

Understanding Experiences of Newcomers with Disabilities Training Program



UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY
FACULTY OF SOCIAL WORK



"Immigrants" by Minnesota Historical Society

A Training Program for Settlement Workers Working with Immigrants & Refugees with Disabilities



Designed & Delivered by
Dr. Yahya El-Lahib, MSW, PhD

And Team

Katie Mitchell, MSW

Maimuna Khan, BSW

Idil Shirdon, MSW

Lauren Migrino, MSW student

Kaltrina Kusari, MSW, PhD Student

Presenters' Bios

Dr. Yahya El-Lahib is an assistant professor at the Faculty of Social Work, University of Calgary. His research and practice have centred on disability issues, community practice and policy development. His current research examines the intersection of disability, displacement and the impacts of war on displaced subjects.

Katie Mitchell is a French/German-Canadian who was born in the traditional territory of the Anishinaabeg (Thunder Bay) who grew up in Mohkinstsis (Calgary) in traditional territories of the Blackfoot of Treaty 7. Before being at stay-at-home mom with her two young children, she had over 8 years experience working with persons with disabilities on a one-on-one basis in daily living programs. This led to a passion for working within the disability sector with a focus on advocacy and addressing systems change. Wanting to broaden her skill set and knowledge base, Katie joined the International and Community Development Master of Social Work program at the University of Calgary. She completed her specialization year practicum with the Calgary Ability Network, which addresses various social issues faced by the disability community through collaboration. Helping with the development of this training module was a primary focus of her role within the Calgary Ability Network.

Maimuna Khan is a social worker and a research assistant with the Faculty of Social Work, University of Calgary. Maimuna's research interests include interrogating dominant discourses surrounding issues of race and racism as they shape experiences of displaced racialized bodies. In addition, her research experience and practice focus on examining the ways racialized individuals and communities including newcomers with disabilities, experience issues of migration, settlement and integration in the contexts of community practice, social policy, and knowledge production.

Idil Shirdon is a first-generation American-Canadian whose parents

were Somali refugees. Growing up in a tightknit diaspora community and feeling like she straddled a cultural divide, her interest in settlement and integration of newcomers developed early on. Along with being an active member in her ethnocultural community, Idil has worked as a settlement counsellor for 5 years with Calgary Catholic Immigration Society working to resettle government-assisted refugees at the Margaret Chisholm Resettlement Centre. Currently, at the tail-end of her Master of Social Work degree at the University of Calgary specializing in International and Community Development, she is completing her specialization year practicum with ActionDignity which aims to address systemic inequities for ethnocultural communities' full participation in economic, social and civic life. Idil's areas of interest include the intersections of immigration policy, settlement, xenophobia, and disability.

Angela Symon has been working with the Calgary Ability Network for two years, and sitting as the Co-chair for the last year. Having had a stroke, Angela does not allow limitations to slow her down- she has completed a half-marathon, works full time, and loves to travel with some of her past trips being to the Philippines, Southeast Asia and Europe. Graduating from the University of Calgary in 2015 with a degree Bachelor of Arts - Development Studies, after the stroke occurred, Angela holds a strong passion in her heart to help others of ALL abilities gain the skills, knowledge and advocacy to live and thrive in their own communities.

Kaltrina Kusari is a PhD student at the Faculty of Social Work, University of Calgary. Her research centres on rejected asylum seekers and other migrant populations in Kosova. She is also a social worker at the Cerebral Palsy Association in Alberta and an active member of the Calgary Ability Network, Newcomers Table.

Introduction

The need for this training program was identified Dr. El-Lahib's extensive research on the intersection of disability and displacement (El-Lahib, 2012; 2015; 2016; 2017; 2018). Findings demonstrate that newcomers with disabilities experience many forms of marginalisation including but not limited to ableism, racism and colonialism in all states of migration including pre-application, application, as well as their settlement and integration. These experiences are due to many factors such as lack of available resources and the significant gap in knowledge and necessary skills among settlement workers involved in facilitating settlement and integration services for newcomers. These knowledge gaps are essential to help understand the complexities that shape the experiences of immigrants and refugees with disabilities as they settle in host countries. Recognizing these limitations, Immigrant Services Calgary requested this training for their staff and volunteers to improve their knowledge base and equip their staff with the necessary knowledge and practice skills to better serve the newcomers with disabilities population.

