

Use of Social Media and Community Outreach for Immigrant Youth Recruitment during COVID-19

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BACKGROUND

Immigrant and refugee communities constitute 21.9% of the population [1], yet face increasing barriers to healthcare access. The Refugee and Immigrant Self-Empowerment (RISE) for Health program is a potential mechanism of increasing health literacy, targeting immigrant youth. Identifying ways to best engage immigrant and refugee youth was a key importance to the success of this program.

PURPOSE

To outline an effective method of recruitment aimed at youth for a health and wellness summer program during COVID-19.

RECRUITMENT CONTEXT

The program was open to 25 first- or second- generation immigrant and refugee youth entering grade 9 the following academic year, up to those recently graduating from grade 12.

Session topics presented in RISE sessions were chosen from youth focus groups that identified contemporary health issues relevant to immigrant and refugee youth.

Due to COVID-19, the RISE outreach strategy was primarily virtual, while other strategies were used when available.

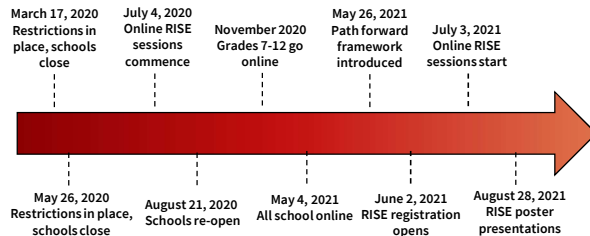


Figure 1: Timeline of RISE sessions with COVID-19 pandemic

RISE PROGRAM OUTLINE

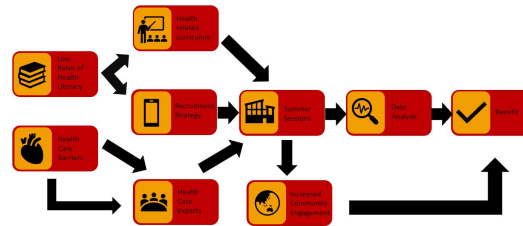


Figure 2: General outline of the RISE program and its activities

RECRUITMENT STRATEGY

Social Media

With shareable posts and stories, Instagram allowed for outreach beyond the 100+ followers of the account. Posts informed and empowered participants about topics explored during RISE sessions.

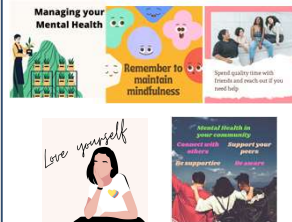


Figure 3: A series of posts spread through social media for the RISE program

Community and Cultural Group Outreach

As language could be a barrier to access [2], recruitment materials given to community and cultural groups in Calgary (i.e., Immigrant Services Calgary), were translated to various languages.

Peer-to-Peer Engagement



Highschool students on the RISE team helped spread information about the program to friends and classmates, through word-of-mouth and by hanging posters up in school.

SUMMARY

Use of social media, community and cultural groups, and peer-to-peer engagement were beneficial in engaging immigrant and refugee youth participants for the RISE program, despite the pandemic. Using these methods, the quota of 25 youth participants was filled for the summers of both 2020 and 2021.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Website Creation

The use of a website can explain our mission, previous activities and future programs, and act as a central hub of information for the RISE program. Resources about current health issues within communities will also be available for self-guided learning.

Larger Organizational Outreach

Marketing through larger organizations such as school boards and media outlets will allow us to reach a larger number of youth and families, thus increasing awareness about the program. Marketing will focus on communicating the value of the program while informing and empowering those who view it.

Assess and Reflect through Future Focus Groups

Future focus groups will analyze previously described recruitment strategies and the retention of students associated with each method of recruitment. This will identify methods that are effective and those that need adjustment to increase student involvement with the program.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS AND REFERENCES

1. Statistics Canada, Government of Canada, 2021.
2. Office of Family Assistance, Administration for Children and Families, 2010.