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Sahara Family Support Program, Punjabi Community Health Services

Theme: Culturally Appropriate Services for Immigrant and Refugee Women, Their Families and Communities

The Sahara Family Support Program at Punjabi Community Health Services aims to improve family functioning through providing support to clients and their families. This is achieved through our one-to-one counselling and/or group programs, and linking them to appropriate community/social resources. All services are offered in English, Punjabi, Hindi, and Urdu.

Critical Elements

- The program is modeled after the model developed by Ontario PCHS for providing services to South Asian clients. This is an Integrated Holistic Service Delivery Model which seeks to provide integrated support to individuals and family members as one service.
- Focusing on providing culturally and linguistically appropriate supports to the South Asian population, the work initially started with parenting and supportive counselling, and then evolved into domestic violence intervention as the program started seeing more crisis calls related to domestic violence and addictions.
- The program includes a 16-week group for perpetrators and another for victims of honor based violence as well as clients experiencing addiction. The perpetrators are usually facing assault charges and have had Emergency Protection Orders served. Key program elements include definitions of abuse, cultural myths, as well as issues power and control and cycle of violence.
- Oftentimes extended family members are also involved. The program involves these other family members for whom group, one-on-one support or family counselling are also available.
- The counsellors also support women who are staying in the women's shelters, to ensure they retain cultural connections and supports.
- The program also connects clients with other resources or advocates on their behalf, e.g., in their interactions with the justice system (e.g., go court, get an emergency protection order), reporting to child and family services, or connecting women with Alberta Works for financial resources.
- The program uses a strength-based approach, listening to what client's needs are, identifying existing skills that the staff can build on, particularly drawing on informal supports.
- Because their community is of primary importance for newcomers, the program uses a "collectivist approach in a collectivist culture" by engaging with the South Asian community, family members and faith leaders, and providing them with training related to addictions and family violence and engaging them in the work with the victims.