



Anti-Oppression Service Toolkit

for Supporting Black LGBTQ+ Newcomers



Land Acknowledgement

We Are All Treaty People

The 519 is located in Tkaronto, now known as Toronto, which in Mohawk means ‘where there are trees standing in the water’. Today, Tkaronto is covered under Treaty #13 and the Williams Treaties. It is the traditional territories of many First Peoples, including the Mississaugas of the Credit, the Anishnaabe, the Chippewa, the Haudenosaunee, and the Wendat peoples.

As we gather here today, these nations continue to experience ongoing colonization and displacement—where land acknowledgements are offered in place of land itself.

This territory is part of ‘the Dish with One Spoon’ wampum, a Treaty made between the Anishinaabe, Mississaugas, and Haudenosaunee, where nations entered into an agreement to protect the land and responsibly care for its resources in harmony together.

As settlers, newcomers, refugees, and Indigenous peoples, we have all been invited into this treaty in the spirit of peace, friendship, and respect. We are also mindful of broken treaties that persist across Turtle Island today and recognize our responsibilities as Treaty people to engage in a meaningful, continuous process of truth and reconciliation with all our relations.

We remember those who came here involuntarily, particularly those brought to these lands as a result of the trans-Atlantic slave trade and slavery. This city was built on stolen land and stolen labour of Black, Indigenous, and racialized people.

What we now refer to as Canada was also built on the labour of many immigrant and migrant communities. From the transcontinental railroad to farming and food production, the country heavily relied (and continues to) on the talent, skill, and hard work of racialized people. In exchange, many of them are denied residence, and they continue to go through punishing immigration experiences and perpetuating racial disparities.

By being on this land, we are all responsible for upholding its treaties. Treaty agreements were made to last as long as “the sun shines, the grass grows, and rivers flow.”

We invite you to learn about the Indigenous Nations that care for the land you are on, and where you might come from, visit native-land.ca to learn more.

Our Commitment

The 519 is committed to advancing anti-racism and decolonization while centering the voices, leadership, and joy of Black, Indigenous, racialized, trans, and non-binary communities.

While this work is underway, it is never over. It is informed by our approach to internal processes, programming, philanthropic strategy, and the future we envision together.

We are particularly grateful for the internal leadership of The 519's Black Collective, Trans Engagement Strategy (TES), and our Indigenous and 2 Spirit partners.

Introduction

Purpose of the Toolkit

This toolkit is designed to help service providers deliver more equitable, informed, and affirming support to Black LGBTQ+ immigrants and refugees. Drawing on community wisdom and workshop findings, it provides practical strategies to combat anti-Black racism, homophobia, transphobia, and xenophobia in various service sectors.

The goal is to equip frontline workers with tools to create safer spaces, improve access to services, and empower Black LGBTQ+ newcomers to thrive. Ultimately, this resource aims to foster **healing, solidarity, and systemic change**, so that no client is forced to hide or struggle alone due to their race, gender identity, or sexual orientation.

Who This Toolkit Is For

This toolkit is intended for a wide range of professionals and volunteers in the immigrant and refugee settlement sector – including settlement workers, housing and shelter staff, healthcare providers, employment counselors, legal aid practitioners, and community organizers. It speaks to anyone involved in supporting newcomers who holds an ethic of care and wants to ensure their services are truly inclusive.

Whether you work at a specialized 2SLGBTQ+ agency or a mainstream organization, these guidelines will help you better serve Black LGBTQ+ clients. Leaders and policymakers in the sector may also find the toolkit useful for staff training and program development.

How to Use This Toolkit

The toolkit is organized into thematic sections that build upon each other.

- **Key Concepts & Language** Introduces the terminology and principles of intersectional practice to build a foundational understanding.
- **Lived Experiences** Features real narratives and quotes from Black LGBTQ+ newcomers to foster empathy through personal reflection or staff discussions.
- **Sector-Specific Recommendations** Provides best practices tailored to specific service areas like settlement, healthcare, housing, employment, and legal services.
- **Tools and Templates** Offers concrete resources, including templates and tools, to support service delivery.
- **Training Modules** Contains outlines for creating effective training programs to enhance service provider skills.
- **Community-Led Practices** Showcases examples of practices led by the community, which can be adapted to improve service delivery.
- **Accountability & Evaluation** Suggests methods for measuring progress and ensuring ongoing accountability.
- **Additional Resources** Directs you to further supports and reading to deepen your understanding and practices.

Background

This toolkit was developed in a community-informed process, rooted in a series of workshops with Black LGBTQ+ refugee newcomers in Toronto (in partnership with Black Legal Action Center). Over eight weeks, participants shared stories of resilience and outlined the challenges they faced in **housing, employment, healthcare, legal systems, and social inclusion**. Each workshop focused on a theme, from understanding systemic discrimination to storytelling for healing, and generated insights for improving services.

Participants described navigating multiple layers of oppression: as one facilitator noted, *“when race, gender identity, sexual orientation and immigration status intersect, the impact is multiplied”*. These conversations also underscored how vital **community and chosen family** are in surviving and resisting oppression. *“519 is my home... we feel safe, we feel at home [here],”* one newcomer said of the LGBTQ+ center, highlighting the importance of truly inclusive spaces. However, the workshops revealed that many mainstream services remain ill-equipped. Participants encountered misgendering by staff, racial microaggressions, and a general lack of knowledge about where to turn for help.

This toolkit is a response to those gaps. It integrates the lived expertise of Black LGBTQ+ newcomers with proven anti-oppressive practices to guide service providers in all sectors. By using this toolkit, you are joining a commitment to do better, to create services that validate the whole person, to actively oppose discrimination, and to center the leadership of those who have lived through these challenges. In short, the toolkit’s purpose is to turn the community’s hard-won insights into concrete action on the frontlines.

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01

Key Concepts & Language

1.1 Glossary of Terms

Before diving into practice, it's essential to establish a shared understanding of key concepts and language. This section provides a glossary of terms and outlines why an **intersectional** approach is crucial in service provision.

2SLGBTQ+

An acronym for Two-Spirit, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Queer/Questioning. The "2S" acknowledges Two-Spirit people, a term used by some Indigenous North Americans. The "+" includes other diverse identities such as intersex, non-binary, asexual, etc. It's important to use inclusive acronyms and, when in doubt, ask individuals how they identify. The term "newcomer" in this toolkit generally includes refugees, asylum seekers, and other recent immigrants.

Anti-Oppressive Practice (AOP)

A framework in social services aimed at recognizing and dismantling systemic oppression in all forms (racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, xenophobia, etc.). It involves critically examining power dynamics, engaging in self-reflection to address one's biases, and working in partnership with marginalized clients to achieve equity. In practice: For a provider, AOP means actively challenging discriminatory remarks, designing programs with input from marginalized groups, and advocating for changes in unjust systems.

Cisnormativity & Transphobia

Cisnormativity is the assumption that everyone is cisgender (identifies with the sex assigned at birth) and that cis identities are the "normal" default. This mindset marginalizes trans and non-binary people and is linked to transphobia, the fear, hatred, or invalidation of trans identities. Transphobia can manifest in misgendering, denying someone opportunities or services because they are trans, or subjecting them to harassment. Another real-life example: a trans participant was outright denied an apartment, with a staff member privately admitting it was "because of your gender". Service providers must actively counter cisnormativity by respecting gender identities (names, pronouns) and implementing policies that make spaces safe for trans clients.

Chosen Family

Used in 2SLGBTQ+ communities to describe a network of close, supportive friends who fulfill the role of family (especially when biological families are unsupportive or far away). Newcomers frequently have to build a chosen family in Canada. Service providers can help by facilitating connections and group bonding in programs.

