



Canadian Centre for Diversity and Inclusion
Centre canadien pour la diversité et l'inclusion

Success stories

Canadian Mental Health Association Waterloo Wellington
A Canadian case study in diversity and inclusion

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Canadian Mental Health Association Waterloo Wellington: A Canadian success story in diversity and inclusion

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Thanks to Minerva Sánchez Rudman and Christine Gilles at the Canadian Mental Health Association Waterloo Wellington for talking with me.

Expanding diversity in mental health services by improving language accessibility for community residents

If you are a mental health service provider in Canada, how do you provide counseling for a multicultural population that speaks a variety of languages? More specifically, how does a mainly English-speaking organization communicate with a diverse group of individuals when many of them do not communicate well or at all, in English? How would you communicate to provide much needed mental health services for people who only speak a language other than English such as Italian, Spanish, Chinese or Arabic? The issue of being able to provide services in a variety of languages to meet the needs of the increasing diversity among the residents within the Waterloo and Wellington communities is something that the [Canadian Mental Health Association of Waterloo-Wellington](#) (CMHA WW) has sought to overcome.

The CMHA WW officially launched on April 1, 2013 through the merger of two separate mental health providers, the CMHA Grand River Branch and Trellis Mental Health and Developmental Services. The merger took place to create one common mental health provider, reducing confusion and barriers to accessing mental health services in the community. This new organization has a total of 11 sites in the Waterloo Wellington area, which provide mental health and addiction services for all ages. The CMHA WW supports inclusion and diversity through the belief that welcoming a diverse range of voices and experiences will strengthen the organization and improve client experience. The organization values and welcomes the participation of the Waterloo and Wellington communities. Nevertheless, the organization strives to continuously seek new and unique ways to ensure a diverse range of voices are heard and provide influence with the help from their newly formed Inclusion and Diversity Committee.

Inclusion and diversity committee (IDC)

Two years ago, the CMHA WW created an Inclusion and Diversity Committee (IDC), starting at the employee level. To set themselves up for success, they updated their terms of reference, started a relationship with the Canadian Centre for Diversity and Inclusion (CCDI) and have an Inclusion and Diversity policy in progress. The committee accomplish their goals with the help of 16 active members, two co-chairs and the encouragement and input from the CMHA WW. The

committee works on implementing a variety of resources, activities and events to create greater diversity and inclusion within the organization, one of which is the interpretative services that they provide. This service is easily accessible to all staff and many of them have used it including Minerva Sánchez Rudman, senior executive assistant at CMHA WW. “We need to accommodate the growing immigrant and refugee population in the Waterloo and Wellington areas. The interpretation service allows us to provide the proper care and services needed,” says Rudman. The interpretive services implemented have allowed the CMHA WW to provide greater language accessibility to those in need.

Interpretive Services

The CMHA WW is committed to improving access to the organization’s different services. Language, in particular, is one barrier identified for many people who have learned English as a second language, or who do not speak English at all. “All staff have access to the interpretive services so that they can properly communicate and help people who speak a variety of languages and want to access mental health services,” says Christine Gilles, multicultural and French language services coordinator. Within the organization, the service creates a stronger awareness of the diversity among the employees themselves. At the CMHA in the Waterloo area, one of four staff speak English as a second language and in the Wellington area, one of five staff speak a first language other than English. “Becoming aware of the diversity of the staff at the CMHA WW helps create a greater understanding among the employees about the various countries and cultural backgrounds of the people they encounter daily,” adds Gilles. The interpretive services are offered both over-the-phone and in-person.

Over the Phone (OPI). The Over the Phone (OPI) service was launched last June in response to the increase of immigrants in the Waterloo and Wellington areas and the desire to accommodate their needs. CMHA WW has had some success with OPI before, but the organization had never contracted one business until last summer, when the organization began to work with a single business service called Language Services Toronto (LST) through the Toronto Central Local Health Integration Network (TC LHIN).

LST provides real-time, over-the-phone interpretation (OPI) services in more than 170 languages, 24 hours a day, seven days a week to immigrant, refugee, ethno-cultural and racialized populations. The main objectives of the LST program are to eliminate language barriers to accessing quality service and to improve health outcomes by ensuring increased, accurate communication between providers and patients using professionally-trained interpreters. The TC LHIN covers the costs of the service for providers in Community Support Services, Community Mental Health and Addictions, and Community Health Centres, while hospitals within the LHIN and hospitals and organizations outside the TC LHIN can also join the program, but pay the costs themselves.

