



Spring Newsletter

FCJ Refugee Centre

SPRING 2017

All Women Count:

Workshops for Newcomer Women

FCJ Refugee Centre invites you to a series of workshops that will focus on topics/information that you can use and apply in your daily life: Health and self-care, recreation, housing, dealing with the lawyer, facilitation skills, violence against women, and more.



FCJ Refugee
Centre

208 Oakwood Ave.
Toronto, ON M6E 2V4
Tel: 416-469-9754
Fax: 416-469-2670

The workshops are possible thanks to the support of Catherine Donnelly Foundation.



All Women Count

The workshops will focus on developing effective problem-solving behaviours used to adapt and apply to areas of responsibility:

- Health and self-care
- Recreation
- Housing
- Beauty tips
- Jewelry Making
- Facilitation skills
- And more

TTC tokens will be provided
Time: 4:00pm - 6:00pm

WORKSHOPS SERIES SCHEDULE Spring/Summer 2017

- **June 1:** METRAC- Criminal Law and Violence Against Women
- **June 8:** METRAC- Child and Spousal Support
- **June 15:** Parkdale Community Legal Clinic- Dealing with the Lawyer
- **June 22:** George Brown College- Indigenous Peoples History
- **July 06:** METRAC- Help for Family Law Issues
- **July 13:** Canadian Centre for Victims of Torture- Mental Health and Wellness : dealing with stress, self-care and depression
- **July 20:** METRAC- Tenant Rights for Abused Women
- **August 3:** Public Health Toronto- Relationships and Sexual Health

- **August 10:** METRAC- Workplace Rights
- **August 17:** Financial Planning
- **August 24:** Catholic Cross Cultural Communication Centre- Resumes, Cover Letters and Interviews
- **August 31:** Catholic Cross Cultural Communication Centre- Resumes, Cover Letters and Interviews

LOCATION OF THE WORKSHOPS:
FCJ REFUGEE CENTRE

For any further information please contact
Blanca Cruz at 416-4699754 ext.229 or
blancacruz@fcjrefugeecentre.org



INTENSIVE COURSE

ACCESS TO EDUCATION

for precarious immigration status youth

With the generous funding from the City of Toronto, Community Legacy Initiative grant, we were able to develop our partnership with York University to create pathways for precarious status youth to pursue university degrees. The bridging program allows precarious status students to pursue university degrees while paying domestic fees.

The second course successfully ended on June 14 and the next one is going to start on September.

Newcomer Youth Recreation Forum

FCJ Youth Network attended a Newcomer Youth Recreation Forum on Monday, June 12, 2017. During the forum the presenters Chinue Bute, Rosa Solorzano & Maria Alejandra Ramirez talked about "From Youth to You; Youth engagement toolkit", a robust resource about newcomer youth engagement. This toolkit emphasize the importance of hearing the voices of the youths and allowing them to be part of the process, which will help them to integrate to the Canadian Society, creating safe spaces for newcomer youth.

My Experience at York University

This opportunity first arose when the FCJ Refugee Centre created class for precarious status youth who couldn't access post-secondary education. I was one of them. Seeking the opportunity to expand our horizons, Access to Education program give us a chance to have access to University.

During the 12 week program my skills weren't only tested, but enhanced furthering my ability to withstand the pressures of varsity life. It was a great experience, learning new things and understanding and getting the feel of varsity life, hopefully I'll enjoy it this coming September.

Tee-Jay Ndjoze-Siririka



Loly Rico Announced as the 2017 Spirit of Barbra Schlifer Award Recipient



Loly Rico, co-director has been awarded with “The Spirit of Barbra Shlifer Award 2017”. An award dedicated to a woman who is set on improving the lives of women effected by violence. Being the 2017 recipient of this award is very special and important to Loly : “For me, it has a special meaning because when I came to Canada 27 years ago, and I learned English, that was my first job, doing interpretations, and it was one of the first places I went to try to do connections, networking, because I started working with women facing abusive situations and referring them to Barbra Shlifer if they needed interpreters.”



Legal Aid Ontario is proposing cutting 40% of refugee and general immigration services beginning on July 1st



*Coalition of Service Providers
for Refugee Claimants in Southern Ontario*

The cuts will put at risk the lives of thousands of people seeking safety within Canada's borders. Due to this, the majority of our clients will be directly and seriously impacted by any cuts to Legal Aid. Community workers simply are not able to provide the legal support necessary for refugee claimants to succeed in finding protection in Canada.

