

Empowering Grandparents: Champions for healthy early childhood development in ethno-cultural, immigrant families

Resources for Service Providers

Grandparents → Family Health Promoters

Ethno-cultural, immigrant grandparents (and “grandboomers”) have variable sets of needs and capacities and face multiple demands from co-residing family members as they are settling and aging in the multicultural communities in Toronto. These affect grandparents’ well-being and their ability to provide the care their young grandchildren would need. With the support of social and health care providers, these grandparents can be empowered to facilitate healthy social and emotional development of young children more effectively, through:

1. Responding to grandparent’s holistic needs
2. Facilitating multidisciplinary community support
3. Achieving culturally sensitive care
4. Encouraging learning, awakening, and practice.

1. Responding to grandparents’ holistic needs

- Intersecting holistic needs and circumstances: Physiological (e.g. chronic diseases, pain, and fatigue), cognitive (e.g. health literacy and beliefs), emotional (e.g. coping with loss, self-efficacy, connection), behavioural (e.g. overcoming the knowledge-action gap), and social (e.g. family systems, social capital).
- Easy registration process that builds trust and understanding from the start.
- Convenient program day, time and location.
- Grassroot outreach strategies (e.g. Peers, community walkabouts, internal referrals).
- Engaging grandfathers (e.g. Goal-oriented and practical learning, encouraging the sharing of lived experiences).
- Practical family support (e.g. TTC tokens, respite child-minding, interpretation, and healthy snacks).

2. Facilitating multidisciplinary community support

- Serving as points of access to community services (e.g. information and referrals, brief consultation).
- Balancing between the facilitator and educator role.
- Promoting interdisciplinary learning and growth.
- Reflective practice (e.g. reflecting on personal biases).

3. Achieving culturally sensitive care

- Recognizing the challenges of cultural homogeneity and essentialism, linear categorical thinking, exaggeration of intergroup differences.
- Taking into account intragroup differences, internalized cultures, and intersecting diversities.
- Recognizing various approaches to health and wellness (e.g. the strive for homeostasis, human agency, health in the context of the individual’s life-world)
- “POISE” approach to cross-cultural communication (Tsang, 2007): Preparation, Openness, Inquisitiveness, Sensitivity, and Execution.

4. Encouraging learning, awakening and practice

- Building and maintaining a supportive environment for social facilitation (“We’re in this together!”) and adult learning (“What’s in it for me?”).
- Opening a safe narrative space for explorations on: N3C (needs, characteristics, circumstances, and capacities) and its impact on individual behaviours; health behaviours; and motivation to behavioural change.
- Promoting incremental learning and practice: e.g. weekly action-plan, in-session practice and feedback.
- Affirming grandparents’ capacities by: e.g. Sharing of lived experiences, personal health and coping strategies.
- Ensuring easy access to knowledge and skills (“at the level of the general public”): e.g. Plain language, facilitator’s attitude, collaborative creation of strategies, visual aids, and problem-solve to encourage real-life application of learned skills.
- Grandparents in our groups were eager to learn about: Practical skills in interacting with young children, caring for young children (e.g. dealing with coughs and fever at home), chronic disease prevention and management (e.g. vision health), healthy eating, family relationships, and ways to keep a positive outlook.

Useful Resources

- **A Learning system:** Tsang, A. K. T. Strategies and Skills Learning and Development (SSLD). <http://ssld.kttsang.com>
- **Cultural Competency in Health Care:** See SickKids Cultural Competence website at www.sickkids.ca/culturalcompetence
- **Infant Mental Health Promotion (IMHP):** Please visit www.imhpromotion.ca

A Resource for Grandparents By Grandparents

Between 2012 and 2013, the Chinese grandparents of the Grandparent Support Groups at South Riverdale Community Health Centre put forth the following friendly reminders for fellow grandparents who are caring for young children in Toronto, Canada:

[Translated into English from Chinese]

10 things I can do to help my grandchild grow up healthy

- Bring my grandchildren to community centre to learn and play with other children.
- Pay attention to children's daily routine.
- Limit my grandchild's time in front of the TV and computer (no more than two hours a day).
- Encourage my grandchild to learn Chinese.
- Take children to sports and arts activities.
- Limit junk food.
- Ensure that children wash their hands often.
- Learn some nursery rhymes so I could sing along with them.
- Pay attention to children's emotional needs
- Build a safe and loving home environment for the children.

10 things I can do to keep myself healthy

- Participate in community workshops and programs.
- Exercise everyday (e.g. walking) for at least 30 minutes.
- Volunteer for my community (e.g. help other seniors).
- Make new friends.
- Talk with friends and share any challenges.
- Learn something positive from everyone.
- Pay attention to my eating: Less salt, less sugar, more fibre.
- Take care of myself and my partner/spouse.
- Be optimistic.
- Do what I am capable of doing. Keep trying!



Multi-lingual Resources for Grandparents

- **“AboutKidshealth”**: Health information produced by The Hospital for Sick Children.
www.aboutkidshealth.ca/En/HealthAZ/Multilingual/Pages/home.aspx
- **“In My Language”** (<http://english.inmylanguage.org>): Provides information on immigrating, housing, work, health, education, legal matters, and daily life in Ontario.
- **Multicultural health resources** (www.srchc.ca): South Riverdale Community Health Centre website.
- **Toronto Public Health (416-338-7600)**: Free access to public health nurse or dietitian. 8:30 am to 4:30 pm, Monday to Friday. Can request for interpretation.

Interact and
communicate

Get to know children's
needs.

Model it.

Keep learning
Try my best

Keep healthy