

SETSCoP

Communique: Fourth meeting of the Individual and family wellbeing and safety sub-group

Videoconference – 3 August 2021

On 3 August 2021, SETSCoP held its fourth meeting for members of the Individual and family wellbeing and safety sub-group. The focus of the meeting was on how settlement services support the mental health of clients.

Mental health in settlement

Attendees shared the unique considerations for addressing mental health in the context of settlement. Providers acknowledged that the key role of settlement practitioners in mental health is to identify, provide basic psychoeducation and refer to specialist mental health services.

Attendees noted that when supporting clients with mental health concerns, settlement practitioners should:

- Screen for mental health issues and provide basic psychoeducation in a way that clients understand, with consideration of cultural or religious factors.
- Understand the stigma associated with receiving mental health support and consider safety in their community.
- Be aware that not only cognitive or emotional symptoms can demonstrate mental health issues but also symptoms which are psychosomatic (e.g. physical symptoms such as stomach pain).

One attendee noted that it is important to differentiate that some settlement practitioners have a specialist focus in an area of settlement, while others provide more general case work support.

Moreover, that soft entry activities and initiatives are valuable in starting conversations around mental health and wellbeing. There was general consensus that developing trust and providing safe environments promote disclosure of mental health concerns from settlement clients. Interestingly the COVID-19 pandemic has normalised mental health issues and as such has led to more awareness of mental wellbeing and acceptance of seeking mental health support for members of migrant and refugee communities.

Assessment of risk

In addition to the identification of mental health concerns and knowing appropriate referral pathways, settlement practitioners need to have a good ability to assess risk across a range of domains including:

- Mental health and wellbeing
- Suicide risk

- Family and domestic violence
- Child safety.

Training and tools

Participants shared that there would be value in specific training for settlement practitioners that looks at how to support individuals with mental health issues in settlement. Additionally, that there needs to be greater support around boundaries and self-care for frontline settlement staff who at times need to respond to complex and emotionally-charged situations. The development of templates and tools to support mental health in settlement was also suggested the sub-group members.

Shared resources

[Mental health first aid training](#)

[ASIST suicide intervention training](#)