The mandates of our organizations are to support people who are at risk in finding protection. It is clear that legal representation is essential in this. Therefore, we cannot support any cuts to Legal Aid funding.



Dear Jawad Kassab and the Legal Aid Ontario consultation committee,

The Coalition of Service Providers for Refugee Claimants in Southern Ontario calls on Legal Aid Ontario (LAO) to ensure that serious cuts are not made to immigration and refugee law services.

We are aware that you have severe budgetary constraints that have forced you to make difficult decisions about where to save on providing services. However, we implore you not to make the proposed 40% cuts to refugee and general immigration services beginning on July 1, 2017. Such cuts will put at risk the lives of thousands of people seeking safety within Canada's borders. Even one life is one too many to be put at risk.

We propose that you explore alternative ways to make cuts to services that do not disproportionately impact the immigration and refugee law sector.

The agencies of the Coalition are on the front line when it comes to responding to the needs of refugee claimants in Ontario. We, as service providers to refugees, support thousands of people each year as they navigate the complex refugee determination system. We also assist them to exercising their right to access legal representation. We see firsthand the critical role of proper legal representation in accessing justice.

Our agencies are already beyond capacity in providing essential settlement services to refugee claimants. In addition to helping them access legal services provided by LAO, we support refugees in accessing affordable housing, education, health care and other essential social services. As you are well aware, the desperate housing situation in many parts of Ontario has occupied many refugee service providers' time almost completely. We are therefore clearly unable to fill the huge gap in legal support that would be created by the proposed cuts. Furthermore, our agencies are financially constrained charities staffed by settlement workers and volunteers. We are not legal professionals. Refugee and immigration law is a highly specialized area of law that requires well-trained and experienced lawyers. We as community workers simply are not able to provide the legal support necessary for refugee claimants to effectively seek protection in Canada.

As outlined below, the consequences of inadequate legal representation will be serious.

- Refugee proceedings have life and death implications. We expect the number of negative decisions at the Refugee Protection Division will increase, putting refugees' lives at serious risk. Poor or inadequate representation leads to decisions that can result in removal to a situation where refugees will face persecution, torture or death. This would amount to refoulement.
- More negative decisions at the RPD will require more applications to the Refugee Appeal Division (RAD) and/or the Federal Court to address the errors. Without adequate Legal Aid funding, these critical processes will be compromised. Both appellate processes are very complex and require legal expertise and familiarity with case law. Settlement workers are no substitute for proper legal representation in the appellate processes.
- Wrongful decision-making will result in increased instances of failed refugee claimants choosing to remain in Canada without legal status due to serious fear of return to their country of origin. This situation puts vulnerable people in a precarious situation without access to essential services. Many refugee claimants who lack financial resources will seek alternative ways to pay for counsel, thereby increasing their vulnerability. Refugee claimants already face too many barriers in the process of seeking protection in Canada. Many could be at risk of exploitation by employers taking advantage of their desperation for an income to pay their legal fees. Refugee claimants come to Canada to seek protection and may have to prioritize legal costs

Coalition Of Service Providers for Refugee Claimants in Southern Ontario



over their own basic needs. We expect to see refugee claimants without financial resources directing a significant portion of their social assistance towards paying legal fees. This will force already vulnerable claimants to depend more on shelters, food banks, and other services. In turn this will inevitably push them into situations of extreme poverty. Furthermore, the pressure on social services, such as emergency shelters, which are already under significant stress, will be multiplied. The undesirable consequence will be that the cost will be borne by other government departments in an indirect way. Proper Legal Aid funding will prevent a crisis.

Many of the Coalition members are transitional housing organizations. These organizations will inevitably absorb the cost of much of the financial pressures placed on refugee claimants, particularly if claimants are put in the position of having to pay legal fees over rent. We cannot in good conscience close the doors on those who see no other option but to direct social assistance to legal fees. However, the charitable sector is financially constrained. Our work of supporting refugee claimants will be further constrained if we find ourselves covering the costs of housing that are left when governments do not fulfill financial responsibilities.

This would mean our overall ability to provide even basic services to refugees would be severely compromised.

The mandates of our organizations are to support at-risk people in finding protection and navigating essential social services at the same time. We do not have the resources to provide extra services. Please see the attached list of services that are already offered by the member agencies of the Coalition. Most of these services are done behind the scenes and should not be taken for granted. Providing these services leaves us with no capacity for filling in gaps in legal support. Legal representation is crucial to the refugee resettlement process and not something in which we are trained or have the capacity with which to assist. Therefore, we cannot support any action that will contribute to denying essential services to refugee claimants.

