

Looking through the lens: A photovoice study examining access to services for newcomer children ^[1]

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Source: International Journal of Qualitative Studies on Health and Well-being

Format: Article

Publication Date: 8 Sep 2023

AVAILABILITY

Access online ^[2]

Abstract

Purpose

Canadian new immigrant families (also known as newcomers) encounter challenges navigating systems when trying to access programmes critical for their children's healthy development. The purpose of this study is to understand how newcomer families find and use early childhood programmes and services from the perspective of families and early childhood educators (ECEs) working within a settlement organization.

Methods

Using photovoice methodology, newcomer family members (n = 8) with young children and ECEs (n = 6) participated in a series of virtual workshops to share photos and reflect on their experiences.

Results

Participants discussed the systemic barriers that obstructed newcomer families' access to services for young newcomer children. Financial challenges due to unemployment/underemployment, language and cultural differences were emphasized. Despite these barriers and challenges, participants shared how culturally responsive programmes enhanced their connections to programmes and services. Both groups of participants discussed the critical role of social networks in supporting newcomers to use programmes by helping families become aware of available services and assistance with various processes such as registration.

Conclusions

This research illustrates the lived experiences of newcomer families and identifies opportunities to address inequities, improve early childhood programmes, and enhance families' access to programmes and services.

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