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NETWORK

STRIVING TOWARD BEST PRACTICE

Settling LGBTQIA+ Newcomers

There are many LGBTQIA+ people whose lives are at risk in countries around the world, who are facing violence and persecution. Humanitarian protection agencies and governments tend to make it laborious and retraumatizing for LGBTQIA+ people to make successful refugee claims, which is a requirement for resettlement. Sponsors need to continuously educate themselves about the realities of this community, to gain a better understanding of how to support LGBTQIA+ newcomers by learning more about the unique challenges in settlement around empowerment and a rights-based approach, and that it is not necessary for sponsors to be members of the LGBTQIA+ community themselves.

Key guidelines:

- **Learn the acronyms** – understand the differences and challenges
- **Cultural backgrounds** – links with cultural groups may not be safe based on oppression in home country; however, sense of family and community can be important, but not necessarily supportive and may be threatening even in Canada
- **Identify resources** – identify LGBTQIA+ affirming resources and agencies available to ensure efficient and effective settlement; ensure sources are trusted
- **Safe spaces** – don't assume all spaces are safe even if they say they are
- **Listening** – practice active listening that engages and makes the other person feel heard
- **Building trust** – trust is a critical factor in LGBTQIA+ sponsorship, and can take time, even when sponsors identify as queer, newcomers have had to be defensive and learned to mistrust those who say they are part of the community
- **Patience** – practice patience to thoroughly assess a situation and research the best decision with the newcomer; understand that an LGBTQIA+ newcomer may not be ready to self-identify for reasons of trust and internalized homophobia/transphobia, not all decisions made by the newcomer will seem logical to the sponsor

- **Health** – unique challenges, newcomers reluctant to raise issues around sexual and gender identify issues

Connections:

- <https://www.rainbowhealthontario.ca/>
- <https://www.hastlefreeclinic.org/>
- <https://accessalliance.ca>

Reference:

- PRSN Skills Development workshop – February 24, 2024