Cultural Competence (and Cultural Humility)	The ability of an individual or organization to understand and respectfully interact with people from diverse cultural backgrounds. It involves learning about different cultural practices and acknowledging historical and social contexts (e.g. effects of colonialism). Cultural humility adds that one should approach others as the expert of their own culture, maintaining an attitude of learning and avoiding stereotypes. For instance, understanding that a Black newcomer's distrust of medical institutions may stem from historical and personal experiences of racism – and thus responding with empathy and extra transparency is cultural competence in action.
Homophobia & Queerphobia	Homophobia refers to fear or hatred of gay, lesbian, and bisexual people; queerphobia is a broader term encompassing prejudice against anyone who identifies as LGBTQ+. This can range from slurs and overt discrimination to more subtle invalidations (like assuming a client is straight, or failing to include same-sex partner options on forms). In our context, many LGBTQ+ newcomers flee countries where homophobia is violently enforced, only to encounter new forms of it in Canada, such as a colleague making a homophobic joke or service providers with biased attitudes.
Intersectionality	A term coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw describing how different aspects of a person's identity (race, gender, class, sexuality, etc.) intersect and create unique experiences of discrimination or privilege. For example, being Black and LGBTQ+ and a newcomer isn't just three separate issues; together they can magnify exclusion or vulnerability. An intersectional approach means not treating any group (e.g. "LGBTQ+ newcomers") as a monolith, but rather paying attention to internal diversity and how overlapping identities change needs and barriers.
Microaggressions	Subtle, often indirect or unintentional, discriminatory comments or actions. They may be small slights or assumptions (e.g. asking a gay refugee "When did you choose that lifestyle?" implying it's a choice, or a startled look when a Black trans woman walks into a women's washroom). Over time microaggressions erode a person's sense of belonging. Note: Staff should be trained both to avoid perpetrating microaggressions and to support clients dealing with them.
Misgendering	Referring to someone by the wrong gender or pronouns (e.g. calling a trans woman "he" or using an old name). Misgendering can be deeply hurtful and invalidating. It was a common misstep noted in our workshop scenarios, with calls for better staff training to always respect chosen names/pronouns. Tip: If you accidentally misgender someone, briefly apologize, correct yourself, and move on – then remember for next time.

Key Concepts & Language

Precarious Status	Refers to immigrants who do not have permanent residency or citizenship – e.g. refugee claimants, international students, people on temporary permits, or undocumented folks. Precarious status often means fewer rights (limited work eligibility, no voting, sometimes no healthcare) and a fear of anything that might jeopardize their future status. Our participants with precarious status often felt unable to report abuses due to fear of deportation or harming their asylum case.
Systemic Racism	The entrenched practices and policies within institutions that have the effect of disadvantaging racialized groups. Unlike overt individual prejudice, systemic racism often shows up as “subtle” biases embedded in everyday interactions and structures. Despite the subtlety, these cumulative biases harm Black newcomers’ sense of belonging. Understanding systemic racism means recognizing patterns like credential devaluation (e.g. foreign degrees being dismissed) or racial profiling, and addressing them proactively in service settings.
Trauma-Informed Care	An approach that assumes individuals may have past trauma and seeks to create a service environment that is safe, trustworthy, and empowering. Trauma-informed organizations train staff to recognize trauma symptoms and avoid re-traumatizing clients. Key principles include safety, trustworthiness/transparency, peer support, collaboration, cultural sensitivity, and giving control/choice to clients. In practice: This can range from offering private meeting rooms and control over interview pacing to having flexible policies when clients miss appointments due to trauma-related issues.
Xenophobia	Fear or prejudice against foreigners or immigrants. For Black LGBTQ+ newcomers, xenophobia often intertwines with racism and queerphobia. For example, employers exploiting refugees by underpaying them, or communities excluding newcomers due to distrust. Newcomers might also sense they have “no status” or right to complain about mistreatment. Understanding xenophobia means being aware of power imbalances.

Each of these terms is not just a concept but a **real force shaping clients’ lives**. Service providers are encouraged to refer to this glossary when uncertain and to continually educate themselves and their teams (through anti-oppression training, reading, etc.) so that they can recognize and name these issues when they arise.

1.2 Understanding Anti-Black Racism, Homophobia, Transphobia, and Xenophobia

These interrelated oppressions often operate simultaneously. The toolkit emphasizes that addressing them requires both self-reflection and systemic action:

Anti-Black Racism

may surface in your work as implicit bias (e.g., lower expectations of Black clients, surprise at their qualifications) or through institutional rules that disadvantage Black people. For instance, healthcare providers must be mindful that Black patients have historically been undertreated for pain due to false beliefs about pain tolerance. In settlement or legal services, anti-Black racism can affect credibility judgments – such as officials doubting a Black refugee’s story more readily. Acknowledge these patterns and counter them by treating every client’s concerns as valid and advocating for equal treatment in external systems.

Homophobia/ Transphobia

in service settings can severely undermine a client’s trust. Even subtle cues like a form that has no option for “preferred name” or staff who consistently misuse pronouns can send the message that LGBTQ+ people are not truly welcome. One workshop participant in a role-play was misgendered and dismissed by a settlement worker, leaving her feeling alienated. To avoid this, providers should clearly communicate acceptance (through visible symbols, inclusive language, and explicit non-discrimination policies) and correct any mistakes immediately with a sincere apology. A trauma-informed lens is critical: many LGBTQ+ newcomers carry memories of hiding themselves to survive, so experiencing respect and affirmation in your agency can be profoundly healing.

Xenophobia

often appears as bureaucratic indifference or hostility toward newcomers. Clients may report feeling treated like “burdens” or suspect motives. A notable example discussed was misinformation that LGBTQ+ refugee claimants are “faking” just to get into Canada, which some participants had heard circulating. This toxic narrative can seep into how staff or community members treat refugees (e.g., undue skepticism, resentment). Counter xenophobia by educating colleagues and the community about refugees’ real contributions and courage, as facilitators did by sharing facts (for example, clarifying that welfare for asylum seekers is minimal and nobody chooses persecution for financial gain). Approach each newcomer with the assumption that they want to belong and contribute, because overwhelmingly that is the truth.

1.3 Why Intersectionality Matters in Service Provision

Intersectionality is not just a buzzword – it’s a practical guide for tailoring your services. Black LGBTQ+ newcomers stand at a crossroads of multiple minority identities. If we address only one dimension (say, homophobia) and ignore others (like anti-Black racism or migration stress), we risk missing critical needs. The workshops underscored this: participants noted how their challenges spanned multiple systems, e.g. a single person could face housing discrimination, job rejection, and poor treatment by an agency, all rooted in a mix of transphobia, racism, and xenophobia. Adopting an intersectional approach means:



Holistic Intake & Assessment

Rather than a generic checklist, use an intersectionality framework when assessing client needs. The toolkit provides an “Intersectionality Checklist” (see Tools & Templates) to prompt questions. Practicing this mindset helps reveal needs that a one-size-fits-all approach would overlook.

No “Single-Story” Assumptions

Avoid assuming all LGBTQ+ newcomers have the same story or needs. Recognize that different constellations of identity yield different barriers and strengths. Intersectionality reminds us that a win in one area (e.g., asylum granted) doesn’t erase racism or homophobia in other areas. Thus, service plans should be personalized and multi-pronged.

Empathy and Trust

When clients see that you “get” their layered experience, it builds trust. While you may not always have a staff member of the exact same identity, an intersectional approach allows you to mirror that level of understanding and make the client feel seen.

In summary, knowing the language of oppression and the importance of intersectionality is the foundation for everything that follows. These concepts will be referenced throughout the toolkit, and service providers are encouraged to continue deepening their understanding of them. **Using the right words and lens is an act of respect and a first step toward equity.**



02

**Lived Experiences
of Black LGBTQ+
Newcomers**

2.1 Common Challenges Faced by Black LGBTQ+ Newcomers

To ground these concepts, this section shares lived experiences of Black LGBTQ+ newcomers, highlighting common challenges as well as resilience. Each story and quote is included with the permission of participants (names have been changed for privacy). Service providers are encouraged to reflect on these narratives – they illustrate why the changes recommended in this toolkit are so urgently needed.



Housing Discrimination

Safe housing is often denied to Black LGBTQ+ refugees. Participants reported blatant racism, one landlord said, “I want someone from Mexico... I don’t want Black.” Others faced “coded” discrimination, like being told only vegetarians or certain language speakers could rent. One trans woman was told privately she was refused “because of your gender.” These barriers fuel homelessness and instability.



Employment Barriers and Exploitation

Skilled newcomers often find their qualifications ignored, forcing them into low-wage “survival jobs.” One said, “Your degree is narrowed down to high school.” Racism also blocks opportunities, an experienced Black hairstylist was rejected because clients “might have a difficulty” with her race. Workers also face exploitation; one participant had to threaten legal action to be paid after a day’s work.



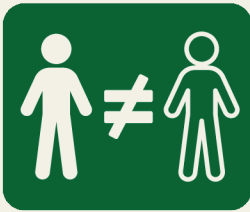
Misgendering and Lack of Respect in Services

In agencies meant to help, trans newcomers are often misgendered or dismissed. “Layla,” a Black trans woman, was called by the wrong name because of outdated ID, undermining her identity. Participants confirmed this is common, showing the urgent need for cultural competency and respect training for service providers.



Mental Health Struggles and Isolation

Fleeing one's country and starting over causes deep stress. Participants described early months in Canada as full of fear, depression, and confusion — made worse by isolation and not knowing where to find help. Even moments of joy, like attending Pride, were shadowed by fear of losing their refugee claim. Trauma-informed care is essential.



