

THE CCIS CULTURAL BROKERAGE PROGRAM: Creating Positive Outcomes Over Three Years

Executive Summary of Evaluation Findings from the
CCIS Cultural Brokerage Program
2014-2017



December 2017

Executive Summary

With funding from Alberta Human Services, the Calgary Catholic Immigration Society (CCIS) established the Cultural Brokerage Program in 2014 to address the need for enhanced, culturally competent, services for culturally diverse children and families involved with the Government of Alberta's Ministry of Children's Services (Children's Services). Children's Services seek to ensure that children in Alberta are safe as they grow and develop. If there is a concern for a child's safety within their family, Children's Services will assess the situation in order to determine what the family can do to increase the safety of the child. If concerns for the child's wellbeing are grave, Children's Services may apprehend the child to ensure the maintenance of their safety.

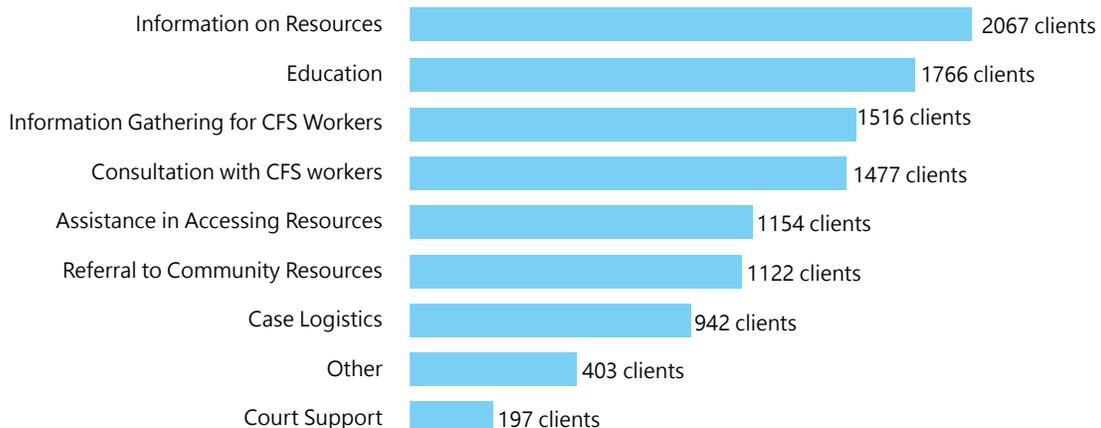
Research has shown that newcomer families experience multifaceted challenges directly related to their migration and resettlement experiences. Cultural Brokers understand the impact of resettlement upon families and are able to expertly identify root causes of family strife, enabling opportunities to connect families to the resources that will support their ability to thrive in Canada.

The support provided by Cultural Brokers helps Children's Services close cases more quickly, conduct culturally responsive assessments and, when child safety is assured, avoid apprehensions. For families, the involvement of Cultural Brokers decreases the stress and fear that might come with Children's Services involvement, promoting greater mutual understanding between Children's Services and culturally diverse families. The support from Cultural Brokers also helps ensure that families are supported beyond their involvement with Children's Services, helping them avoid Children's Services involvement in the future and enabling them to thrive in Canada.

When Children's Services is involved with culturally diverse families, CCIS' Cultural Brokerage Program helps to bridge the relationship between Children's Services and these families by providing:

- Cultural interpretation (including language interpretation)
- Referrals and information about community services (e.g. parenting programs, support for resettlement, etc.)
- Follow-up support and individual case management
- Information about Canadian expectations and laws
- Cultural Thinking Framework training for Children's Services staff to enhance cultural responsiveness in service provision with diverse cultural communities

Supports Beyond Cultural Interpretation Provided by Cultural Brokers Since 2014



Cultural Brokerage Program Clients Since Program Initiation in 2014

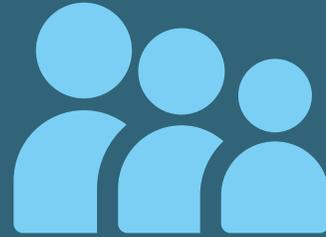
Over the last three years,
the Cultural Brokerage Program has supported

1,539

families
representing a total of

3,877

individuals.



