

Needs Assessment Committee: Recommendations for Supporting the EMA's Asylum Seeker and Newly Arrived Immigrant Communities

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NEEDS ASSESSMENT BACKGROUND

Needs Assessment Committee Purpose

As the Needs Assessment Committee (NAC), we manage all required needs-assessment activities, including:

- Data analysis;
- Selecting topics to investigate to contribute to the Planning Council's assessment of local **needs for services**, review of **epidemiological and service utilization data**, and estimating and assessing **unmet need and service gaps**

Needs Assessment Activity

- Needs assessment is a process of collecting and analyzing information to understand service needs or gaps between current and desired outcomes/conditions
- Compiled knowledge is used to determine what changes are needed to help fill those service gaps and meet identified needs
- Action requires setting priorities and deciding how best to use available resources for positive change
- A process of collecting information about the needs of people with HIV (PWH) in a Part A jurisdiction, both those receiving care and those not in care
- Includes both quantitative (numerical) and qualitative (non-numerical) data obtained from multiple sources using a variety of methods
- This process and planning task is led by the PC's Needs Assessment Cmte

2022-2023 Comprehensive Needs Assessment

- In the 2022- 2023 planning year, the NAC completed a Comprehensive Needs Assessment
- The Needs Assessment identified the services needed by PWH in addition to the following components:
 - Information about the needs of PWH - both receiving care and those out of care;
 - Used data from multiple sources on the demographics and number of people diagnosed with HIV/AIDS, their specific health and social service needs, and the current resources available to meet those needs (Ryan White Program and other funding sources) for improving their quality of life

Identifying Emerging Topics and Issues

Following the Needs Assessment completion, data and findings that were limited and/or missing was added to a list of topics to prioritize in the 2023-2024 planning year.

Purpose of exploring these topics is to:

- 1. Expand our repository of data and findings**
- 2. Look beyond traditional and surveillance sources to capture rich and relevant data for priority populations**
- 3. Understand the multiple, intersecting identities not commonly reflected in surveillance data**
- 4. Highlight key HIV epidemiological data for populations and communities disproportionately impacted by the HIV epidemic in the NY EMA.**
- 5. Investigate topics that have not been explored by PC in the past**

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EMERGING TOPIC: SUPPORTING THE EMA'S ASYLUM SEEKER AND IMMIGRANT COMMUNITIES

List of Prioritized Emerging Topics

✓ Asylum Seeker/Newly Arrived Immigrants

- People with disabilities including cognitive, developmental, emotional/ behavioral, physical, or sensory-impaired
- People with substance use
- People of trans experience
- People involved in sex work or sex exchange
- Availability of an online, searchable RWPA service directory
- Geographic distribution of RWPA service locations data
- HIV Workforce Challenges
- Provider training around Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (SOGI) data

Background - Emerging Topic: Supporting Asylum Seekers and Newly Arrived Immigrants

- Since Spring 2022, there have been more than 180,000 newly arrived immigrants entering the City shelter sites
 - Around 64,000 have remained
- Many newly arrived immigrants have limited access or no coordination of service provision prior to locating to NY
- These newest New Yorkers are:
 - Single adults and families with young children seeking asylum in the U.S.
 - Most are from Spanish-speaking countries, but also many from African, Asian and Caribbean countries
 - Many have experienced difficult and traumatic journeys to the U.S. and are in need of physical, emotional, well-being support
 - As the world is experiencing a global refugee and displacement crisis, many fleeing their home countries to the U.S. are escaping persecution, torture, violence, and instability

(Source: DOHMH Health Care Access and Policy Unit and The City, NYC Comptroller)

- From October 2023 to January 2024 the Needs Assessment Committee received a series of presentations and reports based on content pertinent to developing informed recommendations for improved and enhanced service delivery to support HIV-positive asylum seekers and newly arrived immigrants who seek care in the Ryan White Part A (RWPA) system.