Racism in Everyday Life

Participants experienced daily racism, from being stared at to being followed in stores. One newcomer, unused to racism back home, called it a “culture shock.” She coped by joking with suspicious staff, but the constant microaggressions erode self-worth and belonging.

These challenges are by no means exhaustive, but they are among the most commonly raised. They illustrate that Black LGBTQ+ newcomers face **multiple, intersecting barriers**: racism, homophobia/transphobia, and anti-immigrant bias combine to restrict access to basic needs, rights, and dignity. However, just as importantly, the workshops highlighted **strength and solidarity** in this community, which informs the solutions proposed in later sections.

2.2 Case Study: Layla's Story

To see how these challenges converge, consider “Layla's story.” Layla is a fictionalized composite of many real stories shared, used in the workshop as a scenario for discussion. Layla is a Black trans newcomer woman seeking to rebuild her life in Canada. In a short span of time:

► Employment Bias

Layla attends a job interview for which she is well-qualified. However, the interviewer notices discrepancies in her documents (perhaps her voice or appearance doesn't match a former name on a diploma) and proceeds to misgender her. Despite her experience, she is casually rejected. The interviewer's prejudice – whether transphobia or discomfort with immigrants – means Layla never got a fair chance. She leaves feeling humiliated that her identity became the issue rather than her skills



Housing Insecurity

Layla has been renting an apartment, but when her lease comes up for renewal, the landlord refuses. The reason is never stated plainly, but hints suggest it's due to bias against her gender expression (transphobia) or perhaps her race. He might say something like "I've decided to go with family tenants instead," as a cover. Layla now faces the prospect of homelessness or having to seek shelter, knowing some shelters segregate or inadequately protect LGBTQ+ residents. (This scenario mirrored real participants' experiences where landlords made excuses to exclude them, as noted above.)



Settlement Services Failure

Seeking guidance, Layla approaches a local settlement agency. Instead of help, she encounters a worker who, seeing a masculine-looking "M" on an old ID or simply making assumptions, addresses her as "Mr." and insists she fill out forms with her "real name." Layla tries to explain, but the worker isn't trained in trans inclusion and dismisses her concerns. She leaves without the housing or legal referral she needed, feeling alienated and unsafe with that service provider.

In this composite narrative, we see how **three systems – employment, housing, and social services – each failed Layla due to intersecting racism, transphobia, and xenophobia**. Discussing this scenario, workshop participants identified the various points where intervention is needed: employers should be trained or held accountable, stronger anti-discrimination laws (or enforcement) in housing must be pursued, and frontline service agencies must practice inclusivity (e.g. never assume pronouns, always use chosen names, have staff educated about trans clients). They also put themselves in Layla's shoes to strategize: *How could she respond to the interviewer's disrespect? What could she do about the landlord? Where else might she find support?* This case study became a springboard for proposing solutions, many of which are incorporated into this toolkit's recommendations. For service providers reading this, Layla's story is a reminder: **when a client walks through your door, they bring the whole context of these experiences with them**. Our job is to ensure that, unlike what Layla faced initially, they find **allyship and solutions** at our agencies instead of more barriers.

In summary, the lived experiences shared here demonstrate both the **urgent gaps** in current service systems and the **transformative power** of community and affirmation. Black LGBTQ+ newcomers are not passive victims; they are experts in their own lives who, given the chance, actively contribute to solutions (whether by mentoring others, educating their peers, or leading community initiatives). The next sections of this toolkit will translate these experiences into concrete recommendations, so that service providers can actively remove barriers and support the leadership and well-being of Black LGBTQ+ clients.



03

Sector-Specific Recommendations

3.1 Settlement & Immigration Services

Focus: This area includes immigrant settlement agencies, refugee support organizations, intake centers, and any frontline services helping newcomers navigate immigration processes and initial settlement (e.g. orientation, referrals, language classes, etc.).



- **Inclusive Intake Practices:**
 - Ask for and use chosen names and pronouns on all forms.
 - Offer fill-in options for gender, relationship status, and family structure.
 - Explain privacy/confidentiality protections clearly to build trust.
 - Avoid assumptions based on appearance, accent, or documentation.
- **Creating Affirming Spaces:**
 - Display visible signals of inclusion (rainbow/trans flags, multilingual posters).
 - Provide gender-neutral washrooms and private rooms for sensitive conversations.
 - Hire staff with lived experience of being Black, LGBTQ+, and/or a newcomer.
 - Consult community members with lived experience to shape programs.
 - Offer orientation sessions that address LGBTQ+ rights, tenant rights, and healthcare navigation.
 - Establish peer-led groups to reduce isolation.
 - Provide clear, visible complaints mechanisms for clients if they feel disrespected.
- **Access to Services & Referrals:**
 - Develop clear referral pathways to legal aid, housing, healthcare, and employment supports.
 - Provide quick “resource cards” in multiple languages for clients to take with them.
 - Maintain updated directories of LGBTQ+ and Black-led services.
- **Capacity Building:**
 - Train all staff in anti-oppressive practice and cultural humility.
 - Encourage continuous self-reflection and debriefing for staff to reduce bias.
 - Partner with grassroots Black LGBTQ+ groups to co-deliver programs.
 - Conduct regular audits of organizational policies for inclusion and accessibility.

3.2 Healthcare Services

Focus: This pertains to physical and mental health services – including community health centers, hospitals, clinics, mental health counseling, and any health-related support for newcomers. Even if you are not a health professional, as a service provider you play a role in guiding clients toward appropriate healthcare.



- **Affirming Care Delivery:**
 - Always use chosen names and pronouns; correct mistakes without defensiveness.
 - Challenge anti-Black racism in medical decision-making (e.g., assumptions about pain tolerance).
 - Provide interpretation services sensitive to LGBTQ+ terminology.
 - Normalize conversations about HIV, PrEP, and queer-specific health needs without stigma.
- **Access & Navigation:**
 - Educate clients on how to use OHIP, IFHP, and coverage differences.
 - Connect clients to LGBTQ+-affirming providers (e.g., Rainbow Health Ontario directory).
 - Help clients navigate gender marker changes and access to HRT or surgeries.
- **Mental Health Support:**
 - Offer referrals to trauma-informed counseling, group therapy, or peer healing spaces.
 - Normalize seeking mental health support; address stigma.
- **Organizational Practices:**
 - Display visible signs of inclusion (rainbow/trans flags, anti-racism posters, multilingual brochures).
 - Train providers on cultural competency, anti-racism, and queer/trans health.
 - Advocate for equitable funding for Black and LGBTQ+ mental health services.
 - Collect feedback from clients on whether they felt respected and safe.
 - Advocate for systemic improvements in health coverage.

Even if you are not a healthcare provider, be knowledgeable: know that Black people's pain can be underestimated, know that trans people may avoid care out of fear, know that HIV stigma is real. Use that knowledge to guide clients and to gently educate any health professionals you network with.

3.3 Housing & Shelter Services

Focus: This includes emergency shelters, transitional housing programs, housing help centers, and any service dealing with finding or providing accommodation for newcomers.



- **Anti-Discrimination Protocols:**
 - Enforce zero-tolerance policies on racism, homophobia, and transphobia.
 - Ensure residents sign codes of conduct that include LGBTQ+ and racial respect.
 - Train staff to intervene immediately in cases of harassment.
- **Inclusive Shelter Practices:**
 - House people by their lived gender identity, not their legal documents.
 - Provide privacy options (private rooms, curtains, gender-neutral washrooms).
 - Ensure representation of Black LGBTQ+ staff/volunteers to build trust.
 - Create peer-led resident groups for support and accountability.
- **Supporting Housing Navigation:**
 - Provide rights education (Human Rights Code, landlord obligations).
 - Help clients file complaints or connect with housing tribunals.
 - Keep an updated list of LGBTQ+ and newcomer-friendly landlords/shelters.
 - Explore innovative models (e.g., host-home programs with vetted allies).
- **Policy & Advocacy:**
 - Advocate against exclusionary shelter policies.
 - Push municipalities to create dedicated LGBTQ+ refugee housing spaces.

In summary, housing is one of the most critical and difficult arenas. The recommendation is twofold:

- **build safe havens internally (shelters that are inclusive) and,**
- **guide clients to affirming housing externally (through up-to-date knowledge and advocacy).**

By doing so, we aim to break the cycle where Black LGBTQ+ newcomers are left wondering “will I ever find a safe place to live?”. No one should have to choose between being who they are and having a roof over their head.

3.4 Employment Services

Focus: Services that assist with job search, career counseling, skills training, and workplace integration for newcomers. This includes employment counselors, vocational trainers, mentorship programs, and any advocacy around fair employment.



