

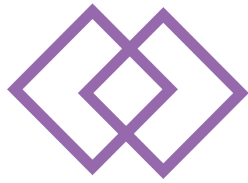


~~**SORRY,**~~

**I'M NEW HERE**

**HEALTHCARE NAVIGATION MANUAL VOL. 2**





**YA ESTOY AQUÍ**  
HEALTHCARE COLLECTIVE

# **~~SORRY,~~ I'M NEW HERE**

**HEALTHCARE NAVIGATION MANUAL VOL. 2**

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## BY:

Our original healthcare navigation manual, ***Ya Estoy Aquí***, was created by a team of five individuals, predominantly composed of Latina women who were recent newcomers to Toronto.

***Sorry, I'm New Here***, serves as the second volume in this healthcare navigation series, building on the voices of people who have experienced the realities of settlement and migration. For this edition, we broadened our outreach to consult with community members who reflect the cultures, languages, and histories depicted in the book. While we have worked hard to include diverse voices, it is important to acknowledge the limits of our representation. There are countless perspectives we have yet to capture fully. Experiences shaped by intersections of race, gender, disability, sexual orientation, and migration status. These gaps are not failures but reminders of the ongoing work required to create a resource that reflects the true complexity of the newcomer experience.

## FOR:

***Sorry, I'm New Here*** is a guide created for people navigating healthcare in Toronto under the Interim Federal Health Program (IFHP). It was created based on the real-life experiences of newcomers who learned to navigate a complicated healthcare system while dealing with the challenges of moving to a new home.

- **Newcomers** who are new to Canada's healthcare system and need simple, step-by-step advice on how to get the care they need.
- **Community advocates** and **service providers** who work alongside newcomers and need tools to help them overcome challenges in the system.
- **Healthcare providers** who want to learn more about the specific difficulties newcomers face, especially those who don't have an OHIP card and are trying to navigate healthcare on their own.

## LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

# Sorry, I'm new here.

These words, whispered with a mix of hope and uncertainty, echo the journey of many newcomers who set foot in this city. They carry the weight of leaving behind the familiar, the comfort of the known, to embark on a journey into the unknown. The puzzle piece trying to find its place in a new design.

When we launched *Ya Estoy Aquí* - Healthcare Navigation Manual Vol. 1 in the Summer of 2024, it sparked a real shift in power, finally enabling community members to navigate the system on their own terms. People were holding the manual in their hands, sharing it on their phones, finding themselves reflected in its pages.

But for all the people we lifted up, many of our own group members still carried their own weights. The limbo of status, the tightrope of legality, the waiting rooms where your name never gets called. Even as we stood in our moment, we knew there was still work to do.

*¡Y ya estamos aquí!* Not just as a testament to the newcomer experience, but as proof of what's possible when community is the foundation. *Sorry, I'm New Here* is both a mirror and a call to action. It is a moment to reflect on our lives, the systems designed to support them, and an invitation to do better together.

To be new here is to start over, over and over again. It's knowing the world might not fit you, but still deciding to carve out a corner that feels like home. It's a kind of courage that not everyone knows, a balancing act between survival and hope.

For those of us who aren't newcomers, the path home looks different. It's about unlearning indifference, about seeing the barriers that others face and refusing to let them stand. It's about recognizing that belonging isn't something to withhold—it's something to build.

## A NOTE ON STORY TELLING

This resource is built on a simple but powerful belief:  
***stories have the ability to inspire, empower, and guide.***

**"I WANT TO SHARE  
MY STORY, MY VOICE,  
SO OTHERS CAN  
FIND THEIR WAY, SO I  
MYSELF CAN HEAL."**

Because retelling personal trauma carries risks, we chose to create composite characters. This approach attempts to preserve authenticity while ensuring safety, privacy, and respect in how they are told. From start to finish, this process has been guided by group members with lived experience, who have prioritized transparency, fair compensation for contributors' time, and a deep awareness that stories are not just told but entrusted.

Our method also draws on *Story Theory*<sup>1</sup>, a nursing framework developed by Smith and Liehr that views narrative as a vital tool for reflection, meaning-making, and action. By presenting health challenges through first-person stories, we aim to give readers a sense of recognition and possibility. These narratives are, in many ways, fairy tales. Problems have solutions, and every step leads somewhere. Reality is often more complicated, but the steps taken in these stories are real, the organizations exist, and the outcomes, though not guaranteed, are possible.

We also recognize that storytelling alone is not enough to support communities facing real challenges. True support for newcomers goes beyond simply providing resources, and trust can only be earned from genuine, ongoing connections. To truly break down barriers, services must be shaped by the people who use them. This resource is not neutral. It carries the voices, frustrations, and urgency of our own group members who have lived and are living with precarious immigration status as reflected in its pages. It stands with them, because they have, and will always have, the final say on what we're standing for.

1) Liehr, P., & Smith, M. J. (2020). Claiming the Narrative Wave With Story Theory. *Advances in Nursing Science*, 43(1), 15–27. <https://doi.org/10.1097/ANS.0000000000000303>

# YOUR STORY MATTERS

Your experiences with the healthcare system are important. They can inspire others and help make things better. **Follow the link to share your story**—whether it's a success, a struggle, or something you've learned along the way. Your voice will help improve this resource and work toward better healthcare for everyone.



**CLICK HERE TO SHARE YOUR STORY**

*Thank you for trusting us with your story.  
Building a stronger, more caring  
community starts with listening to you.*



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# WHO'S IT IFHP & ME FOR?



## **RESETTLED REFUGEES:**

Government-assisted,  
privately sponsored



## **REFUGEE CLAIMANTS:**

Awaiting claim  
decision



## **PROTECTED PERSONS:**

Asylum approved or  
PRRA decision



## **SURVIVORS OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING:**

With temporary resident  
permit



## **SURVIVORS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE:**

With temporary resident  
permit



## **DETAINEES:**

Under detention in  
Canada



## **OTHER GROUPS:**

Eligibility may vary

**Coverage continues until eligible for provincial  
insurance or other conditions.**

# WHAT'S INCLUDED?



## **BASIC COVERAGE:**

Hospital care, primary care by a doctor or nurse practitioner, transport to the hospital by ambulance



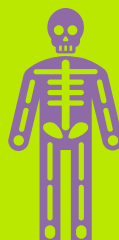
## **SUPPLEMENTAL COVERAGE:**

Vision, urgent dental care, mobility aids, psychotherapy



## **MEDICATIONS:**

drugs prescribed by a doctor or nurse practitioner



## **IME COVERAGE:**

Exams and diagnostic test for the purpose of your Immigration Medical Exam



## PATIENTS AND PROVIDERS



***Finding help in Ontario's healthcare system can feel like  
being lost in a maze.***

## VOICES FROM COMMUNITY MEMBERS

*When you try to access healthcare, what's the first thing you think or feel? For many newcomers, it's a sense of uncertainty.*



# ANXIETY ABOUT ACCESSING CARE

*"Every time I need to see a doctor, I feel this knot in my stomach. Will they know how IFHP works? What if they ask for money I don't have? Sometimes, I wonder if it's easier not to go at all."*

Not knowing how the system works can make people feel unsure and stressed. Many newcomers worry they might be turned away or asked to pay a lot of money. This can cause them to wait too long before getting help, even when their health issues are serious.

# FEELING LIKE AN OUTSIDER

Language and cultural differences can make people feel alone or left out. Patients might feel invisible or misunderstood, especially when healthcare providers don't know about their specific needs or how programs like IFHP work.

*"I don't know if they really see me when I'm sitting there. I've tried to explain my situation so many times, but it feels like no one is listening. I leave most appointments feeling more confused than when I walked in."*

# LIMITED ACCESS TO SPECIALIZED SERVICES

*"When I asked about mental health support, they handed me a pamphlet in English. I couldn't even read it. I know they wanted to help, but it just made me feel more alone."*

Even when care is available, it doesn't always meet the specific needs of newcomers. When healthcare providers don't understand a patient's background, culture or past experiences, patients can be left feeling unsupported and disconnected from their own care.

## VOICES FROM HEALTHCARE PROVIDERS

# OVERWHELMED BY ADMINISTRATIVE BURDENS

*"The system expects us to handle so much paperwork for one patient. Checking if someone qualifies for care, getting approvals before treatment, and filling out paperwork for insurance claims is exhausting and takes time away from patient care."*

Accepting IFHP patients involves checking eligibility and using a different payment process. The extra paperwork and steps can feel like a lot of work, which may discourage some providers from participating.

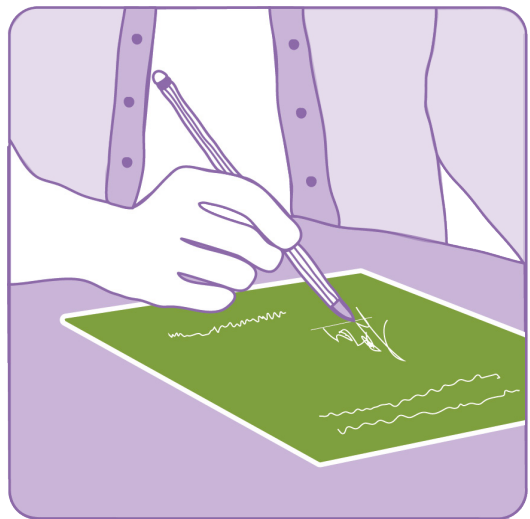
# LIMITED AWARENESS OF IFHP PROCESSES

Many healthcare providers don't know about IFHP or aren't signed up to offer care through it. This lack of understanding often causes delays, refusals, or requests for payment that shouldn't happen.

