



## Building Trust with Culturally Diverse Mothers

Building trust with women reaching out to services is essential to help ensure their initial and continued accessing of support.<sup>3</sup>

The following two BCSTH resources were designed to increase access to services for Indigenous families and immigrant and refugee women leaving violence. While they were not both written specifically for the PEACE Program, they share relevant practices to increase access and build trust and safety with culturally diverse families:

- [Increasing Access to PEACE Programs for Indigenous Children, Youth and Non-Offending Caregivers](#)
- [Building Supports. Promising Practices Guide for Supporting Immigrant and Refugee Women Leaving Violence.](#)

### Key Practices to Build Trust <sup>1</sup>

**Take a holistic approach:** A holistic approach entails building trust in the community, so that community members are willing to talk about difficult and sensitive topics. Reaching out to the various cultural communities in your larger community can be a good starting place for building trust with the various communities, and with individuals in the communities.

**Mentor:** If possible, consider finding mentors and building relationships in the community you are working with when the culture of a client is different to your own. This may allow you to gain insight into other cultures without leaning on clients to educate you. In addition, finding mentors and building relationships with diverse parts of your community can support those communities to trust and reach out when they need support.

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<sup>1</sup> Adapted from the Building Supports Promising Practices Guide for Supporting Immigrant and Refugee Women Leaving Violence (p. 14)



**Create Safety:** What safety looks like will vary for every mother. Creating safety means emotional and cultural safety, in addition to physical safety. One of the most significant ways to create emotional and cultural safety is through building relationships with mothers. PEACE Program counsellors can help to meet the mother’s relational needs by asking her what helps her to feel safe, and by listening in a non-judgmental way. Ensure that she feels comfortable to express herself and her needs. If concerns arise about her physical, emotional and/or cultural safety, problem-solve together, seek support within your agency and remember to refer to other local services when the support required is beyond your scope of practice.

To help create safety:

- Meet mothers where they are at. Do not push her. Do not assume.
- Explore the role of culture and its meaning to the mother.
- Be open-minded and compassionate and listen to each mother’s situation without making assumptions about her spiritual, religious or traditional practices based on her ethnicity or race, community or position within the community.
- Avoid putting mothers in the position of feeling that they need to defend or explain their cultural practices. If mothers feel the need to put energy into defending their cultural practices, energy is diverted away from the issue at hand.
- Phrase questions in a culturally safe way.
- Predictable routines, positive language, listening, witnessing and open-ended questions can enhance well-being and security.

**Prioritize confidentiality:** Confidentiality is a crucial part of building trust. Spend time explaining confidentiality, and how it is applied in the PEACE Program. Be sure to consult with mothers and find out their preferences if making any referrals.

**Practice Patience:** Patience is key. Working with mothers from diverse backgrounds requires time and careful planning. A mother might require interpretation services and/or familiarization with cultural and societal expectations in Canada. In addition, be aware that mothers from other



cultures who are not proficient in English may not understand what you are saying. If you note that they may not be understanding you, rather than repeating what you are saying, consider using different words until they report that they understand. In addition, if a mother's understanding of English is poor, be careful not to speak louder in hopes that she will understand.

**Be responsive:** Being responsive and flexible in your work is essential to meeting the needs of mothers with diverse backgrounds.

**Be curious:** Practicing cultural safety means not making assumptions about mothers, their background, experiences, or needs. Being curious and asking mothers appropriate and relevant questions can help you to better understand them, and how best to support them.

## How to Build Trust<sup>2</sup>

To begin establishing safety and trust with mothers with diverse backgrounds accessing the PEACE Program:

- Spend longer periods of time building the relationship with the mother.
- Have patience—respect the approach and pace at which the mother wishes to share her experiences.
- Prioritize choice.
- [Listen](#) and reflect on what you are hearing. We may not understand the mother's experience, but we can hear it and let them know we have heard their experiences.
- Explore the role of culture, and its meaning, to the mother.
- If relevant, recognize the woman's pre-arrival experiences of violence and trauma.
- Ensure transparency.

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<sup>2</sup> Adapted from the Building Supports Promising Practices for Supporting Immigrant & Refugee Women Leaving Violence p. 18



- Ensure and affirm confidentiality.
- Be sensitive to the mother’s choices regarding her communities.
- Always get the mother’s consent when making any referrals.
- Recognize the mother’s strengths.
- Attend community events, which can also be used as platforms to talk about violence against women and girls.

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This document was published March 2022.

