

Capacity Building and Evaluation of OHS Training in Settlement Agencies

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Agenda

Background

Objective and timeline of the Project Working Group

OHS Capacity Building in Settlement Agencies

Evaluation

Findings

Discussion

Potential Solutions



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Background

IWH Study on safe employment integration of recent immigrants and refugees*

- Newcomers had limited knowledge about OHS and worker rights and were unsure about how to handle dangerous work situations or what to do if they were injured
- Settlement organizations were described as important and trusted resource to raise issues/questions without worrying about job security
- Settlement sector may lack OHS knowledge and resources to support their clients



*Kosny, A., Yanar, B., Begum, M., Al-khooly, D., Premji, S., Lay, M. A., & Smith, P. M. (2019). Safe employment integration of recent immigrants and refugees. *Journal of International Migration and Integration*, 1-21.



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Project Milestones

Uptake of research findings by MCCSS Refugee Settlement Program

MCCSS requirement of OHS training in 2018-19 funding agreements with agencies

IWH shared study findings with service agencies

January 2018



MCCSS collaboration with MOL to build OHS capacity among service providers

MOL connected with OHCOW and other system partners (IWH, WSPS, WSIB)

Working group formed

January – February 2018

Objective

Build OHS capacity among Ontario settlement agencies to support their clients through:

- Increasing their OHS knowledge base
- Providing best practices in sharing OHS information with their clients
- Providing key resources to direct their clients to additional OHS information and support



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Project Milestones

MCCSS requirement
of OHS training in
2018-19 funding
agreements with
agencies

January 2018

Working group
formed

January – February 2018

Working Group
meetings

Creation of OHS
capacity building
workshops &
resources

February – April 2018

Capacity Building
Workshops delivered
to service providers

Resource
Distribution

April – November 2018

Surveys and
Focus Groups

June 2018 – February 2019

Surveys and Focus Groups

June 2018

Post program
Survey
(Service Providers)

September 2018

Follow-up
Survey
(Service Providers)

November 2018 –
February 2019

Focus Groups
(Agency Clients)



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OHCOW and Project Committee

- OHCOW's experience with frontline OHS support to vulnerable workers and OHS workshop development and delivery.
 - Migrant, Temporary Foreign Agricultural Workers (TFAWs)
 - Newcomer support in Guelph, Ontario.
- OHS system project committee was formed to promote collaboration and to ensure project support drew experience and resources from across the system.



Workshop development and USB resource

Capacity building workshop

- Initially, proposed as a peer-to-peer training, but a more flexible workshop structure was decided on that prioritized learning from participating agencies.
- An overview of key OHS content

Key OHS resources provided via USBs:

- IWH Safe Work Toolkit (PowerPoint slides and handouts on OHS and WSIB)
- Ministry of Labour Awareness Training Workbook
- Ministry of Labour Prevention Poster
- Ministry of Labour Pains & Strains poster
- WSIB- Your guide-Benefits, Services and Responsibilities
- WSIB- Form 6-Worker report of injury or disease



OHS Workshop and Resource Delivery

The OHS workshop was delivered in three regions, to a total of 55 settlement agency workers.

- April 26th, 2018 : Ottawa, 13 participants
- April 30th, 2018 : Hamilton, 19 participants
- May 3rd, 2018: Toronto, 23 participants.



The three Workshops were delivered by OHCOW, with logistical and administrative support by MCCSS staff. The Toronto workshop also included presentation support by IWH, WSPS, WSIB and MOL representatives.

***French language capacity limitations**



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Workshop Icebreaker:

Case study of Ontario newcomer

Juan was a recent refugee and found a job at a large home renovation store. He was tasked with moving heavy products, such as BBQs, from the shipping area onto delivery and transport vehicles. Juan noted that he often tried to lift heavier objects by himself, and work “harder”, as he felt being a newcomer meant he needed to prove himself as a good worker.