*"Sometimes, I see a patient's IFHP document, and I hesitate. Do I know what's covered? What if I make a mistake? It feels easier to avoid it altogether."*

# MISMATCH BETWEEN COVERAGE AND CARE NEEDS

*"A mother came to me urgently seeking mental health support for her Farsi speaking teenage daughter. But the only option was group-based support in English. What she needed was a therapist who understood her culture, was trained in trauma care, and spoke Farsi"*



Sometimes it's worth a second opinion: therapy for Depression, Anxiety, and PTSD is available in Farsi and more at **The Wise Self Psychotherapy Clinic** or **Nazca Health**.

Many newcomers require mental health support that matches their cultural background, language, and lived experience.

# EMPOWERING YOURSELF AND OTHERS

## FOR PATIENTS:

### **Create a Personal Health Cheat Sheet**

Write down your medical history, current health issues, allergies, and medications in clear, simple language. Having this information prepared can save time and help avoid misunderstandings.

### **Bring a Support Person**

If you can, bring a trusted friend, family member, or community advocate to your appointment. If no one is available, try using a phone or video call during the visit to connect with someone who can help and support you.

## KEY PHRASES FOR FINDING YOUR WAY:

### **Requesting a Referral:**

*"I understand that this clinic might not have the specialist I need. Could you please refer me to someone who accepts IFHP coverage?"*

### **Inquiring About Coverage:**

*"I am covered under IFHP. Can you confirm if this service or medication is included in my coverage?"*

### **Seeking Clarification:**

*"I'm not sure I completely understand the steps you explained. Could you go over it again or give it to me in writing?"*



## FOR HEALTHCARE PROVIDERS:

### Create a “Starter Kit” for Common Newcomer Needs

Don't forget to include resources that help with social support like **food** and **clothes** as well. They can be just as important!

### Build an Interpreter Contact List

Build a list of reliable options (e.g., local interpreters, language lines, or apps) and share it with patients when they register.

### Follow-Up and Check-In

If you referred a patient and haven't heard back, follow up to check for obstacles in their care, and take the extra steps to bridge any gaps.

## SUPPORTIVE ACTIONS AND KEY STEPS:

### Confirming IFHP Eligibility and Coverage:

*“Let me call the **Medavie Blue Cross IFHP Hotline** to confirm your coverage is still active and check if this medication is included. This will help us avoid any surprises and make sure you get the care you need.”*

### Directing Patients to Reliable Resources:

*“We can't help you here today, but here's a list of clinics that are familiar with IFHP. Let me highlight the ones I think would be best for your situation. I recommend calling them before you arrive to make sure they can see you.”*

Looking for a refugee friendly food bank?  
Try **Vaughan Food Bank** for residents of Vaughan or **Humanity First** for residents living in the GTA.

**Breaking down barriers in healthcare takes small, intentional actions from both patients and providers. Together, these steps build trust, improve understanding, and create a pathway to care that feels less like a maze and more like a partnership.**



## PRIMARY CARE

Finding primary care can be one of the most frustrating and uncertain experiences for newcomers. Whether it's finding a clinic that accepts IFHP, getting support for a child with disabilities, or knowing where to go when appointments are unavailable, the following stories highlight both the struggles and the solutions.

*Healthcare options  
if you don't have  
OHIP*

*Community Health  
Centres & supports to  
bridge the gaps*

*Self-advocacy and  
getting around  
healthcare barriers*

### ***Key Resources:***

**CIBC Just for Kids Clinic** – Specialized healthcare clinic for children, including those covered under IFHP.

**TAIBU Community Health Centre** – Holistic healthcare services for the Black community across the Greater Toronto Area.

**Scarborough Health Network Urgent Care Centre** – Quick medical care for non-life-threatening conditions that require immediate attention.

**Refugee Friendly Clinics** – A comprehensive list of healthcare clinics that are familiar with IFHP and serve newcomers.

# MARIA'S STORY



I stayed up all night trying to care for my son, Emmanuel, who had a high fever.

The medication wasn't helping, and I felt alone and uncertain about what to do.

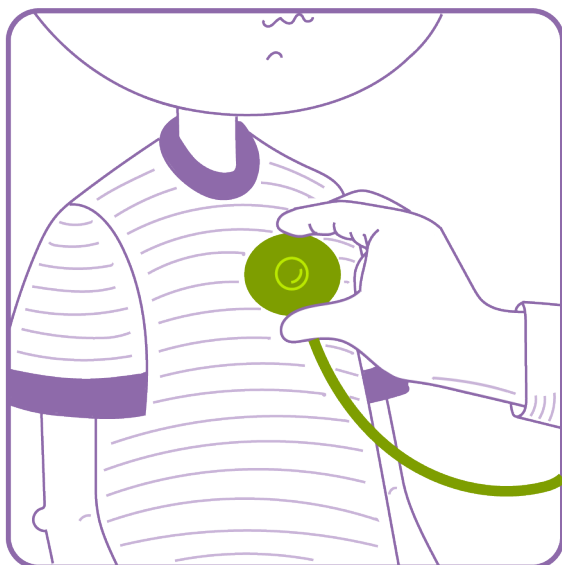


I called one clinic after another, but no one answered my calls.

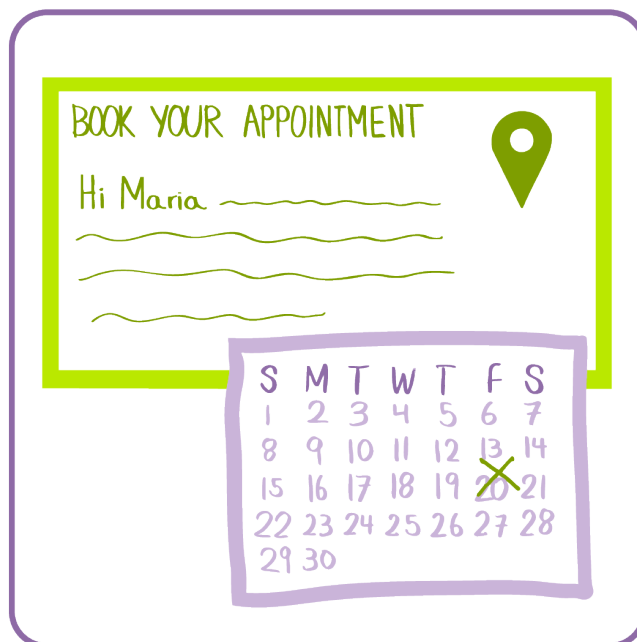


I decided to go to a nearby clinic, only to be told they couldn't help us without an appointment.

As I left the clinic feeling defeated, a nurse caught up to me. She recommended the ***CIBC Just for Kids Clinic***, a nearby centre that welcomed IFHP holders. With the nurse's help, I quickly booked an appointment through the clinic's online portal.



But as I left, I could not stop thinking about how difficult it had been to get there.



The staff at CIBC Just for Kids Clinic treated us with kindness and care. Emmanuel finally saw a doctor, and I felt a moment of relief.

**"THE HARDEST PART  
WASN'T THE APPOINTMENT,  
IT WAS EVERYTHING I HAD  
TO DO TO GET THERE. WHY  
SHOULD IT TAKE SO MUCH  
EFFORT JUST TO GET BASIC  
CARE FOR MY CHILD?"**

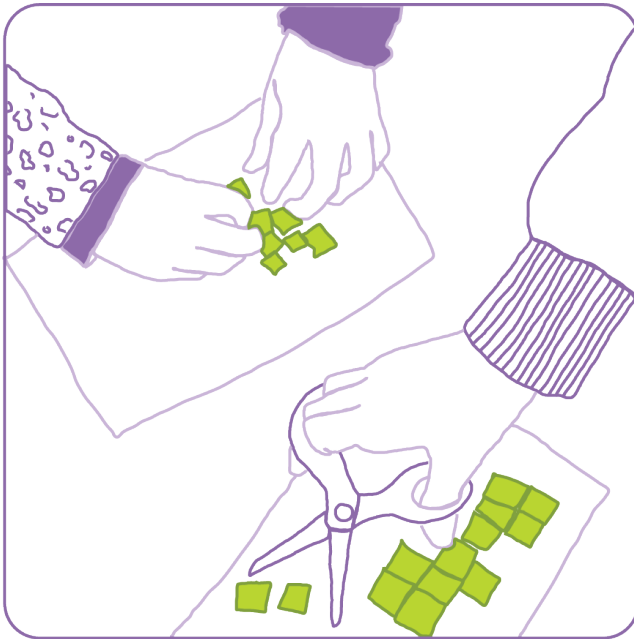
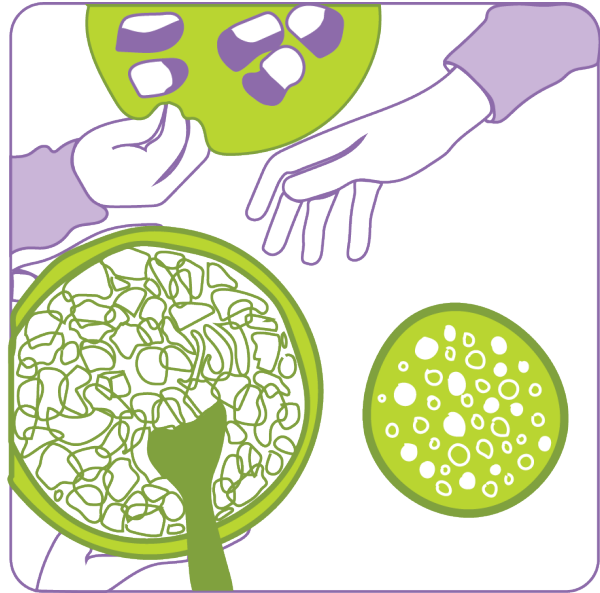
# IYOBOSA'S STORY

After arriving in Canada, my family and I stayed at a temporary refugee shelter. I felt overwhelmed trying to adjust to life in a new country.



