CAPACITY BUILDING THROUGH THE COVID-19 LENS:

HARNESSING INNOVATION AND MOBILIZING BEST PRACTICES FROM THE PANDEMIC

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FOCUS AREA: COMMUNITY RECEPTION & INTEGRATION

COVID-19 CONTEXT

Social connections are often lost or diminished in the virtual realm, greatly impacting the mental health, employment safety and security, access to healthcare, and face-to-face community engagement of both service providers and newcomers.

VULNERABLE POPULATIONS

Newcomer women
- Disproportionate need to balance home demands with professional development and formal employment

Refugee youth
- Increased negative mental health and educational setbacks (technological barriers)
- High stress levels paired with a lack of support systems

Asian communities
- Anti-Asian sentiment arose from the perceived association with the COVID-19 virus

Newcomers who do not hold permanent resident status
- Unable to access many newcomer services

PRELIMINARY OBSERVATIONS

CHALLENGES & BARRIERS

Organizational level

- Restrictions to in-person programming
- Limited opportunities for outreach and promotion of newcomer services

Client level

- Barriers with essential translation
- Technological barriers limiting access to online newcomer services
- Maintaining the same quality of education for school aged children during the transition to virtual learning

BEST PRACTICES

- Pop-up COVID-19 Vaccination clinics
- Partnerships between newcomer serving organizations to create culturally competent food hampers
- Conversation circles
- Virtual mentoring programs for children and youth

SAMPLE FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

- What are the barriers to connecting newcomers to the community amidst COVID-19?
- What patterns have been observed in relation to racism and discrimination experienced based on misconceptions around COVID-19?
- What are the interventions implemented to increase community connections during the COVID-19 pandemic?
- What have been the best practices and approaches utilized to increase community connections during the COVID-19 pandemic?
- How have agencies navigated pre-existing or emergent barriers pertaining to community integration amidst the public health context?
- What learnings from the COVID-19 context of community reception and integration are worthwhile to leverage into organizational capacity building and professional development?
- What emerging practices have transformed service delivery and are most effective for supporting newcomers' community integration in the context of COVID-19 and its long-term impacts?
- What approaches across agencies can strengthen the network of community reception and integration services and develop sector-wide capacity to support newcomers with these emergent needs in relation to community reception and integration?
- What approaches have been developed to ensure effective community reception and integration service delivery to newcomers with complex needs or those who have traditionally been underserved?
- What specific issues have emerged from COVID-19 that have prompted you and your partner agencies to develop collaborative responses pertaining to community reception and integration services?