Broader Context of the Intersection of Disability & Displacement

Canadian immigration has systematically excluded people with disabilities from becoming immigrants (Chadha, 2008; El-Lahib, 2015; 2016; 2018; Hanes, 2009; Wong, 2011). Exclusionary policies such as the "*Excessive Demands Clause*" as well as settlement practices have relied on selection criteria such as normalized and dominant health discourses, education and employment, to determine admissibility of immigration applicants and guide their access and entitlements to settlement and integration services. In fact, due to the Excessive Demands Clause, immigrants and refugees with disabilities have been

and continue to be seen as an inadmissible social group, as this clause significantly contributes to normalize ableist assumptions that construct this population as a financial burden on social services (Chadha, 2008; Dossa, 2009; El-Lahib, 2016; 2017; Hanes, 2009).

Such dominant discourse only emphasizes problematic and ableist discourses about people with disabilities which “*devalues Canadians with disabilities and does nothing to recognize the contribution persons with disabilities and their families can and do make to Canadian society*” (Council for Canadians with Disabilities, 2013, Immigration section, para. 6). For more specific examples of the discriminatory nature of Canadian immigration policies and settlement practices, please see the following authors Carniol, 2010; Chadha, 2008; Council for Canadians with Disabilities, 2012; CCD, 2013; Dua, Razack, & Warner, 2005; Dossa, 2006, 2009; El-Lahib, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018; El-Lahib & Wehbi, 2012; Ethno-Racial People with Disabilities Coalition, 2005; Ethno-Racial People with Disabilities Coalition of Ontario (ERDCO), 2013.

These marginalizing practices are important for social service providers to be aware of and understand because immigration policies shape their settlement practices. For example, various policies have often led to the allocation and prioritization of social services in ways that exclude people with disabilities in areas such as education, health care, employment and youth programs (e.g. Albrecht, Develiger, & Van Hov, 2009; Chung & Samperi, 2004; Cramer & Plummer, 2009; Islam, 2008). More importantly, there is a lack of preparedness among settlement workers to assist immigrants and refugees with disabilities (Dossa, 2006, 2009; El-Lahib, 2015, 2017, 2018; Groce, 2005; Harris & Roberts, 2004). For example, settlement workers who want to assist

immigrants and refugees with disabilities are often constrained by their lack of knowledge and necessary skills to facilitate such support or restricted by ableist policies that regulate their work and shape access and entitlement to settlement services.

About this Training Program

This training program has been developed by Yahya El-Lahib, Assistant Professor, Faculty of Social Work, University of Calgary, in collaboration with the Calgary Ability Network, the Newcomers with Disabilities Table. The curriculum consists of four key areas that would help settlement workers better support newcomers with disabilities in their integration process. Specifically, the curriculum enhances frontline knowledge and skills by focusing on the following key areas:

- **Knowing:** what we know and how we know it?
 - What are the dominant knowledges and practices and how they can be disrupted
 - What are the knowledges and necessary skills needed to facilitate better settlement and integration of newcomers with disabilities?
- **Shift thinking:** What is necessary knowledge and skills needed to shift thinking and attitudes towards newcomers with disabilities
 - What do we need to know?
 - How do we facilitate the shift to critical disability thinking?
- **Doing:** What do we do wrong, what could we do better, and how?
 - Key best practices to support newcomers with disabilities
 - Key skills necessary to accommodate and provide accessible services
 - How to design accessible services and accommodate newcomers with disabilities

- **Moving forward:** What are the necessary institutional practices that we could help facilitate
 - How to support inclusive immigration policies and settlement practices
 - How do we contribute to reforming or changing ableist policies?

Participants in this training program will be exposed to practical skills and resources that will enhance their knowledge and allow them to practice with a transdisciplinary framework that combines knowledges from the immigration, disability and settlement sectors. Throughout this training program, examples of how policies impact service provision in both settlement and disability fields will be examined, and information provided on how to better facilitate service provisions relevant to newcomers with disabilities. In addition, the experiential nature of this curriculum with its emphasis on building concrete practice skills using best practices and competency guidelines recognized by experts in these fields. Specifically, the curriculum offers participants the following key competencies:

- An overview of relevant immigration policies and settlement practices as they relate to disability issues and the experiences of newcomers with disabilities
- An overview of necessary knowledge and practice skills to understanding issues of disability, impairment, access and accommodation issues of guardianship, diagnosis process and relevant support programs for people with disabilities such as AISH, PDD, and so forth
- Best practices on how to develop inclusive practices and how to accommodate newcomers with disabilities
- A summary of necessary skills and knowledge to understand

