Working with each other, our families and our communities: A guideline for partnered research initiatives that support immigrant and refugee families of children who are neurodivergent

Created by Inclusive Futures Initiative

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Purpose of guideline

The purpose of this guideline is to support those who are conducting research to support the needs of immigrant and refugee families with neurodivergent children. While this guideline is targeted towards researchers, we recognize that there are others who also support the needs of migrant families with neurodivergent children including formal service providers and community leaders.

This guideline seeks to build better relationships between those who design and implement research and those who participate in it. For us, relationships represent the foundation on which research projects should be built. For each research stage, relationships are constantly being developed and nourished. While relationships can often be perceived as the behaviors exhibited by people, relationships can also be influenced by how we present ourselves on research documents (e.g., recruitment documents, consent forms, publications and research summaries).

This guideline sits at the intersection of two marginalized identities within the Canadian context: children who are neurodivergent and families who are immigrants or refugees. As a team, we use the term neurodivergent in a broad sense to refer, as Walker (2014) states, children whose “minds functions in ways which diverge significantly from the dominant societal standards of ”normal”. We chose to use this term as a way of normalizing different developmental paths and acknowledge that “normal” is constructed by the society we live in. In Canada, the growth of individuals migrating to Canada is increasing on an annual basis. As an example, in 2022, Canada welcomed 437,539 permanent residents and 46,528 refugees over 80 countries (Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, 2023). In addition to this, 4,789,693 travel documents were issued to visitors, students and temporary workers (Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, 2023).

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While it is difficult to obtain statistics on immigrants and refugees families with neurodivergent children including those who are students, temporary foreign workers and visitors, the recent 2012 Canadian Survey on Disability (formerly called the Participation and Activity Limitations Survey) reports that 44% immigrants report a severe disability compared to 40% Canadians (Hansen et al., 2018). For immigrants and refugees with a neurodivergent child, they navigate new and multiple systems that are often confusing and opaque. By acknowledging these intersections, we aim to provide a guideline that will lead to research that finds new ways to support and uplift the voices of migrant families with neurodivergent children.

These guidelines were created by a group comprised of families of neurodivergent children, formal service providers and academics. We come from diverse ethnocultural and linguistic communities. In total, we have about 50+ years experience working to support and advocate for the needs of migrant families including those families with neurodivergent children. The content of this guideline was generated through multiple reflection sessions that we engaged in from October 2023 to May 2024.

To this end, we see this guideline as a way to support relationship-building with different stakeholders and in specific research stages. However, we do not believe these guidelines can be standardized as we are always learning new ways to support and uplift the voices of migrant families with neurodivergent children.

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Learning about our families with neurodivergent children

Our immigrant and refugee families represent a diverse group coming from different ethnocultural, linguistic and faith backgrounds. Primary challenges encountered by families include the following:

- Structural barriers - This includes the lack of qualified service providers working within the community (e.g., school and early intervention areas) with neurodivergent expertise and/or cultural and linguistic expertise, organizational and regional resource limitations.
- Jargon barriers - These comprise of the specialized terminology associated with diagnoses (low-functioning autism versus high-functioning autism), and services (e.g., respite).
- Systemic barriers - This covers different types of oppressions including ableism, racism, colorism and sexism.

For many of our families, they are likely to encounter one or more of these barriers in addition to existing and emerging barriers associated with the settlement process. Further, these barriers can have impacts on relations within the family. For instance, we have heard stories of marital issues and difficult relationships with members of the extended family. Lastly, many of our families who migrate to Canada do not have the vocabulary associated with diagnoses and services. This can often hinder engagement with families particularly when we interact from positions of privilege (e.g., a service provider or a researcher) and make assumptions that they understand a specific diagnosis or they have the means to navigate and access supports for their child.

Despite these barriers, a child's diagnosis can serve different functions namely the child's and family's identity, how the child and all family members navigate day-to-day life and more importantly, the gateway to receiving supports for the child.