On one occasion when lifting a BBQ by himself, he injured his back. He continued working and did not report the injury to his employer or WSIB. He noted that at the time he was worried that reporting the injury could result in him losing his job, and he mentioned that he had heard of another worker losing his job due to an injury. He also noted that at the time he did not know much about health and safety, did not receive workplace training, did not know who to turn to, and found it difficult accessing information due to language barriers. When this worker was seen at OHCOW’s clinic, he had stopped working, his injury had worsened, he was in substantial pain and having trouble walking, and he was not sure about what to do.



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OHS Content Covered in Workshop

- ❑ Recognizing workplace health and safety hazards: [Applying] a health and safety lens
- ❑ Working together and the Internal Responsibility System (IRL)
- ❑ Employer and supervisor responsibilities under the OHSA (what to expect)
- ❑ Worker responsibilities and Rights under OHSA
- ❑ What to do if you get injured or sick at work
- ❑ Workplace injury or illness and the Workplace Safety & Insurance Board (WSIB)
- ❑ What to do if your occupational health and safety concerns are not addressed at the workplace level: Contacting the Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development
- ❑ Anti-reprisal legislation, protecting workers from wrongful firings due to workplace illness or injury, or for asserting rights under the OHS act

In-workshop findings

Preliminary findings were identified from the questions, comments and discussions of participants during the workshops. Key findings included:

- Vulnerability among refugee and newcomers, and intimidation to raise OHS concerns.
- Many newcomers not receiving mandatory OHS Worker Awareness training at their workplaces.
- Recognition of the need to ensure employers are meeting OHS responsibilities.
- Improving access to MOL resources, and ensuring resources are formatted to the needs of newcomers (language translations, videos, pictograms)
- Increased French language resources
- Recognition that many settlement agency staff had limited knowledge regarding WSIB coverage and compensation process.
- Workplace mental health/ stress resources for newcomers
- OHS resources for newcomer youth
- Workplace violence and harassment resources

Post-workshop Survey

June 2018: Post-workshop evaluation survey sent out to all 55 settlement agency participants. 27 participants answered survey (21 English speaking, 6 French speaking)

Key findings:

- Survey respondents/ workshop participants varied in role and experience
- Language of clients most identified was **Arabic**, Turkish, Hindi, Punjabi, Urdu, Dari, French, Spanish.
- Most respondents identified a familiarity with OHS information, but at least 2 respondents answered somewhat familiar for all but one topic.
- Less knowledge of WSIB and compensation process was identified.
- Post workshop, all participants reported now being either familiar or very familiar with all topics covered.

Post-workshop Survey

Key findings:

- 90% or respondents answered 'yes' to planning to incorporate workshop content into own OHS presentations
- Identified most useful components of workshop
- Identified improvements that could be made to the workshop
- Respondents identified being interested in more resources on WSIB
- Majority of respondents expressed interest receiving other OHS resources or information from workshop partnering agencies.

Service provider follow up

September 2018- Objective: To gather information on settlement agency workers' perspective on how their own OHS workshops went with their client communities:

- 11 respondents
- Respondents presented OHS information to a total of 342 newcomer clients.
- Diverse delivery methods used (Slide deck, lecture, discussion, role-play)
- 8 out of 11 respondents answered that they had used resources from the workshop USB.
- Respondent identified having OHCOW representative present information to clients.
- Respondent identified having WSPS representative present information to clients.

Service provider follow up

- **Challenges**
 - Limited availability of language translation (Arabic)
 - English versions not appropriate for lower English language proficiency.
- **Client feedback**
 - Clients found OHS information useful.
 - All respondents identified feeling confident to answer OHS related questions from their clients.

2nd OHS resource distribution

November 2nd, 2018

- OHCOW/ Committee organized distribution of additional OHS resources. MCCSS staff sent settlement agencies an email with OHS resources.