Background - Summary of Presentations

List of presentations and content shared with NAC:

- **Current Policy Changes Impacting Immigrant/Recent Asylee communities** (*NYC Health Dept. – BHHS External/Policy Affairs*)
- **Coordinated City Services to Support Immigrant/Recent Asylee communities** (*NYC Health Dept. - Dir. Of Policy and Immigrant Initiatives – Health Care Access and Policy Unit*)
- **HIV among people born outside of the U.S. in NYC, 2022 data** (*NYC Health Department*)
- **CBO and Health Care Providers to Support Immigrant/Recent Asylee Communities** – (*African Services Committee and Ryan Health*)
- **Language services and resources available through NYC Health Dept.** (*Language Access Department*)

Background - Themes, Goals and Recommendations

- From January to February 2024, the NAC, summarized our meeting presentations into major themes and the goals we envisioned for improving services for the population.
- Then we used the themes and goals to develop a set of recommendations for the Recipient and RWPA providers to implement to improve and expand immigrant/asylum seeker access to RWPA services

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FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS REVIEW

Theme 1: Language Barriers

- Some organizations are experiencing an increase of clients needing language interpretation services
- Language interpretation services during client visits/appointments increase the length of appts in comparison to non-newly arrived immigrant populations
- Lack of interpretation services and resources to meet the needs of newly arrived Spanish-speaking and French-speaking, and some Wolof- and Pulaar-speaking clients (West Africa)
- Shortage of staff able to provide translation services (specifically West African dialects and other less-frequently spoken languages)
- Interpreters should be someone culturally aware and have received cultural humility training relevant to the population being served

Goal 1: Language Barriers

Strengthen RWPA provider capacity to provide high-quality, diverse easy to access and linguistically affirming language written or oral interpretation and translation services in the languages spoken by newly arrived immigrants being served in the NY EMA.

Final Recommendation 1: Language Barriers

R1(a). The Recipient to recommend that RWPA providers assess and enhance their existing capacity to provide interpretation and translation language services.

R1(b). The Recipient to provide vetted resources and guidance for staff trainings that address the cultural and linguistic needs specific to immigrant communities of the NY EMA, including indigenous languages spoken by Latino/a and African immigrants. Resources should include the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs (MOIA) - Language Access and Disability Program, NYC Health Dept.'s Language Service Program, and the materials, trainings and resources. Find a listing of indigenous language vendors [here](#). Ensure that all printed materials are available in multiple languages.

Theme 2: Service Demand Increase and Navigation Challenges

- A consistent and significant increase in client volume has been a difficult barrier to navigate with constrained and limited resources in staffing and funding
- Many clients are coming to organization sites due to word of mouth through their communities; most clients are coming in as walk-ins
- Clients report that safe and affirming organizations are important to them/their community

Theme 2: Service Demand Increase and Navigation Challenges

- Many asylum seekers experience lengthier appointment visits due to the loss of health documentation during their challenging journey to the US/NYC
- Many asylum seekers come to organizations seeking non-health care services such as school enrollment and workforce opportunities
- Lack of information and confusion about the asylum process among clients seeking permanent residency status in NYC
- Population vulnerable to exploitation (being scammed into fake/illegal and expensive legal immigration services)

Goal 2: Service Demand Increase and Navigation Challenges

To help RWPA providers accommodate and manage the increase in service needs of newly arrived clients while continuing to serve existing clients effectively and help them mitigate health care and social support navigation challenges by making appropriate referrals.

Final Recommendation 2: Service Demand Increase and Navigation Challenges

R2(a). Recommend that RWPA providers improve and expand upon existing case management services that focus on immigrant communities. To consider partnering with agencies to identify ways to facilitate case management for immigrant communities.

R2(b). The Recipient should regularly identify providers that have a focus on immigrant services who have the capacity to receive client referrals to mitigate high client volume from referring RWPA providers.

Final Recommendation 2: Service Demand Increase and Navigation Challenges

R2(c). The Recipient should provide RWPA providers with an understanding of the full breadth of available and new navigation services and resources being offered by City agencies and various community-based organizations (CBOs) to refer clients to appropriate health care and social services, including Medicaid enrollment, vaccinations, school enrollment, immigration legal services, employment, and NYC identification enrollment. Highlighted resources to be sent to RWPA providers electronically monthly.

R2(d). The Recipient should offer RWPA providers with referrals to resources for identifying and reporting claims of abuse, fraud, scams and/or crime (includes but not limited to immigration services fraud, housing, public spaces discrimination, workplace abuses) on behalf of clients (e.g., [New Americans Hotline](#), [Action NYC](#), [Asylum Seeker Advocacy Project](#)). Highlighted resources to be sent to RWPA providers electronically monthly.

Theme 3: Mental Health Concerns – Client Experience

- Frequent reporting of asylum seekers experiencing significant trauma, e.g., kidnapping, extortion, and sexual assault, other exploitation during and/or after the difficult and dangerous journey to the United States (while also considering the contributing conditions why many newly arrived are fleeing their country of origin)

Goal 3: Mental Health Concerns – Client Experience

To address the mental health concerns and the high level of trauma among newly arrived immigrant clients using an affirming, culturally responsive and client-centered approach; to equip staff with the appropriate tools to address mental health concerns.