- **Bridging Gaps:**
 - Support clients in credential recognition and equivalency assessments.
 - Connect them with bridging programs (where available) or mentorship networks.
 - Train clients on reframing international experience as transferable skills.
 - Partner with bridging programs or create mentorship-to-employment pipelines.
 - Train clients in financial literacy (e.g., taxes, pay stubs, contracts) to prevent exploitation.
- **Safe and Inclusive Hiring:**
 - Educate employers on inclusive hiring practices, legal obligations, and the business case for diversity.
 - Prepare clients to handle bias or discriminatory questions in interviews.
 - Host inclusive hiring fairs with vetted employers.
- **Workplace Protection:**
 - Educate clients about minimum wage, overtime, and anti-discrimination laws.
 - Provide templates for reporting workplace exploitation.
 - Encourage collective support networks among clients to share job leads and warn about unsafe employers.
- **Retention & Growth:**
 - Promote mentorship or buddy systems for newcomers in workplaces.
 - Train employers on the business case for hiring LGBTQ+ newcomers.
 - Advocate for faster work permits and credential recognition policies.

In essence, employment services must wear multiple hats: career coach, advocate, and sometimes shield against exploitation. By implementing the above, you help Black LGBTQ+ newcomers not only find jobs, but find dignity and growth in their work lives, which is central to successful integration.

3.5 Legal Services

Focus: Legal support for newcomers, especially around refugee claims, human rights, and discrimination issues. This can include settlement agency legal clinics, pro bono lawyers, refugee law practitioners, and paralegals, as well as those providing referrals to external legal resources.



- **Refugee Claim Support:**
 - Provide trauma-informed legal interviewing (take breaks, validate experiences).
 - Use culturally competent interpreters trained in LGBTQ+ terminology.
 - Prepare clients with clear explanations of refugee processes and hearing timelines.
 - Gather evidence safely (protect overseas contacts, explain purpose of reports).
- **Client Education:**
 - Teach newcomers about their legal rights and complaint options.
 - Share plain-language guides on the refugee process, human rights complaints, and legal aid.
 - Explain rights to change lawyers and complaint mechanisms for poor representation.
- **Culturally Competent Practice:**
 - Always use correct pronouns/titles in hearings.
 - Avoid stereotypes when presenting SOGIESC claims; represent diverse lived realities.
 - Support clients in telling their story authentically, not performatively.
- **Systemic Advocacy:**
 - Report unethical lawyers, landlords, and exploitative employers.
 - Join coalitions to advocate against restrictive refugee policies
 - Empower clients to become peer educators once their status is secure.

In conclusion, the legal sector recommendations center on ensuring justice is accessible and affirming. By guiding clients through intimidating legal systems with competence and care, and by challenging the systems to do better (through accountability and advocacy), we uphold not just the letter of the law but its spirit – protection and dignity for those who need it most.



04

Tools and Templates

This section provides concrete tools, templates, and worksheets that can be adopted or adapted by service providers. These resources are designed to be **practical aids** in implementing the recommendations from earlier sections. Feel free to customize them to fit your organization's context. Each tool is rooted in the workshop insights and best practices we've discussed.

4.1 Sample Inclusive Intake Questions

Crafting intake questions in a sensitive way sets the tone for a client's experience. Here are examples:

What name would you like us to use when addressing you?

Instead of "Full legal name" only. This invites the client to share a chosen name if different from legal, reassuring them you respect that.

What are your pronouns? (e.g. she/her, he/him, they/them)

Include this for everyone, not just those who "seem" trans. Normalizing it prevents singling out and signals you don't assume gender.

Do you have any specific needs or concerns you would like us to be aware of to better support you?

This open question can prompt disclosure of things like mental health status, safety concerns, or identity needs in a way that's client-led.

Household/Family Composition: (Include chosen family or significant relationships you want to mention)

Many newcomers may not have traditional family here, but might rely on a network of friends or community members. This question acknowledges that support network.

Have you faced any challenges or uncomfortable situations in accessing services (housing, healthcare, etc.) that you'd like us to know about?

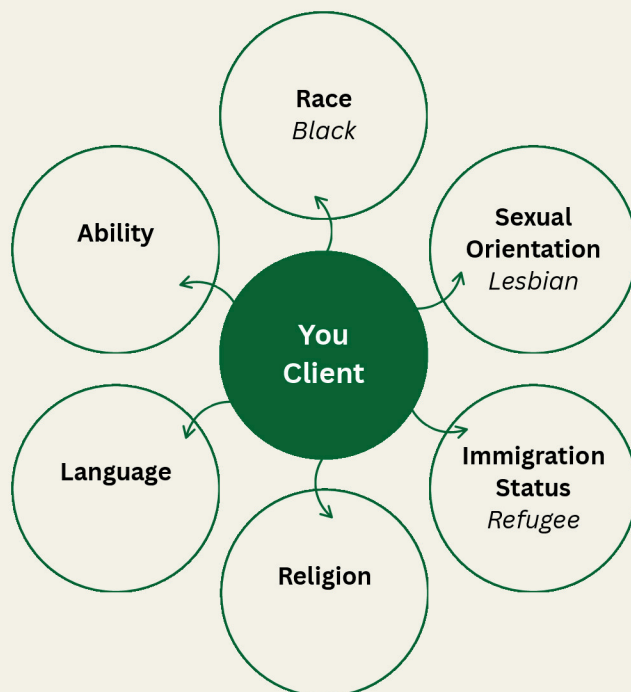
This invites them to share experiences of discrimination or barriers, which can inform how you assist them. A client might reveal, for example, they were misgendered at another agency, so you can take extra care and perhaps advocate on their behalf if needed.

What goals do you have that you're looking for help with?

Rather than assuming needs, ask. This strengths-based approach can reveal, say, that a client is focused on getting a job in their field or needs legal help for a refugee hearing. It helps center their priorities.

4.2 Identity Map Worksheet

This is a reflective tool either for clients (in a workshop or counseling context) or for staff to increase cultural humility. Draw a simple diagram – a circle in the center labeled “You/Client” and surrounding bubbles or branches for different identity facets (race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, immigration status, religion, language, ability, etc.). The worksheet invites the individual to fill in aspects of their identity in those bubbles and then answer prompts like:



Which parts of your identity feel most positive or give you strength?

Which parts of your identity have been challenging or have caused you to be treated unfairly?

How do these parts overlap or affect each other?

For staff, this exercise can be eye-opening to recognize how overlapping identities work (e.g., “Black” and “gay” might each have challenges, but combined there might be specific issues like racism within LGBTQ spaces or homophobia in Black spaces).

For clients, it can help articulate their experience. In the workshops, participants did a version of mapping through case studies and personal storytelling, noting how “intersecting identities... shaped daily experiences of discrimination.”.

This worksheet basically guides that thought process on paper. After filling it, discuss: Does the client feel the service system is recognizing all these parts? What could be improved? This can yield concrete ideas for service tweaks and also empower the client by validating all of who they are.

4.3 Community Agreements Template

A template to establish guidelines for group activities (e.g., support group sessions, workshops, or training). It might include principles like:



Respect confidentiality (what's shared here, stays here).
– Echoing the workshop's foundation of trust.



Use 'I' statements (speak from your own experience).
– Prevents generalizing or invalidating others' stories.



Step up, step back (if you tend to be quiet, challenge yourself to contribute; if you tend to speak a lot, make space for others).



No assumptions (about anyone's identity or experiences).



It's okay to disagree, but do so with kindness and without attacking. Focus on ideas, not the person.



Take care of yourself (feel free to step out if you need a break; the facilitators are here if you need support).

This template can be printed as a poster or handout. At the start of a meeting or training, present these agreements and ask if anyone wants to add or clarify something. In the workshops, facilitators explicitly framed the space for healing and solidarity, and those ground rules “helped create a safe container for sharing.”. Doing this in any group setting fosters a culture of mutual respect and safety, which is particularly crucial when discussing sensitive topics around identity and discrimination.

4.4 Reflection Questions for Staff

Regular reflection helps staff identify biases and improve practice. Here are some prompts that can be used in supervision meetings, trainings, or personal reflection journals:

In what ways might my own background (culture, values, etc.) be influencing how I interact with Black LGBTQ+ newcomer clients? Am I making any assumptions?

Recall a recent client interaction that was challenging. How might intersectionality have played a role in that situation? What did I learn, and what could I do differently next time

What does 'belonging' mean for the clients I serve, and how is my service helping or hindering that sense of belonging?

How do I respond when a client discloses an experience of discrimination? Do I empathize take action, or do I get uncomfortable/quiet? What can I improve in my response?

Have I updated my knowledge about resources and policies recently? If a client asked me tomorrow where to report a hate crime or how to change their name on documents, would I confidently know the answer or where to find it?