Our families are very resilient and have found ways to support each other. We have heard stories from both families and service providers with multiple themes including:

- Individual growth as parents - We learned from parents on how they have grown in their journey to accepting their child's neurodivergence, to learning and mastering how to navigate services, to working with their families and peers on how to mutually support and thrive with each other.
- Collective growth as a community - Both our families and our colleagues shared with us how they learned to work alongside each other to address resource gaps and systemic barriers. For instance, we learned how parents have grown to become system advocates for their peers. Another example is how faith leaders are creating sensory rooms in faith spaces. Lastly, another team member described to us their peer mothers' journey of coming together to support each other in their journey of being a caregiver to a neurodivergent child. In turn, these meetings eventually led to the creation of a peer parent support group that has local, national and international reach.

The following are guidelines to support the relationship-building process with immigrant and refugee families with neurodivergent children.

01. Do not make assumptions

Parents understand that their child is different but don't always have the vocabulary to talk about this difference or the knowledge of how to support their child. Hence, their understanding may vary about their child's diagnosis, the landscape of services and navigating different services to attain a particular support/resource. To this end, we should not make assumptions that families have in-depth knowledge about these topics. Further, we should learn from families how they understand their child's diagnosis and how they would like to support their child.

02. Learn the history of terms

Learn from immigrant and refugee families and/or proxies (e.g., community leaders or cultural health brokers) how specific diagnoses (e.g., autism, Down Syndrome) and services (e.g., respite, speech language pathologist) have been historically used within ethnocultural communities that are involved in the research. Within our families that we support, we recognize that specific diagnose like autism may not be well understood and thus have negative connotations within specific communities. Further, services for neurodivergent children in Canada do not have the same equivalent, or may not exist with the country of origin of some ethnocultural communities.

03. Be cognizant of past traumas

It is important to be attentive to past traumas and seek to find ways on how families can have their voices be heard and validated. Immigrant and refugee families with neurodivergent children have wide-ranging experiences with an array of supports including settlement and disability-specific. For some of our families, these encounters have often been negative and create more stressors for families to navigate.

04. Be cognizant of multiple and intersectional systemic barriers

For immigrant and refugee families with neurodivergent children, experiences of privilege and oppression manifest due to how social identities are valued/marginalized in society. For instance, for many of our families, having a neurodivergent child and being a recent newcomer with limited financial or social resources makes it challenging for them to navigate complex service delivery systems. Other social identities such as being a single and/or an older parent further creates an oppressive context for families to navigate and find appropriate services for their neurodivergent child.

05. Learn about their assets

Learning about the assets within a particular ethnocultural, linguistic or faith community can be useful for a research project. Immigrant and refugee families with neurodivergent children have varying assets that they often rely on to help support their family including their neurodivergent child. These assets can be personal or within their community. For instance, families shared with us how they seek community spaces that affirm and value their child's neurodivergence. We also learned that families found a sense of identity and multiple supports within their peer groups and within their neighborhood (e.g., a neighbor who is kind and understanding towards the neurodivergent child).

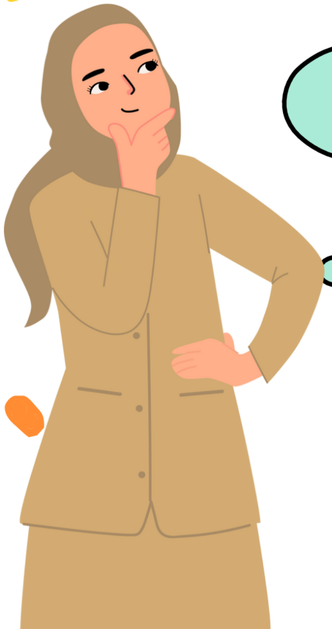
Learning about our communities

How do migrant families describe themselves and their neurodivergent child ?

What barriers or traumas have migrant families experienced when seeking supports ?

What were the pre- and post-migration experiences of families with neurodivergent children ?

What assets do migrant families use to support their neurodivergent child ?