At **TAIBU Community Health Centre**, I finally found the support I needed. The staff listened to my concerns, completed a needs assessment and registered my son with **SMILE Canada - Support Services**, an organization that provides financial help for children with disabilities. Through the program, I was able to get an adaptive bath seat and physiotherapy for my son.

For the first time, I felt a little bit of hope and my family began to rebuild. I found comfort cooking familiar meals at **FoodShare's Community Kitchen.**



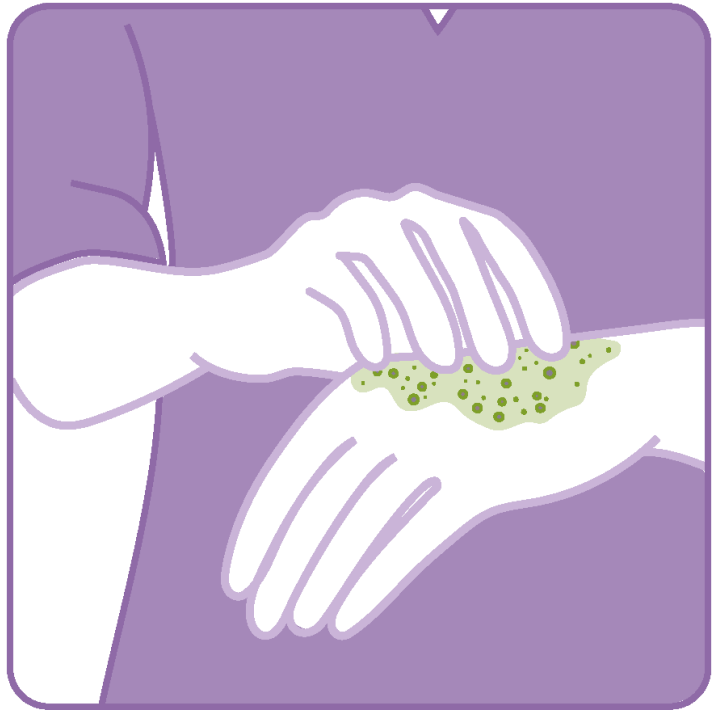
My son enjoyed new friendships and activities through **SMILE's Accessible Programming.** My wife discovered early years programming for our second child at the **Scarborough Centre EarlyON Child and Family Centre.**

**"I'M NOT JUST A NEWCOMER,  
I'M A FATHER DOING HIS BEST  
FOR HIS FAMILY. I JUST NEEDED  
SOMEONE TO SHOW ME THE WAY."**

# LEILA'S STORY

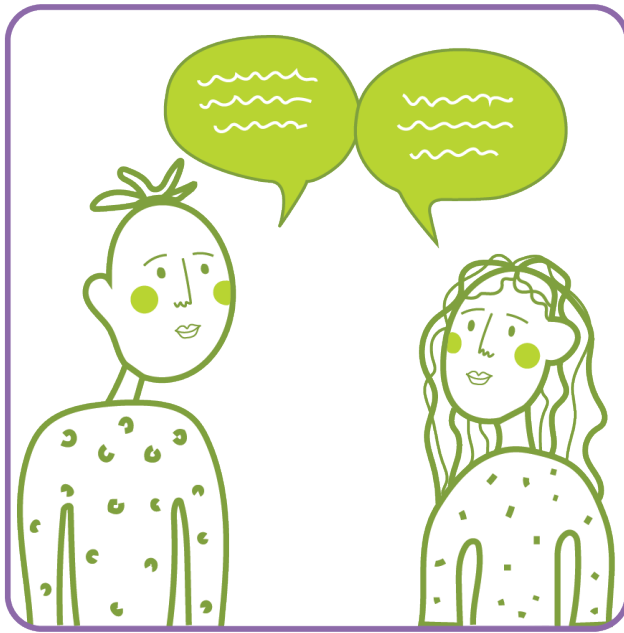
When my mom's rash spread, I tried to book an appointment through a local clinic's website.

The site asked for an OHIP number, but since my mom was covered under IFHP, I couldn't complete the booking.



I called the clinic for help, but the staff didn't speak my language, making it hard to communicate.

I tried other clinics' websites, only to face the same problem.



**"IT'S FRUSTRATING  
TO SEE MY MOTHER  
FACE THESE  
STRUGGLES JUST  
BECAUSE OF HER  
IMMIGRATION  
STATUS."**

I considered taking my mom to the hospital, but was worried about the long wait time. My friend suggested the **Scarborough Health Network Urgent Care Centre**, a faster and calmer choice than the hospital's emergency department for things like rashes.



I was relieved that my mom got treatment at the Urgent Care Centre, but I still felt frustrated at how difficult it was to book an appointment at my local clinic without an OHIP number.



# DR. ADRIANA'S STORY

When I first started seeing patients covered by IFHP, I wasn't sure what to expect. I had heard other healthcare providers talk about the challenges: delays with paperwork, confusing payment rules, and little support. But when I started listening to patients' stories, my perspective changed.

My patients often arrived at my clinic confused and overwhelmed. Many held the single **brown sheet of paper**, but they didn't fully understand what it meant or what it covered.



Even the healthcare providers I worked with often didn't know much about IFHP. It wasn't just the patients who were unsure, many of us were unclear about the program too!

I also learned that systemic issues, like the lack of payment for filling out forms under IFHP, made it even harder for newcomers to access important benefits like ODSP and Special Diet Forms. At one point, a clinic refused to accept a referral for urgent dental care, claiming the treatment wasn't covered. Frustrated but determined to help my patient, I reached out to **Filling the Gap Dental Outreach**. The volunteer dentists stepped in right away to provide the care that was needed.

This experience highlighted a tough truth: gaps in what providers know about IFHP often leave patients stuck, unable to get even the most basic care.

**"I REALIZED THAT IF  
I COULDN'T GET CLEAR  
ANSWERS, MY PATIENTS  
DIDN'T STAND A  
CHANCE NAVIGATING  
THIS SYSTEM ALONE."**

## MEDICATIONS & SPECIALISTS

Adjusting to a new healthcare system can be hard, but it's especially tough for newcomers dealing with long-term health issues like diabetes and high blood pressure. Not being able to get the same medications, figuring out how to see specialists, and facing language or cultural barriers can make it very difficult to stay healthy. From running out of medication to connecting with pharmacies and community programs, the following story shows how important it is to find care early and keep it consistent over time.

*Refilling  
prescriptions after  
arriving in Canada*

*Accessing  
specialists for  
chronic care*

*Community  
programs' role in  
healthcare*

### ***Key Resources:***

**Donya Medical Clinic** – Family-centered care with a focus on accessibility for new immigrants and refugees.

**Rexdale CHC's Diabetes Education Program** – Educational support and resources for people living with diabetes.

**The Arab Community Centre of Toronto - AMAN Seniors Program** – Community support for seniors including wellness, writing, technology training, and social events.

# SAMI'S STORY

My father has Type 2 diabetes and high blood pressure and has been taking the same medications for over 20 years. Back in our home country, he knew his body well and had regular check-ups with a trusted heart doctor and a diabetes specialist. But when we moved to Canada, things became very different. His medications weren't available at the pharmacy without a prescription, the foods he was used to were expensive, didn't taste the same, and were hard to cook at home.

Explaining how the healthcare system worked here was another challenge. Back home, seeing a specialist was easy, but in Canada, it took a lot of time and effort. I kept telling my father, just like he always told me, that even though the journey might be long it was worthwhile.

At first, I didn't know where to start. Clinics said they were too full to help us, forms were confusing with words we didn't understand, and every step seemed to lead to more steps.



**IT FELT LIKE WE WERE TRYING TO CLIMB  
A MOUNTAIN WITH NO CLEAR PATH.**

## HOW WE FOUND OUR WAY:

### **Gathering Information**

When we arrived in Canada, my dad only had four weeks' worth of pills left. I learned that suddenly stopping these medications could cause serious health problems, especially for his heart. My top priority became making sure he didn't run out of his medications.

### **Finding a Primary Care Clinic:**

I searched everywhere for help. I asked friends, visited the mosque, checked the food bank, stopped by the community centre, and even went to the library and a local settlement agency. After a week of searching, I found

**Donya Medical Clinic**, a safe place for newcomer families. The doctor spoke our language and understood the cultural aspects of caring for seniors like my dad.



### **Pharmacies Help Bridge the Gap**

The doctor assured us that my dad's diabetes could be managed under his care. He also referred my dad to a cardiologist and a yearly diabetic eye exam. Through the nurses at the clinic, we also learned about **Rexdale CHC's Diabetes Education Program** and **The Arab Community Centre of Toronto - AMAN Seniors Program**, that gave my dad a chance to stay active.

### **The Turning Point**

The medications the doctor prescribed were not exactly the same as the ones my father had been taking back home. We relied on the pharmacy staff to help us understand how the changes in his medications might impact his health. When the medical terms became too confusing, I reached out to **Access Alliance Language Services** for support.



## REFLECTIONS

I never anticipated the hidden costs: hours spent coordinating appointments, translating forms, and missing school. I would sit quietly in waiting rooms, watching my dad clasp his hands together, the way he always does when he's uncertain.

As newcomers, we bring with us a lifetime of habits, fears, and expectations. Healthcare isn't just about medical expertise; it's about understanding. Making sure the people who carried you through the hardest parts of life know they don't have to carry everything alone.

**MY  
FATHER'S HEALTH  
BECAME MY SECOND  
FULL-TIME JOB.**

# PREGNANCY & HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Newcomer women can face unique vulnerabilities, including exploitation, human trafficking, and barriers to healthcare. The following story highlights the risks faced by those on temporary visas, the challenges of accessing safe reproductive healthcare, and the power of community support in building a new home.