- how to navigate various disability and settlement sectors
- Key practice models to working with people with disabilities, namely, the social model, the rights-based model, the cultural model and critical model. In addition, key principles of accessibility, accommodation, and inclusion will be examined
- Useful resources for practitioners that offer hands on best practices and outline key competencies to accommodating, communicating and working with newcomers with disabilities

Finally, this training curriculum is grounded in and utilizes Human Rights as the base for the training and considers disabled rights are Human Rights issues. In addition, the training also offers helpful resources on critical disability theories and best practices to working with people with disabilities in ways that are critical and anti-oppressive. A list of the references used to inform this work is offered at the end of this program. These references cover the following areas:

- the intersection of immigration and disability in Canada
- disability theory
- disability practice models
- the role of language in disability theory
- the perspectives of immigrants with disabilities in Canada

These sources are meant to add to the existing knowledge and practice skills that settlement workers and service providers use to support the settlement experiences of immigrants with disabilities. We hope you will find the knowledge and skills offered in this training will be helpful to enhance the settlement practices for newcomers with disabilities.

Resources to Enhance the Settlement Practices for Newcomers with Disabilities

Dos and Don'ts

Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants (OCASI) – Accessibility Kit

https://ocasi.org/sites/default/files/accessibility-kit_0.pdf

Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants (OCASI) – Access to Immigrant Settlement Services for Immigrants with Disabilities: Handouts for Management Staff Immigrant Settlement Services

<http://www.ocasi.org/sites/default/files/ocasi-handouts-managers.pdf>

Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants (OCASI) – Access to Immigrant Settlement Services for Immigrants with Disabilities: Handouts for Sector Employees Immigrant Settlement Services

<http://www.ocasi.org/sites/default/files/ocasi-handouts-sector-employees.pdf>

Migration Matters: Supporting Newcomers with Disabilities

<https://www.amssa.org/resources/quicklinks-resources/supporting-newcomers-with-disabilities/>

http://www.amssa.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/AMSSA-InfoSheet-Issue27_Disability.pdf

Respect Ability – Etiquette: Interacting with People with Disabilities

<https://www.respectability.org/inclusion-toolkits/etiquette-interacting-with-people-with-disabilities/>

United Spinal Association – Disability Etiquette: Tips on Interacting with People with Disabilities

<https://www.unitedspinal.org/pdf/DisabilityEtiquette.pdf>

Minnesota Public Radio – Dos and Don'ts When Interacting with the Disabled

<https://www.mprnews.org/story/2010/05/04/copleywoods>

Disability Rights and Resources – Disability Etiquette (General behaviour, conversation, common courtesies, portrayal)

https://www.disability-rights.org/?page_id=20

Vancity article - 6 Ways You Can Support People with Disabilities

<https://blog.vancity.com/6-ways-can-support-people-disabilities/>

How To: Accommodate

Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants (OCASI) – Accessibility Kit

https://ocasi.org/sites/default/files/accessibility-kit_0.pdf

Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants (OCASI) – Accessibility Planning in the Settlement Sector: Newcomers with Disabilities

<http://www.ocasi.org/sites/default/files/accessibility-planning-webinar-2.pdf>

Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants (OCASI) – Access to Immigrant Settlement Services for Immigrants with Disabilities: Handouts for Management Staff Immigrant Settlement Services

<http://www.ocasi.org/sites/default/files/ocasi-handouts-managers.pdf>

Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants (OCASI) – Access to Immigrant Settlement Services for Immigrants with Disabilities: Handouts for Sector Employees Immigrant Settlement Services

<http://www.ocasi.org/sites/default/files/ocasi-handouts-sector-employees.pdf>

University of Washington – Tips for Engaging with Different Disabilities
<https://depts.washington.edu/uwdrs/faculty/faculty-resources/tips-for-working-with-different-disabilities/>

Ontario's Universities Accessible Campus – Teaching Students with Physical Disabilities (Suggestions and tips for teaching and for interacting with students with disabilities)
<http://www.accessiblecampus.ca/tools-resources/educators-tool-kit/teaching-tips/teaching-students-with-physical-disabilities/>