Since 2014 the Cultural Brokerage Program has supported family members* born in **64** different countries.

The five most common countries where supported family members had been born:

Philippines	15%
Canada	15%
China	13%
India	11%
Pakistan	6%



* Note: Families may be composed of multiple cultures, so information reported about cultural background, languages spoken and country of origin are recorded and reported by individual family member.

When completing their involvement with the Cultural Brokerage Program, families are invited to participate in a Client Rated Outcome Exit Survey or a brief interview with the program evaluator to provide feedback about outcomes they may have experienced due to the program. Since the start of the program in 2014 **99% of families have felt they benefited overall from the Cultural Brokerage Program and:**

100%

of families felt that they learned about accessing community resources through the Cultural Brokerage Program

96%

of families indicated they feel more comfortable with government systems in Canada because of what they learned through the Cultural Brokerage Program

97%

of families feel that they now have goals or a plan of action because of the support they received through the Cultural Brokerage Program

Since 2014, program evaluation activities have revealed that the most prevalent concern leading to Children's Services' involvement with Cultural Brokerage Program clients has been domestic violence. In recognition of the prevalence of domestic violence concerns amongst Cultural Brokerage Program clients, the potential impact on children, the need for cultural consideration within domestic violence responses in May 2017 the Cultural Brokerage Program expanded to include a Domestic Violence (DV) Specialist and a formal partnership with the Calgary Women's Emergency Shelter (CWES) was established.

In working with individuals from different cultural contexts and worldviews the Cultural Brokerage Program DV Specialist works in a nuanced way that supports family desires while promoting whole-family wellness. For families this often means working to keep the family together and understanding the family as part of a broader community (collectivist worldview) rather than focusing on the experiences of individual family members separate from one another and the community more broadly (individualist (Western) worldview). Since May 2017, 33 families have worked with the DV Specialist.

Building on the experience of the Cultural Brokerage Program team and key learnings from community building efforts in the first two years of the program, in 2017 the Cultural Brokerage Program also developed a framework for working within contexts of cultural diversity. The framework, called the Cultural Thinking Framework, is the articulation of the experience of the Cultural Brokerage Program and provides a common approach that partners can use to bridge the gap between service delivery and the value of acknowledging cultural identities. Based on the Cultural Thinking Framework, training in intercultural practice has been developed and tailored for delivery with key community partners as well as Children's Services.

The creation of the Cultural Thinking Framework and the DV Specialist role are evidence of the Cultural Brokerage Program's desire to continually improve with the support from program evaluation activities. Overall, evaluation of the Cultural Brokerage Program over the last three years has revealed that important positive outcomes are being created for individuals, families, communities, and systems. By partnering with Children's Services to enhance their ability to work within cultural diversity the Cultural Brokerage Program has established an innovative and effective program model that promotes the best outcomes for culturally diverse families.

Recommendations based on the evaluation findings since 2014 include:

- 1. Continue the program and seek opportunities for expansion.**
Based on the effectiveness of the program in creating positive outcomes, it is recommended that the program continues. When asked about what could be improved about the program, the most common comment from all evaluation stakeholders was simply to provide more of the program, including more team members, more availability of Cultural Brokers, and more Children's Services offices having a Cultural Broker.
- 2. Continuously review program processes to ensure efficiency and effectiveness.**
Ongoing review of program procedures will be important for ensuring ongoing efficiency and effectiveness and effective program growth if the program expands.
- 3. Ensure Cultural Brokerage Program staff have access to training and self-care opportunities to avoid burnout.**
The work of the Cultural Brokerage team is inherently emotionally taxing, and recognizing the possibilities for both vicarious trauma and vicarious resilience through staff training and self-care opportunities will help ensure Cultural Brokers are resilient and able to best support families in the long-term.
- 4. Continue to evaluate the program and seek opportunities to share evaluation findings.**
Ongoing evaluation of the Cultural Brokerage Program will help ensure the program is continuously improved and nimble when faced with changing conditions in the future.