***Recognizing  
& preventing  
exploitation***

***Housing &  
legal aid***

***Pregnancy &  
newborn care***

***Abortion &  
midwifery***

***Mental health &  
peer support***

## ***Key Resources:***

**Canadian Human Trafficking Hotline** – Confidential, 24/7 service connecting survivors to support.

**Planned Parenthood Toronto** – Sexual and reproductive health services, including information on abortion and contraception.

**The Barbra Schlifer Commemorative Clinic** – Legal aid and counseling for women and gender-diverse survivors of violence.

**Hassle Free Clinic** – Sexual and reproductive health services, including abortion care, in a supportive and non-judgmental environment.

**The Canadian Centre for Refugee and Immigrant Health Care** – Compassionate care for uninsured refugees and immigrants in need.

**Soch Mental Health** – Mental health support for South Asian communities, addressing unique cultural and systemic barriers.

# AMANPREET'S STORY

Ever since I was a little girl, I dreamed of becoming a doctor. My family borrowed money to send me to Toronto from Punjab, India, as an international student. I wanted to finish my degree, get a good job, and help my parents and siblings back home. But life in Canada became a nightmare I could have never imagined.



When I first arrived, the house my family arranged for me seemed perfect. It was close to my school and affordable. The landlord seemed kind and thoughtful. He offered me clothes, food and we talked about my life back home. He called me his “little sister”. It felt like he was looking out for me.

A month later, the landlord's attitude began to change. One evening, he asked for more money for rent. When I said I couldn't pay, he suggested I could work at a strip club to make more money. When I refused, he said I was being ungrateful for all the support he had given me. My roommates, other young women, also told me this was normal in Toronto because life was expensive. I was scared but I packed my things and left.



Newcomers can face unfair treatment from landlords or employers who take advantage of their lack of knowledge about rights. Groups like the **Workers' Action Centre** help people protect themselves.

For days, I wandered the streets of Toronto, cold and hungry. I had no friends or family to call. Finally, I went back to the landlord, this time he offered a different solution. He said many Canadian families want babies and would pay me over \$100,000 to get pregnant. I was scared and unsure, but I felt like I had no choice. I agreed.





It started with medical appointments. My landlord took pictures of me and my pregnancy test and I was told to keep the pregnancy a secret. Later on, he started controlling me, my phone, and even my meals. I wasn't allowed to leave the house alone.

When I asked about the money, he threatened to send photos of my pregnancy to my family. I felt ashamed and trapped. I often felt anxious, but in my culture, showing struggle is seen as a weakness, so I hid it. But deep down, I knew I needed help.

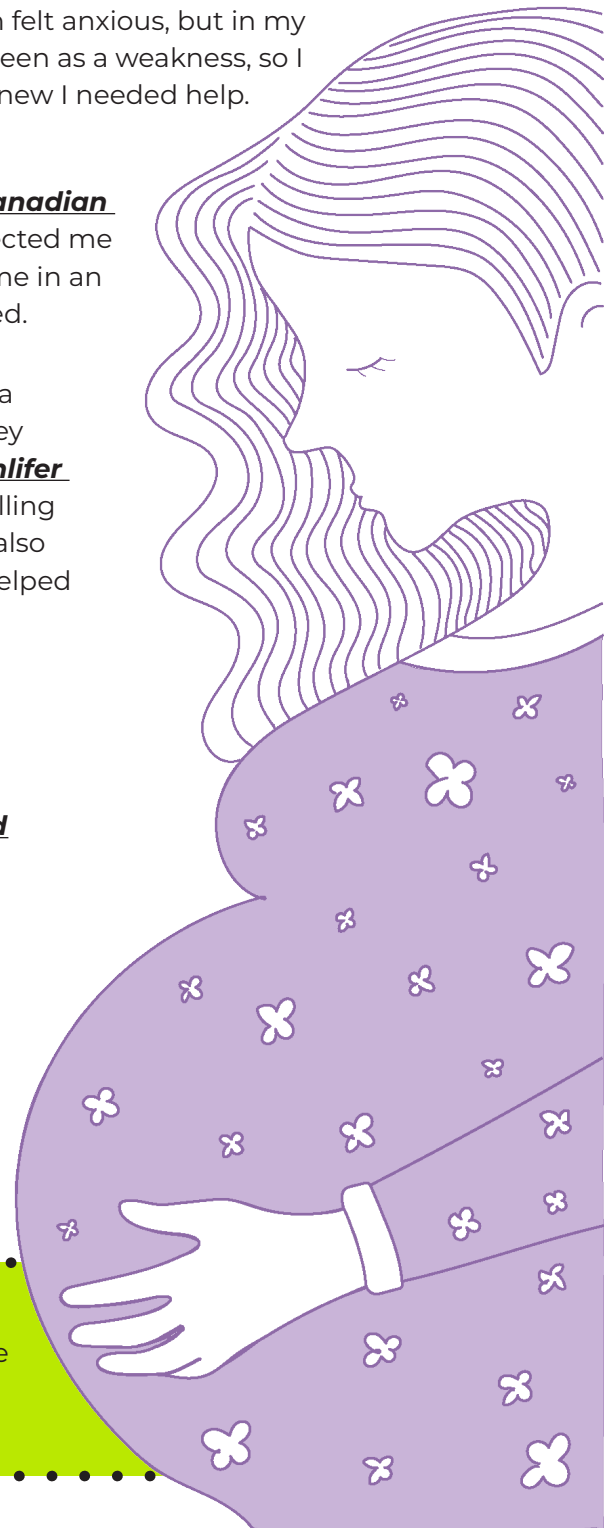
I decided to escape again. I called the **Canadian Human Trafficking Hotline**. They connected me with **Victim Services of Peel**, who put me in an emergency shelter. I was so relieved.

My caseworker helped me start a refugee claimant application. They connected me with **The Barbra Schlifer Commemorative Clinic** for counselling and on-going legal support. I was also referred to **Red Door Shelter**, who helped me move to a safe place.



I thought about ending the pregnancy. I learned about abortion and other options at clinics like Planned **Parenthood Toronto**, **Hassle Free Clinic**, and **GB Women's Clinic**. But through counselling with a Doula at **Birthmark Support**, I realized I wanted to have the baby. I wanted to start over and rebuild my life, and this felt like the first step.

**GB Women's Clinic** offers free, compassionate abortion support in-person, online, or by phone. Prescriptions can be sent to your pharmacy, with medications delivered to your home for a small fee.



## IRCC & TEMPORARY VISA HOLDERS

The IRCC can deport temporary visa holders for doing sex work, and some people use this to control newcomers by taking their passports and threatening to report them.

***If you're on a temporary visa, protect yourself:***

- **Never give up your passport**
- **Know your rights**
- **Don't stay silent**

***Ya Estoy  
Aqui respects  
ALL work  
boots***



Mental health struggles can be overlooked or misunderstood in some communities. **Madison Community Services - RISE** provides safe spaces and resources, helping women feel supported and empowering them to seek care.

## REFLECTIONS

Amanpreet's journey shows incredible strength and resilience. With the right support, survivors of exploitation can take back control of their lives and build a better future for themselves and their children.

**"I LATER LEARNED  
THAT MANY WOMEN ON  
STUDENT OR TOURIST  
VISAS LIKE MYSELF,  
ARE A TARGET FOR  
EXPLOITATION AND  
HUMAN TRAFFICKING."**

Cultural stigma and systemic barriers often lead to difficult decisions around pregnancy, healthcare, and survival. Organizations like **The Pardesi Project** & **Soch Mental Health** raise awareness, helping women make choices that put their well-being first.

# WOMEN'S HEALTH ORGANIZATIONS (TTC REFERENCE MAP)



## SEE OUR APPENDIX FOR MORE DETAILS:

1 South Asian Legal Clinic of Ontario	5 The Midwives Clinic of East York Don Mills	9 Seventh Generation Midwives Toronto	13 IWHC	17 Midwife Alliance
2 Trillium Midwives	6 Riverdale Immigrant Women's Centre	10 Newcomer Women Services Toronto	14 Working Women Community Centre	18 Unison Health & Community Services
3 Scarborough Women's Centre	7 South Riverdale CHC - MATCH Program	11 Kensington Midwives	15 Sistering	19 West End Midwives
4 Diversity Midwives	8 Riverdale Community Midwives	12 Community Midwives Toronto	16 Midwives Collective of Toronto	20 BREATHE Midwives

## SEXUAL HEALTH & 2SLGBTQI+ SUPPORT

Navigating sexual health and safety as a newcomer can be challenging, especially for those living with HIV or facing precarious immigration status. The following story highlights the barriers to accessing care, the impact of stigma, and the importance of finding safe, judgment-free healthcare providers.

*Free HIV  
medications &  
sexual health  
services*

*Trauma-informed  
care after sexual  
assault*

*Refugee claimant  
process & IFHP  
access*

*Community  
& support for  
2SLGBTQI+  
newcomers*

### ***Key Resources:***

**Blue Door Clinic** – Provides free HIV medication and sexual health services, regardless of immigration status.

**Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence Care Centre (Scarborough Health Network)** – Specialized care for individuals who have experienced sexual assault or domestic violence. Support available free of charge regardless of insurance coverage or immigration status.

**FCJ Refugee Centre** – Support services for newcomers, including healthcare navigation, legal assistance, and community resources.

**Crossroads Clinic at Women's College Hospital** – Hospital-based clinic offering primary care for newly arrived refugees and refugee claimants.

