

Sara Abdo (December 2016)

# **The re-settlement journey for refugees living with disabilities and chronic health conditions**

# Outline

- A brief history of forced migration and disability
- ISANS Settlement Health:
  - Demographics
  - Present challenges to re-settlement
  - Proposed re-settlement timeline

# Forced migration and disability

Historically:

- Re-settlement seen as an “unviable” option for refugees with disabilities <sup>1</sup>
- Societal concerns of burden on the host country <sup>2</sup>

Now:

- An indicator of “heightened risk” increasing need of immediate intervention <sup>3</sup>
- Programs supporting re-settlement with host countries (The UNHCR Ten or More Program)<sup>4</sup>

# ISANS Settlement Health- Current Demographics

Table1. High need caseload of immigrant health settlement counsellor at a glance (December 2015- December 2016)

<b>Number of High Needs Clients -</b>	<b>Total 57</b>
- <b>Wheelchair users and with mobility impairments</b>	15
- <b>Known to be living with a mental illness</b>	7
- <b>Visually impaired</b>	2
- <b>Hearing impaired</b>	8
- <b>Living with kidney failure</b>	3
- <b>Living with rare or genetic blood disorders</b>	8
- <b>Intellectual Disability</b>	4
- <b>Other (Some in process of receiving genetic testing)</b>	11

# Health and Resettlement – Snow Globe Effect

Shaking up of:

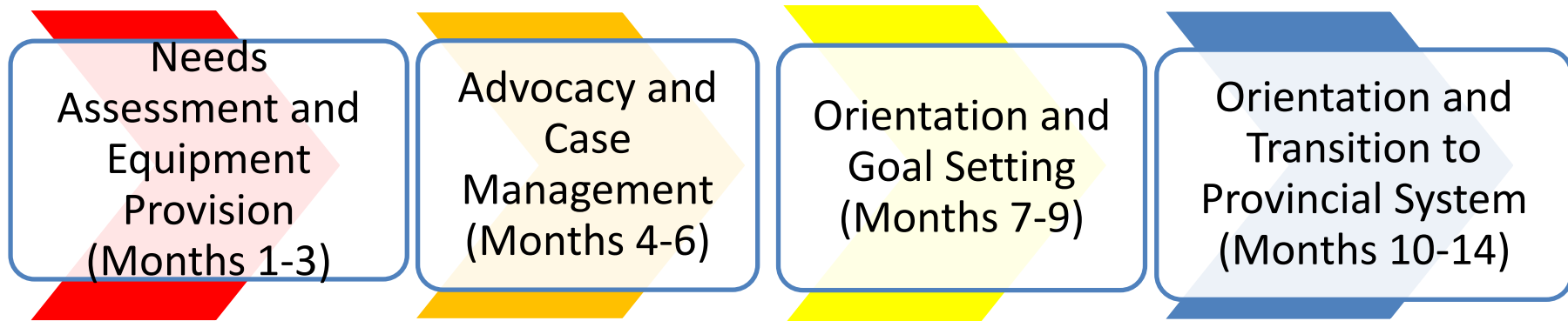
- The person's environment (social, cultural, physical, institutional)
- Personal sense of meaning and identity, skillset, self confidence
- Engagement in meaningful activity

=> Impacts on physical and mental health<sup>5</sup>

# Present challenges to re-settlement

- Accessible and affordable housing
- Timely access to Priority Assistive Products upon arrival to promote safe living and equitable access <sup>6</sup>
- Health Provider:
  - Cultural awareness – including disability culture <sup>7</sup>
  - Knowledge of systemic differences between immigrants and refugees <sup>8</sup>
  - Comfort working with interpreters
- Fluid transition from the federal resettlement assistance program to provincial supports
- Mental health services and services for adults with intellectual disabilities

# Proposed re-settlement timeline



# Suggestions moving forward

- Extensive community collaboration
- Re-settlement model and standard of practice that:
  - Empowers and enables through:
    - Assessment tools and programming that considers pre- and post-migration Research on effectiveness of program in community integration
    - Programs that gradually promote independence and self-advocacy
- Allied health involvement in settlement and advocacy
- Education programs on refugee systems for health and community services



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