The OPI service allows the organization to have a standardized procedure for all staff to use the interpretive services as needed. The service usually involves a three-way conversation between the interpreter, client and counselor. Rudman has used the OPI service before. “It is generally fast and accessible within two to three minutes of calling them,” says Rudman. The service is

used during times when people call in-crisis, or during off-peak hours at night or on the weekend. It is at these times that providing access to an interpreter in person may not be possible, and the OPI service gives people an alternative way to receive help. With the OPI, the organization is no longer limited to helping people access their services at restricted times, but can help people receive the services they need 24/7.

Face-to-Face/ In-Person Services. To accommodate all situations, there are different ways of providing interpretation that is not over the phone, such as face-to-face. “Face-to-face interpretation is preferred, as it is easier for the interpreter and the client to engage in conversation”, says Rudman. The organization is currently working with two local agencies: Immigrant Services Guelph-Wellington for the Wellington area and Kitchener Waterloo (KW) Multicultural Centre for the Waterloo area. The CMHA WW works with these organizations because they are both local and offer a wide range of services. To increase the comfort of interpreters working in the mental health context, the CMHA WW recently organized an information session with Immigrant Services Guelph-Wellington and with KW Multicultural Center where interpreters came to listen and share with the CMHA WW teams in the Waterloo region.

The CMHA WW has been successful integrating both over-the-phone (OPI) and face-to-face interpretive services as one way to initiate greater diversity and inclusion within the organization. These interpretive services offered are helping to make them more accessible to a wider range of clientele. This organization is committed to meeting the needs of the diverse and ever-growing populations found in the Waterloo and Wellington communities and have been overcoming these barriers since their launch in 2013. The CMHA WW has made many changes to create a diverse and inclusive environment within the organization. Some of the changes include having at least one gender neutral washroom at all 11 sites, using inclusive language in caseworks and adding Implicit Bias test to the onboarding package. Other changes in the wider community include developing a partnership with the Sanctuary Refugee Centre, ensuring translations are available for their pamphlets and on their website, providing training in Diversity Hiring Practices, creating a Refugee and Newcomers mental health workshop, and providing First Nations/Métis/Inuit cultural safety training.

The Success Story Initiative

There is astonishingly little published that shines a light on diversity and inclusion successes in Canada, though there are many, across a wide range of organizations. Case studies referenced by trainers and leadership tend to be reporting on different countries, cultures, political and economic settings.

The goal of this initiative is to support diversity and inclusion leadership with stories that are relevant to what's happening now, here in Canada. By sharing their stories, we celebrate the successes of Canadian organizations while contributing to learning for everyone that cares about diversity and inclusion.

The employers who have developed initiatives to promote diversity and inclusion as priorities in the workplace are responding to an increasingly competitive economy that's responsive to the diversity of employees – and the country. We are grateful to those who have participated in interviews.

This series of case studies will be published monthly. Subscribing to our monthly newsletter at ccdi.ca will keep you updated with the latest case studies, which will all be posted online at ccdi.ca/successstories. For more information, contact mail@ccdi.ca.

The Canadian Centre for Diversity and Inclusion

The CCDI has a mission to help the organizations we work with be inclusive, free of prejudice and discrimination – and to generate the awareness, dialogue and action for people to recognize diversity as an asset and not an obstacle.

Through the research, reports and toolkits we develop and our workshops, events and workplace consultations, we're helping Canadian employers understand their diversity, plan for it and create inclusion.

CCDI's leadership has a proven model that's cultivated trust as an impartial third party. Our expertise is focused on the topics of inclusion that are relevant in Canada now and the regional differences that shape diversity.

A charitable organization that thinks like a business, we have created a niche with our innovative research technology and data analysis that brings a deeper understanding of Canadian diversity demographics and mindsets at any given moment.

CCDI is grateful for the support of Employer Partners across Canada. For enquiries, contact Susan Rogers, Chief Client Officer, Susan.Rogers@ccdi.ca or (416) 968-6520, ext. 103.

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