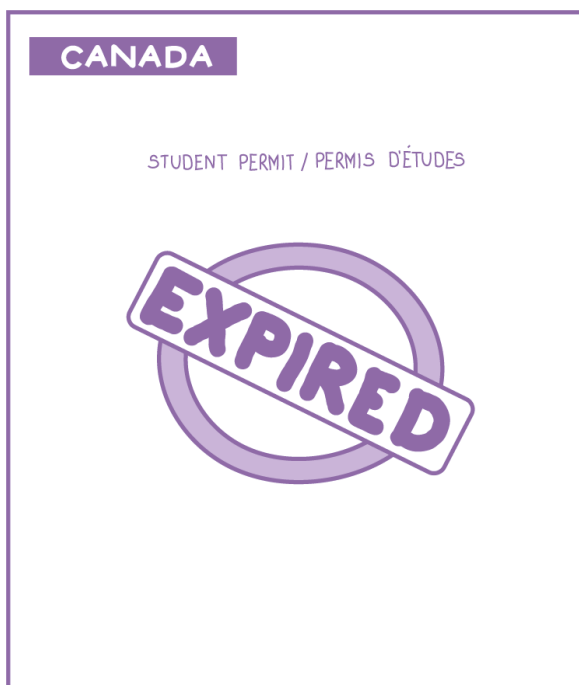
**AIDS Committee of Toronto (ACT)** – Education, support, and advocacy for people living with HIV and AIDS.

# DANIEL'S STORY

I was diagnosed as HIV-positive at 20, and though it was a heavy burden, I was able to manage my health with consistent medication.

When I was 22 I decided to come to Toronto from Colombia on a student visa. When I first arrived, the **PrEP Clinic** provided me with three months of free medication. That kind of care gave me time to keep myself healthy until my student health insurance started.

Unfortunately, life didn't go as planned. I rented an apartment with someone who exploited me financially. My only option was to move out and stay with a friend.



Life quickly became unstable, but I couldn't face the idea of going back to Colombia, so I overstayed my student visa. Living without status, I was terrified of how I'd afford my HIV medication.

Then I found **Blue Door Clinic**, where they gave me my medication for free. They helped me without judgement or asking about my status.

One night, I went on a date with someone I had met online. During the date I was sexually assaulted by them. Afterwards, when I went to the police, they told me there wasn't enough evidence to move forward. I felt abandoned.

A friend suggested that I go to the **Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence Care Centre at Scarborough Health Network**. I was terrified, however the staff made me feel safe. They gave me medical care, counselling, and support without judgment. They treated me like a human being, not just another case.

The care team connected me to the **FCJ Refugee Centre**, where I learned I could apply for **refugee claimant status**. They helped me gather the necessary documents and guided me through the complex system.

Once I submitted my claim, I received my UCI Number and applied for IFHP coverage. My follow-up care was transferred to the **Crossroads Clinic at Women's College Hospital**. As someone without status, I always avoided hospitals because of stories about massive bills and poor treatment of non-insured people. But the team at Crossroads made me feel cared for and seen. Their kindness reminded me that I deserve safety and dignity regardless of my status.

When money got tight, the **Toronto Hardship Fund** helped cover my healthcare bills that enabled me to buy new glasses, which I had been putting off.

Looking back, I wish I'd known earlier about the resources that exist for people like me, health providers that don't judge and just want to help.



## SUPPORT FOR PEOPLE LIVING WITH HIV AND THE 2SLGBTQI+ COMMUNITY

### ***You're not alone.***

Free, confidential care is available. Organizations like **Blue Door Clinic**, **Fife House's Linkage to Care** and other sexual health clinics provide care regardless of your immigration status.

### ***Find your community.***

2SLGBTQI+ newcomer groups like **Rainbow Connect (TNG)** and **Among Friends (The 519)** can help you build connections and avoid isolation. The **AIDS Committee of Toronto (ACT)** and **CATIE** provide essential support for people living with HIV and AIDS.

### ***Trust your instincts and reach out for help.***

Organizations like Justice for Youth and Children and **The 519's Health Justice Hub** are staffed by experienced and empathetic professionals.

### ***Safety is a right.***

**Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence Care Centres** provide trauma-informed care regardless of status or circumstance. **HIV & AIDS Legal Clinic Ontario (HALCO)** offers free legal advice and services.

### ***Pathways to status.***

Settlement agencies like the **Mennonite New Life Centre of Toronto** offer newcomer-focused programs including language and employment training, mental health counselling, and support for survivors of human trafficking.

**"LIVING WITHOUT  
STATUS MADE ME  
FEEL INVISIBLE.  
I WAS TERRIFIED  
OF BEING  
REPORTED, SO I  
AVOIDED ASKING  
FOR HELP."**

## MENTAL HEALTH

Leaving an abusive environment is the first step in a long journey toward healing. The following story demonstrates the challenges faced by survivors of gender-based violence, including female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C), as they navigate life in a new country. From accessing mental health support to meeting medical and legal requirements, this chapter explores the resources and resilience needed to heal and create a safer future for survivors and their families.

*Mental health challenges for survivors of domestic violence*

*Medical requirements for school & work as a newcomer*

*Legal & settlement support for refugee claims*

*Culturally aware healthcare & mental health services*

### ***Key Resources:***

**Canadian Centre for Victims of Torture** – Trauma therapy, mental health support, and legal advocacy for survivors of torture, war, genocide, and crimes against humanity.

**Women's Health in Women's Hands Community Health Centre** – Empowering women with holistic, accessible health care across the Greater Toronto Area.

**Special Diet Form** – A form for individuals receiving Ontario Works to apply for special dietary allowances.

**End FGM Canada Network** – Resources, education, and advocacy to end FGM/C.



# FATIMA'S STORY



The **Canadian Centre for Victims of Torture** helped me share my story for my refugee hearing and worked with a doctor to document my injuries.

In Guinea, my life was shaped by family, culture, and struggle. I grew up in a close community where traditions were strong. But as a girl, I went through FGM/C, and as a woman, I lived under control and violence. My husband made every decision for me. The abuse was not just physical, but also psychological. I had stayed because I wanted to keep my family together. But one day, I realized that it would destroy me, and eventually my children too. I decided to leave for a future where they could see their mother free and unbroken.

When I arrived in Canada with my three daughters, life did not suddenly become easy. At first, we lived in a shelter, sharing a small room. The staff were kind, and some of the women there had stories like mine, but most days, I still felt alone. I believed that if I stayed strong and kept going, I would figure everything out. It wasn't until I broke down one evening that I realized I couldn't do this by myself.

**HOW DO YOU PUT**

**PAIN ON PAPER?**

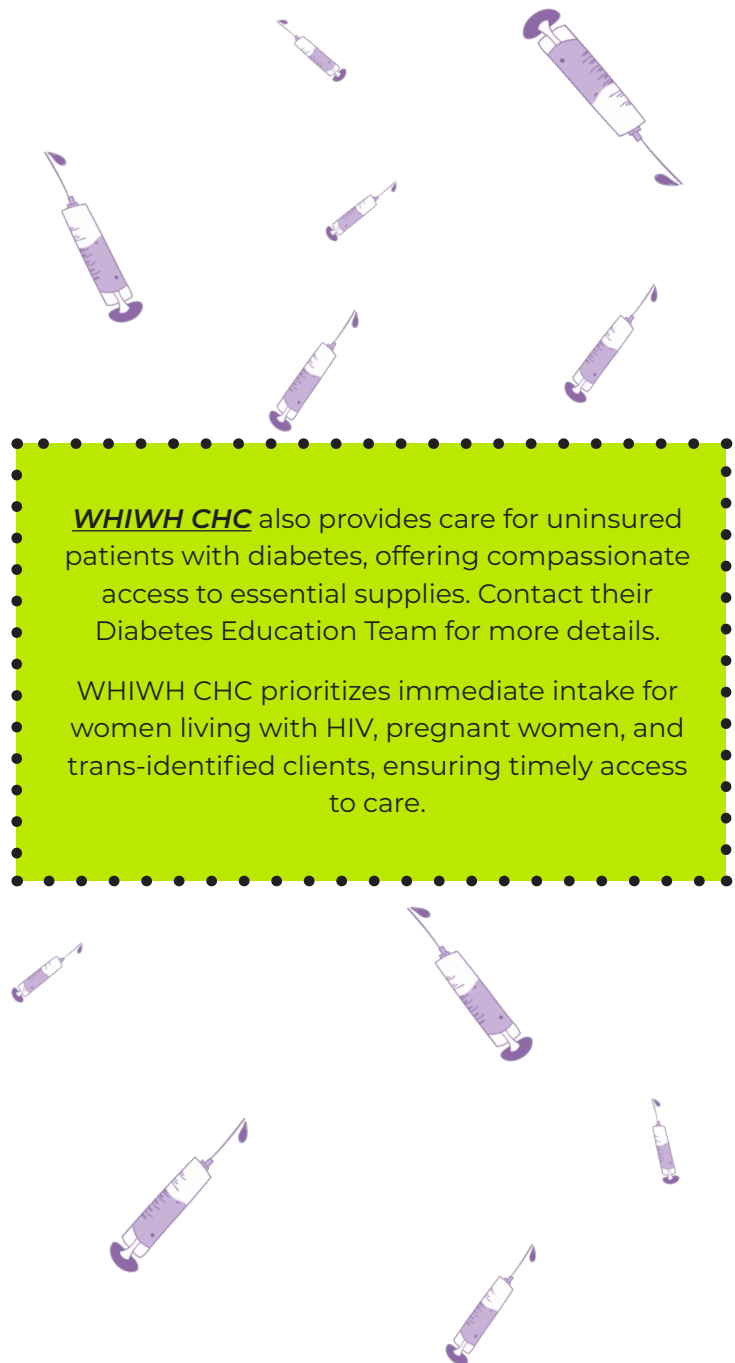
**HOW DO YOU**

**EXPLAIN SCARS THAT**

**NO ONE CAN SEE?**

I decided that becoming a Personal Support Worker (PSW) was the best way forward, but it came with its own challenges. Before I could start my placement, I had to prove I met **medical requirements**: vaccines, immunity tests, and forms.