Building relationships within a research team

In our past experiences in research, we explored how we enter and foster relationships among team members via research projects. This encompasses being invited to a project to being a member of the project team. Involvement in a project that was perceived as not meaningful occurred in the following ways:

- the mandate of the project did not serve to support the community,
- the directive of the project is influenced by an external factor and not necessarily aligned with our interests,
- local context (e.g., the capacity of the organization, the potential past traumas experienced by potential participants) was not incorporated into the project design and implementation,
- it was not clear as to how our perspectives were honored and influenced the project,
- there is a lack of diversity among team members (e.g., being the only racialized person),
- communications between members are non-engaging (e.g., lack of transparency about processes, using technical jargon during meetings) and,
- findings are not mobilized into concrete and effective action.

For us, relationships are an evolving process that cannot necessarily be captured via formal documentation and do not necessarily reflect what has been proposed. Further, in some communities, formal documentation does not carry the same currency as a verbal agreement between two parties who wish to undertake a project together. However, we believe that formal documentation is significant particularly to outline why we come together, and what roles and responsibilities will be undertaken throughout the project. To this end, it is important to update any documentation to reflect new goals, roles or responsibilities.

We also explored how we enter and maintain relationships with those who are directly and indirectly impacted by our research projects including those who are invited to projects to share their perspectives and experiences such as families of neurodivergent children. Non-meaningful engagement with participants had the following features:

- were one-way that were often directed by researchers,
- had objectives that did not align with those impacted by the research,
- were time-limited with little room for engagement and collective reflection on how projects can be oriented to both researchers and participants' goals,
- recreated power dynamics due to a lack of or limited awareness or an unwillingness to explore the influences of multiple and intersecting systemic factors such as capitalism, racism, ableism, sexism, and colonialism,
- lacked transparency in how perspectives would demonstrate benefits for participants and,
- incorporated ways of sharing knowledge that is often didactic and non-accessible.

Lastly, we also acknowledged the role of discursive factors (e.g., colonialism, capitalism, patriarchy) embedded within our working culture that promoted specific ways of working with each other. For instance, we recognize that we, as academics and clinicians in healthcare professions, promote roles (e.g., 'the expert is one who knows everything', 'the researcher does not advocate for policy changes) that can be a barrier to building relationships.

Why we come together becomes the platform for how we relate and what drives our motivation to attain this shared goal. Coming together to collaborate on research must be reflective of how and why our communities come together. From our experiences, coming together is a learning space of shared stories, exchanging and reflecting on perspectives as well as holding spaces for everyone. The following are guidelines to support the relationship-building process with community and service providers.

01. Relationship as infrastructure

In moving towards better engagement in research, we center relationships as the infrastructure to undertake a research project. For us, relationships are the vessel for being and doing things together (e.g., sharing and reflecting together, generating meaningful questions). Fostering relationships becomes integral and as such requires building in opportunities for team members to nurture their relations with each other. Some examples include taking time to know each other, allowing each other to identify what they wish to do, finding opportunities to promote learning, trialing and learning from proposed strategies and reflecting on past ways of working with migrant families with neurodivergent children and working on a research team.

02. Towards a shared mandate

Our values and goals consolidate our motivation to work with each other. Our values underpin how we envision meaningful relationships in research and include the following:

- Growth-oriented – research projects must be premised on opportunities for all involved to learn, build a sense of connectedness and expand our network;
- Anchored through the lens of who will be directly impacted by the research – prospective goals and outcomes of research projects must be aligned with the interests of the community that may include the neurodivergent individual, their family and/or their providers who support them;
- Transformative directive – research projects must have a transformative objective (i.e., focus on addressing structural, institutional and discursive elements) that can help to remove the barriers that neurodivergent individuals and their families face and/or help promote the meaningful participation of neurodivergent individuals and their families into society and;
- Accountability – research projects need to demonstrate clear and practical benefits to families, must honor their involvement and subsequent findings and impacts must be shared to families to demonstrate what happened with the research.

