



Ethno-Culturally Diverse Communities, Newcomers & COVID-19

July 6, 2020

12:30pm – 1:30pm

Newcomers face various barriers when they arrive in Canada

- Cultural
- Trauma
- Stigma
- Their education may not be recognized
- Change in income status
- Etc.

Defining Domestic violence

- When Immigrants arrive, they have their own unique challenges
 - o As service providers we may not be aware of these challenges
- How we define DV may differ from how newcomers/clients would
 - o We could be using the same words, but those words could have different meanings
 - Image: two people looking at a number and seeing either 6 or 9 from their perspective
 - Eg. Question asked of child “does your father beat your mom?” and the child answers “yes, he beats her every night”. The child is referring to them playing board games and their father stating that he beat their mother at the game.
 - In example the newcomers understanding of “beat” and the service providers are both correct, but they are seeing the same situation from their own perspective
- The CDVC defines domestic violence as:
 - o “The attempt, act, or intent of someone within a relationship, where the relationship is characterized by intimacy, dependency, or trust, to intimidate either by threat or using physical force on another person or property. The purpose of the abuse is to control and or exploit through



neglect, intimidation, inducement of fear or by inflicting pain. Abusive behavior can take many forms including: verbal, physical, sexual, psychological, emotional, spiritual, and economic and the violation of rights. All forms of abusive behavior are ways in which one human being is trying to have control, exploit and/or have power over another.”

DV in Ethnocultural Population

- Types and causes of violence
 - Situational violence
 - Back home the family was good and healthy but after they come to Canada and experience resettlement stress and other stresses arguments start and then can escalate to violence
 - Ask: What causes this situation?
 - Ethnocultural families are coming from countries with rich culture and religious values
 - These values are important to their identity and they need to maintain these values to keep respect in their family and community
 - Women are primarily responsible for family honor and as patriarch men have a duty to protect that honor
 - As children age or family members become more acclimatized there may be a change in family culture
 - Drive to protect family can dominate family life as he is doing his duty to keep invasive things from moving into his home
 - Eg. Children speaking English at home
 - Man is already facing stressors and an anger violent man may see himself as a victim under attack
 - This behavior is understood as abusive in our dominant culture
 - Coercive Control
 - Violence may already be there when family moved to Canada
 - May not be any physical violence
 - Coercive control is an act or pattern of acts of assault, threats, humiliation, or intimidation used to harm, punish, or frighten their victim
 - Eg, isolation, monitoring activity, restricting autonomy, gaslighting, name calling, controlling money, reinforcing rules, manipulating kids, controlling body, threats/jealousy, communication control



Barriers for ethnocultural victim to leave

- Difficult for female from ethnocultural communities difficult to leave
- Collectivistic versus individualist culture
 - The collectivist values put priority on family and community
 - Differences between collectivist and individualist culture may not be understood by service providers
 - Victims are blamed for staying in abusive relationship as dominant culture will think it is a sign of subservience
 - However, the victim is aware that the abuse is wrong, but they are unwilling to give up the security they derive from sense of community and family
 - A complex and multi-dimensional family system
 - Community may shun her after she leaves
 - A woman alone may not be respected in the community
 - Identity is closely tied to family and community
- Other barriers:
 - Fear that violence may increase
 - People may not believe her
 - Belief that divorce is wrong and belief in fate
 - Lack of culturally appropriate or linguistically specific services
 - May be punished by community
 - Daughters may have difficulty finding husband as “nobody wants to marry an abuser’s daughter”
 - Thinking of greater good of family
 - Without husband she loses status in society
 - Fear over her/her children’s/her spouses immigration status
 - Fears of racism
- Cultural Safety
 - Concept introduced in New Zealand by nurses in 1980s
 - Recognize and respect the cultural identities of others and safely meet their needs, expectations, and rights
 - Culturally unsafe practices are those that “diminish, demean, or disempower the cultural identity and well-being of an individual”
 - Recognize how social and historical concepts shape society and be aware of your power and privilege in society especially as it relates to clients
 - How social and historical Being aware of power and privilege esp. how they relate
 - Be open minded to people who are different