At **Women's Health in Women's Hands Community Health Centre (WHIWH CHC)**, they showed me where to begin. The nurse reviewed my vaccine records from Guinea, but it wasn't in English and not everything could be verified. A nurse practitioner ordered blood work to test my immunity, and I took the requisition to the lab. When the results came back, the nurse explained which vaccines I still needed. They ordered and administered them in stages. It took several appointments, but eventually, I was able to complete all the medical requirements for my PSW program. It wasn't easy, but with their help, I made it through.



**WHIWH CHC** also provides care for uninsured patients with diabetes, offering compassionate access to essential supplies. Contact their Diabetes Education Team for more details.

WHIWH CHC prioritizes immediate intake for women living with HIV, pregnant women, and trans-identified clients, ensuring timely access to care.

I also needed a **Special Diet Form** because of my health needs. The staff at WHIWH CHC connected me to their dietitian who worked with me to complete the form. I didn't even know this type of support existed. Small things like this, having the right forms, the right food, make a big difference when you're trying to build a new life.

The fear I have now is different, but it is no less heavy. It is the fear of my daughters facing the same risks I escaped. The thought keeps me awake at night. I've been fighting to hold myself together, raising three kids on your own and trying to get an education. I push through the judgments and find the strength to keep going; reminding myself why I'm here and that I've made it this far. Therapy has helped me, but it hasn't erased the memories.

Healing is a journey, not a destination. Every session, every document filed for my case, every small step forward is part of building a future for us. I'm not saying I've overcome it all, or that everything is better now, but I'll keep going forward because there's no going back.



## ENDING FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION/CUTTING

### ***Dear Healthcare Providers,***

If you do not know what FGM/C is or how to support those who have experienced it, please understand that survivors are asking you to learn. Their stories are not just medical cases. They are real people who have shown incredible strength and are deserving of compassionate, trauma-informed care.

### ***Dear Survivors,***

If you are looking for kind and knowledgeable professionals who understand your needs, support is available. Visit **Flourish Access** and **End FGM Canada Network** for compassionate resources and care.

## PHARMACIES & HOMECARE

When time, accessibility, and system barriers block the path to care, knowing where to turn can make all the difference. This chapter explores how pharmacists can provide quick and accessible treatment for minor conditions and how homecare services can support recovery at home, even for those covered by IFHP.

*Pharmacist  
prescribing &  
emergency  
renewals*

*Coordinating  
IFHP  
Homecare*

*Pharmacies and  
support for chronic  
conditions*

### ***Key Resources:***

**Caring Touch IFHP Network** – A centralized homecare referral system connecting patients, healthcare providers, and services.

# PHARMACIES

When my mom got a urinary tract infection (UTI), I didn't know what to do. She was in pain, but getting a doctor's appointment right away was hard. A friend suggested we go to a pharmacy, and I was surprised when the pharmacist helped us. After a quick consultation, they gave her a prescription for antibiotics right there. It saved us time and stress.

Pharmacies are an important part of healthcare, especially for newcomers or anyone who can't see a doctor right away. Pharmacists can help with things like UTIs, allergies, skin infections, and even cold sores. They can also renew certain prescriptions in emergencies, give vaccines, and help manage conditions like diabetes or high blood pressure.

## *Here's how pharmacies can help you:*

### **Emergency Prescription Renewals:**

In urgent situations, pharmacists can renew certain medications if you can't see a doctor right away.

### **Minor Health Issues:**

They can prescribe treatments for UTIs, allergies, cold sores, and mild infections.

### **Vaccines:**

Many pharmacies offer flu shots, COVID-19 vaccines, and other immunizations.

### **Medication Advice:**

They can explain how to take your medications, what side effects to watch for, and if other drugs or foods might interfere.

### **Chronic Conditions:**

Some pharmacies help monitor blood sugar or blood pressure and give advice on managing these conditions.

**IF YOU'RE NEW TO CANADA OR STRUGGLING TO SEE A DOCTOR, PHARMACIES ARE A GREAT FIRST STEP FOR QUICK, ACCESSIBLE CARE.**

# MECARE

When I developed sepsis, my recovery relied on regular and well-organized home care. My doctor filled out the necessary referral form, detailing my medical needs. However, unlike the *Ontario Health at Home* system available to OHIP holders, IFHP doesn't have a clear, centralized way to arrange these services. This left my social worker rushing to piece together care through a scattered and unconnected group of providers:



Each call presented a new challenge. Some providers weren't familiar with IFHP coverage, others had long wait times, and some didn't accept IFHP patients at all. The lack of coordination delayed my recovery and left me and my family feeling overwhelmed.

## ***A Centralized Solution:***

After weeks of trying to organize care through different groups, my social worker found a better solution: **Caring Touch IFHP Network**. By sending just one referral form, the network became the link between patients, healthcare providers, and service providers. This simpler process cut down on delays and rejections, making it easier for me to get the care I needed to recover at home with my family.

# APPENDIX

{ NO WRONG DOOR }

## CHILDREN AND FAMILY SUPPORT

### **Black Creek CHC Pregnancy & Breastfeeding Support**

Free prenatal groups, lactation consulting, and massage therapy for pregnant women and new mothers.

### **CIBC Just for Kids Clinic**

Specialized healthcare clinic for children.

### **Newborn Resource Package**

A resource package to support midwives, hospital staff, and service providers advocating for newborns' OHIP eligibility.

### **SMILE Canada - Support Services**

Support for racialized children with disabilities and their families through hospital support, accessibility funds, service navigation, and inclusive activities in over 10 languages.

### **SMILE's Accessible Programming**

Inclusive activities and services tailored for children with disabilities.

### **Scarborough Centre EarlyON Child and Family Centre**

Play-based learning, parent workshops, family activities, and community resource referrals.

### **Unison Health & Community Services - Prenatal Program**

Weekly sessions offering prenatal care, nutrition guidance, breastfeeding support, and community connections for pregnant women.

### **Well Baby Visit**

Monitor growth, development, and health throughout childhood.

## DENTAL

### **Filling the Gap Dental Outreach**

Dental care for under-insured and uninsured individuals.

## GENERAL INFORMATION

### **Interim Federal Health Program (IFHP)**

What's covered under the IFHP.

### **Eligibility for IFHP**

Who's covered under the IFHP.

### **Medavie Blue Cross IFHP Hotline**

Assistance with IFHP eligibility, benefits, and claims payment.

### **UCI Number**

Unique Client Identifier Number, used to verify IFHP eligibility.

## FINANCIAL SUPPORT

### **Ontario Works**

Financial assistance for individuals and families in need.

### **Special Diet Form (Ontario Works)**

A form for individuals receiving Ontario Works to apply for special dietary allowances.

### **Special Dietary Needs (Toronto)**

Information on applying for special dietary needs support under Ontario Works.

### **Toronto Hardship Fund**

Financial assistance for medical items, services, and funeral expenses in Toronto.

## HIV SERVICES AND SUPPORT

### **AIDS Committee of Toronto (ACT)**

Education, support, and advocacy for people living with HIV and AIDS.

### **Blue Door Clinic**

Free, confidential HIV care for uninsured individuals in Toronto.

### **CATIE**

Canada's source for HIV and hepatitis C information.

### **Fife House's Linkage to Care**

Connecting newcomers living with HIV to care and support.

### **HIV & AIDS Legal Clinic Ontario (HALCO)**

Free legal services for people living with HIV and AIDS in Ontario.

### **The PrEP Clinic**

Accessible HIV care, PrEP, and support.

## HEALTHCARE

### **Caring Touch IFHP Network**

A streamlined homecare referral system connecting patients, healthcare providers, and services.

### **Referral Form**

Form to facilitate IFHP-related homecare referrals.

## HEALTH PROMOTION, ADVOCACY, AND SPECIALIZED SUPPORT

### **Health Network for the Uninsured in Canada (HNUC)**

Advocates for and connects under-insured and uninsured individuals to healthcare and community services in the GTA and beyond.

### **Personal Health Cheat Sheet**

Resource for tracking personal health information and navigating healthcare options effectively.

### **Rexdale CHC's Diabetes Education Program**

Educational support and resources for individuals living with diabetes to help manage their condition.

### **Sistering**

24/7 safe haven, meals, support, healthcare, and resources for marginalized women and gender-diverse people.

### **Starter Kit**

Ready-made resources for issues newcomers often face.

### **TAIBU CHC**

Holistic healthcare services for the Black community in the Greater Toronto Area.

### **Women's Health in Women's Hands CHC**

Accessible, holistic healthcare for racialized women.



## LANGUAGE AND ACCESSIBILITY

### **Access Alliance Language Services**

Multilingual interpretation and translation services to help newcomers navigate healthcare and community services.

### **Interpreter Contact List**

List of interpreter services to assist newcomers in overcoming language barriers when accessing healthcare.

## LEGAL AID

### **FCJ Refugee Centre**

Support services for newcomers, including healthcare navigation, legal assistance, and community resources.

### **FCJ Refugee Centre - Refugee Hearing Process**

Virtual orientations for refugee claimants and appeal process guidance.

### **My Refugee Claim**

Comprehensive resources for people making refugee claims in Canada.

### **Justice for Youth and Children**

Legal services for people under the age of 25 living without status in Ontario.

### **Settlement Agencies (Toronto)**

Map of settlement agencies in Toronto offering housing, employment, language, and legal aid support.

### **South Asian Legal Clinic of Ontario**

Legal aid, education, and advocacy for low-income South Asians.