While we recognize these are our goals, co-created meaning within a relationship is always unique and specific to the people who meet and work together on an ongoing basis. As such, we encourage researchers to reflect with communities ways of how they can co-create, foster and sustain meaning into their relationships with each other.

Specific considerations

The following are guidelines to support the relationship-building process specific for team members and for participants.

01. Considerations for team members

Fostering relationships with each other involves creating spaces for all to be involved. A first step involves creating a team composition that reflects the community being impacted by the research. Next, the infrastructure of the team must be sensitive to potential barriers (e.g., inability to provide theoretical or technical research expertise, lack of time to participate, discomfort in participating in meetings) that may hinder participation. To minimize these barriers, it is important to create inclusive meeting processes (e.g., offer options for how people can participate, assign research tasks that leverage members' strengths, provide fair compensation for members' involvement), build in wrap-around supports (e.g., learn from family members how to support neurodivergent individuals) and incorporate adaptations into the research design (e.g., creating a design that is practical and feasible for all involved).

Given the array of team members, there is a potential for differences to emerge due to a group of unique positionalities and lived experiences. While differences can be points of dis-connection, these can also be bridges for new connections and subsequently open avenues for novel insights. Although, holding spaces for different perspectives may at times, be difficult and frustrating, it is necessary to embrace the emergence of the knowledge creation process.

Lastly, team growth relies on a relational model of mentorship whereby peers learn, act and reflect with each other. It is a process that organically grows and cannot be predicted, owned or directed by one person. At times, its emergence evolves on its own. As such, we emphasize, that when we make mistakes (as we will eventually do), practicing patience, grace and humility helps to facilitate the team's growth.

Building a team on an ongoing basis

How does our membership reflect our communities we work with ?

What are the internal and external resources our team needs to support each other's participation ?

What potential organizational and systemic barriers hinder participation ?

What are the ongoing processes we engage in to learn about each other and how we work together ?

How are we creating spaces to hold shared and diverse perspectives ?

02. Considerations for participants

Likewise, building respectful and accountable relationships with potential participants involves the creation of processes that honor and value different worldviews and experiences. Identifying and recruiting potential participants must have the following beginning steps:

- Spending time within their communities (e.g., learning how neurodivergent individuals and their families use terms to express themselves and navigate their worlds),
- Promoting transparency about the project throughout their involvement,
- Creating safe and adaptive ways for participants to be involved and not experience re-traumatization (e.g., working with community leaders to identify past traumas experienced within the community, building a nest of culturally-responsive emotional support and information for families),
- Incorporating formats and processes (e.g., creating study materials in different languages and promoting these materials using different media; using data collection methods that are similar to gathering/learning customs within a specific culture; using recruitment materials that do not promote transactional but growth-oriented encounters) that are responsive to the multiple ways that participants learn and are familiar with and,
- Working with participants to identify how to honor them (e.g., being present as they share their stories and/or providing appropriate compensation) as we work to co-create knowledge.

We want participants to feel empowered and valued to share their story, not diminished and marginalized by the research process.

Building inclusion for our communities

What opportunities do we have to spend time to learn and/or support migrant families with neurodivergent children and their communities?

How do migrant families with neurodivergent children like to participate in our study?

How will migrant families with neurodivergent children like to be honored during their involvement in the research project?

What were past barriers and/or traumas that prevented migrant families with neurodivergent children to not be involved in research projects?

Sharing our learnings:

For us, sharing knowledge represents an opportunity to engage with a variety of stakeholders. It represents an opportunity to learn how knowledge is of value to both academic and non-academic communities. It is thus another opportunity to build relationships with those who will be impacted by the research regardless if they were involved in the research. For us, sharing knowledge represents a stage where we must be attentive to how research outputs can be conveyed respectfully and meaningfully to the academic and non-academic communities.

While sharing knowledge can occur in academic and non-academic settings, plans for sharing knowledge are not identical across both settings. Our past experiences with sharing knowledge in academic communities often involves presenting at a conference a large amount of data within a short amount of time. Further, this data is often saddled with complex jargon that remains meaningful to those who have expertise in the area. Lastly, given the short amount of time for discussion, the presenter often is the only speaker with minimal opportunities for everyone to participate.