Prevention Link-Light House Initiative Resources:

1. Ontario's Occupational Health and Safety Act
2. Ontario's Employment Standards Act
3. Human Rights at Work
4. Ontario's Workplace Safety and Insurance Act

PREVENTION LINK 
DISABILITY PREVENTION AT WORK

**LIGHTHOUSE
INITIATIVE** 
PREVENTION LINK



2nd OHS resource distribution

WSPS resources included



- Health & Safety Information, articles and updates for settlement agencies and small businesses. WSPS Small Business Centre: Settlement agencies or small businesses can receive information about health & safety.
- Small Business Advisory Service: A free consulting program. WSPS volunteers with Canadian Registered Safety Professional (CRSP) designation can spend up to 9 hours helping small businesses or settlement agencies build up or improve their health & safety system. (only for workplaces with fewer than 20 persons)
- Health & Safety Awareness Presentation: WSPS volunteers with health & safety background can give free presentations to settlement agencies and their clients. In some areas the presentations can be delivered in French and other languages.
- Health and Safety Representative (HSR) Basic Training: Workplaces with between 6 to 19 persons should have a Health & Safety Representative. Now WSPS offers an 8-hour online training for this role and the cost is CAD 25.
- Marijuana and impairment in workplace

Focus Groups (FGs) with Agency Clients

Objective: To gather newcomer clients' perspectives on the OHS training delivered by the settlement agencies



FG discussions focused on:

- Clients' experiences in the economic integration programs related to OHS training
- OHS experience and knowledge
- Whether knowledge gained from the training had been helpful



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Focus Group Participants

- Over half (54%) were from Middle East. The rest of the participants were from Africa, Southeast Asia, South America and Europe
- Majority of the participants had work experiences in their home or transition countries in diverse occupations (e.g., engineering, architecture, business owner, trades)
- All participants reported experiencing difficulty looking for employment in Canada due to language challenges and lack of Canadian experience required by employers



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Work Experiences in Canada

- Majority of the participants reported having had some work experience in Canada (construction, moving and delivery, food services, cleaning and manual labour)
- Although participants expressed feeling welcomed by their employers, first jobs were characterized by precarity (e.g., temporary contracts)
- Employer OHS practices varied (unsafe conditions and insufficient training). Only few received proper OHS training
- Examples of getting injured at work and not knowing what to do at the time



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Work Experiences in Canada

“And at the work I was at, I will find myself in situations that I will say, why am I doing this? I shouldn’t be doing that, right? But I was never told I was going to be doing that or that I would be in a dangerous position. And I never got a training for it or something like that so I feel like they should give you a little bit more information, mostly when you’re working in construction and doing the stuff that you can get a disease...” —FG 1

“R: So, at that time, I have no idea, I didn’t attend any safety health. So, nobody advised me. So, when I fall from the forklift, I didn’t make any complaint because I have no idea. I hurt my lower back...No one advised me. Even my [co]workers, they didn’t say anything.

M: And you did not know about the compensation, like, you can report it?

R: I have no idea. No idea. So, that’s the benefit of to make a new workshop like this”— FG 4

Agency Program Content

- Four of the five programs provided industry-specific information and training (blended in-class and hands-on)
- Some provided Canadian certificates
- Opportunities to connect with potential employers through job placements/ internships
- Participants shared that the programs helped them acquire the necessary skills for finding employment in Canada (e.g., resume writing, interviews, soft skills) and understand the expectations of the Canadian employers



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Agency Program OHS Content

- Most participants reported having little to no knowledge of their rights prior to attending the programs, except for few who had received training in their workplaces
- OHS information was integrated into all programs. The depth and delivery depended on the program (basic awareness – industry specific OHS)
 - In all focus groups, participants reported receiving information about OHS health and safety rights (right to know, right to participate, right to refuse unsafe work).
 - Industry specific programs provided more in-depth training such as working at heights, hazard identification



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Right to Know and Right to Participate

- Participants talked about discussing common workplace hazards, rights and responsibilities, and learning about the Occupational Health & Safety Act
- Participants in the industry-specific programs received information on occupation-specific hazards and safety practices
- Safety as everyone's responsibility

“The health and safety, like I said, it shed more lights to me. Before the program, I didn't know a lot of things I can get involved in. I can also volunteer to become a representative or worker member of joint health and safety committee. And I can always help with health and safety inspection by pointing out as possible hazards in the work area” — FG1