- Assess the client with a blank mind, this is a lifelong process of learning and being self-reflective
- Safety is defined by those who receive service not those who provide it
- Understanding of a different culture will always involve interpreting and judging experience through ones' own lens

Gaps in services for ethnocultural clients

- Typical service provision gaps
 - Shelters:
 - Perceived that shelter is only for homeless or addicted and it is not a safe space
 - Space
 - Language barrier and cultural sensitivity
 - Lack of long-term support (housing)
 - Family support
 - Huge gap
 - May find that when you try to support women the next day or week after they return to perpetrator
 - After talking we realize that they want to keep the family together, but the amount of abuse in the home is limiting their ability to do so – they want to take a break but they want to return to family
 - Immigrants come to Canada for better life for their children, grassroots issue is stress factor that goes along with immigration
 - Eg. Man who was a doctor back home comes to Canada and has no English. Now he cannot work as doctor and needs to do survival jobs. This is a blow to self-esteem, and he may be frustrated with himself and lose confidence/ self-esteem
 - Support for immigrant men
 - Support for immigrant children/secondary victims of violence
 - Perpetrator engagement in education
 - Look at violence through family lens
 - Specialized culturally sensitive counselling
 - Unaffordable for low income families
 - Gender specific counselors
 - Lack of special considerations
 - Religion
 - Spirituality
 - Service coordination/case management



Impact of COVID-19

- We are all impacted, people who are already vulnerable or are experiencing DV have increased risk
- Increased risks:
 - o Technology control
 - o Assessing “real” safety
 - Eg. In virtual setting if you are doing counselling over phone or video how do you assess real safety how do you know perpetrator is not controlling equipment?
 - Many immigrant families live in multifamily homes, could be in-laws there or other families, it could be more than one perpetrator
 - o Safety planning
 - o Family setting
 - o Fear of virus
 - M individuals want to leave but are afraid of virus as they may have children, and they hear shelters have limited capacity
 - o Emergency housing
 - May need to look at alternate resources, hotels, motels, etc.
 - If shelter is not available how do we ensure safety and cultural appropriateness
 - o Added stress factors

Preparing for future

- Adjusted ways to mitigate the new risk factors
 - o Revisit safety planning
 - o Gauge who else in family is around (in-laws, partner); during greetings ask about everyone in the family staying at home
 - o Look beyond perpetrator as family situation is different
 - o Video calls to be preferred way of virtual service delivery (to assess casually that their physical space is safe and secure)
 - o Educate clients about the signals for help

Engaging men and boys

- Providing customized support for males
- Lots of immigrant families do not want to separate, family wants to stay together but it is not a safe situation
- Creating a safe place
- Male support groups
- Gender equity workshops
- Group sessions focusing on prevention and awareness



Moving forward with best practices

- Counseling support:
 - Individual/couple/group
 - First language (interpretation and translation)
 - Culturally sensitive
 - Support groups (men/women/couples)
 - Customized support groups – eg. Women only, Hindi-speaking women only
 - Assistance with parenting
 - Rebuilding lives (family)
- Strategic partnerships
 - Shelters
 - Police service
 - Immigrant families may have experiences that reduce lack of trust in police, reduce these assumptions
 - Children's services
 - Foodbank
 - Collaboration efforts
 - Eg. CDVC
 - Health services
- Evidence based tools
 - Risk and protective factor survey
- Customized supports
 - Emergency housing support
 - Emergency food
 - Transportation support
 - Childcare provision
 - Parenting after violence
 - Accessible service locations
 - In-home support
- Outreach
 - Community education/awareness
- Engaging men and boys
 - Active networks (e.g. MAN-C)
 - Support groups
 - Gender equity workshops
 - Healthy relationships sessions