Further, certain research products have its benefits and its drawbreaks in presenting complex topics. For example, peer-reviewed manuscripts are great tools to present complex topics and broaden knowledge. However, manuscripts often have complex and technical language, are text-heavy and formatted in a design language only known to specific groups. Collectively, these aspects of peer-reviewed manuscripts can be inaccessible to other key stakeholders who wish to learn.

When sharing knowledge in non-academic settings, we valued the formats that are interactive, multi-lingual, incorporates different ways of learning and honors the values of participants' contribution. For instance, we enjoyed sharing knowledge when they were presented through art or story-telling formats (e.g., dancing and plays).

The following are guidelines to support the relationship-building process specific to the knowledge sharing process.

01. Adopt a peer-oriented approach

Sharing knowledge must be anchored in an approach that strives to balance the relational dynamics between the presenters and the attendants. Both presenters and attendants are of equal value and thus each can contribute to the next steps of the research project. For instance, presenting findings to the community may give additional ideas of how to scale intervention projects or to identify future research projects. When adopting a peer-oriented approach, interactive and/or dialogical formats remain invaluable as they actively engage everyone. For many of us in our communities, sharing knowledge in these formats opens up opportunities for people to deepen their learning and more importantly, how these learnings are meaningful in their lives.

02. Knowledge sharing events serve multiple functions

Creating an event (e.g., workshop) for the purpose of sharing knowledge is not an ideal way to recruit attendants for a non-academic community event. In our experience, when sharing knowledge within our diverse communities, these events must serve multiple functions beyond sharing knowledge such as building formal (e.g., connecting with services) and informal (e.g., connecting with other families) social capital for families, enhancing existing knowledge and/or skills (e.g., learning more about services and supports existing in the local area) or building community (e.g., learning how to support each other).

03. Translate findings into art formats

For many of our communities, sharing knowledge via art forms (e.g., visual art, role plays, music, dances) is a great tool for families.

04. Incorporate the perspectives of community leaders

Community leaders comprise a variety of individuals who may provide formal and/or informal support and come from a variety of sectors (e.g., health, school, faith). Regardless they have invaluable knowledge of what terms to use, how to present information and ways to share information. They also have an array of logistical experience in helping to plan community events as well as how to recruit community members.

05. Consider how to value participants' contribution

When sharing knowledge, considerations should focus on how to demonstrate the importance of their contribution. While presenting aggregate forms of information is helpful, sharing perspectives of participants in complex and nuanced formats (e.g., stories) highlight their contribution. For instance, some of us have found that reading participants' stories in a presentation via a research team member can have a vivid impact on attendants. When making these considerations, it is important to consult with community leaders and/or family participants on how they wish to share their contributions.

06. Consider priorities of sharing knowledge

When prioritizing groups and formats for sharing knowledge, we suggest research teams consider the needs of the team. For instance, sharing knowledge with the communities may be helpful when needing guidance on next steps of a project or an intervention. In contrast, sharing knowledge with the academic community and publishing articles may be helpful in cementing learnings such as validating a need for a specific intervention. Regardless, we believe that study learnings should always be shared to participants to gather their perspectives.

Exploring how to share with our communities

How do we create knowledge-sharing events where everyone is an active learner and participant?

What tools can we use to share knowledge that nourish all our senses?

How do we honor participants' contributions in meaningful ways?

How will sharing our learnings mutually benefit our team and our communities?

Understanding each other

Research teams may comprise of different stakeholders that include neurodivergent individuals, caregivers, community leaders, formal service providers and academic researchers from different disciplines. Our relationships with each other on research teams can be influenced by our past relationships with each other, by our past schemas that are related to the context of working together and more importantly, the embedded power dynamics that emerge from the different identities that we have with each other.