Final Recommendation 3: Mental Health Concerns – Client Experience

R3(a). RWPA providers should train their staff on understanding the specific behavioral and mental health needs of newly arrived immigrant clients using a trauma-informed approach.

R3(b). The Recipient should develop a robust list of crisis intervention RWPA providers with a least 5 resources per borough of county.

R3(c). The Recipient should coordinate real-time training calendars and resources specific to crisis counseling, psychological first aid and trauma-informed care training for all RWPA provider staff to participate in. (From NY EMA Framing Directive).

Theme 4: Mental Health Concerns – Staff Experience

- Staff may experience secondary trauma from exposure to traumatic experiences shared by many asylum seeker clients
- Staff need help to address and prevent burnout, secondary trauma/compassion fatigue

Goal 4: Mental Health Concerns – Staff Experience

To build staff and peer worker resiliency, support, and organizational capacity to enhance emotional and psychological wellness in the workplace.

Final Recommendation 4: Mental Health Concerns – Staff Experience

R4(a). RWPA providers should develop and implement a self-care plan for any staff and peer workers needing support (e.g., US Department of Education Self-Care Plan [here](#)).

R4(b). RWPA providers should develop and implement a supportive mental health workplace toolkit, and Psychological First Aid (PFA) trainings for supporting staff (e.g., NYC WorkWell Toolkit [here](#), PFA training [here](#)).

Final Recommendation 4: Mental Health Concerns – Staff Experience

R4(c). RWPA providers should share resources on mental health trainings, peer/profession-specific support groups, town halls etc. (e.g., Mayor's Office of Mental Health calendar of trainings for providers [here](#), Worker2Worker free peer support counseling program for social workers [here](#)).

R4(d). RWPA providers should integrate professional evidence-based wellness models, work-life balance principles and best practices into their organization's vision to promote resilience in the workplace (e.g., an evidence-based wellness model used by the Worker2Worker program [here](#)).

Theme 5: LGBTQ+ Asylum Seekers Needing Health and Support Services

- Increased number of asylum-seeking LGBTQ+ clients from the seeking health care services
- Some newly arrived immigrants are coming from countries where same-sex relationships are criminalized
- Emphasize the importance of providing tailored, affirming, and safe healthcare to this community

Goal 5: LGBTQ+ Asylum Seekers Needing Health and Support Services

To provide the guidance and resources to help providers with treating LGBTQ+ clients with sensitivity and competence to appropriately meet their needs in an affirming manner.

Final Recommendation 5: LGBTQ+ Asylum Seekers Needing Health and Support Services

R5(a). RWPA providers should provide educational orientation to all staff and peer workers to improve LGBTQ+ competency.

R5(b). RWPA providers should ensure that staff and peer worker training includes an introduction to the SOGI (Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity) foundational themes in a context that addresses intersectional identities and oppressions (e.g., homophobia, transphobia), implicit biases and presumptions. Training should include content on using respectful terminology and understanding the experiences of LGBTQ+ asylum seeker/displaced clients (e.g., Rainbow Health Club - *LGBTQ Cultural Competency Trainings for Behavioral Healthcare Providers and Consumers in NYC* [here](#)).

Final Recommendation 5: Asylum Seekers Needing Health and Support Services

R5(c). RWPA providers should ensure that the delivery of services are provided in a safe and supportive space that is both affirming and welcoming.

R5(d). RWPA providers should offer relatable materials, guidelines and resources on LGBTQ+ affirming services.

R5(e). RWPA providers should partner with trusted community-based organizations for technical assistance and referral network assistance. If additional supportive services are needed, the RWPA provider should use the [DOHMH NYC Health Map](#) to refer and connect clients to an online directory of vetted LGBTQ+ affirming service providers.

Theme 6: Stakeholder and Community Engagement

- Importance of staying abreast of City/State/Federal policy that impacts the delivery of health and social support services to immigrant communities (e.g., TPS changes, work visa rules)

Goal 6: Stakeholder and Community Engagement

To build the capacity of RWPA providers to navigate the evolving policy and service system as it relates to immigrant health and social services access.

Final Recommendation 6: Stakeholder and Community Engagement

R6(a). The Recipient should provide information about changes to the immigration policy and protections, and the health care and social support service landscape to RWPA providers to maximize service provision and referrals.

- Assign a Recipient representative to attend the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs (MOIA) and NYC Service, "Coordinating Asylum Seeker Efforts: Nonprofits & NYC Government" monthly meetings for updates.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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QUESTIONS?
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