

2016 - 2017

HEALTHY FAMILIES HEALTHY COMMUNITIES EVALUATION SUMMARY

Purpose:

This evaluation of the Healthy Families Healthy Communities program aimed to understand participants' experience in the program and assess the impact of the program on their lives.

What is Healthy Families Healthy Communities?

The Healthy Families Healthy Communities (HFHC) program is an initiative for youth and women from Tamil, Afghan, Iranian, and Somali communities to share experiences, learn new information about Canada, and address issues around family violence. The program has been in operation since 2013.

What does HFHC Involve?

- *Family Services Toronto* (FST) hires and trains **peer leaders** from Afghan, Iranian, Somali and Tamil communities to facilitate **youth workshops and support groups**.
- **Community facilitators** from FST conduct **workshops for women in the community**.
- In the Afghan & Somali communities, some women were parents of participants in the youth group.

Workshops dealt with three themes:



Self



Family



Community

Evaluation Process

Surveys

FST's Knowledge Building team developed **surveys** to identify fundamental aspects of programs.

- Participants indicated satisfaction with sessions from 1 ('strong dislike') to 5 ('liked a lot').
- Participants indicated agreement with a set of statements related to program impacts on attitudes towards self, family and community.

Focus Groups

HFHC staff conducted and assisted with **focus groups** and informal feedback sessions to gain a deeper understanding of program impacts.

- Peer leaders and community facilitators led discussions in participants' first language.
- Participants reflected on key learnings and experiences in the program.

What are the goals of HFHC?

- Increase interpersonal skills in problem solving and communication in the family.
- Increase interpersonal connections among community members.
- Develop participants' capacity to address issues of violence in family and community settings.
- Increase knowledge about community crisis, health and social services.
- Increase knowledge about life in Canada, including laws, rights and responsibilities.
- Help participants negotiate differences between their culture of origin and Canadian culture.

*There was no evaluation conducted with the Tamil women's group in 2016-2017.

WOMEN'S GROUPS

HOW DID THE PROGRAM HELP YOU?

Learned new and effective ways to raise children

Improved social connectedness

Increased knowledge related to newcomers and family violence

Learned about Canadian laws on immigration and individual rights

Gained awareness about available services for newcomers

The statements above were expressed by Afghan and Iranian women in focus groups following program completion.

In 2016 – 2017, HFHC included four groups for women in the community:

- Afghan Women
- Somali Women
- Tamil Women
- Iranian Women

Program Improvements

In 2015-2016, women from the Afghan group suggested it would be easier to attend the group if childcare could be provided.

In 2016-17, Afghan women praised the on-site childcare, as their children could make friends and learn about their culture, language and tradition.

BECAUSE OF THIS PROGRAM...

IMPROVED RELATIONSHIP WITH SELF



- *I have a better understanding of myself.*
- *I learned strategies to take care of myself if I feel angry, stressed or lonely.*
- *I feel more connected to others.*

IMPROVED RELATIONSHIP WITH FAMILY



- *I know how to tell if a relationship is healthy or unhealthy.*
- *I have built a closer relationship with my children.*
- *I know healthy ways of dealing with conflict.*

IMPROVED RELATIONSHIP WITH COMMUNITY



- *I know how to access more services in my community.*
- *I have a better understanding of how violence affects children and youth.*
- *I have a better sense of how to have healthy community relationships and connections.*

"I gained so many ideas about self, how to give my life direction, how to communicate with my kids, how to help the community and work as a group."

"The program gave women a place to come together, exchange ideas and build friendships. We talked about how we can do things together as a community and build better lives."

Over 85% of Iranian and Somali participants expressed agreement with the above statements.

YOUTH GROUPS

In 2016 – 2017, HFHC conducted four groups for youth in the community*:

- Afghan Youth (F)
- Somali Youth (F)
- Afghan Youth (M)
- Iranian Youth (M/F)

“The family part of the workshops was the most interesting to me. I tried using what I learned about communication with my brothers and sisters.”

“I really loved the program. I became more socialized after joining the program. I am interested in continuing and meeting new friends.”

HOW DID THE PROGRAM HELP YOU?

Learned strategies for dealing with intense emotions

Increased knowledge of rights and definition of abuse in Canada

Increased confidence identifying healthy and unhealthy relationships

Developed communication, problem solving and conflict resolution skills

Gained knowledge about available services for newcomers to Canada

The statements above were expressed by Iranian youth in focus groups following program completion, and by Somali youth in a conceptual mapping exercise in the program's final session.

Iranian-Canadian youth said that HFHC helped them increase social connections by:

- Introducing them to new friends through peer support meetings;
- Increasing their confidence to meet people outside of their Iranian peer group;
- Teaching them to have a “good attitude towards everyone”.

Somali-Canadian youth said that because of their participation in HFHC groups, they:

- Became more aware of the warning signs of abuse;
- Gained confidence and pride in their identity as Somali-Canadians;
- Learned strategies to promote self-confidence, self-acceptance and a positive internal voice.

Afghan-Canadian youth identified that HFHC promoted development in many key areas, by:

- Teaching them strategies for dealing with intense emotions;
- Increasing their knowledge of their rights and the definition of abuse in Canada;
- Increasing their confidence in identifying healthy and unhealthy relationships.

For more information about Healthy Families Healthy Communities:

Visit us online at familyservicetoronto.org or call us at (416) 595 9230.

Icon Credit:
Person, by ngamlerdle.design (Noun Project)

*M = Male, F= Female; Based on participants' self-identification of their own gender.

The Iranian male and female youth groups combined based on the preference of the participants.