Within a research team, there can be multiple relationships that have been forged prior to agreeing to become a team. Thus, learned social practices of engagement are likely to come into play and these may include how we listen or do not listen to each other, give or not give voice to one another, value or discredit perspectives that are different from our own, demonstrate how shared perspectives have helped or have not helped us. In addition to this, other schemas attained through lived experience will also influence how we relate to each other. Some examples may include working on a case study within a team or working with members to design a particular product.

Relationships will also be influenced by the different identities that we have. Each of us has a unique set of social identities that result in having a specific set of worldviews, attitudes, and values. In addition to our individual identities, we will also have organizational identities that can influence how and why we choose to come together as a research team. Exploring these identities and how they differ or are similar to others can help understand how to navigate and bridge power differences within a team. The greater that we become more self-aware of our positionalities and the privileges that we have, the more mindful we will be of our power in navigating dynamics in our research relationships.

Engaging in ongoing reflection

How has my organization valued neurodivergent individuals?

How has my organization welcomed individuals who migrated to Canada?

How are our worldviews similar or dissimilar?

How do I relate to you at an organizational level?

How does my privilege shape our interactions?

How do I relate to you at an individual level?

How do I relate to you at an institutional level?

How has society valued or not valued perspectives from neurodivergent individuals?

How has society welcomed or not welcomed perspectives from individuals who migrated to Canada?

The following are guidelines on how to use reflection to support the relationship-building process within teams.

01. Unpack how we learn to be in relationships

We learn a variety of social practices that shape how we share our perspectives, listen, give voice to other ideas, be open to different ideas and validate different perspectives. These social practices are ingrained and subtle in our daily practices. These social practices can also evolve, even in a nuanced way, with each new encounter. Often, we are not necessarily attentive to how these practices influence how we act and how we shape decision-making processes in team-oriented projects. Further, we are often not attentive to how we influence each other's value and well-being in the immediate and future context. Within any relationship, what we learn influences how we are valued and in turn generates ideas for how we can expect to act in the future.

Building relationships on a research team must focus on providing a platform for ongoing reflection particularly given that relationships continue to evolve throughout the research project. It is best to start as early as possible to identify ways of being welcoming, inclusive and nourishing towards each other. Although, the focus of the reflection can be on exploring how we learn to be and act in relationships, specific attention must focus on how these practices promote the marginalized and the privileged perspectives. Further, reflection should unpack practices that promote the outcomes instead of the process dimensions of relationships. Some examples might explore how relationships can be perceived to be (i) transactional instead of being mutually beneficial or (ii) siloed and fixed instead of evolving and interconnected.

02: Explore how and why we come together

Coming together on projects can reflect individual, organizational and institutional objectives, outcomes, and benefits. Unpacking each of these influences illuminates how power dynamics have influences from different and intersecting sources. More importantly, attention to these influences creates a platform for team members to find ways to re-center project objectives, outcomes, and benefits to the appropriate group (i.e., direct stakeholders who will be impacted by the research findings).

03. Nourish our encounter with each other

As social beings, our relationships are embodied encounters that require the nourishment of all our ways of knowing. Reflection is at its optimal when attention is given to all our senses, our intuition, our ways to conceptualize knowledge and our spirit. Each way of knowing provides nuanced if not in-depth knowledge to how we engage, support, and empower each other. To this end, platforms and tools for reflection should incorporate, promote and foster different ways of knowing.

How can we grow together?

What were our experiences on past teams ?

How can our projects create ways to mutually grow as individuals and as organizations ?

How do we create mindful spaces to address power dynamics ?

How do we address potential organizational and systemic barriers that hinder the growth of a team member or our team as our projects progress ?

How do we nourish our learning spaces to incorporate all ways of knowing ?

Supporting families as a service provider

As noted above, our families often encounter challenges due to linguistic/cultural, jargon, structural, and systemic barriers. As providers working with different migrant families, our support involves being an intermediary to help families navigate different services and advocate for their rights to services. In our work, we are often supporting our families from a reactive instead of a proactive approach. For instance, we often support families with neurodivergent children who already have difficult interactions with other service providers. While we wish to provide a holistic support, it can be difficult to provide this type of support given the numerous existing challenges encountered by a family. For instance, some of our family members are still waiting for a diagnosis, and/or obtain approval for necessary early intervention or respite services. When accessing supports for our families, these supports often are not tailored to the cultural needs of the family and the neurodivergent needs of the child.

