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User Guide

Building Connected Communities: Improving  
supports to reduce loneliness and social  
isolation in immigrants 65+


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2019

### User Guide

Sheridan Centre for Elder Research

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*Building Connected Communities:*  
**Social Isolation and  
Loneliness Toolkit  
User Guide**



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## *Background*

This toolkit was developed by the Centre for Elder Research, Oakville ON, Canada as part of a 4-year research project titled Building Connected Communities: improving Community Supports to Reduce Loneliness and Social Isolation in Immigrants 65+. This project was conducted in partnership with Dixie Bloor Neighbourhood Centre, Peel Senior Link, Indus Community Services, Yee Hong Centre for Geriatric Care and Community Development Halton and was supported by funding from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC). The research focused on exploring strategies to effectively reach out to, and support, older immigrants who may be experiencing, or are at risk of experiencing, social isolation and/or loneliness in Peel and Halton Regions. Interviews and surveys were conducted with older immigrants and with staff at various community agencies, faith groups and community hubs. The results collected from these interviews and surveys informed the resources provided in this toolkit.

## *The Centre For Elder Research*

The Centre for Elder Research conducts innovative Lab to Life® research that enhances the quality of life of older adults while serving as an education and research hub for the broader community.

**For Further Information Contact:**

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# Research Team and Community Partners

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## Research Team

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## Community Partners

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Catherine Hutson – Yee Hong Centre for Geriatric Care



*We would like to thank all of the older adults who participated and shared with us. As well as the various community organizations and faith leaders who invested time in this research project. This would not have been possible without your kind support.*



## *What Is This Toolkit?*

The Social Isolation and Loneliness Toolkit is a collection of resources about social isolation and loneliness and their impact on older adults and older immigrants in particular. These tools are intended for anyone in the community who interacts or works with older adults and anyone who might be in a position to either identify and/or provide support to someone who might be at risk of social isolation/loneliness, including staff at community organizations, faith leaders, doctors, nurses, pharmacists, business owners or community volunteers.

The purpose of this toolkit is to:

- Support the identification of older adults at risk of social isolation/loneliness
- Educate those who work with/support older adults about social isolation/loneliness
- Help identify gaps in community support that can be filled with new community programs/services/initiatives
- Promote social inclusion in a meaningful way
- Address barriers to social inclusion

## *Using This Toolkit*

Copies of these resources may be reproduced non-commercially for the purpose of educational opportunities and/or program/service creation with appropriate recognition given to the Centre for Elder Research and the funder the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC). Tools (especially the PowerPoint presentations) should be used in their entirety to maintain appropriate citations of external sources.

# When You Might Want To Use The Toolkit

**01** To better understand the needs of socially isolated and/or lonely older immigrants in Peel and Halton. The toolkit may be useful as guidance or inspiration when:

- Planning a new program or service
- Improving an existing service
- For general education/training

**02** To reach out to older immigrants who may be socially isolated or lonely. The toolkit provides research-based ideas for:

- Recruiting members/clients/participants for programs/services
- Promoting social inclusion
- Addressing service gaps

**03** To provide services that optimally engage all older adults. The toolkit provides research-based ideas for:

- Providing programs to foster or maintain social relationships
- Providing programs that are culturally competent
- Address barriers to social engagement

# Contents: Professional Development and Training Resources

## **Understanding Social Isolation and Loneliness**

This PowerPoint presentation will help you learn about social isolation and loneliness, how they differ and how they interact, consider some concepts and models that contribute to an understanding of how social isolation and loneliness impact older immigrants and discuss how this all relates to your organization.

## **What are the Risk Factors of Social Isolation and Loneliness?**

This PowerPoint presentation will help you review the risk factors that contribute to social isolation and loneliness, learn about why/how immigration can be a risk factor for social isolation/loneliness, discuss which risk factors might affect the older adults you work with and consider solutions.

## **Tips for Planning and Implementing Inclusive Programs**

This resource provides some considerations for those planning programs to support social inclusion. Tips are included for data-driven program development, for outreach to isolated and/or lonely older immigrants and for addressing barriers through a culturally competent lens.

## **Intervention Best Practices**

This resource summarizes some of the best practices in programs and initiatives designed to address social isolation and/or loneliness. It can be used to inform program planning and implementation.