State University of New York – Accessibility Resources: Sensory Disabilities
<https://www.oswego.edu/accessibility-resources/sensory-disabilities>

Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act – Accommodating Invisible Disabilities in the Workplace
<https://www.aoda.ca/accommodating-invisible-disabilities-in-the-workplace-2/>

University of South Florida Students with Disabilities Services – Accommodations: Hearing Impairment Accommodations
<https://www.usf.edu/student-affairs/student-disabilities-services/accommodations/hearing-impaired.aspx>

Family Connect: For Parents of Children with Visual Impairments - Accommodations and Modifications at a Glance: Educational Accommodations for Students Who Are Blind or Visually Impaired
<https://www.familyconnect.org/info/education/know-your-rights/accommodations-and-modifications-at-a-glance/135>

Alberta Education (Learn Alberta) – Programming for Students with Learning Disabilities Individualized Program Plans: Accommodations

http://www.learnalberta.ca/content/kes/pdf/or_ws_tea_ld_b_04_acc.pdf

Settlement At Work Wiki – Settlement and Mental Health

[http://wiki.settlementatwork.org/index.php?title=Settlement and Mental Health](http://wiki.settlementatwork.org/index.php?title=Settlement_and_Mental_Health)

Plain Language

Inclusion Europe – Information for all: European Standards for Making Information Easy to Read and Understand

http://easy-to-read.eu/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/EN_Information_for_all.pdf

Plain Language Action and Information Network – Plain Language Guidelines: Choose Your Words Carefully

<https://www.plainlanguage.gov/guidelines/words/use-simple-words-phrases/>

Plain Language: How to Simplify Content for a Better Reader Experience

<https://zapier.com/blog/plain-language/>

Plain Language Association International: What is Plain Language?

<https://plainlanguagenetwork.org/plain-language/what-is-plain-language/>

References

- Albrecht, G. L., Devlieger, J. P., & Van Hov, G. (2009). Living on the margin: Disabled Iranians in Belgian Society. *Disability & Society*, 24(3), 259-271.
- Carniol, B. (2010). *Case critical: Social services and social justice in Canada* (6th ed.). Toronto, ON: Between the Lines Press.
- Chadha, E. (2008). "Mentally defectives" not welcome: Mental disability in Canadian Immigration Law, 1895-1927. *Disability Studies Quarterly*, 28(1).
- Chung, I., & Samperi, F. (2004). An East-West approach to serving Chinese immigrants in a mental health setting. *Journal of Immigrants & Refugee Services*, 4(1/2), 139-159.
- Cramer, E. P., & Plummer, S. B. (2009). People of color with disabilities: Intersectionality as a framework for analyzing intimate partner violence in social, historical and political contexts. *Journal of Aggression, Maltreatment & Trauma*, 18, 62-181.
- Council for Canadians with Disabilities (CCD). (2012). *Immigration and disability*. Retrieved on June 18, 2013 from : <http://www.ccdonline.ca/en/socialpolicy/immigration/immigration-and-disability-23March2012>
- Council for Canadian with Disabilities (CCD). (2013). *Immigration: Immigration and people with disabilities*. Retrieved on June 18, 2013 from: <http://www.ccdonline.ca/en/socialpolicy/immigration>
- Dossa, P. (2006). Disability, marginality and the nation-state-- negotiating social markers of difference: Fahimeh's story. *Disability and Society*, 21(4), 345-358.
- Dossa, P. (2009). *Racialized bodies, disabling worlds: Storied lives of immigrant Muslim women*. Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press.
- Dua, E., Razack, N., & Warner, J. N. (2005). Race, racism and empire: Reflections on Canada. *Social Justice*, 32(4), 1-10.
- El-Lahib, Y. & Wehbi, S. (2012). Immigration and disability: Ableism in the policies of the Canadian state. *International Social Work*,