Do I truly listen to clients' stories, or do I tend to steer them toward what I think the issue is? How can I ensure I'm creating space for them to be the 'experts' on their life?

These reflections can be private or discussed in group debriefs. The key is honest self-assessment. The toolkit encourages a shift from a top-down "helper" mindset to a collaborative partnership. Questions like these help staff pivot towards humility, learning, and shared power with clients.

4.5 Referral Pathways Chart

One of the identified needs was to clearly delineate where to go for what problem, since newcomers often “don’t know which institution handles what issue”. A Referral Pathways Chart is a visual or tabular tool that maps common issues to appropriate resources. For example

Issue or Need	Where to Seek Help	Contact Information
Housing discrimination (e.g. landlord racism, eviction due to homophobia)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Human Rights Tribunal or housing enforcement unit in your city Community legal clinic (e.g. Black Legal Action Centre for anti-Black racism case) Settlement agency housing worker (for immediate rehousing support) 	[Websites/ phones of tribunal, clinic, agency]
Need a safe shelter or housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> LGBTQ+-friendly shelters (list names) Transitional housing (list any specifically for youth, trans people, etc.) Host homes or emergency housing programs (if any exist locally) 	[Contact info for each]
Experiencing workplace discrimination or unpaid wages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employment Standards claim (Ministry of Labour) for unpaid wages Human Rights complaint for discrimination Legal clinic specializing in employment or a workers’ rights org For immediate advice: worker helpline [number] 	[...]
Health issue and no family doctor (or experiencing bias with doctor)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rainbow Health Ontario directory (LGBTQ+ friendly doctors) Clinic [X] that serves uninsured or refugees If mental health: list LGBTQ+/Black-friendly counseling services Emergency: 911 or crisis line [X] (note: police involvement caution if relevant) 	[...]
Need to change legal name/gender on IDs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provincial vital statistics office (forms for name change, gender marker) –note any fees and waiver if refugee Clinic or settlement service that can help fill forms (list) 	[...]
Want to meet other LGBTQ+ newcomers (community connection)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meetup/support group at [Community Center/The 519] Organizations like Egale Canada, Rainbow Railroad (for peer mentorship) Online community (e.g. moderated Facebook group for LGBTQ+ immigrants) 	[...]

This chart can be posted in staff areas and also given to clients as a handout. It should be kept updated (review every 6 months, because services and programs change). The chart acts as a “cheat sheet” for quick guidance, something participants noted would empower both providers and newcomers to navigate systems effectively. Essentially, it operationalizes the idea of service providers as bridges. A newcomer with this chart could see, for instance, “Oh, if I have a legal problem at work, I can call this number.” Visual flowcharts (with decision trees like “Did X happen? → Go to Y”) can also be useful for those who prefer diagrams.

All these tools and templates aim to translate the toolkit’s principles into day-to-day practice. They are starting points – please adapt language for cultural appropriateness (e.g., the way terms are described might change if working with youth vs. elders, or in different languages). Also involve the community in reviewing these tools: get feedback from a few newcomer clients or peer volunteers on whether the intake questions or the agreements make sense to them. The more collaborative the development, the more effective they’ll be.

In implementing these, remember the spirit behind them: *making services more accessible, affirming, and responsive*. These are living documents; update them as you learn and as things change (for instance, if a new law passes affecting refugees, update the referral chart or rights info). By using these tools, you take tangible steps toward an anti-oppressive practice that doesn’t just reside in theory, but in the very forms, questions, and charts that structure your service delivery.

A large, stylized yellow shape resembling a flower or a series of overlapping petals, positioned in the upper left corner of the slide.

05

Training Modules for Staff Development

5.1 Module 1: Understanding Systemic Oppression and Intersectionality

Duration	~3 hours (can be split into two shorter sessions)
Objective	Ground staff in core concepts (systemic racism, homophobia, transphobia, colonialism, xenophobia) and how these intersect in newcomers' lives. By the end, staff should be able to define these terms and give examples of how they manifest in settlement, employment, healthcare, etc.

Content & Talking Points:

- Set the tone for openness, honesty, and a commitment to learning.
- Define each key term clearly, supported by relevant real-world examples (e.g., racial wage gap statistics, cases of discriminatory housing practices, healthcare access inequities).
- Emphasize that these systems operate together rather than in isolation.
- Introduce the concept of intersectionality with examples from service contexts, such as a Black trans refugee who experiences racism in housing searches and transphobia in shelter settings.
- Use a visual representation (e.g., overlapping Venn diagram, intersecting roads) to illustrate how multiple forms of oppression can combine into a unique lived reality.
- Explain terms that may be less familiar to staff, such as “cisnormativity,” and how these assumptions can shape interactions.

Activity – Case Study Discussion:

- Divide participants into small groups, each with a scenario depicting overlapping oppressions.
- Example: A gay man from Jamaica who recently gained refugee status in Canada experiences mockery of his accent from coworkers, insinuations about his sexuality, and repeated rejections from landlords due to a lack of credit history.
- Groups identify:
 - The types of oppression present (e.g., xenophobia, racism, homophobia, systemic financial barriers).
 - How these oppressions interact.
 - What service providers could do to support the client in each situation.
- After discussion, reconvene to share key points and highlight the interconnected nature of these barriers.

Facilitator Script (Key Points):

- Acknowledge that many clients face challenges that cannot be reduced to a single category.
- Stress that multiple marginalized identities can magnify the impact of discriminatory systems and policies.
- Remind staff that not all newcomers share the same experiences; understanding intersectionality allows for tailored, relevant solutions.
- Create an environment where discomfort is acceptable, as long as it is met with a willingness to learn.

Evaluation:

- Pre-test with a few targeted questions (e.g., defining systemic racism, explaining intersectionality, true/false statements about discrimination).
- Repeat similar questions after the module to measure improvement.
- Use “one-minute papers” to capture staff insights and questions for future training.

5.2 Module 2: Culturally Competent and Affirming Service Practices

Duration	~3 hours
Objective	Equip staff with concrete skills to create affirming environments – from proper communication (names/pronouns) to intake procedures and handling sensitive situations. By the end, staff should be competent in using inclusive language and understanding the importance of representation and safety in service settings.

Content & Talking Points:

- Begin by revisiting reflections from Module 1 that point to necessary behaviour changes.
- Explain cultural competency as a lifelong process of learning and respectful communication.
- Define affirming practice as ensuring every policy, space, and interaction communicates safety and acceptance.
- Review examples of inclusive intake forms, pointing out strong features and areas for improvement.
- Reinforce a trauma-informed approach: avoid pressuring clients to disclose, be patient with anxiety, and respect pacing.
- Stress the importance of confidentiality, particularly for LGBTQ+ and asylum-seeking clients.
- Discuss how visible representation among staff and in materials fosters trust and belonging.

Activity – Role-Play Scenarios:

- Scenario A: A trans woman's ID lists a different gender marker; staff practice respectfully confirming her name and pronouns.
- Scenario B: A client reports racism at a shelter; staff practice active listening and response.
- Scenario C: A gay client appears hesitant when filling out family-related sections of a form; staff practice offering inclusive prompts.
- After each role-play, discuss strengths and areas for growth. Rotate roles to ensure participants experience both staff and client perspectives.

Facilitator Points:

- Use correct names and pronouns consistently.
- Avoid making assumptions based on appearance or accent; invite self-identification.
- Keep apologies for missteps brief and move forward without shifting focus to the staff member.
- Display visible inclusivity cues (e.g., posters, brochures, symbols).

Hands-on Practice:

- Use tools such as an Identity Map Worksheet to build empathy.
- Familiarize staff with the Referral Pathways Chart and test their ability to locate relevant resources quickly.

Evaluation:

- Wrap up with a quiz or game to review key points.
- Observe changes in comfort and skill level during role-plays compared to earlier sessions.

5.3 Module 3: Lived Experiences, Storytelling, and Empathy Building

Duration	~2 hours (could be part of a longer session)
Objective	Deepen staff's empathy and understanding by engaging with real stories of Black LGBTQ+ newcomers. Train staff in active listening and encourage them to view clients as partners with their own leadership potential. Use storytelling as both a learning tool and a method for clients' healing.

Content & Approach:

- Explain why centering lived experience is essential — statistics provide context, but stories convey the human impact.
- Use anonymized accounts to illustrate systemic barriers and resilience.
- Allow staff to reflect on these stories, considering how their perceptions might change with more complete information.

Activity – Storytelling Circle:

- Provide prompts such as, “Describe a time you felt excluded and what could have helped.”
- In small groups, participants share (optional) and listen without interrupting.
- Discuss common themes and insights after all have shared.