## **Cultural Competency Training Video**

This training video will help you learn more about cultural competence when working with immigrant older adults. It reviews active steps to guide you in the process of creating culturally competent organizations and programs.

 **To access the video:** [https://source.sheridancollege.ca/centres\\_elder\\_building\\_connected\\_communities/](https://source.sheridancollege.ca/centres_elder_building_connected_communities/)



*Tip: Look for light blue cover pages for professional development and training resources.*

# Contents: Community Tools

## **Social Isolation Detection Tool**

This checklist can help anyone who works with older adults determine if an older person might be at risk of social isolation. A list of recommendations (referrals) is included.

## **Staying Socially Connected Tip Sheet**

This handout for older adults includes a list of research-informed tips that an older adult can use to engage socially in a variety of ways.

## **Coping with Loneliness Reflection Tool**

This handout for older adults is a reflection tool that includes prompts and activities to help a lonely older adult consider their feelings and come up with potential solutions by taking stock of their feelings, strengths and supports.

## **Interactive Maps: Halton Region and Peel Region**

These interactive pdf maps include the mainstream, ethno-specific, multicultural and faith organizations and community hubs in each city within the Halton Region and Peel Region. The contact information, websites and directions for each organization can be easily accessed from the maps to support staff in making referrals or program design decisions.

## **2016 Census Data Sheets**

These data sheets provide a snapshot of the census data pertaining to older immigrants and the risk factors for social isolation/loneliness. Data sheets and for each city in Peel and Halton are available.



*Tip: Look for orange cover pages for community tools.*



# Contents: Supplemental Report

## **Building Connected Communities: The Role of Faith Communities in Improving Supports to Reduce Loneliness and Social Isolation in Immigrants 65+**

**Authors: Reshma Banu, Sirena Liladrie and Behije Noka**

This report connects survey findings with the importance of offering programs and services through faith groups and makes recommendations for creative collaborations with them in strengthening the community's response to unmet needs of older immigrants.

# Suggestions For Using The Social Isolation And Loneliness Toolkit

## 01 Training Resources (PowerPoint Presentations and Video):

- Use as a workshop training opportunity for staff/team members/volunteers.
- Have group discussions using the question prompts.
- Make the discussions relevant to your organization's goals and values and the older adults you work with.

## 02 Social Isolation Detection Tool:

- Use the checklist to objectively assess whether an older individual may be at risk of being socially isolated.
- Use the list of referral sources and resources to provide some direction/support to the older individual, if appropriate.
- Use the identified risk factors to develop a customized approach for recommendation/referral.

## 03 Staying Socially Connected Tip Sheet: For Older Adults

- Provide this tip sheet as a handout to older adults looking for ways to be more connected socially.

## 04 Coping with Loneliness Reflection Tool: For Older Adults

- Provide this resource as a handout to an older adult who has expressed that they are lonely and is open to personal self-reflection.
- Alternatively, use the tool as a guide for a 1:1 activity or group activity with older adults.

## 05 Interactive Maps:

- Use these tools when planning new programs/services to see the age demographic make-up of different neighbourhoods and to identify gaps in services/programs.
- Use the maps to make referrals to clients/members who are looking for services/programs in their neighbourhood.

- Access referral organization websites directly from the maps for more information about their services/programs.
- Use the maps to provide agency contact information and Google Map directions (including via public transit) to interested clients/members.

## 06 Census Data Sheets:

- Use these data sheets in conjunction with the interactive maps to consider which neighbourhoods are at higher risk of having socially isolated/lonely older immigrants.
- Use this information to inform the development of new programs or services or to improve existing ones.

## 07 Tips for Planning and Implementing Inclusive Programs Tool and Intervention Best Practices Tool

- Use these tools as inspiration for new program models/service ideas.
- Follow the planning and implementing steps to create and deliver inclusive programs.
- Access tips and ideas from the research literature and other successful interventions.

## Note

This project was conducted from 2015-19. The research team made every effort to ensure information was accurate as of the time of publication, but please be aware that some of the information may have changed or may be out of date if accessed in the years following that. The inclusion of any agency or service in this toolkit does not constitute an endorsement of the service.

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