

Multi-Agency Partnership (MAP)

Minutes of the Meeting on Thursday, April 26, 2018

Location: OPTIONS – Whalley WorkBC Location Meeting Room)

Suite 160-10362 King George Blvd., Surrey

The meeting was held on the unceded territories of the Coast Salish peoples, specifically the Kwantlen, Katzie, Semiahmoo, and Tsawwassen First Nations.

Attendees: Zarghoona Wakil (MOSAIC); Masashi Yoshida (MOSAIC); Loren Balisky (Kinbrace); Adriana Zepeda (Kinbrace); Angelica Alejandro (VAST); Mariana M. Vieyra (VAST); Andrea Noakes (VAST); Sabrina Dumitra (AMSSA); Sara (AMSSA); Thanh Lam (Mount Pleasant N H); Sylvie Viger (MJTT); Peter Prediger (inasmuch); Tammy Johnson (inasmuch); Nathan Wright (bc211); James Grunau (Journey Home); Heidi Rist (Journey Home); Yulia (Journey Home); Valentina Stanciu (MSDPR); Khim Tan (Options); Iris Solorzano (Options); Dennis Juarez (Options); Yola Vargas (FBC); Katherine de Visser (IRCC); Mia Morin (Vancity); Patricia Mahecha (Inland Refugee Society); Mobin (Inland Refugee Society); Tina Murphy (Fraser Health); Sandra Almeida (SUCCESS); Mary Kam (SUCCESS); Azadeh Tamjeedi (UNHCR); Chris Morrissey (Rainbow Refugee); Meheret Bisrat (DIVERSEcity); Raquel Velasquez (Umbrella Multicultural Health Co-op)
Jenny Moss (MAP)

Apologies: Bridget Bell (IRB), Ronnie Law (MOSAIC), Gillian Orris (Canadian Red Cross)

9:30 am Welcome

Co-chair: Mariana M. Vieyra (VAST)

Introductions

Thanks to Vancity for providing the funding for MAP

The Agenda was outlined and approved.

The March Minutes were approved

AGREED that unless requested in paper form future Minutes will be available electronically only.

9:45 am Refugee Claimants' Health Benefits under MSP: response to questions raised.

Monica Uribe - Manager, Eligibility, Compliance and Enforcement Unit – Ministry of Health

Monica is the manager of the ECE Unit, comprised of 12 investigators for the province of BC. Their main role is to detect and investigate suspected non-residents who are abusing the Medical Services Plan of BC. Part of their role is to ensure that all eligible beneficiaries receive funded benefits. The Investigators work closely with the Health Authorities in determining eligibility for funded medical, hospital and pharmacy benefits for BC residents.

Monica presented to answer questions regarding refugee claimants' benefits under MSP – eligibility and regulations. She explained she could not answer questions pertaining to IFH (Interim Federal Health) which is not a provincial program.

Monica provided a PowerPoint presentation that is attached.

Questions & Answers:

Q: How can claimants apply for a waiver for the waiting period?

A: Write to the Waiver Committee with a request. A package of information and forms to complete will be sent.

Q: How strongly does the hospital try to recover fees?

A: Fees are recovered by the Ministry of Finance for MSP & Pharmacare, and if needed through a credit agency

But hospitals are very willing to organize a repayment plan that is workable. And the same would go for MSP premium payments, doctor's fees etc.

But the debt must eventually be repaid.

Q: Can Refugee youth under the care of MCFD receive MSP benefits?

A: MCFD is the guardian – so these minors are eligible for MSP

Q: But what if that doesn't happen?

A: Agency should contact Monica's unit – MCFD will pay health costs in place of a parent.

Q: Are files referred to CBSA of undocumented people with unpaid bills?

A: MSP does not make referrals to CBSA. Not their mandate to refer to immigration. But they must recover unpaid bills.

This did happen in Fraser Health a long time ago, but now MSP operates under the 'Access without Fear'

Q: If a child is born in the USA to refugee claimants in Canada can he/she receive MSP?

A: As long as all outstanding bills have been paid.

Q: Should a claimant apply for MSP immediately they receive a work permit? Claimant doesn't necessarily have a job and the premiums are difficult to pay.

A: Ministry applies for the care card once a claimant has work permit / Social Assistance.

Agreed this is a difficult situation when a claimant is without work.

10:30 – BREAK

10:45: MAP matters: World Refugee Day – invitation to volunteer

WRD: Wednesday June 20 – a celebration of the resilience of refugees and an opportunity to inform.

The event will focus on refugee claimants as there is a need to provide more public education.

There will be several events at Vancouver Public Library Central Branch including:

- a) Information Fair on the Promenade: tables available to MAP members (10 am – 4pm)
- b) Simulation of a refugee claimant's experience: Take a Walk in My Shoes (11am – 3pm)
- c) Reading of the City Proclamation for World Refugee Day and speeches (1pm)

MAP invites members to sign up for a table on the promenade and to indicate whether they want to represent themselves in the simulation or prefer to approve a pre-written script. Jenny will follow up.

Volunteers are also needed for pre-planning and to help at the event. If you would like to help please contact Jenny at info@mapbc.org or 778-835-3760

10:55 am - Opportunity to provide key input to AMSSA for National Settlement Conference

Facilitator: Sabrina Dumitra, Settlement Coordinator, AMSSA

The National Settlement Council is a pan-Canadian mechanism for ongoing dialogue, collaboration, consultation, planning, information exchange and the sharing of innovative practices among the settlement sector, key settlement and integration stakeholders, Provinces and Territories and Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC). The Council focuses on settlement and integration policy and programming designed to enhance settlement outcomes.

