



Canada's source for
HIV and hepatitis C
information

La source canadienne
de renseignements sur
le VIH et l'hépatite C

From *The Positive Side, Summer 2018*

From the Front Lines

By Shazia Islam

Immigrating to Canada can be both an exciting and an exhausting experience. For many newcomers, Canada offers opportunities to improve the quality of their lives and, for those escaping persecution or hardship in their countries of origin, a safe refuge. But settling in a new country comes with its challenges: Newcomers must learn to navigate a maze of services—immigration, healthcare, education, employment, housing and social services.

While juggling competing priorities, many are also learning a new language, grappling with income insecurity, and discovering that their education or training isn't recognized here—often in the absence of family, friends and their cultural community.

An HIV diagnosis, either prior to or after arriving in Canada, can further complicate the settlement process. Many HIV organizations offer invaluable supports to help HIV-positive newcomers access care and connect with others. Here are just a few.

Drumbeat



[HIV Community Link](#), Calgary

This program was named Drumbeat to appeal to the African, Caribbean and Black (ACB) communities it aims to reach. The sound of a drumbeat is a call to listen and take action.

In addition to educating people at risk for HIV about HIV prevention, Drumbeat supports people from the city's ACB communities who are affected by HIV. It offers peer support to help newcomers settle into their new homes. It hosts informal talks for both HIV-positive and -negative people, such as "Brothers' Chats" at barbershops and local churches; discussions cover everything from HIV stigma to treatment to harm reduction. For African women living with HIV, events like Under the Mango Tree and In the African Kitchen provide an opportunity to socialize, learn and engage in craftmaking and cooking.

For more info, call 403.508.2500, ext. 109 or visit www.hivcl.org. You can also check out HIV Community Link's brochures, available in 8 African languages.

Knowledge into Action



[Sexuality Education Resource Centre](#), Winnipeg

Knowledge into Action (KIA) is a program designed to raise awareness about HIV and hepatitis C, reduce stigma and improve the health of African newcomers from HIV-endemic countries. KIA runs a series of groups open to all newcomers, including those living with or affected by HIV. The sessions explore topics such as the social determinants of health, HIV 101, HIV stigma and how to manage your health. People can attend without disclosing their HIV status.

If you are a newcomer living with HIV, you can book a one-on-one session with the project coordinator beforehand to discuss your level of comfort participating in group activities where HIV is discussed. People living with HIV are also invited to facilitate KIA group sessions and are offered training to develop their skills beforehand.

To find out more, call 204.982.7816 or visit www.serc.mb.ca/immigrants-and-refugees

Making Ends Meet & Systems Navigation



[AIDS Coalition of Nova Scotia \(ACNS\)](#), Halifax

To respond to the realities associated with income insecurity, Making Ends Meet offers people living with HIV access to personal hygiene products. Once a month, people can pick up shower supplies (soap, shampoo, shaving cream, razors) and dental hygiene items (toothbrushes, toothpaste, mouthwash) as well as other necessities such as scarves and gloves for winter.

“Making Ends Meet is one of our most in-demand programs for newcomers,” says ACNS program coordinator Lori O’Brien. “Clients say that this program helps with the financial burden newcomers are faced with when starting over in a new country.”

ACNS also offers newcomers referrals and help with navigating healthcare and social services. The program coordinator informs clients of programs where they can access drug coverage, mental health resources, legal aid and housing, to ensure that newcomers have the tools and supports they need.

To learn more, contact the program coordinator at 902.425.4882, ext. 225 / pc@acns.ns.ca or visit www.acns.ns.ca

Legal Services



[HIV and AIDS Legal Clinic Ontario \(HALCO\)](#), Toronto

HALCO is the only organization in Ontario that provides legal services specifically for people living with HIV. This includes summary legal advice, referrals and legal representation. These services are available to people with HIV who are financially eligible and whose legal issue relates to HALCO's areas of legal practice (income security, housing, immigration/refugee, employment, health, human rights, privacy, powers of attorney and wills, prison law and family law).

HALCO also holds free educational workshops. Newcomers may benefit from going to workshops on the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP), Ontario's Drug Benefit Program, and HIV Disclosure and the Law.

For people looking for a lawyer at another organization or in private practice, HALCO makes referrals to lawyers who are knowledgeable about HIV and offers assistance with disclosing their HIV status to immigration lawyers.

To learn more, visit www.halco.org

[Ethno-racial Treatment Support Network \(ETSN\)](#)



[Committee for Accessible AIDS Treatment](#), Toronto

This intensive training program is for racialized newcomers who are looking to meet other people living with HIV, learn how to talk to their doctors about their health concerns, increase their knowledge of HIV, and develop their counselling skills to support their peers living with HIV.

ETSN is divided into two parts: Level 1, "Helping Ourselves," is a four-day training that equips people living with and affected by HIV with knowledge about HIV treatment, how to manage medication side effects and talking to healthcare providers. Level 2, "Helping Each Other," as the name suggests, is all about taking care of others —participants learn active listening and peer support strategies.

CAAT reports that 90 percent of ETSN graduates subsequently become actively engaged in pursuing their life goals —through employment, further education and training, volunteering, sitting on boards and strengthening their support networks. One graduate commented: "Taking ETSN Level 1 helped me regain my self-esteem and confidence in the face of a recent HIV diagnosis. I learned about HIV drugs, how to take care of my health and what questions to ask my doctor. When I took Level 2, I learned how to hold space for my peers and support them. The training was very holistic and helpful."

For more info, call 416.364.3030, ext. 2318 or visit www.hivimmigration.ca

Research shows that ethno-racial minority newcomers bear a disproportionate burden of HIV in Canada: In 2014, ethno-racial minority newcomers accounted for approximately 13.9% of new HIV infections while making up only 2.5% of the population.

Produced By:



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Disclaimer

Decisions about particular medical treatments should always be made in consultation with a qualified medical practitioner knowledgeable about HIV- and hepatitis C-related illness and the treatments in question.

CATIE provides information resources to help people living with HIV and/or hepatitis C who wish to manage their own health care in partnership with their care providers. Information accessed through or published or provided by CATIE, however, is not to be considered medical advice. We do not recommend or advocate particular treatments and we urge users to consult as broad a range of sources as possible. We strongly urge users to consult with a qualified medical practitioner prior to undertaking any decision, use or action of a medical nature.

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