The following are guidelines to support the relationship-building process between service providers and families.

01. Strive for a comprehensive understanding of families.

Learn where families are in their journey of understanding their child's diagnosis and the landscape of supports where they reside in. Gain a deeper understanding of their migration and settlement journey particularly focusing on how specific diagnoses and supports for neurodivergent children have been viewed in their origin of country compared to Canada.

02. Tailor supports to the family's specific needs.

Explore with families how their cultural, linguistic or faith needs can be incorporated within their neurodivergent child's care plan. Actively offer the services of a provider (e.g., cultural broker) that is familiar with their language and with their cultural customs. Provide space for families to ask questions and listen to their concerns. Help foster families' knowledge and skills so they can feel empowered to voice their perspectives, have confidence and the capacity to access supports for their neurodivergent child. Lastly, given the potential that families may not have an in-depth understanding terminology related to their child's diagnosis and the necessary supports, be attentive in how you share information. Find ways to translate complex terminology into simple, clear and accessible knowledge.

03. Education for families

Families need ongoing education to enhance their vocabulary about their child's diagnosis and the supports for their child. Given the family's settlement journey and their neurodivergent's child's care trajectory can intertwine, it is also important to build the family's knowledge of other supports that families may encounter. This may include education, social services, housing and employment. Further, workshops are needed for families to foster their skills in navigating different supports, knowing their family's rights to services and learning how to advocate for their child and their family.

04. Education for communities

Organizations that are vital to promoting the health and well-being need to have ongoing education. For instance, faith organizations (e.g., mosques and churches) have been critical hubs for migrant families to find peer support. Unfortunately, for our families, they often face disability-related stigma within their faith organization. As such, education should focus on enhancing the knowledge and skills so that faith leaders and their congregants can create a welcoming and inclusive environment for migrant families with neurodivergent children.

05. Education for service providers

Service delivery experiences stand to improve when providers are culturally and neurodivergent responsive. While education can focus on enhancing knowledge about diagnoses and disability services specific to the child, greater attention should focus on enhancing providers' self-awareness of how their different social identities and resultant worldviews shape how they relate to, engage with, and empower immigrant and refugee families with neurodivergent children.

For service providers, being responsive to families requires being aware of how their own and their families' realities are shaped by systems that validate/marginalize them. In building self-awareness, providers must be attentive to how their own individual and institutional characteristics shape their relations with families. For instance, a provider may consider how one's worldviews and realities as a provider in one's chosen discipline have historically influenced how they engage with and listen to immigrant and refugee families with neurodivergent children. In another example, this provider may also consider how one's organizational mandate and policies have influenced engagement with immigrant and refugee families with neurodivergent children.

Supporting our families

When tailoring support, what dimensions (e.g., citizenship, cultural, language, faith, gender, ability) must I consider ?

What has been the journey of families as they support their neurodivergent child ?

What education is needed for our families and our communities ?

How can I be mindful about my biases and my worldview on an ongoing basis ?

Summary of guidelines

Highlight 1 Learn about immigrant and refugee families with neurodivergent children

- Learn how families identify themselves
- Be cognizant of past traumas, oppressions and avoid making assumptions
- Learn about the assets within the community you work with

Highlight 2 Center relationships within the project

- Create ways of being, doing and reflecting together
- Develop shared goals that are growth-oriented and transformative
- Build accountable and meaningful relationships for all involved

Highlight 3 Sharing knowledge with communities

- Adopt a peer-oriented and multi-functional approach
- Use multi-lingual, and art formats
- Incorporate views of community leaders and participants

Highlight 4 Understanding each other

- Unpack social practices that marginalize and privilege perspectives
- Identify individual, organizational and institutional influences
- Optimize reflection using different ways of knowing.

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