The National Settlement Conference will take place in June in Regina. BC's representatives are Chris Friesen (ISS), Jean McRae (Inter-cultural Assoc, Victoria), Katie Rosenberger (AMSSA)

At the same time this is an opportunity to create a BC focused immigration strategy to be used to facilitate dialogue between the settlement sector and the provincial government. The document will address some of the following topics: attraction, retention and dispersion of newcomers to BC in large and small communities.

AMSSA provided MAP with questions for members to respond and provide feedback:

General question: *how much time will be accorded to claimants' issues at the conference?*

A: It is a 2-day conference – CCR will bring up refugee claimant issues (30 mins) and there will be other opportunities – the needs of claimants are being raised more and more.

1. What key unaddressed needs are you seeing among refugee claimants? How have you seen these needs change over the past 1-2 years?

RESPONSES:

- Long process for refugee hearing – during that time refugee claimants are ineligible for work/language benefits.
Why not provide some training to claimants while they are waiting for their hearing?
- ESL classes with childminding.
- Refugee claimants need more income assistance because of the delays
- More services for youth:
 - Knowledge services for youth.
 - More explanation about the legal process for youth.This is a particularly difficult time for youth – especially those speaking other languages.
- Funding doesn't go far enough:
 - Settlement agencies don't have enough staff or resources to deliver everything claimants need.
- Need a discussion around who does what – maybe specialize – housing, English, work. There is too much duplication when everything is in just one or two hubs.
- Inform other community services about refugee claimants – their needs and rights. Go beyond silos to include more community services.

2. What approaches have you found to be successful in supporting refugee claimants? What additional strategies would improve support currently available?

- ISS refugee hub – they have housing for GARS – need more housing for claimants
- Pre- employment training – before claimants get their work permits
- Networking with local groups – places of worship, other groups who are willing to engage.
- Tapping into grassroots organizations who may have other ways to secure funds, non-traditional service providers.
- Groups that are trauma-informed for early intervention to support and inform claimants during the long process.
- Sustained support – knowledge stream that does the hard work on finding housing, legal etc – a more strategic approach for all claimants – like a Task force
- Health education – more like life skills – keeping appointments etc. Intersectionality with Health
- To be more mobile – accompaniment for those especially at the beginning.
e.g. should be social workers on staff with CBSA right from the start.

3. What leverage points exist for improved responses to the needs of refugee claimants by the Federal Government (IRCC) and the Provincial Government?

No answers

4. What are the current unaddressed organizational needs for your agency/organization? What supports would help you build capacity?

- There has been a doubling of client load for agencies working with claimants – need more help. Services are challenged because of the increase in numbers.
- Should there be a Funding grid for employees in the settlement sector?
Staff retention hard because of poor pay etc.
It's hard to attract and retain staff with poor pay and benefits. It's also difficult to maintain a cohesive working group when so many are part time.
- Constant changes forced on agencies because of funding changes
Insecurity because of the regular funding changes
- How can agencies provide stable and predictable help to clients when their staff don't have it.
(IRCC are looking at a possible 5-year cycle instead of current 3-year)

*The Conference is on June 14/15 – please contact Sabrina beforehand if you have more ideas:
at sdumitra@amssa.org or 604-718-4220*

11:40 am – AGENCY UPDATES

Mariana reminded members that updates should pertain to refugee claimant matters.

- **Khim (Options)**
Shared printed material about Option's services to claimants under the 2 streams.
- **Marit – DiverseCity**
Have 4 staff: Spanish, Punjabi,
Trying to include claimants in more of their services
- **Thanh - Mount Pleasant N H**
It's Neighborhood House Week.
- **Masashi – MOSAIC**
"I Belong" group now has a Fraser valley extension with services in Surrey serving LGBTQ claimants 2 days a week.
In Vancouver the group meets on 2nd and last Monday of every month.
- **Iris – Options**
All Options' programs are open to claimants: connections to services like income assistance applications, work searching and legal – Options provides services close to where claimants live.
- **Valentina - MSDPR**
Working at Options and DiverseCity – 2 days a week at each.
Once claimants have their claim ID they can ask for social assistance – it's also possible to apply by phone. Valentina frequently sets up 3-way call with claimant, settlement agency and ministry staff.
- **James – Journey Home**
Does your agency need funding? – 'Ride for Refugee' fundraiser is a great way. It's held on the Saturday before Thanksgiving in Vancouver and Fort Langley.
Ask James or Loren how to set up a team.
- **Loren – Kinbrace**
Wellness program has been stalled because Erin is leaving.
Invitation to MAP members to attend the Ready Tours 10th anniversary lunch after the next MAP meeting – look for invitation in MAP email directly.
- **Adriana – Kinbrace**
Also, Kinbrace is under renovation – they cannot take referrals from IRS because there's no space.
- **Sylvie – (MJTT)**
MJTT has started contacting the successful respondents regarding the following:
 - Negotiations of new contracts to start **July 1st, 2018**
 - Discussion of client transition if necessary

- **Mariana – VAST**

Representing MAP at Vancouver Immigration Summit Planning.

- **Jenny – MAP**

Jenny has 9 years' experience teaching English and she is willing to volunteer to collaborate with an agency to teach refugee claimants who don't have access to ESL otherwise. She is especially qualified teaching Spanish-speakers. Please get in touch if your agency is interested.

11:55 pm Evaluation and Adjournment

Next Meeting: Thursday, May 24, 9:30 am at Welcome Centre, Victoria Drive, Vancouver.