Canada has an international reputation of being at the forefront in providing protection to those fleeing persecution. This is the time for Canada to live up to that reputation.

On the historic 150th anniversary of this country, we implore you to stand up for what is right, and to ensure that access to justice is provided for the most vulnerable among us. Protection, justice, and compassion are values that we all must work together to uphold. These are the values that make Canada a country truly worth celebrating.

Sincerely,

Adam House, Toronto
Angela Rose House, Windsor
Carty House, Ottawa
Casa El Norte, Fort Erie
Casa Maria Refugee Homes, Peterborough
Chez Marie, Fort Erie
Christie Refugee Welcome Centre, Toronto
FCJ Refugee Centre, Toronto
Fort Erie Multi-Cultural Centre
Matthew House, Fort Erie

Matthew House, Ottawa
Matthew House, Toronto
Matthew House, Windsor
Mennonite Coalition for Refugee Support, Kitchener
Micah House, Hamilton
Quaker Refugee Committee, Toronto
Ray of Hope - Welcome Home Refugee House, Kitchener
Romero House, Toronto
Silas Hill Home for Refugees, Toronto
Sojourn House, Toronto

Coalition Of Service Providers for Refugee Claimants in Southern Ontario

REFUGEE CENTRE FREE TAX CLINIC

Free Tax clinic run successfully during March-April 2017. We had 2 volunteers working with tax return: Alma Ulob and Maricel Ortiz, both under the coordination of Kanishka Basnayake. Did an excellent job!!

Being part of FCJ Refugee Centre Tax Clinic is a great experience. I volunteer at the Finance and Accounting department. This year I was registered in the Community Volunteer Income Tax Program running at FCJ Refugee Centre. We started mid of March. Every Friday and Saturday we accommodated 6-7 clients

It was a pleasure to help our community through the Tax Clinic

Alma Ulob

MONDAYS AT FCJ REFUGEE CENTRE

Do you need support on immigration/settlement issues?

We welcome anyone asking for information and support regarding Immigration/Settlement issues.

- Humanitarian and Compassionate Consideration Process
- Conditional Permanent Residence
- Permanent Residence application
- Work permit
- Sponsorship Applications

- Refugee Process
- Legal Aid application
- Family reunification orientation
- Renew permanent residence Card
- English classes
- Visa extension

- Travel Document
- Invitation Letter
- Furniture Bank referral
- Social Assistance
- School enrolling
- Shelter/transitional housing referral
- Medical referral
- Clothing Bank

YOU ARE WELCOME TO COME ON MONDAYS

(Except long weekends)

WALK INS ARE FROM 10:00 AM TO 4:00 PM

Informative sessions are possible thanks to the support of



208 Oakwood Ave. Toronto ON
416- 469 97 54

www.fcjrefugeecentre.org
info@fcjrefugeecentre.org

Health Care Clinic

FCJ Centre's Primary Health Care Clinic continued open the doors on Wednesdays (9:30am to 12pm) and Saturdays (09am to 1pm) by appointment. The clinic takes between 5 to 7 patients every time it is open, each appointment takes around 30 minutes. On Saturdays, the clinic also receives family groups with about 3 or 4 members, with longer appointments of approximately 45 minutes to 1 hour.

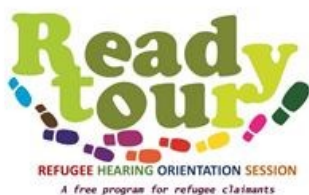
Most people come because they were referred by other community centers or previous clients, many of them are walk in (especially on Saturday), not knowing that it is necessary to book the appointments.

Some challenges faced by the clinic are language barriers, since about 60% of the clients need interpretation, usually Spanish or Portuguese. Due to difficulties for the clients, there is a lack of access to previous medical records, which could help the doctor assess the situation,. Most clients are also not familiar with the health care system and which services the clinic can service. Related to that, some clients do not know that even without a status in Canada, they can still access hospitals for emergency services. Some services cannot be provided by the clinic and need to be referred to other centers. Many walk-ins to the clinic also request about the services we provide or other information, such as the Food Bank, Immigration Services, housing, Tax Clinic , etc.

READY TOUR AND RAD

READY TOUR AND RAD INFO-SESSIONS

summer 2017



July	6 th	20 th
August	3 rd	17 th



July	13 th	27 th
August	10 TH	24 th

For Registrations contact Carolina Teves: cteves@fcjrefugeecentre.org