## MENTAL HEALTH & WELLNESS

### **Canadian Centre for Victims of Torture**

Trauma therapy, mental health support, and legal advocacy for survivors of torture, war, genocide, and crimes against humanity.

### **Madison Community Services - RISE**

Supports newcomers facing mental health and settlement challenges in Toronto.

### **Nazca Health**

Culturally sensitive, trauma-informed mental health care for newcomers covered under IFHP.

### **The Pardesi Project**

Mental health support for South Asian communities, addressing unique cultural and systemic barriers.

### **The Wise Self Psychotherapy Clinic**

Flexible, no-waitlist therapy to help heal emotional wounds and improve well-being.

## 2SLGBTQI+ SUPPORT

### **The 519's Health Justice Hub**

Legal services for individuals under 25 living without status in Ontario.

### **Among Friends (The 519)**

Weekly support for LGBTQI+ refugee claimants to connect and thrive.

### **Rainbow Connect (TNG)**

Safe space for 2SLGBTQI+ newcomers to connect, learn, and grow.

## MIDWIFERY SERVICES

### **BREATHE Midwives**

(647) 249-9562

### **Community Midwives Toronto**

(416) 944-9366

### **Diversity Midwives**

(416) 609-8187

### **Kensington Midwives**

(416) 928-9777

### **Midwife Alliance**

(416) 534-9161

### **The Midwives Clinic of East York**

#### **Don Mills**

(416) 424-1976

### **Midwives Collective of Toronto**

(416) 963-8842

### **Riverdale Community Midwives**

(416) 922-4004

### **Seventh Generation Midwives Toronto**

(416) 530-7468

### **South Riverdale CHC - MATCH Program**

(416) 461-2493

### **Trillium Midwives**

(905) 668-8520

### **West End Midwives**

(416) 792-5665

## PRIMARY CARE

### **The Canadian Centre for Refugee and Immigrant Healthcare**

Compassionate care for uninsured refugees and immigrants in need.

### **Crossroads Clinic at Women's College Hospital**

Hospital-based clinic offering primary care for newly arrived refugees and refugee claimants.

### **Donya Medical Clinic**

Family-centered care with a focus on accessibility for immigrant and refugee populations.

### **Refugee-Friendly Clinics**

A list of healthcare clinics that are familiar with the Interim Federal Health Program and serve newcomers.

### **SanoMed Clinic**

Family medicine, walk-in services, and PrEP consultations, accepting OHIP, UHIP, and IFHP.

### **Scarborough Health Network Urgent Care Centre**

Quick medical care for non-life-threatening conditions that require immediate attention.

## SETTLEMENT, EMPLOYMENT, AND EDUCATION

### **Becoming a Personal Support Worker**

Information on becoming a Personal Support Worker in Ontario.

### **Canadian Red Cross - First Contact Ontario**

Info, referrals, and support for refugee claimants, including shelter, health, legal, and social services.

### **Daily Bread Food Bank**

Helping locate nearby food banks across the Greater Toronto Area.

### **FoodShare Toronto's Community Kitchen Program**

Cooking workshops to build skills, strengthen connections, and share meals in Toronto.

### **Home Essentials Newcomer Support (HENS)**

Essential household items for newcomers looking for a fresh start.

### **Humanity First Food Bank**

Refugee-friendly food bank offering food pick-up and delivery for low-income families in need.

### **Mennonite New Life Centre of Toronto (MNLCT)**

Settlement services, employment and language training, mental health counselling, and support for survivors of human trafficking.

### **Newcomer Women Services Toronto**

Support for immigrant and refugee women with settlement, employment, and language services.

### **Ontario Colleges Pathways to PSW and Nursing**

Pathways for PSWs to become Registered Practical Nurses.

### **Riverdale Immigrant Women's Centre**

Anti-violence, employment, training, and digital literacy programs for immigrant women.

### **Scarborough Women's Centre**

Employment support, counseling, food security, settlement services, and community programs.

### **The Arab Community Centre of Toronto - AMAN Seniors Program**

Support for immigrant seniors with culturally and socially enriching activities, including wellness, writing, technology training, and social events.

### **Toronto Metropolitan University's Sanctuary Scholars Program**

Access to education for students with precarious status.

### **Vaughan Food Bank**

Refugee-friendly food bank providing 7+ days of nutritious food at each visit for each family member.

### **Workers' Action Centre**

Resources and advocacy for workers' rights, focusing on support for those in precarious employment.

### **Working Women Community Centre**

Settlement, language tutoring, interpreters, and community referrals.

## SEXUAL ASSAULT, HUMAN TRAFFICKING, AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE SUPPORT

### **Aura Freedom**

Resources, support, and advocacy to combat sexual exploitation and gender-based violence.

### **The Barbra Schlifer Commemorative Clinic**

Legal aid and counseling for survivors of gender-based violence.

### **Covenant House Toronto**

Shelter, support, and services for homeless youth.

### **Canadian Human Trafficking Hotline (1-833-900-1010)**

Confidential, 24/7 service connecting survivors to support.

### **End FGM Canada Network**

Resources, education, and advocacy to end female genital mutilation/cutting

### **Flourish**

Improving FGM/C healthcare access, awareness, and support.

### **Legal Rights and Human Trafficking**

Legal training and resources for combating human trafficking in Ontario.

### **Red Door Shelter**

Safety, support, and shelter for women and children escaping domestic violence.

### **Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence Care Centre at Scarborough Health Network**

Specialized care for individuals who have experienced sexual assault or domestic violence, provided free of charge regardless of coverage or status.

### **Shelter Movers**

Helping survivors of abuse move safely with referral-based support.

### **Victim Services of Peel**

Crisis support and services for individuals who have experienced trauma or violence in the Region of Peel.

## SEXUAL HEALTH AND WELLNESS

### **Doula at Birthmark Support**

Personalized abortion doula support available before, during, and after procedures.

### **GB's Women's Clinic**

Free medication abortion services available in-person, virtually, or by phone.

### **IWHC**

Sexual health clinic serving immigrant, refugee, and marginalized clients in Toronto.

### **Hassle Free Clinic**

Sexual and reproductive health services, including abortion care, in a supportive and non-judgmental environment.

### **Maggie's Toronto**

Support, resources, advocacy, and community for sex workers in Toronto.

### **Planned Parenthood Toronto**

Sexual and reproductive health services, including information on abortion and contraception.

## VACCINATION AND IMMUNIZATION

### **Ontario's Publicly Funded Immunization Schedule**

Details on routine immunizations covered in Ontario.

### **CANImmunize**

Digital tool to store, access, and receive reminders for vaccination records.

### **Medical Requirements for Healthcare Workers**

Medical requirements for healthcare workers and students.

### **TDAP Vaccine**

Protects against tetanus, diphtheria, and pertussis, recommended once per pregnancy.

### **Toronto Public Health Appointment Booking System**

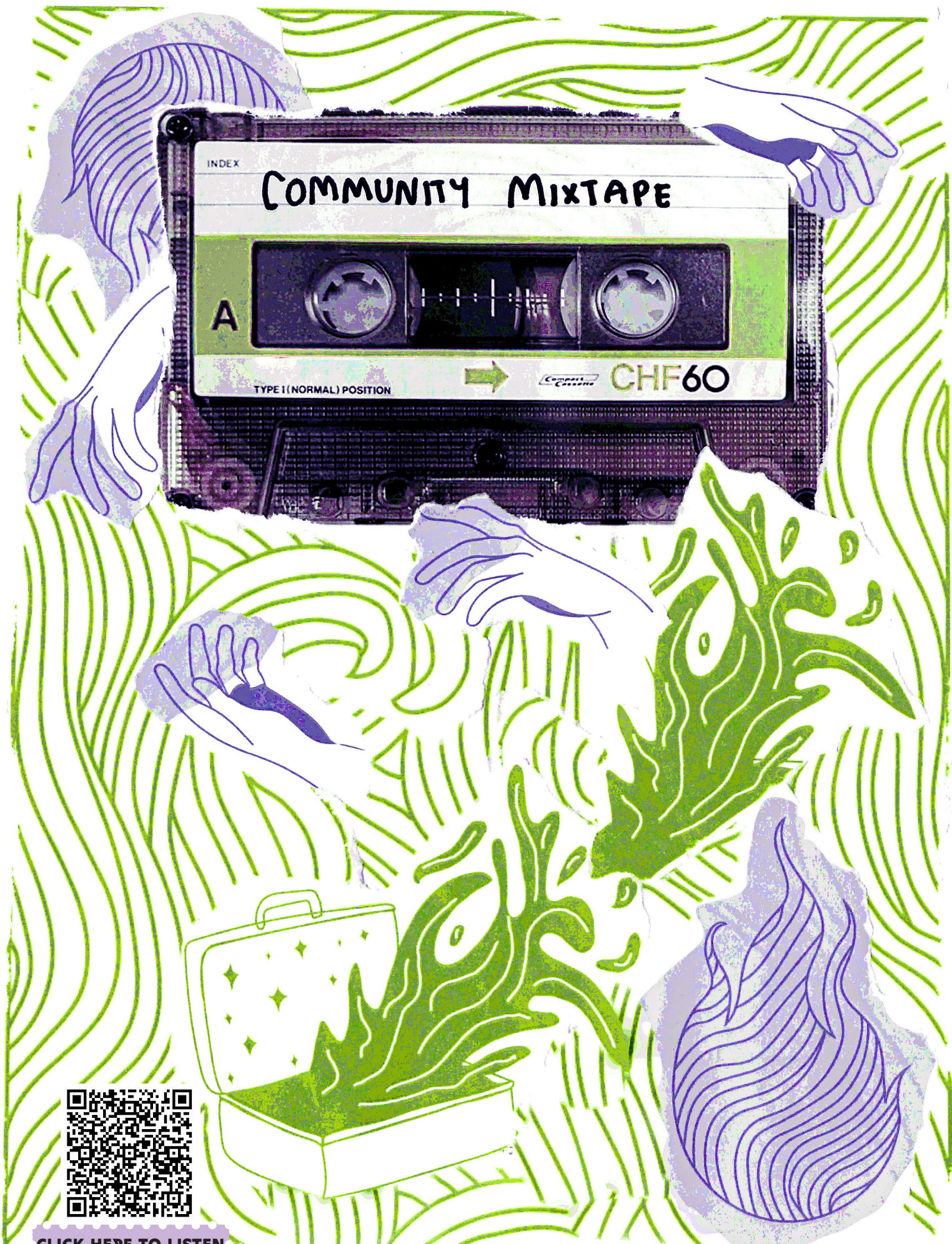
Schedule appointments for public health services, such as vaccinations.

