403-223-4156
- *Taber Food Bank Society* 403-223-1833 [www.taberfoodbanksociety@gmail.com](mailto:www.taberfoodbanksociety@gmail.com)

