

321. Cross-cultural lessons of engaging immigrant and refugee families in research and evaluation

This presentation will share the cross-cultural evaluation lessons that emerged from a community-based early childhood developmental screening and follow-up intervention project implemented in a culturally diverse community in Alberta. The project was a collaboration of nine partners from the health, children's services, education, and non-profit sectors and used a paraprofessional, strength-based model of service delivery to build parent and community capacity to support the healthy development of young children. Parents of 18- and 36-month old children completed a developmental screening questionnaire. Following screening, families were provided with support, educational programmes, and if necessary, intervention, that built on existing family and community resources. To make informed decisions about how services are being allocated and delivered, it is critical to include the perspectives of immigrant and refugee families about their children's development and address the barriers they face in accessing health and social services. Engaging families marginalized by income, culture, and language barriers is often challenging in research and evaluation. Within this project, barriers were addressed by integrating multicultural health brokers within the service delivery model, evaluation planning and implementation. The brokers are bicultural and bilingual members of the community that provide linguistic interpretation and cultural clarification while supporting families in accessing services and resources within the health and social services systems, and community. This presentation will describe the process of working collaboratively with brokers to engage immigrant and refugee families in a community-based evaluation in order to better understand culturally relevant developmental screening and intervention practices. In particular, this presentation will highlight both the challenges (e.g., recruitment, data collection) and successes (e.g., engagement with new communities, consent procedures, knowledge mobilization) of engaging immigrant and refugee families in collaborative research and evaluation.