## **FULL DIRECTORY HERE**

**{WEBSITE - ADDRESS - PHONE - EMAIL}**







CLICK HERE TO LISTEN



# FINDING YOUR GROOVE IN A NEW PLACE

**“Being new here is a heavy feeling. It’s figuring out how to survive while the world feels stacked against you, raising 3 kids on your own, trying to get an education without papers, praying through nights of no sleep and too much doubt. It’s fighting to hold yourself together, leaning on anyone who’ll listen, and still showing up to help someone else when you’re barely making it. Being new is swallowing your pride to ask for help, pushing through the stares and the judgment, and somehow finding the strength to keep going. It’s crying in the shower after a 12 hour shift and a 3 hour class and then wiping your eyes, reminding yourself why you’re here and that you’ve made it this far.”**

**— Christine,  
From No Status to Refugee Claimant to Permanent Resident,  
From Personal Support Worker to Registered Nurse**

**“Coming to Canada was more than just a move. I wanted to break free from a hard life back home in Mexico, but I didn’t have a clear picture of what to expect. My main goal was to learn English because I knew it could open doors for me. At first, everything felt new and exciting, but that also made me vulnerable. I joined local LatinX groups to find jobs, hoping for support. But my eagerness often led to exploitation. I remember one trial shift where I worked hard, only to be sent home without pay. It was crushing. I needed that money to survive, but instead, I was taken advantage of. I was frustrated but determined not to let exploitation define my experience. The agency that helped me apply for refugee status [FCJ Refugee Centre] gave me a lifeline here. It wasn’t easy, but with every step forward, I reminded myself that I was brave for making this choice. That I was holding on tight, that I wouldn’t let my future slip away.”**

**— Ana,  
First in Family to Emigrate, From Visitor to Refugee Claimant to Student**

**“I went to a clinic to get help and found myself having to explain my insurance coverage over and over again. It felt dehumanizing, and I wondered if I’d ever be treated as a priority. Now, I stand on the brink of becoming a nurse, ready to serve others just like myself. Every challenge I faced only reinforced my commitment to helping those who might feel as lost as I once did. I am here to uplift others, proving that even when the world feels against you, you can rise and make a difference.”**

**— Amir,  
Future Healthcare Professional**

## VOICES FROM THE COMMUNITY

**DANAE REYES**

Community Consultant

**AMY CHENG**

Unison Health and  
Community Services

**ANURADHA GROVER-TEJPAL**

Community Consultant

**SUE FERRI**

RN

**ALEX MCLEAN**

Paramedic

The Entire Staff at  
**THE CANADIAN CENTRE FOR  
REFUGEE AND IMMIGRANT  
HEALTHCARE**

**CHARLOTTE ZOH ACHU**  
RN & Community Consultant

**MARIA BOADA**  
CMHA

**MISHA HOSSAIN**

Toronto North Local  
Immigration Partnership

**ELISA IBARRA & MIGUEL MÁIQUEZ**  
FCJ Refugee Centre

**SOGOL ZAND**

Canadian Red Cross

**HAMED KARAGAH**

Community Consultant

**LAURA SOLIS**

Riverdale Midwives

**KATE SELLEN & THE HEALTH  
DESIGN STUDIO TEAM**  
OCAD University

**MARY ANN GATBONTON**  
Toronto Public Health

**NKEIRUKA OSAGIE**  
ACT

**SANDRA RAMIREZ ACUNA**  
Community Consultant

**SARAH SHAHID**  
Decent Work and Health  
Network

**GNANUSHAN KRISHNAPILLAI**  
Justice for Youth and Children

The Entire Staff at  
**THE MENNONITE NEW LIFE  
CENTRE OF TORONTO**

**HAMED KARAGAH**  
Community Consultant

**LEAH VENEMA & MICHELLE GREEN**  
Chantel's Place

**MELKER MANGUBAT**  
Caring Touch Home Health Care

**JADE GUTHRIE**  
Food Share Toronto

**SAMANTHA MACNEILL**  
Peel Anti-Human Sex Trafficking Strategy

**TOMILOLA JOHN**  
Women's Health in Women's  
Hands CHC



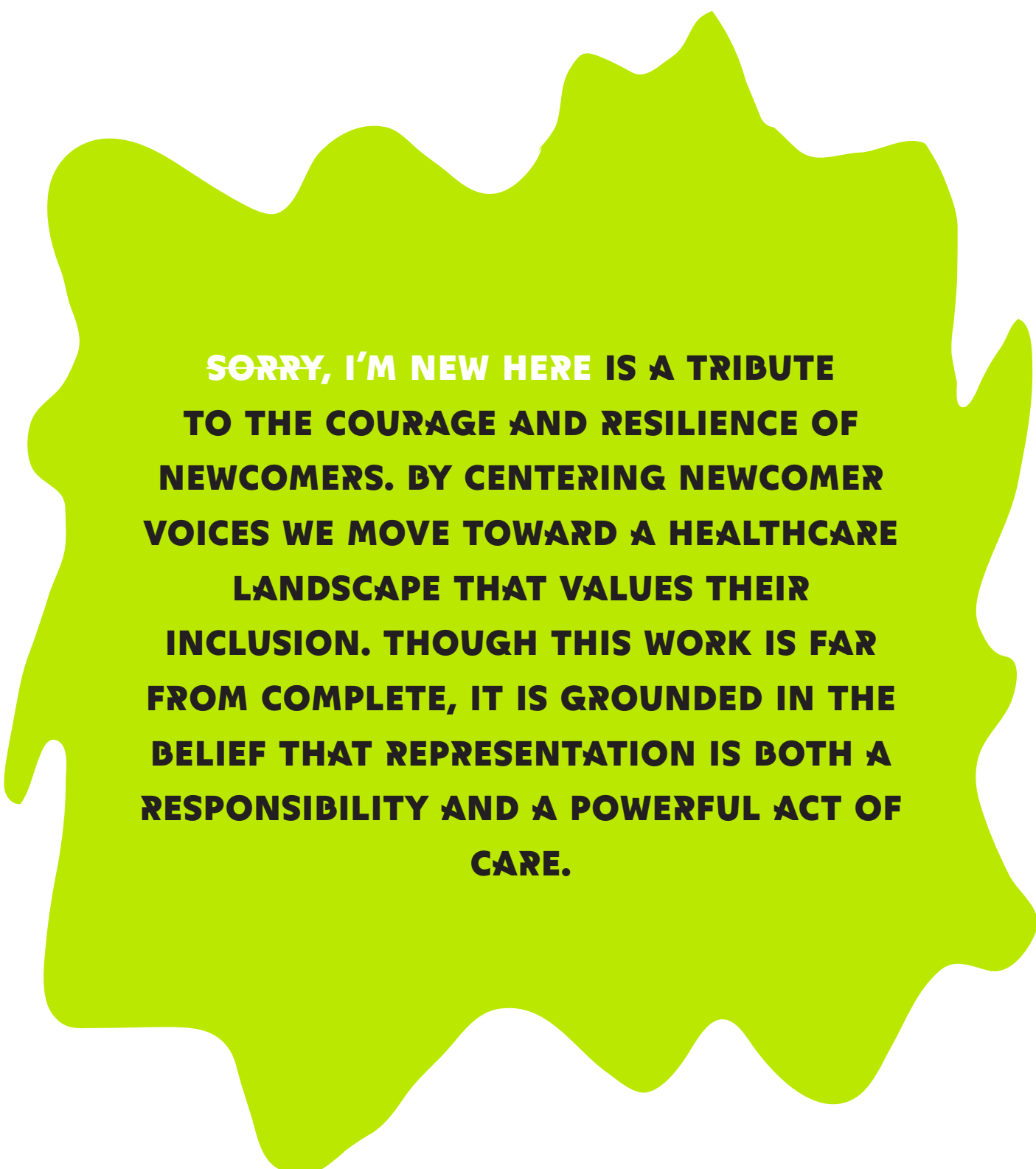
## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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THEIR STORY, THANK YOU. YOUR  
WISDOM AND STRENGTH INSPIRES  
AND UPLIFTS THESE PAGES.  
AS THEY'RE TURNED, THEY CARRY  
THE QUIET HOPE OF WHAT'S  
POSSIBLE, A REMINDER THAT  
TOGETHER WE RISE TOWARD  
ANOTHER DAY.**



**SORRY, I'M NEW HERE IS A TRIBUTE  
TO THE COURAGE AND RESILIENCE OF  
NEWCOMERS. BY CENTERING NEWCOMER  
VOICES WE MOVE TOWARD A HEALTHCARE  
LANDSCAPE THAT VALUES THEIR  
INCLUSION. THOUGH THIS WORK IS FAR  
FROM COMPLETE, IT IS GROUNDED IN THE  
BELIEF THAT REPRESENTATION IS BOTH A  
RESPONSIBILITY AND A POWERFUL ACT OF  
CARE.**