Right to Refuse Unsafe Work

- The right to refuse unsafe work was a key learning outcome for many focus group members
- Participants shared that they had been surprised to learn that an employer cannot fire an employee for refusing to do unsafe work:

“Yes, and also what’s your rights. I get surprised when I learned that you can refuse unsafe work. In my background, you cannot refuse. When you get an order to do the job, it’s your responsibility to finish it. But here you have the right if you think it’s not safe, there’s any impact, this is for me it’s very, very important. I was thinking you get fired if you refused. But here, no, you can discuss with your supervisor if you’re feeling it’s not safe. This is very, very important to me, the right to participate and discuss.” — FG3



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Previous OHS experiences and New Knowledge

- Participants shared that learning about the Canadian context helped them see the differences in work and safety practices between their home countries and Canada

“I feel that [occupation] work here is more organized usually and the safety issue is very important. We were not aware of it back home, so this is a good point we learned here. Also, the type of organizing, the way of organizing the job is different, it's all scheduled not like back home. Safety and PPE, masks” – FG 5



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Language Challenges and OHS

- Some participants had trouble understanding the information provided in the programs and in their workplace due to language challenges

“R: When we read the papers, long, long, and the word is a little bit hard for us and a little bit big, too...when we saw the movie, oh, I understand.

R: After [name of staff] explained it for us.

M: Oh, you get help?

R: Yes, they help us, and after, oh, okay.

.....

R: The big words, we can't understand.

R: Yes, big words” — FG 2



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Preparing for the next steps

- Participants shared that learning about their workplace rights and the employer responsibilities helped them feel more confident in their employment preparation process

“I found it very interesting and it gave me more confident. Like, when working in a place, I know I have the right to speak, the right to ask questions, and that is very, very important” — FG1

“Yeah, the better you have the knowledge, the better you protect yourself. If you don’t know, so you’re lost, right? You’re insecure, you’re unprotected, uninsured and safety. Better that you have the knowledge.” — FG 4



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Discussion

- Capacity building efforts have led to increase in knowledge of OHS rights and responsibilities among service providers and confidence in answering OHS questions from newcomer clients
- Settlement agencies shared information and training with their clients
 - level of OHS knowledge and the experience varied among settlement agencies
 - Settlement agencies identified being less knowledgeable on WSIB and compensation process
 - settlement agencies identified an interest in continuing to be connected and/or receive information from OHS prevention system
- Workshop and focus groups discussions identified the need to make OHS information more accessible to newcomers with low language proficiency



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Discussion

- Newcomer clients spoke highly of the OHS training and support they received in the employment programs and identified the information as useful and important
- Almost all participants reported not having knowledge of their rights prior to participating in the economic integration programs
- Although focus group participants shared that the training provided in the programs helped them feel more confident in their knowledge of worker rights and workplace safety, the application of OHS rights by newcomers may still be limited by experience of vulnerability



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Potential Solutions



- Systematic review of OHS system resources accessible to newcomer workers
- Translation and simplification of OHS resources across the system
- Continue to formalize OHS system relationship with settlement sector and stakeholders
- Check list of key OHS educational components to improve standardization among settlement agency workshops
- Respond with resources on identified topics of interest : Ex WSIB information



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Potential Solutions



- Continued consideration on how to address newcomer apprehension and intimidation in applying OHS rights.
- The OHS system needs to review strategies to ensure employers are complying with their OHS responsibilities and are supported to do so in ways that are effective for newcomers.
- The OHS system needs to evaluate the effectiveness of legislative protections and support resources being offered to these workers. Anti-reprisal.
- Opportunity to explore other cross- sector partnerships in support of the OHS of newcomer. Ex: Community Health Centres (CHCs) / primary healthcare sector.



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We would like to thank Momtaz Begum (IWH) and Dr. Cameron Mustard (IWH) for their support.

A diverse group of approximately 25 young adults, including men and women of various ethnicities, are standing in a line and holding a large white rectangular banner. They are all smiling and looking towards the camera. The banner is held in front of them, partially obscuring their midsections. The background is a plain, light-colored surface.

Questions? Discussion?