Facilitator Points:

- Recognize storytelling as a legitimate form of advocacy and a source of service design insight.
- Train staff to pick up on both factual content and emotional cues.
- Discuss professional boundaries and the importance of self-care to avoid burnout.
- Offer grounding exercises to help manage emotional reactions during intense stories.

Evaluation:

- Ask participants to write a short reflection on how the session has influenced their perspective.

5.4 Module 4: Sector-Specific Skill-Building and Action Planning

Duration	~3 hours (or split into mini-modules)
Objective	Translate learning into sector-specific strategies. This module could be subdivided for staff in different roles (or done as a rotating workshop where each sector group goes to a focused station). It covers applying what we learned to Settlement services, Healthcare navigation, Housing, Employment, Legal, etc., as relevant to your organization. The idea is to workshop concrete improvements and protocols.

Content & Method:

- Organize staff into sector-specific groups (or mixed groups for small organizations) to address tailored scenarios:
 - Settlement: Redesign intake forms to include pronouns and gender identity options.
 - Healthcare: Increase mental health engagement through outreach, partnerships, or onsite clinics.
 - Housing/Shelter: Develop policies to protect trans clients in communal spaces.
 - Employment: Prepare clients for potential workplace discrimination and work with employers on prevention.
 - Legal: Create safe, anonymous ways for clients to report concerns about legal service providers.
- Encourage teams to draft language for forms, create policy excerpts, or list action steps.

Action Planning:

- Combine group outputs into a single organizational action plan with timelines, assigned responsibilities, and measurable goals.

Evaluation:

- Have staff re-enact scenarios from before the training to assess improvement.
- Collect individual commitments to specific practice changes.

5.5 Module 5: Evaluation and Accountability (Optional/Advanced)

Duration	2 hours
Objective	Train staff in how to continuously evaluate their programs for equity and involve clients in that process (linking to Section 8 of the toolkit). This could be for managers or for everyone if your team is small. Cover using metrics, surveys, and feedback loops, as well as how to handle criticism constructively.

Content Highlights:

- Use self-assessment checklists to audit inclusivity in spaces, materials, and policies.
- Track metrics such as disclosure rates, satisfaction scores, and service usage trends.
- Build feedback loops that communicate back to clients how their input led to changes.
- Develop strategies for maintaining alumni engagement and ongoing feedback.

Activity:

- Draft a short client survey measuring inclusivity, respect, and safety.
- Role-play responding constructively to critical feedback.

Outcome:

- Normalize evaluation as a continuous process rather than a one-time exercise.
- Establish personal action commitments linked to staff performance review cycles.

Pre/Post-Training Assessments:

- Include quizzes, skill demonstrations, and self-assessed confidence ratings.
- Follow up after six months to measure retention and identify refresher needs.

Continued Learning:

- Provide reading lists and opportunities for peer-led learning.
- Encourage ongoing discussions about case studies and new challenges in service delivery.



06

Community-Led Practices

6.1 Community-Led Initiatives for Healing and Problem-Solving

One of the strongest themes from the workshops was the value of initiatives led by Black LGBTQ+ newcomers themselves. These approaches are effective for healing and for finding solutions to shared challenges. This section highlights practices that centre peer support, storytelling, and coalition-building. Service providers are encouraged not only to support these approaches, but at times to step back and make space for community leadership. The experience, knowledge, and resilience already exist within the community; the role of service providers is often to supply resources, platforms, and allyship to amplify them.

6.2 Peer Support and Mentorship Models

Community solidarity acts as a protective factor that services should nurture. Several models can be used:



Buddy/Peer Mentor System

- Pair each newcomer with someone who has successfully settled and shares a similar background.
- For example, connect a newcomer from Nigeria with a Nigerian Canadian LGBTQ+ mentor or another Black queer person with refugee experience.
- Recruit former refugees (alumni) and professionals from Black and queer communities as mentors.
- Mentors can offer practical guidance (navigation, job search) and emotional support.
- Even in small client bases, informal buddy systems can work well if both parties consent.
- Provide orientation to mentors on boundaries and available resources.
- Recognize the benefit of peer-to-peer communication outside office hours.
- Where possible, offer incentives such as honoraria or transit tokens to show the value of mentors' contributions.



**Peer
Support
Groups
(Sharing
Circles)**

- Organize regular group meetings where Black LGBTQ+ newcomers can connect, share stories, and offer mutual support.
- Facilitate a consistent schedule (e.g., weekly drop-in) and remove barriers with food and transportation support if possible.
- Begin sessions with prompts that encourage sharing, then allow conversations to develop organically.
- Staff should take a supportive background role, stepping in only for facilitation or conflict resolution.
- Encourage connections outside the group for continued mutual aid.
- Peer groups often evolve into spaces for collaborative problem-solving on issues like navigating benefits systems or addressing poor-quality legal services.



**“Pay It
Forward”
Leadership
Development**

- Many community members want to help others once they have been supported themselves.
- Create leadership opportunities for former clients, such as co-facilitating workshops, joining advisory committees, or participating in outreach.
- Provide training in facilitation, public speaking, or peer mentoring to prepare them for leadership roles.
- Include community leaders in staff training sessions, resource development, and program planning.
- This builds relatable role models, reduces service hierarchies, and promotes shared ownership of program outcomes.

6.3 Storytelling as Resistance and Healing

Storytelling appears throughout the toolkit as a powerful community-led practice. It is both personally restorative and politically impactful.

Storytelling Workshops or Open Mics

- Host dedicated creative expression sessions (e.g., writing workshops, poetry nights, digital storytelling projects).
- Guide participants to reframe harmful narratives into affirming ones.
- Encourage collective exercises where members challenge and rewrite negative messages they've received.
- Maintain a supportive environment where participants set the pace of disclosure.

Community Arts and Media

- Support the creation of art, video, or written work that documents lived experiences.
- Partner with local arts groups or media outlets to provide training and platforms.
- Develop materials such as testimonial videos, zines, or booklets that can be used for public education and peer inspiration.
- Ensure participants maintain control over how their work is used and shared.

Storytelling as Leadership

- Encourage community members to share their journeys in contexts ranging from peer groups to public events.
- Connect interested speakers to opportunities such as conferences, school visits, or advocacy panels.
- Provide preparation support and after-care for storytellers, as sharing personal experiences can be emotionally demanding.
- Frame storytelling as an act of resistance to stigma and as a way to strengthen collective identity.

6.4 Building Coalitions with Black LGBTQ+ Community Groups

Collaboration with organizations led by or embedded in the communities served increases impact and reach.

Identify and Partner with Relevant Organizations

- Map Black LGBTQ+-led initiatives in your area, including nonprofits, informal networks, faith groups, and activist collectives.
- Explore co-hosting events, sharing referrals, and jointly addressing community issues.
- Partner with advocacy groups to amplify campaigns on topics such as healthcare access or housing rights.

Share Power and Resources

- Consider collaborative funding applications where larger agencies use their infrastructure to support grassroots partners with community trust.
- Allow community-led groups to take leadership roles where their expertise is strongest.
- Treat coalition work as a means of decentralizing power and ensuring resources flow to where they are most needed.

Joint Events and Cross-Training

- Host forums together to gather community feedback on key issues.
- Exchange training sessions: grassroots leaders can provide cultural insight and emerging needs; service agencies can share technical expertise in areas like trauma-informed care or immigration processes.
- Build mutual capacity to address needs more effectively.

Coalition Advocacy

- Form or join coalitions that tackle systemic issues collectively, such as access to shelters or policing practices.
- Share advocacy tools and coordinate messaging for greater policy influence.
- Amplify coalition partners' campaigns through your own communication channels.

6.5 Implementing Community-Led Practices

When putting these approaches into action

- Adopt a stance of humility, recognizing when to lead and when to step back.
- Act as a logistical and resource facilitator while allowing the community to direct the work.
- Share successes widely to attract support and demonstrate impact.
- Acknowledge and learn from challenges to refine the approach.

The shift from a provider-client dynamic to a collective, collaborative model builds resilience within the community itself. With empowered peer networks, robust storytelling practices, and strong coalitions, Black LGBTQ+ newcomers can access services, shape them, and lead within them. Over time, this strengthens both individual well-being and the community's ability to advocate for itself, even in the face of external challenges.

In conclusion, **community-led approaches transform the dynamic**: it's no longer provider-client, it's a community working collectively, with providers as facilitators and allies. This empowerment approach builds capacity from within, ensuring that even if funding or systems falter, the community has its own strong network to rely on. And that, ultimately, is the goal: that Black LGBTQ+ newcomers *feel powerful, connected, and heard* – able to not only access services but also to shape them and lead among themselves.



