

INTERVENTION

for immigrant families in vulnerable situations

This infographic is based on work by de Chantal Lavergne, Sarah Dufour and Rosita Vargas Diaz ¹

Immigration is often a family project to give the children a better life. However, some families face more significant challenges due to their specific situations and obstacles related to the integration process into the host country.

Migration puts some families in a very precarious situation that can affect parenting and sometimes requires intervention by youth protection services.

Here are the main challenges they experience :

- Lack of information about the host country's laws and standards for child rearing;
- Challenges related to labour market integration;
- Conflicts associated with transforming family roles;
- Loss or lack of support from extended family and friends;
- Lack of awareness of and difficulty in accessing available support resources in the neighbourhood.



Receiving protective services is demanding for all families, but such challenges can be exacerbated for immigrant families.

Particular individual, family or systemic factors may influence the way they interact with DYP youth workers:

- Lack of understanding of the role of the DYP and the meaning of the intervention;
- Fear of the legal repercussions of a report on their migration plans or on losing custody of a child;
- The overrepresentation of certain minority children in the child welfare system, which may lead them to fear unfair treatment.

The youth worker-client relationship is crucial in youth protection interventions. This relationship takes on a unique quality for immigrant families because of their cultural background and the challenges they face.



1. The primary source of the infographic is a study that explores the experience of immigrant families in youth protection by giving them a voice to gain access to a detailed description of their views on the intervention they received and their relationship with the youth workers (Lavergne, Dufour, Vargas Diaz, 2021).

Here are a few intervention approaches to encourage immigrant family involvement:

1. Decentralization...

Become aware of your own perceptions of what a family should be and your preconceived notions of other cultures since they can influence how you interpret situations.

Your perceptions of important aspects of family life, such as educational practices or the concept of paternal authority, may be far removed from, or even opposed to, those of the family, which can lead to misunderstandings and misconceptions. Reflecting on these different frames of reference between you and the parent can help you put your views and judgments into perspective and help overcome communication barriers.

of the youth worker



Frames of reference

History

...different...

Education

...different...

Language

...different...

Values

...different...

Religion

...different...

Occupation

...different...

Power relations

...different...

Etc.

of the immigrant parent



In a cross-cultural context, the work of understanding the other is critical to moving beyond false beliefs about the families' home culture and recognizing their uniqueness and the challenges they face. Such families may be more reactive or fearful of intervention than native-born families.

2. Openness

Establish a trusting relationship through dialogue, listening and support.

Certain actions and attitudes can positively influence the families' perceptions of and reactions to the intervention, namely those aimed at the following:

- Being aware of the stress caused by the intervention and helping them overcome it by showing respect, persevering and not judging;
- Taking an interest in their immigration process and settlement in the host country, both in terms of the hardships they have experienced and the successes they have achieved;
- Recognizing their strengths and resilience in immigrating;
- Establishing a dialogue around their educational values, their expectations of their child's behaviour and how they see their behaviour toward their child, without judging;
- Explaining the process and direction of the youth protection intervention more clearly.

Using an interpreter or intercultural expert may also be necessary to facilitate communication and mutual understanding.



3. Negotiation

Negotiating compromises regarding the solutions to be put in place can be promising, especially when value systems are at odds. It can help to find common ground to end the conflict in a way that respects the immigrant parents' educational values, prior cultural experiences and living conditions.

Parents appreciate youth workers' efforts to give them leeway to be involved in decisions about their families. In particular, they value the following:

- Participating actively in the decision-making process;
- Being encouraged to ask questions, give their opinion on what is being proposed or suggest alternatives;
- Working on setting common goals, having the opportunity to set their limits and feeling that the youth workers respect it;
- Receiving support to help them negotiate their dual cultural affiliation and overcome the cultural gap that may exist between them and their teenagers.



Taking a participatory and negotiation-oriented stance can help rebalance the power in the relationship with them and help increase their sense of competency and commitment to change.

4. Concrete assistance

Support families to overcome challenges related to migration paths or the integration process.

Families appreciate getting help to resolve difficulties and receiving information, referrals and support in their endeavours to gain access to the following:

- Information on parenting in the host country (e.g., workshops on adapting to parental roles);
- Local community organizations (e.g., food banks);
- Public programs and services (e.g., family allowances or medical care for children);
- Immigration assistance (e.g., information on social benefits based on immigration status).

While some of the listed needs may appear to be outside the scope of the youth protection mandate, it can be helpful to recognize them and actively connect them to relevant resources to strengthen their social safety net and help sustain changes.





References...

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Additional resources...

[A framework for intercultural intervention](#)

Two videos on working with immigrant families:

- [1. Working with families in a culturally diverse context: Some thoughts \(13 minutes\)](#)
- [2. Valuing the involvement of immigrant fathers \(15 minutes\)](#)

[An equitable practice framework for African-Canadian clients](#)

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