- 55(1), 95-108.
- El-Lahib, Y. (2015). The inadmissible “Other”: Discourses of ableism and colonialism in Canadian immigration. *Journal of Progressive Human Services*, 26(3), 209-228.
- El-Lahib, Y. (2016). Dominant health discourses in action: Constructing people with disabilities as the “inadmissible Other” in Canadian immigration. *Disability Studies Quarterly*, 36(3). Available on line at: <http://dsq-sds.org/article/view/5055/4414>
- El-Lahib, Y. (2016). Troubling constructions of Canada as a “land of opportunity”: A critical disability lens. *Disability & Society*, 31(6), 758-776.
- El-Lahib, Y. (2017). Theoretical dimensions for interrogating the intersections of disability, immigration and Social work. *International Social Work*, 60(3), 640-653.
- El-Lahib, Y. (2018). Social work at the intersection of disability and displacement: Rethinking our role. *Journal of Progressive Human Services*. Published online first on October 17, 2018: <https://doi.org/10.1080/10428232.2018.1531744>
- Ethno-Racial People with Disabilities Coalition. (2005). *Supreme Court case decision – Victory for immigrants with disability*. Retrieved on March 11, 2014 from: <http://www.erdco.ca/news.html>
- Ethno-Racial People with Disabilities Coalition. (2013). *Current project: Welcoming and Inclusive Communities Accessibility Project*. Retrieved on June 13, 2013 from: <http://www.erdco.ca/current-project/>
- Government of Canada. (2019). *Canadian Human Rights Commission*. <https://www.canada.ca/en/human-rights-commission.html>
- Government of Manitoba. (2014). *Accessibility for Manitobans Act: The Law*. (2014). Retrieved from: <http://www.accessibilitymb.ca/law.html>
- Government of Ontario. (2012). *About Accessibility Law*. Retrieved from: <https://www.ontario.ca/page/about-accessibility-laws#section-0>

- Groce, N. (2005). Immigrants, disability, and rehabilitation. In H. Stone (Ed.), *Culture and disability: Providing culturally competent services* (pp.1-14). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Hanes, R. (2009). None is still too many: An historical exploration of Canadian immigration legislation as it pertains to people with disabilities. *Development Disabilities Bulletin*, 37(1), 91-126.
- Harris, J. (2003). "All doors are closed to us": A social model analysis of the experiences of disabled refugees and asylum seekers in Britain. *Disability & Society*, 18(4), 395-410.
- Harris, J., & Roberts, K. (2004). "Not our problem": The provision of services to disabled refugees and asylum-seekers. In D. Hayes & B. Humphreys (Eds.), *Social work, immigration and asylum: Debates, dilemmas and ethical issues for social work and social care practice* (pp. 151-161). New York, NY: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.
- Islam, Z. (2008). Negotiating identities: The lives of Pakistani and Bangladeshi young disabled people. *Disability & Society* 23(1), 41-52.
- Nova Scotia Legislator. (2017). *Bill No. 59: Accessibility Act*. Retrieved from https://nslegislature.ca/legc/bills/62nd_3rd/1st_read/b059.htm
- Statistics Canada- Turcott, M. (2015). *Persons with Disabilities and Employment*. Retrieved from: <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/75-006-x/2014001/article/14115-eng.htm>
- Wong, H. S. (2011). Not welcome: A critical analysis of ableism in Canadian immigration policies from 1869-2011. *Critical Disability Discourses*, 4, 1-27.

Understanding Experiences of Newcomers with Disabilities Training Program Agenda

Day 1: Knowing and Shift Thinking

9:00-10:00: Introductions & Objectives

10:00-11:30: The Silent Matching Game

- Setting the context for disability and immigration
- Disrupting dominant discourses on disability
- The intersection between ableism, racism, colonialism

11:30-12:00: CAN Human Rights Table: Human Rights Perspective on Disability

- Accessibility: Federal and provincial legislations

12:00-1:00: Break

1:00-2:00: Immigration & Disability: Tensions in Policies & Practices

- Immigration Policies: Admissibility and inadmissibility legislations
- Excessive Demand Clause
- Settlement perspectives on excessive demands

2:00-3:30: Disability & Impairment: Understanding the Tensions

- Body politics: understanding ableism and disableism
- Different types of disability
- Understanding disability in the context of immigration
- Issues and tensions in diagnoses
- Accessibility and accommodation
- Guardianship/Trusteeship/Guarantor
- “How to offer Inclusive services”

3:30-4:00: Wrap-up

Day 2: Doing and Moving Forward

9:00-10:00: Introductions & Objectives

10:00-11:30: Theater of the Oppressed Activity

- Disrupting dominant practices with disability

11:30-12:30: Group work

- Applying learnings in practice case scenarios

12:30-1:30: Break

2:30-3:30: Moving forward

- Supporting inclusive immigration policies and settlement practices
- Understanding disability and resisting the operation of ableism

3:30-4:00: Wrap Up and Evaluation