07

Accountability & Evaluation

Creating an equitable and inclusive service is an ongoing process. It requires continuous accountability, self-reflection, and adaptation. This section outlines how organizations can audit their services for equity, track meaningful metrics, establish feedback loops with LGBTQ+ clients, and design client evaluation surveys. The goal is to ensure that the principles of this toolkit are not only implemented but sustained over time.

7.1 Auditing Your Service for Equity

An equity audit is a systematic review of policies, environments, and outcomes to identify potential bias or exclusion.

Organizational Self-Assessment Checklist

Use a structured checklist to assess:

Visibility & Representation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Are symbols of LGBTQ+ inclusion and anti-racism present in your space?• Does printed or digital material reflect diversity, including Black queer individuals?
Forms & Procedures	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Do forms use inclusive language, offer multiple gender identity options, and allow chosen names?• Are intake and complaint processes confidential and accessible?• Is there an intersectionality lens applied in assessments?
Staffing & Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Does staff composition reflect the diversity of your clients?• Are all staff trained in anti-Black racism and LGBTQ+ inclusion, and is this training refreshed regularly?
Services & Programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Are there specific programs for marginalized subgroups (e.g., trans newcomer support groups)?• Are there client populations underrepresented in certain services, and if so, why?
Decision Making	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Are clients involved in program design through advisory boards or focus groups?• Are there clear accountability mechanisms for bias-related incidents?

NOTE: Questions can be yes/no or on a rating scale. Conduct this audit annually (or biannually), involving management, frontline staff, and ideally a community representative to provide a well-rounded perspective.

Equity Audit Team or External Review


Consider appointing an internal equity oversight group or inviting external experts to conduct a review. External evaluators can identify issues normalized internally, such as unwelcoming visual cues or outdated forms. Including people with lived experience of being a Black LGBTQ+ newcomer brings invaluable insight.


Reporting and Transparency


Document audit findings and create an action plan to address them. Share a summary with staff, stakeholders, and, where appropriate, clients. Communicate clearly about changes being made and the rationale for them. Transparency fosters trust and accountability.


7.2 Metrics to Track


To measure progress on equity and inclusion, identify key metrics and monitor them consistently:


-  **Client Demographics and Reach**

Number of Black LGBTQ+ clients served, distribution across programs, and trends over time. Track languages served, immigration status breakdowns, and geographic reach. Investigate gaps where certain groups are underrepresented.
-  **Client Satisfaction and Outcomes**

Satisfaction ratings, sense of safety, and outcome metrics (e.g., stable housing secured, employment obtained, immigration status resolved). Compare outcomes for Black LGBTQ+ newcomers with other groups to identify inequities.
-  **Incident Reports and Resolutions**

Number and type of reported bias or discrimination incidents, and resolution rates. Track follow-up actions such as training refreshers, mediation, or policy updates.
-  **Training and Competency**

Staff training completion rates, assessment scores, and observed application of inclusive practices. Include equity objectives in performance reviews.
-  **Community Engagement**

Number of peer mentors, partnership meetings, and attendance at community-led events. Track initiatives emerging from community collaboration.
-  **Retention and Alumni Success**

Continued engagement of clients post-program, participation in follow-up events, and examples of former clients taking on leadership roles.

Metrics should be collected systematically, analyzed regularly, and used to guide improvements rather than simply for reporting.

7.3 Continuous Feedback Loops with LGBTQ+ Clients

- **Regular Feedback Channels** Maintain accessible and safe options such as anonymous online forms, suggestion boxes, or periodic check-ins. Publicize these channels frequently.
- **Client Advisory Committees or Focus Groups** Engage a diverse group of clients to meet periodically and offer structured feedback. Provide compensation for their time and expertise.
- **Town Halls or Forums** Host annual or semi-annual meetings where clients can share concerns and ideas directly with organizational leadership. Present updates on actions taken in response to past feedback.
- **Follow-Up on Referrals** Check in with clients after external referrals to ensure services met their needs. Use this data to evaluate and improve referral networks.
- **Public Responses to Feedback** Communicate changes made as a result of client input, acknowledging community contributions to program improvements

7.4 Sample Evaluation Survey for Clients

Here is a template for a brief but comprehensive client survey you can use to evaluate your services (modify as needed):

Part 1: Experience & Satisfaction

(Likert scale questions, e.g., 1=Strongly Disagree to 5=Strongly Agree):

- I feel welcomed and respected when I visit [Organization Name].
- Staff at [Org] understand the unique challenges I face.
- I can be myself at [Org] without hiding any part of my identity. (This gets at safety/belonging)
- I am satisfied with the services and support I have received.
- When I have a concern or issue, I know how to raise it and trust it will be addressed.
- [Org] helped me connect to other useful resources or communities.
- I would recommend [Org] to other Black LGBTQ+ newcomers. (Net promoter type question)

Here is a template for a brief but comprehensive client survey you can use to evaluate your services (modify as needed):

Part 1: Experience & Satisfaction	Likert Scale 1=Strongly Disagree to 5=Strongly Agree				
I feel welcomed and respected when I visit [Organization Name].	1	2	3	4	5
Staff understand the unique challenges I face	1	2	3	4	5
I can be myself without hiding any part of my identity.	1	2	3	4	5
I am satisfied with the services and support received.	1	2	3	4	5
I know how to raise concerns and trust they will be addressed.	1	2	3	4	5
[Org] helped me connect to other useful resources or communities.	1	2	3	4	5
i would recommend [Org] to other Black LGBTQ+ newcomers.	1	2	3	4	5
Part 2: Open-Ended Questions					
What has [Org] done well in supporting you?					
What could [Org] improve to make you feel more included or supported?					
Have you experienced or observed anything at [Org] that felt discriminatory or insensitive?					
Are there services you wish [Org] offered?					
Any other comments or suggestions?					
Part 3: Optional Demographics					
Identity categories (e.g., Black/African/Caribbean descent, LGBTQ+, Refugee claimant).					
Age range, gender identity, immigration status.					
Part 4: Follow-Up					
Would you be willing to discuss your feedback in more detail or join a focus group?					

Surveys should be available in relevant languages and take less than 10 minutes to complete. Offer incentives where possible to encourage participation.

7.5 Embedding Accountability as Culture

Evaluation should be a mindset as much as a process. Staff at all levels should regularly ask:

- Are we meeting the needs of those who trust us?
- What can we improve?

Make accountability a shared responsibility, involve clients directly in evaluating success, and address shortcomings openly. Celebrate successes such as improved satisfaction ratings or positive community impact, while continuing to adapt to evolving needs.

In summary, make accountability a shared responsibility across staff and involve clients in evaluating success. Celebrate the wins (like improved satisfaction scores or successful policy changes) and confront the shortcomings openly. This humility and dedication to progress will keep your service aligned with the community's needs and the toolkit's vision – even as those needs evolve in the future.



08

**Additional
Resources**

8.1 Ontario-Wide LGBTQ+ Newcomer Referral Directory

This directory is designed for service providers and clients. It highlights LGBTQ+ newcomer-focused resources, anti-racism supports, legal aid, crisis lines, and community organizations across Ontario.

PROVINCE-WIDE / ONTARIO-WIDE SERVICES

- **Rainbow Railroad** – International NGO helping LGBTQ+ people escape persecution; partners with local settlement services. rainbowrailroad.org
- **Egale Canada (Egale Refuge Program)** – Supports LGBTQ+ refugees with housing, sponsorship, and national advocacy. egale.ca
- **Black Legal Action Centre (BLAC)** – Free legal clinic focused on anti-Black racism (employment, housing, policing, human rights). blacklegalactioncentre.ca
- **Legal Aid Ontario – Refugee Law Office** – Expertise in refugee claims, including SOGIESC-based claims. legalaid.on.ca
- **HALCO (HIV & AIDS Legal Clinic Ontario)** – Free legal services for people living with HIV (common among LGBTQ+ refugees). halco.org
- **OCASI (Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants)** – Advocacy and resources for immigrant-serving organizations, including LGBTQ+-specific initiatives. ocasi.org
- **FrancoQueer** – Ontario's Francophone LGBTQ+ advocacy group, offering peer support and events. francoqueer.ca
- **LGBT YouthLine** – Province-wide peer support for LGBTQ+ youth (phone, text, and online). youthline.ca
- **211 Ontario** – Directory of local social and settlement services. Dial 2-1-1 or visit 211ontario.ca.

GREATER TORONTO AREA (GTA)

- **The 519** (Toronto) – LGBTQ+ community hub with newcomer settlement, peer mentorship, housing advocacy and legal clinics. the519.org
- **Black CAP** (Black Coalition for AIDS Prevention, Toronto) – Settlement, HIV support, and community outreach for Black LGBTQ+ newcomers. black-cap.com
- **Sherbourne Health** (Toronto) – Health centre with LGBTQ+ newcomer programs (Among Friends) and specialized trans health services. sherbourne.on.ca
- **ASAAP** (Alliance for South Asian AIDS Prevention, Toronto) – HIV prevention and LGBTQ+ newcomer support for South Asian communities. asaap.ca
- **ACAS** (Asian Community AIDS Services, Toronto) – Health and newcomer support for East/Southeast Asian LGBTQ+ communities. acas.org
- **Across Boundaries** (Toronto) – Mental health and addiction services for racialized communities, with LGBTQ+-affirming counselors. acrossboundaries.ca
- **Action Positive VIH/Sida** (Toronto) – Francophone HIV/AIDS and LGBTQ+ support, especially for African and Caribbean newcomers. actionpositive.ca
- **Human Rights Legal Support Centre** – Help to file HRTO applications. hrlsc.on.ca
- **LAO Refugee Law Office** – Refugee hearings & immigration law support. legalaid.on.ca

OTTAWA / EASTERN ONTARIO

- **Kind Space** (Ottawa) – LGBTQ+ community space offering peer support, trans groups, and newcomer-inclusive programming. kindspace.ca
- **Capital Rainbow Refuge** (Ottawa) – Sponsorship group for LGBTQ+ refugees, offering resettlement support and advocacy. capitalrainbowrefuge.ca
- **MAX Ottawa** – Health and wellness programs for queer men, including newcomers. maxottawa.ca
- **Centretown Community Health Centre** (Ottawa) – Offers LGBTQ+ health services, counseling, and newcomer support. centretownchc.org

SOUTHWESTERN ONTARIO

- **Rainbow Refugee Association of Waterloo Region** (Waterloo) – Community sponsorship group supporting LGBTQ+ refugees. rrawr.ca
- **OK2BME** (Kitchener-Waterloo & Guelph) – LGBTQ+ youth services, including newcomer-friendly counseling. ok2bme.ca
- **Regional HIV/AIDS Connection** (London) – Harm reduction, counseling, and LGBTQ+ newcomer outreach. hivaidsconnection.ca
- **Positive Living Niagara** (Niagara Region) – HIV services and LGBTQ+-inclusive programs for newcomers. positivelivingniagara.com
- **Speqtrum** (Hamilton) – 2SLGBTQIA+ youth supports. speqtrum.ca
- **SPECTRUM Waterloo Region** – Peer space for LGBTQ+ newcomers. ourspectrum.com
- **London InterCommunity Health Centre** – Trans & newcomer-inclusive primary care. lihc.on.ca

NORTHERN ONTARIO

- **Sudbury Rainbow Alliance** (Sudbury) – Peer support and community events for LGBTQ+ people, including newcomers. rainbowalliancesudbury.com
- **Thunder Pride Association** (Thunder Bay) – Advocacy, community events, and newcomer-inclusive LGBTQ+ programming. thunderpride.ca
- **AIDS Committee of North Bay & Area** (North Bay) – HIV prevention and LGBTQ+ support services. aidsnorthbay.com
- **Rainbow Centre Laurentian** (Sudbury) – University-based LGBTQ+ support with outreach to local newcomer students.

CRISIS & HOTLINES (ONTARIO & NATIONAL)

- **9-8-8 Suicide Crisis Helpline** - 24/7 phone & text support. Call or text 9-8-8
- **Trans Lifeline** – Peer-run crisis line for trans people: 1-877-330-6366
- **LGBT YouthLine** – Call, text, or chat: 1-800-268-9688 | youthline.ca
- **Distress Centres** (local) – 24/7 phone support; check 211ontario.ca for nearest option.
- **BounceBack Ontario** – Free CBT coaching in multiple languages: bouncebackontario.ca
- **211 Ontario** - Find local food, housing, legal, health, and newcomer supports.

FURTHER READING & POLICY RESOURCES

- **Ontario Human Rights Commission** – Intersectionality Primer ohrc.on.ca
- **“Wanted: A Place Called Home”** – Report on LGBTQ+ refugee housing in Ontario.
- Robyn Maynard, **Policing Black Lives – Analysis of systemic racism in Canada**.
- City of Toronto – **Anti-Black Racism Unit Toolkit** (adaptable Ontario-wide).
- **Canadian Council for Refugees (CCR)** – Advocacy and updates on refugee law. ccrweb.ca
- **Rainbow Refugee** (National) – Resources and sponsorship support. rainbowrefugee.ca



09

Closing Reflection

This toolkit ends where it began: with the voices and hopes of the community. Building it has been a process of listening and acting, of turning lived experience into strategy. What follows are closing reflections, commitments, and affirmations to guide service providers forward.

9.1 Final Words from the Community

Workshop participants expressed dreams of dignity, safety, and leadership. Their message was clear: they are not victims, but partners in shaping solutions. The principle of “nothing about us without us” was repeated throughout, reminding us to always ask: have we centered the people most affected?

A sense of family and belonging was also central. Participants left feeling less alone and more connected, with the workshops seen not as an ending but as the start of ongoing partnership. In the same way, this toolkit should be treated as a living resource, with service providers continuing to listen, adapt, and engage.



THIS IS WHAT HEALING FEELS LIKE

*After years of hiding who I am, I looked in the mirror today and smiled.
This is what healing feels like.
Surrounded by people who see me, love me, and call me by my name,
This is what healing feels like.
Sitting in therapy and finally saying “I’m bisexual” without shame,
This is what healing feels like.
Seeing people like me at work and in public freely living their lives,
This is what healing feels like.
Marching with my community, demanding justice and equality,
This is what healing feels like.*

by Samora - a workshop participant

9.2 Our Commitment to Action

As service providers, we pledge to:

- **Implement changes:** Update forms, training, and policies, and adjust as feedback evolves.
- **Continue learning:** Stay informed on anti-Black racism, LGBTQ+ inclusion, and newcomer issues.
- **Center lived experience:** Involve Black LGBTQ+ newcomers in service design and evaluation.
- **Advocate:** Challenge unjust laws, discriminatory practices, and funding gaps alongside our clients.
- **Be transparent:** Own mistakes, communicate improvements, and invite accountability.
- **Support each other:** Recognize the emotional toll of this work and practice self-care as teams.

This is not just a written commitment but an ongoing practice, shown through action and openness.

9.3 Affirmations for Frontline Workers

Frontline workers carry this vision daily. These affirmations are meant to sustain you:

- **You are making a difference**, even in small acts like respecting pronouns or offering a safe space.
 - **Your empathy heals** in ways policies cannot, creating belonging where isolation once was.
 - **You don't need every answer**; honesty and care are what clients remember.
 - **Care for yourself**; sustaining this work requires rest and support.
 - **You are part of the family** and the change; your advocacy helps shift systems as much as your direct service.
-

9.4 Looking Ahead

The vision is clear: Black LGBTQ+ newcomers thriving, free to be their full selves, supported by services that affirm them, and contributing their brilliance to society. This toolkit is not an ending but a “to be continued.” Together, we commit to keep moving from exclusion to belonging, from surviving to leading.

We affirm: We see you. We hear you. We stand with you. The journey continues, and we are ready.



Thank You




This toolkit exists because of the voices, wisdom, and courage of the Black LGBTQ+ newcomers who shared their stories and experiences. Thank you for trusting us with your truths and reminding us what resilience looks like in the face of systemic barriers.

We also thank the frontline workers, community leaders, and service providers who continue to show up, ask hard questions, and push for change. Your commitment to building inclusive, affirming, and anti-oppressive spaces makes a difference every day.

A special thank you goes to the **Black Legal Action Centre (BLAC)** for funding this work and for standing in solidarity with Black communities across Ontario.

Finally, to everyone reading and using this toolkit: thank you for your willingness to learn, reflect, and act. Each small step you take helps create a safer, more just world for Black LGBTQ+ newcomers and for us all.



Contact Information



The 519 is a Toronto-based 2SLGBTQ+ community centre dedicated to advocacy, service provision, and creating inclusive spaces for queer and trans communities, newcomers, and marginalized groups.

Phone 416-392-6874

Website The519.org

Email Info@The519.org

Address 519 Church St,
Toronto, ON M4Y 2C9



The Black Legal Action Centre (BLAC) is a non-profit community legal clinic in Ontario that provides free legal services to address anti-Black racism and advance the rights and dignity of Black communities.

Phone 416-597-5831

Website blacklegalactioncentre.ca

Email info@blac.clcj.ca

Address 180 Dundas St W unit 1509,
Toronto, ON M5G 1Z8
